



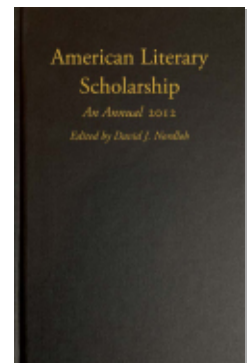
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Drama

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18 Drama

David K. Sauer

Last year's innovation in drama criticism was a kind of historicism that wove together artifacts surrounding a play like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to define a broader context, though to some extent reducing the playtext to the same value as souvenirs sold at performances. This year's works instead see drama as a means of contextualizing the historical image, photo, or event, supplying the meaning that might have been taken for granted and left to stand alone. In *Spectacles of Reform: Theater and Activism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Michigan), 2013 winner of the American Society for Theatre Research Barnard Hewitt Award, Amy Hughes observes, "Theater scholars have studied the mechanics of stage spectacle, and historians have traced the impact of U.S. reform movements, but to date the two fields have not come together to question how and why sensation scenes capitalized on public iconography and national sentiment associated with various advocacy projects." The term *public iconography* nicely summarizes what is under scrutiny in much of this year's scholarship. Hughes argues that recontextualizing in a play "renders visible the invisible; it makes sensation seen. Consequently, spectacle plays an instrumental role in the public and private spheres because of its potential to destabilize, complicate, or sustain sedimented ideological beliefs." A simple example cited last year and worth recalling is Koritha Mitchell's *Living with Lynching* (Illinois), reprinted this year in paper. Mitchell analyzes plays performed between 1890 and 1930 that recontextualize stark photos of lynching by showing the victim instead in an alternative domestic context and assigning more convoluted motives

to the lynchers. Supplying the missing context is a common ingredient in much of the new work on American drama.

i **Recontextualizing 9/11, War, and the Dead**

Stephen Bottoms takes the year's prize for the most stimulating essay. He approaches recontextualizing in "The Canonization of Christopher Shinn" (*MD* 55: 329–55), analyzing three plays that have as their background 9/11 and the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But the plays never directly touch upon those events: "Shinn's drama," Bottoms argues, "performs the major in a minor key—aspiring not to timelessness but timeliness, and taking the big, public events of the moment as the starting point for explorations of some of the private crises and hauntings that shadow them." The first ten scenes of Shinn's *Where Do We Live* take place sequentially in August 2001. "At the opening of scene eleven, however, we are informed that we have leapt forward to 27 September—more than two weeks (and in the subjectivity of passing time, several million years) after the World Trade Center ceased to exist. There is, then, a yawning temporal hole in the fabric of the play, an unremarked upon absence that echoes the hole in the New York skyline. Audiences must negotiate the gap in their own terms."

What makes the article doubly relevant to defining through absence is that Bottoms sets it up with reference to Shinn's exclusion from a proposed Methuen anthology of American drama. Shinn's play was blocked, first by Arthur Miller's estate and then by David Mamet; the implication seemed to be that including a "minor" playwright would diminish the others. Bottoms constructs an extremely sophisticated argument based on the ethics posited by French philosopher Alain Badiou, who attacks big-issue binaries as oversimplifying to an extreme, the binaries fabricated by homogenizing a wide variety of points of view. The point is that the same thing is being done in the Mamet/Miller attempt to control the canon of American drama. A playwright like Christopher Shinn who is not a big Broadway success is, in fact, undermining such clear-cut views of positions, especially in these plays of homosexuality, rich versus poor, racial divide, and Muslim versus Christian, the easy handles we are conventionally given. The result of contextualizing such issues into smaller domestic settings is, counterintuitively, to make more evident many differing points of view. After a "U.S.A." toast/chant in a bar is modified to "where we live," the "resistant speech act changes

everything in four words, by repositioning the United States, not as a unified state exacting biblical revenge on offending nations for wrongs done to it, but as a domestic environment, a home whose traumatized, dysfunctional inhabitants need urgently to begin meaningful dialogue.” Using Mamet’s 2008 declaration of his new faith, “Why I Am Not a Brain-Dead Liberal,” as a foil, Bottoms examines Mamet’s vision of America as oversimplifying: “Shinn’s attention to underlying states of personal and communal trauma might, at the very least, demand a reappraisal of Mamet’s complacency about America’s ‘wonderful and privileged circumstances.’” For Bottoms Shinn’s plays “suggest an ethical imperative to listen, even to voices that may trouble or disturb, and to respond, even to events that call us out of our closets and comfort zones.” Bottoms concludes, “It is for this reason that, reflecting on the questions left hanging by this small story of the abandoned anthology, I finally decided to forego scholarly discretion and share it.” The issue of canonization is thus linked to simplistic reductions in political debate. Even though such reductionism is never explicitly invoked in the plays, they make a “minor” playwright worthy of study.

The most theoretical approach to recontextualizing appears in Jeanne Collieran’s *Theatre and War: Theatrical Responses since 1991* (Palgrave). Collieran analyzes why visual images of the war are now confusing: “While visible evidence and witnesses were once touchstones for truth and fact, the proliferation of signs and images, disseminated more widely than ever before because of television, cell phones, and computers, has changed the status of proof and altered conceptions of authenticity.” The result is that “as subjects of contemporary culture, we find ourselves in a state of permanently agitated desire: the desire to see the ‘real’ thought to be anterior to the represented persists, but it is wrapped in doubt about whether this desire can ever be satisfied, and whether the desire itself is illusory.” Collieran argues for two ways that theater offers a critical optic: “its ability to discern different discursive formations at work and identify their rhetorical stance and implicit arguments, and its capacity to read and make sense of the proliferation of images, without reducing their visceral effect, their reliance on context, or even their ambiguity.” Collieran’s work culminates with analysis of Tony Kushner’s *Homebody/Kabul*: “The Afghanistan that the Homebody has read about and imaginatively entered is nothing like the Afghanistan where she visits and meets her death. The deep disjuncture between the two halves of the play—the imaginative and lyrical monologue and the grim events of

the realistic second act— . . . [raises the question]: is there any sense in which political intervention can ever not be motivated by self-interest?”

Katarzyna Beilin approaches doubleness as well in “‘The Split-Screen Syndrome’: Structuring (Non)Seeing in Two Plays on Abu Ghraib” (*CompD* 46: 427–50). Beilin argues that Peter Morris’s *Guardians* (2005) and Juan Mayorga’s *La paz perpetua* (2007) “reinterpret the photographic performances of Abu Ghraib, returning them to the narratives from which particular photographic frames excerpted them. These plays thus reinscribe infamous photographs back into political contexts, personal lives, family dynamics, and gender, race, and species relations as they are built by the linguistic exchanges and bodily interactions onstage.” The famous photo of the female prison guard atop naked prisoners in hoods was given no context. But in Morris’s *Guardians* “the stage is dramatically split between the masculine and the feminine, the manipulating media and the manipulated soldier, in their incarnations from the dark heart of the War on Terror. Thus the public is confronted with a double blindness: that of the male journalist, whose nonseeing eyes are fixated on the pornographic power/pleasure spectacle, and that of the soldier Girl, who sees only what media people like him want to show her. . . . American Girl’s suffering, even after she realizes she has been framed, strikes us as insufficient; she is only bitter about her victimization and expresses no concern about her own victims’ pain.”

A more theoretical study, again directed at Tony Kushner’s *Homebody/Kabul*, is Shelley Manis’s “Cain’s Grave, Ground Zero, and ‘History’s Unmarked Grave of Discarded Lies’: The Question of Hospitality to the Other in *Homebody/Kabul*” (*JADT* 24, iii: 23–45). Manis’s argument is located in theories of haunting, which create “the possibility of enlightenment through recognition of our incomplete understanding of the world around us.” Haunting does not reveal secrets but rather emphasizes the “experience of secrecy as such; an essential unknowing which underlies and may undermine what we think we know.” This notion, reinforced further by concepts drawn from Jacques Derrida, forms the basis for a fascinating account of the early staged reading of the complete *Homebody/Kabul* at the Guggenheim Museum just after September 11. I had seen the first production in 1998 at a tiny London theatre in Chelsea, what became the first act only, the hour-long monologue of *Homebody*. Manis recounts the public reading of the expanded play in October 2001. This reading, conducted in the city still shattered by the destruction of the twin towers, took on totally

different resonances—although Kushner refused to change a word of the text to suit the new conditions: “Like [Walter] Benjamin’s Angel of History [partial inspiration for *Angels in America*],” Manis explains, “the Homebody gazes metaphorically at the ash heap of the past as her audience is simultaneously drawn to the present (and uncertain future) by the uncanny similarity between Cain’s Grave [Kabul gave sanctuary to Cain, where he is said to be buried] and New York’s Ground Zero. The Homebody’s pause creates a space for mourning and empathy for the other. . . . The audience’s tension is palpable in the stillness of the theater space after the Homebody says wistfully, as though compelled by a force she doesn’t quite understand, ‘I should like to see that.’”

This use of gaps, whether of weeks around 9/11 or the split staging of *Guardians* or just a long “pause” like this one specified in the staging of *Homebody/Kabul*, leaves space in all the plays for the audience to fill in and make connections the plays do not explicitly make themselves. (In *Homebody/Kabul* there is also the gap between the mother’s first-act monologue and her daughter’s futile search for what happened.) Manis’s thesis expands the implied argument: “Instead of reifying popular black-and white melodramatic distinctions of good versus evil proffered by [President George W.] Bush[,] . . . Kushner’s play calls into question the very definition of concepts like ‘the civilized world,’ ‘hostile regime,’ or ‘evil and destruction.’ . . . He removes the United States from what Bush’s rhetoric presumes as its place at the center of the universe and urges empathetic listening, careful observation rather than indignant exceptionalism.” This technique of contextualizing the real brings with it a more deeply reflective reconstruction. As a result the simple binaries like Muslim versus Christian dissolve, though in the immediate news reporting they are the easy handles to grasp an event; a more complex view of multiple forces and perspectives arises and collides in a single incident. Indeed, another form of recontextualizing takes place in *Homebody/Kabul* when the daughter’s guide explains that historically Kabul was a city defined by its hospitality, though in giving shelter to the biblical Cain terrible consequences resulted. The audience is left to make the parallel with New York City and hospitality. Yet neat binaries are subverted when Manis observes that the site of the twin towers is not only an American grave but also the grave of the terrorists who killed them.

This article implicitly invokes crucial questions at the center of literary interpretation. Manis’s examination of the resonances of the play in the light of an ex post facto real event, a fate that any play may suffer/enjoy,

asks us to consider how meaning changes over time and with change of circumstances. And her concept of haunting is that the resonance between the real world and the play world is always present in varying degrees. That is, plays about love or death not only contain those concepts but also resonate with those experiences each audience member has had of such pivotal moments in life. Every play, in a sense, creates such a dialogue or haunting between the real and the aesthetic experience, calling forth “what is not seen, but is powerfully real.”

Haunting in a more ghostly sense is how Joanna Mansbridge examines the staging of history in “Memory’s Dramas, Modernity’s Ghosts: Thornton Wilder, Japanese Theater, and Paula Vogel’s *The Long Christmas Ride Home*” (*CompD* 46: 210–35): “Whether conceived of as linear progression, cyclical repetitions, or postmodern ruptures, modernity’s time has been ‘invented,’ in various ways, as a method for organizing human experience and making sense of the relationship between past and present.” According to Mansbridge Wilder’s approach changed between the two world wars, when he “moved away from realism to dramatize time as a kind of teleological unfolding of the eternal present, a present populated by ghosts that signify a generational past returning to remind the living of what is being lost in time.” His *Happy Journey from Trenton to Camden* (1931) first introduced the Stage Manager who later “enables Emily Webb (and the audience) of *Our Town* to realize: ‘We don’t have time to look at one another. . . . Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it?—every, every minute?’ As a universalizing figure, the Stage Manager offers an expansive perspective on a world of lost moments and narrow perceptions.” In this way, Mansbridge argues, Wilder is not advocating a universal principal, but rather created plays “that stage the tensions generated from humanity’s limited ways of thinking about time.” A parallel concern of thinking about time and repetition is found in Paula Vogel’s *The Long Christmas Ride Home*, which uses Bunraku and Noh dramatic techniques to stage a key frozen moment in a family’s history: “The Ghost of Stephen says, ‘There is a moment I want you to watch with me. A moment of time stopping. . . . Come back with me now and perhaps you will see it.’ . . . He breathes life back into the [children staged with Bunraku] puppets, resumes his place among the living, and the play begins again at the moment when the Man is about to hit the Woman, only, now, the audience understands the implications of this moment in the future lives of the three children. As ‘the man raises his right hand and backhands the woman, slowly,

ritualistically' . . . and the car comes to a halt on the edge of a precipice, a cascade of hopeful 'what if's' erupt [*sic*] from each family member." As the play returns to this action, Mansbridge invokes Jill Dolan's idea of a "performative moment" as key to the experience: it "does not resolve or redeem the past, nor does it promise a better future; rather, it shows us how these temporal arrangements are always (and only) being imagined, constructed, and enacted in the present moment. In *LCRH*, the utopian performative emerges when the ghosts of memory, theater history, and modernity converge in the 'phantom note' of performance."

Potentially a fascinating study of the influence of dead characters on the living is S. M. Mahfouz's "The Presence of Absence: Catalytic and Omnipresent Offstage Characters in Modern American Drama" (*MQ* 53: 392–409). A number of theoretical perspectives are invoked here in a study of plays chosen to highlight a postmodern decentering as indicated by absent or dead characters. Ultimately the article presses for some kind of "causal" role for the dead, whose influence is felt among the living: "Functioning as the absent other such offstage characters guide the onstage action and contribute to the conflicts in their respective plays." Despite excellent background research Mahfouz fails to convince: in attempting to cover so much territory he elides too many different operative perspectives.

Jeanmarie Higgins's "The End of Room-Space: Domesticity and the Absent Audience in Wallace Shawn's *The Fever*" (*JDTC* 26, ii: 57–73) is a quite different study of absence. Here another kind of "frightening" without any specific cause is generated by the play's deliberately not invoking any specific country or war but instead reflecting on terrorism, oppression, liberal guilt, and inability to act. Though neither Higgins nor Shawn alludes to the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq or the U.S. response, those actions are the background to this play of that year. The recontextualization that takes place is a peculiar form of metatheater: "[In] *The Fever's* domestic *mise en scène*—the play was written to be performed in someone's house or apartment—public and private spaces exist together to stage a prolonged, shared moment of the uncanny, 'that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.'" The play consists of a monologue in which the speaker regrets cutting himself off and burying himself in a world of things—the home itself is both theatrical set and a real home insulating its inhabitants: "During any given performance of the play, either the performer or one or more audience members is—literally—at home. And staying

at home is the mistake most of the bourgeois world has made, shielding themselves from poverty and misery rather than actively fighting to end them.” It would have been interesting to compare this closet drama to another 1990 play of similar theme, John Guare’s *Six Degrees of Separation*, as well as to see both attempts at isolationism as quite the opposite of the general reaction to the U.S. involvement in the first Gulf War.

ii Recontextualizing Stereotypes

Michael Aman’s “Edward Harrigan’s Realism of Race” (*JADT* 24, i: 5–31) takes on one of the thorniest issues of American realism, the issue of stereotypes as purportedly realistic depictions of otherness. Harrigan’s “Mulligan Guard” series of six linked plays (1879–83) was more popular in its time than Gilbert and Sullivan’s operettas. Set in the Lower East Side among an immigrant population, the works were “noted for attention to physical detail inherent as well as for the supposedly truthful portrayals of diverse communities, both of which gave the series a reputation for realism, a label first assigned the series by William Dean Howells.” The breakthrough was of depicting other nationalities and races (“white, black, Italian, Irish, or Chinese”) as “fully-realized characters in their own right having lives as depicted in plot points and character arcs, and each [having] his/her own wants and strategies in pursuing these.” This sounds realistic, especially making visible previously invisible subgroups in America, but the actors were almost all Irish Americans. Harrigan’s partner Tony Hart was the lead and played one of his most famous roles, Rebecca Allup, in blackface and drag. Aman rightly confronts the issue, citing an interview with Harrigan when questioned about using Negro actors instead: “A [N]egro cannot be natural on the stage. He exaggerates the white man’s impersonation of himself and thus becomes ridiculous.” The issues raised are complex indeed. The passage is reminiscent of Song Liling in *M. Butterfly*, who contends that he is a perfect imitation of a woman “because only a man knows how a woman is supposed to act.”

Aman does a good job of unpacking Harrigan’s view, contending exaggeration “makes obvious the subject matter being imitated but does not replicate the subject matter.” Perhaps more to the point, Aman summarizes Howells’s definition of *realism* as “the serious treatment of everyday reality, the rise of the more extensive and socially inferior human groups to the position of subject matter for problematical-existential

representation.” Harrigan’s plays meet the criterion in their depiction particularly of the interaction of the men’s social groups, the Mulligan Guards (Irish American) and the Skidmore Guards (African American). Howells contends that Harrigan “accurately realizes in his scenes the actual life of this city. He cannot give it all; he can only give phases of it and he has preferred to give its Irish American phases in their rich and amusing variety, and some African and Teutonic phases. It is what we call low life and it remains for others, if they can, to present other sides of our manifold life.”

Also conscious of the dangers of stereotyping, Karl M. Kippola’s *Acts of Manhood: The Performance of Masculinity on the American Stage, 1828–1865* (Palgrave) opens with Washington Irving’s description of three male types in theater audiences. Kippola authenticates that description by analyzing the male characters in Royall Tyler’s *The Contrast* (1787) in Irving’s terms, then quickly moves to Judith Butler’s view of gender as “cultural invention” put on as “performance.” Carefully delimiting his study by race, to white men, and by period, Kippola studies actors as keys to cultural views: “The rugged masculinity of [Edwin] Forrest and the effete intellectualism of [Edwin] Booth, the two great stars that bookend the period, represent diametrically opposed visions of manhood. How and why did the performance of masculinity change so dramatically?” Interestingly it is that most ephemeral of the arts, acting, that Kippola makes his study, not the dramatic texts any more than other “archival materials, political cartoons, popular novels, portraiture, conduct manuals, melodramas and burlesques to trace the shifting meanings and signifiers of manhood in antebellum America.” As with last year’s award-winning study, Robin Bernstein’s *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*, the literary is no longer awarded any more cultural weight than other traces of past culture. As a result, the most acclaimed drama of the period, Anna Cora Mowatt’s *Fashion* (1849), is accorded only a paragraph, although one might think its view of masculinity would be of substantial relevance. Dion Boucicault’s *The Octoroon* is similarly mentioned in a single paragraph.

John Clum’s *The Drama of Marriage: Gay Playwrights/Straight Unions from Oscar Wilde to the Present* (Palgrave) rounds up the usual suspects from British and American drama but starts the Americans with Clyde Fitch (“It is difficult for the critic to write about plays that are so thin”) and George Kelly (“At the heart of Kelly’s work is the impossibility of a loving marriage, mainly because women are stifled and embittered by

the limited role of homemaker"). The later playwrights, Tennessee Williams, William Inge, and Edward Albee, are cited to establish a general overview of marriage, which is then supported by selective close readings of plays. Thus Williams's *Period of Adjustment*, for example, establishes his position: "So Isabel is left with the two central problems faced by many of Williams's heroines: looming poverty and a sexual standoff." Clum is remarkably restrained in speculating on what gay perspectives might have in common, even on the idea of marriage itself, other than to remark that it is "an ideal, an impossibility, and a measure of the morality and limitations of the parties involved." Yet there run through Clum's analysis so many variables, no two of which seem to connect. Inge, he comments, "was fascinated by the relationship between sexuality and sexual desire and the institution of marriage. . . . a wild strong man incapable of totally settling down and a woman who in some ways resents her own need for the man," and Albee created plays in which the relationships of married people move "usually from complacency and routine to violence, and then to either a radical reordering of their lives or to an acceptance of the routine." The dazzling array of possible forces defining marriage seems almost to make each playwright's view sui generis, as perhaps each marriage in real life is as well.

Alisa Roost's "Sex and the Singing Gal (of a Certain Age)" (*JADT* 24, i: 59–83) traces the emergence of the stereotype of the older woman in Broadway musicals. Rodgers and Hammerstein seemingly invented the character as a fount of wisdom in *Oklahoma!* and continued using her through *The Sound of Music*. Roost's survey becomes complex when she moves to Lotte Lenya in John Kander and Fred Ebb's *Cabaret*. Lenya herself, star of *The Threepenny Opera* in 1928, escaped the Nazis and reunited with her husband, composer Kurt Weill, in 1935. So, potentially a heroine of a certain age, the character she plays seems heroic. The character compromises her principles and cynically rejects her Jewish suitor: "The failure of her character to take a meaningful stand is more powerful than it would be for other characters." The older-woman figure frequently appears in Sondheim musicals, now further complicated by self-awareness of her own cynicism, and "also unhappy, seemingly because of the social pressures on older women and their inability to embrace their status as wise older women." The final installment in Roost's story is Tony Kushner's *Caroline, or Change*, in which Caroline's work as a maid and mother is so exhausting she "can't muster the energy to take up the musical and physical space of a solo number." But in the

end “the pain and rage that Caroline has suppressed throughout the show comes [*sic*] to the surface” and she ceases to be an echo of “mammy and older women and doesn’t fit into any neat categories.” Thus the plays vex and drive to extinction an oversimplified stereotype.

Sara Warner’s *Acts of Gaiety: LGBT Performance and the Politics of Pleasure* (Michigan) traces a guerrilla theater movement originating in 1970 that by the 1990s had grown into creation of playtexts. A case study in exclusion and the complexities beneath simple labels, the movement began with the anarchist rebellion of lesbians staging demonstrations because Betty Friedan deliberately excluded them from the “women’s movement” in her establishment of the organization NOW. This produced what Warner terms *acts of gaiety*: “[These] playful methods of social activism and mirthful modes of political performance that inspire and sustain deadly serious struggles for revolutionary change . . . are comical and cunning interventions that make a mockery of discrimination and the experience of social exclusion.” A locus for the works was quickly created Off-Broadway in a theater designated WOW (Women’s One World): “‘Gender deconstruction and parody and everything else Judith Butler ever wrote,’ Jill Dolan has suggested, ‘were achieved with great orgasms of inventive, hilarious performance.’” Warner identifies as the culmination of the movement the plays of the Five Lesbian Brothers, analyzed in her final chapter. The surprising thing about the book is that it seems to be written as if creating an alliterative prose revival. Warner describes the Five Lesbian Brothers as “Sapphic satirists who have made audiences squeal and squirm with polymorphously perverse, politically incorrect, ribald sex comedies” and “preposterously plotted farces with no concern for logic, laws of probability, or coherent characterization [that] feature profligate protagonists in ludicrous situations.” Such a prose style must be wrought consciously in imitation of the playfulness of its subject, but I found it distracting. The most serious issue the book confronts is the controversy unleashed by the Brothers’ final play, *Oedipus in Palm Springs*, which satirized a lesbian mecca and so offended some of the original supporters. The play is said to deliver “a caustic critique of the mainstreaming of the movement, one that makes visible the emotional and political blind spots produced by a privatized, depoliticized, and narrowly defined notion of gay life . . . a parable of the tragic consequences of homoliberalism.” In other words, the play attacked the increasingly simplistic notion of lesbianism the movement had contributed to producing.

Performing Gender Violence: Plays by Contemporary Women Dramatists, ed. Barbara Ozieblo and Noelia Hernando-Real (Palgrave), is a remarkable anthology produced by a working group of European scholars examining American drama. What emerges through the nine chapters is a coherent whole. The first two chapters, written by the editors, outline theories of violence against women and offer overviews of the staging of such violence and its effect on the spectator. The final chapter, by Ozieblo, also examines this difficult issue. The third chapter, by Hernando-Real, looks at victims who rebel, featuring among its examples the view of the family offered by Marsha Norman's *'night, Mother*. Opposing the conventional realistic characterization of Norman's Jessie as trapped female passive victim, Hernando-Real argues that female suicide can carry nuanced tragic weight just as male suicide does: "I believe Jessie's final self-destruction exemplifies the effective, and feminist, theatrical technique that suicide can be, once it is connected to the idea of revenge. Through her suicide, Jessie shows her determination to control her life and be an agent." Subsequent chapters examine plays featuring women's bonding (e.g., Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*), psychological abuse (e.g., Rebecca Gilman's *Boy Gets Girl*), medical violence (e.g., Susan Miller's *My Left Breast*, but not Sarah Ruhl's *A Clean House*, although the latter is mentioned in the editors' introduction), survival strategies of African American women, especially as featured by Suzan-Lori Parks, and finally plays of war such as Emily Mann's *Still Life*. *Performing Gender Violence* opens with a call for "women playwrights to create female characters that will be positive role models for women, rather than the 'monster' (Rebeck) the audience was confronted with in Tracy Letts's *August: Osage County*." Such insistence is wearying in its didacticism: should we dismiss Shakespeare's tragedies because his heroes are not positive role models? Fortunately, as the deeper analysis of *'night Mother* indicates, the perspectives taken throughout the individual chapters are more measured and discriminating.

iii The Holocaust and After

It is a little disingenuous for Jessica Hillman to title her book *Echoes of the Holocaust on the American Musical Stage* (McFarland) and then confess, "The musicals addressed in this book touch on the massacre of the Jews in Europe glancingly, if at all. . . . They instead focus either on the encroaching threat of Nazism, in the case of *The Sound of Music*

and *Cabaret*, pure satire of the Hitler regime in *The Producers*, or fleeting references, metaphors or substitutions in *Milk and Honey*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Rothschilds*, *Rags* and *Ragtime*.” Further, Hillman carefully delimits her focus: “Aesthetic or artistic value judgments are not my concern in this study. Nor are concerns regarding the morality of the commercialization of the Holocaust. I will try to avoid these judgments whenever possible. . . . Instead I will explore the exchange between artistic response and cultural values. This exchange circulates in both directions, from societal interests to art, and from artistic work to cultural concern. This multi-directional flow . . . helps to clarify the impact of the Holocaust on American identity.” Her operative theoretical tool is *postmemory*, a postmodern concept that reality is not one fixed thing: “The postmemory generation, particularly the children of survivors, are forever influenced by Holocaust imagery and narratives and although they did not live through the events will ‘remember’ them nonetheless.” The book traces the emergence of the Holocaust from repression, reflected in the struggle of producers over how much Naziness to depict in *The Sound of Music*, to expression, how much Jewishness to emphasize in *Fiddler on the Roof* five years later. The reviews of *Fiddler* reveal the cultural argument for and against using nostalgia to unearth an earlier time of an ideal community since disrupted and erased. This duality reflects the dual personality of the musical form itself, implied by Martin Gottfried’s observation that “*Cabaret* is two musicals and one of them is enormously striking and magnificently executed [while the other relies on] conventional Broadway musical plotting to fill out the evening.” This duality inhabits the form of the play, with social issues continually creeping into and informing the musical-comedy structure and content. Even so, the shocking final line of the song about the gorilla in *Cabaret*—“She wouldn’t look Jewish at all”—was dropped from the original production and only restored 20 years later in Harold Prince’s revival. The fitting conclusion to this study is Mel Brooks’s *The Producers*, which really pushes the limits of musical-comedy structure by attempting to contain both Hitler and Nazis and which indicates how elastic the tension can be. Hillman reiterates that point by noting that swastikas were removed during rehearsal of *Sound of Music*, used in moderation in *Cabaret*, and finally in *The Producers* made the center of a Busby Berkeley musical number. She notes, “Brooks’ show makes no mention of the Holocaust specifically, and indeed its Nazi representations are confined to a show within a show context, as ‘staged Nazis’ in a meta-theatrical space, thus

avoiding many of the difficulties of Holocaust related humor. I question however if it is possible to ignore the link . . . between a swastika and anti-Semitic hatred. The implications of laughter at Nazi imagery, of a comic Hitler, encompass the shock and discomfort of the knowledge that one is laughing at the perpetrators of one of the most horrific crimes in the history of the human race.” That comment itself demonstrates the huge gap in polar responses to *The Producers*, still vastly popular as a musical.

Gene Plunka’s “Staging the Banality of Evil: Donald Freed’s *The White Crow: Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Cecil Taylor’s *Good*, and Peter Barnes’s *Laughter!*” (*JDTA* 27, i: 51–69) also traces the difficulty of coming to grips with the Holocaust, beginning with the perspective of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1956) that people are good and that the Nazis were just a momentary falling away from that, to the view that there were a few monsters, to Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and the view that Eichmann is everyman, the banality of evil. Freed’s *The White Crow* makes the Arendt position dramatic by inventing a psychiatrist who tries to get Eichmann to accept responsibility for his actions. Eichmann insists that he was a minor bureaucrat, just trying to help the Jews to a homeland, but that when the war in Russia went against Germany there were no ships for transport. In a meeting conducted by prewar leaders, Eichmann simply acceded: “These were bourgeois ‘gentlemen’ who had never deigned to give my type the time of day. And here they were tripping over each other to tell us how to make 10.3 million Jews ‘disappear.’ . . . I drank my fine wine and thought, ‘Today I am Pontius Pilate. I have no guilt. Who am I to judge? These are the powers that be and they have smiled on the entire affair.’” The psychiatrist struggles to get Eichmann to confess guilt; he refuses. The original 1984 staging included the audience on stage in jury boxes: “Freed seems to imply that we, the jury, would have acted no differently as ordinary citizens caught up in the inexorable demands of citizenship and statesmanship. Freed, in placing the jury onstage, confronts us with the dialectic of whether moral responsibility succumbs to or can subvert the typical human desire of adherence to a legal, yet corrupt, bureaucracy, which ultimately leads to personal and professional rewards.”

iv **Recontextualizing Slavery and *The Octoroon***

An earlier instance of the need to contextualize is the famous iconographic image of the scene from Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon* (1859) in which the seemingly white Zoe is literally put up on a table for auction as a slave. A number of studies of that play appeared this year and last, and I feared duplication. But thankfully Lisa Merrill's "'May She Read Liberty in Your Eyes?': Beecher, Boucicault, and the Representation and Display of Antebellum Women's Racially Indeterminate Bodies" (*JDTC* 26, ii: 127–44) did not borrow from Jason Stupp's "Slavery and the Theatre of History: Ritual Performance on the Auction Block" (*TJ* 63 [2011]: 61–84), which she cites once. Instead, Merrill, working on a parallel track though also in consultation with Heather Nathans, has uncovered fascinating new information and background to the play and the debate over slavery in the years leading up to the Civil War. Both Stupp and Merrill fully grasp the ambiguity of response, prurient yet righteous, in staging slave auctions of white-looking young women in a theater or a church. But Merrill goes further in her article, recognizing the implied context of rape contained in such an event: "[Henry Ward] Beecher implored congregants to 'Look at this marketable commodity—human flesh and blood, like yourselves.' . . . I contend that the particular kind of 'seeing' Beecher offered his congregants can be understood, in part, as an example of what Patricia Williams has called 'pornographic seeing.' This voyeuristic way of looking rendered Sarah, and the subsequent young girls Beecher was to have a hand in freeing, into 'an object or spectacle, there for the viewer's pleasure, possessed by the subject's gaze.'"

More important, Merrill has uncovered correspondence between Beecher and Boucicault waging a war of the theater in the New York newspapers in the late 1850s, two years before *The Octoroon* was staged. Beecher was virulently antitheater, and Boucicault attacked him for never having been in a theater: "Beecher believed that one's attendance at a theatre led to contagion and potential class unrest—prompting spectators to become uncontrollable through their exposure to vices they saw enacted. Yet he assumed no such contagion threatened congregants witnessing the 'slave auctions' he staged at his church." Boucicault argued that Beecher's famous sympathy for slaves should extend to the poor actors who are also oppressed, ostracized by society, and essentially wage slaves. Boucicault's elision of "chattel slavery" into "wage slavery"

raises questions about his acknowledged “neutrality” on the issue of abolition. Of course, whether this was a ploy not to offend potential audiences or whether he was actually not antislavery, most newspapers took the play to be abolitionist, though some saw it as exploitative entertainment rather than a serious critique. Merrill’s discovery of all these documents gives a much deeper context to understanding *The Octoroon* and the slavery debate.

While Merrill does well in examining the two stagings of slave auctions, I have always thought an equally powerful counterweight to *The Octoroon*’s superficial melodramatic view of slavery is *Louisa Picquet, the Octoroon; or, Inside Views of Southern Domestic Life* (1861), effectively an interview with an octoroon auctioned as a child in Georgia, sold as a sex slave in Mobile, and resident in New Orleans until the death of her master allowed her and her children to seek freedom. In this account the lives of real octoroons and the complicated conventions of slavery dictated that white(-looking) people could be slaves, while in the same city black(-looking) people could be free citizens, undermining any conventional view of slavery and race as a simple binary.

Another article covers similar territory, but without the Beecher parallels. In “Melodramatic Slaves” (*MD* 55: 459–75) Dana Van Kooy and Jeffrey N. Cox examine a variety of early slave plays, arguing that this form of melodrama required a villainous blocking figure and that slavery fit perfectly into that model. Therefore plays were reactionary in that the existing order was always reaffirmed at the end, thus subsuming slavery issues: “Using slavery to endorse tales of family values and empire, melodrama tends to choke off the presence of slavery—reducing its sites to points in the emplotment of a return to order and a portrayal of slaves that affirms the centrality of whiteness in the theatre of blackface.” Using white actors in blackface undermined any attempt at critique and instead promoted a view of virtuous Christianity within slaves’ culture: “And when melodrama played against stereotype—the enslaved Gambia is the noblest figure in [Thomas Morton’s] *The Slave*, Yarico is more appealing than Inkle [in George Colman the Younger’s *Inkle and Yarico*]—the plays seem to have invoked now the whiteness of the actor, now a whitening of the African character.” The most compelling point is made in the concluding examination of the two versions of *The Octoroon*: “After some well-publicized attempts in the [London] *Times* to defend Zoe’s suicide and the integrity of his original ‘moral’ production, Boucicault ceded to the [British] public’s demand for a

more melodramatic ending. With the lovers now united at the curtain, this version replaces the atrocities of slavery with a romantic plot." This revision, made when the play moved from New York to London, resulted in a totally altered ending, revealing the gap between the two countries: "For the American audience, a cross-racial marriage could not be portrayed, so the play had to end 'tragically.' The British audience, demanding that the order of melodrama be preserved, was willing to see racial boundaries crossed if domestic order could be restored."

Reflecting the popularity of the slavery issues in melodramatic treatment, John W. Frick Jr.'s "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" on the American Stage and Screen (Palgrave) observes that play versions of the novel had 250,000 presentations and "the total attendance during the half century of its existence equaled the total population of the United States." The study of the many incarnations of this work adds to the issues raised by casting and blackface. The great actor of the first company to do the play, Green Germon, would not undertake Uncle Tom because "since he would be playing a blackface role, audiences would consider him comical." In fact, the initial audiences were unpredictable, erupting sometimes in hisses and other times in applause. Similarly Germon's wife would not play Topsy because no woman had ever appeared in blackface, and so she took on only light-skinned roles.

v Studies of Individual Playwrights

A different kind of attack on stereotypes is found in Sharyn Emery's "The *Philadelphia Harlem Story*: Langston Hughes's Screw Play *Little Ham*" (*MD* 55: 373–85). Emery shows how Hughes recontextualized the popular film genre of the 1930s, screwball comedy, and made it into a basis for a new kind of African American urban play that destroyed the old stereotypes: "Black characters were not the ones marrying, loving, and resolving the narrative, and this was part of Hughes's project with his comedies, in which he 'employed humor as a way of countering stereotypes that were evident in both stage productions and Hollywood films of the day'" (quotation from Joseph McLaren's 1997 *Langston Hughes: Folk Dramatist in the Protest Tradition, 1921–1943*). Taking screwball's strong independent woman gave a template for the reversal: "Black female characters onstage within the minstrel tradition (and in American film through most of the twentieth century) were mostly 'mammy' characters: dark-skinned, heavy-set, and loyal. Desexualized

and living only to serve her white employers, the mammy figure was relegated to supporting character, while the white leads romanced and had all the fun. Hughes provides a very different African-American woman, in the character of Tiny Lee, who fits the screwball heroine's shoes. Tiny is her own woman: independent, strong-willed, and a business owner; she is nobody's mammy."

In *Eugene O'Neill's One-Act Plays: New Critical Perspectives* (Palgrave) editors Michael Y. Bennett and Benjamin D. Carson take the view that none of the plays, as they quote Travis Bogard, "is worth consideration in its own right" but should in the aggregate be seen as stumbling steps toward great works to come. Thus Kurt Eisen, "'The Curtain Is Lowered': Self-Revelation and the Problem of Form in *Exorcism*" (pp. 113–28), writes that the recently discovered *Exorcism: A Play of Anti-Climax* "seems a premature glimpse of the later masterpieces that [O'Neill] began to write in 1939," autobiographical works that show "contrary impulses to confess and to conceal." A further argument for the value of studying these plays is said to reveal O'Neill's "political commitments, the sociopolitical, cultural, and historical milieu in which they were written." Deviating from the limits implied by their title, the editors conclude with discussions of longer plays, such as Paul D. Steufert's original approach to *The Emperor Jones* as a ghost play, "'Ain't Nothin' Dere but de Trees!': Ghosts and the Forest in *The Emperor Jones*" (pp. 129–44), attempting to link the play's jungle to the literary forests of Puritans. Thomas F. Connelly's "Neither Fallen Angel nor Risen Ape: Desentimentalizing Robert Smith" (pp. 145–61) takes an equally original view of *The Hairy Ape* as "a transgendered version of the Pygmalion myth with Mildred as Pygmalion and Yank as Galatea." Connelly rejects what he calls the critical tradition of regarding Yank as a person and instead takes him as a "theatrical character," tracing his origin not through Darwin but through earlier performances of ape-men. According to Connelly, "To impute a tragically postlapsarian elevation of consciousness to the primitivism present in the play is sentimentality with a divine face (not to mention a rejection of O'Neill's subtitle)" (i.e., *A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Life*). The collection concludes with Zander Brietzke's sensational analysis "Condensed Comedy: The Neo-Futurists Perform O'Neill's Stage Directions" (pp. 193–202). The 2011 production acted out the stage directions from three of O'Neill's early one-acts, all of them darkly tragic. The production was uproariously funny: "Laughter during the performance seemed to belie the

seriousness of purpose with which O'Neill must have written each play . . . by presenting how difficult it is for actors to carry out the stated intentions and directions of a great if controlling playwright." Simply performing them in their melodramatic literalness made them laughable. *A Wife for a Life* requires an old man who "seems to crumple up" and then to "stare horribly." In *Before Breakfast* Mrs. Rowland reads a letter that provokes "hatred and rage," which then changes "to one of triumphant malignity," again confronting the actor with a difficult transformation. Even more problematic is the ending of *The Web*, in which Rose "seems to be aware of something [.] . . . perhaps the personification of the ironic life force that has crushed her." Brietzke rightly notes, "How does an 'ironic life force' look?" More comical are the unstageable props: a baby is to cough and cry on cue—done here as an alligator hand puppet. In *Bound East for Cardiff* the lifeboat surrounded by sharks is portrayed by three actors with little hats with fins, making fun of the unstageable. The play concludes: "The black stain on the water widens. The fins circle no longer. The raft floats in the midst of a vast silence."

All of this reveals what Brietzke terms O'Neill's "antitheatrical prejudice," citing an interview in which he asserted, "I don't go to the theatre because I can always do a better production in my mind than the one on stage. I have a better time and I am not bothered by the audience." His deepest dissatisfaction was with actors, as he wrote to George Jean Nathan in 1940: "I hate to think of it [*Iceman Cometh*] being produced—of having to watch a lot of actors muscle in their personalities to make strange for me these characters of the play that interest me so much—now, as I have made them live." The neofuturist production made fun of O'Neill by revealing the impossibility of staging his plays literally, but at the same time made a profound point about the nature of theater: "Theatre is very hard to do. Theatrical production is not, after all, akin to an archeological dig that excavates *the* original performance that perfectly mirrors the dramatic text. More often, an outstanding performance of a text reveals *an* original aspect about a play that had never been seen or noticed previously [revealing] more aspects in the play than the playwright ever dreamed existed."

Perhaps David Mamet recognized the excesses of O'Neill's stage directions, since from the outset he eliminated nearly all stage directions from his playtexts. In one sense clarifying this absence, Arthur Holmberg, literary director of the American Repertory Theater, where Mamet-directed plays debuted in the 1990s, recalls the preparations

for the family plays *The Old Neighborhood* and *Cryptogram*. In *David Mamet and American Macho* (Cambridge) Holmberg quotes Mamet in rehearsal: "In my plays I want the facts to speak for themselves. Don't sentimentalize. The less significance you guys find in what you say, the more significance the audience will find." Mamet clearly trusts actors no more than O'Neill, but instead of filling in directions he tries to keep the actors from intruding into his work. Tony Shalhoub is then cited: "Mamet does not want actors to do too much work for the audience. . . . He wants the audience to fill in the colors so that the audience, not the actors, go through the experience." Holmberg has plenty of insight into Mamet's staging, especially of these two plays, as he conveyed his intentions to the actors.

Holmberg's thesis about Mamet's "American Macho" is nicely constructed as he sets up theories of gender and then cites essays that reveal Mamet's typically convoluted views. In his essay "Late Season Hunt" Mamet describes himself as fed up with New York City, "site of 'luxury and fashion,' coded symbols for a fear of decadence and the feminine." Up in Vermont, tracking deer in the winter, he is "delighted" in essentially reasserting his masculinity. But he never takes a shot or gets close to deer: "As a hunter, of course, I am a fraud." Holmberg observes, "Contemporary American men hunt not to put red meat on the table but to resurrect a cultural archetype of masculinity." The key point is not that this is masculine but rather that it is simply a performance—playing at being masculine. So Mamet ridicules such rituals at the same time as he participates in them. His characters are equally ambivalent, seeking to appear masculine always but more concerned with the performance than with any inner nature. Holmberg concludes about Mamet that "his characters both embody tough masculinity and critique the masculinity they embody."

But in the chapter of *David Mamet and American Macho* discussing the plays he observed throughout rehearsal, Holmberg focuses on Sigmund Freud, Oedipus, and the issue of mothers undermining children, apparently taking Mamet's masculinist declarations at face value. Holmberg cites both Donny in *Cryptogram* as an unfeeling mother damaging her son and Jolly in *The Old Neighborhood*, who laments her mistreatment in childhood. Mamet's own experience after his parents' divorce is included as further support for this perspective. Mamet, asked by Charlie Rose about the impact of that divorce, replied, "You'll have to ask me when I get over it." Here is no macho tough guy but rather a

whiner like Jolly herself at times. Mamet normally rebukes such sentiments, as Bobby does in disparaging therapy in *The Old Neighborhood*. Yet Holmberg does a nice job of tying the two plays together with this view of parents, and even stretching it to include the third Mamet-directed A.R.T. premiere, *Oleanna*. The connection there is the play's epigraph from Samuel Butler on unhappy children: "It is astonishing how easily they can be prevented from attributing it to any other cause than their own sinfulness." The payoff in using this approach is provided through another quotation from Shalhoub on his role as Bobby in *The Old Neighborhood*: "When he sees his sister spinning her wheels, he 'comes to understand that locking one's self into a perpetual pursuit of the past is a trap.'" As John says in a screenplay draft of *Oleanna* that Holmberg has discovered, "Now: what is magical about the past. It does not change. . . . A case could be made that it never existed. It is a fiction."

These specific insights into Mamet's views are revealing, though much of the book is shaped by generalizations and sociological studies that just seem too facile. On John in *Oleanna*: "Men love to hog the floor to display expertise." Or on Jolly's lament that she didn't get skis for Christmas: "The wrong gifts signal parental hostility. . . . [That] tells the child that his wishes, thoughts, and feelings count for nothing. These unspoken messages alienate the child from himself." Some supporting arguments come from contemporary playwrights such as Rabe and Wasserstein, but sometimes the support seems far afield: "For a boy, the father looms large as the model of masculinity. *Big Bushy Mustache*, a popular children's book (ages five to eight) illustrates this process and the despair that implodes when anything, no matter how trivial, interferes." Holmberg's conclusion is, not surprisingly, another generalization: "Mamet's plays diagnose a malady of American males: they want to be men, but they do not want to grow up. Their quest for authentic manhood becomes a search for lost boyhood. They confuse masculinity with infantile narcissism." Perhaps the "infantile narcissism" explains why *Big Bushy Moustache* is relevant for Holmberg.

Jon Dietrick's *Bad Pennies and Dead Presidents: Money in Modern American Drama* (Cambridge Scholars) gives close readings of Sidney Kingsley's *Dead End*, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Mamet's *American Buffalo*, August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, and Suzan-Lori Parks's plays. Dietrick uses the loss of the gold standard, leaving the dollar to float on the open market, as a metaphor for the replacement of literalism by ambiguity in language. When there was

a gold standard language was straightforward; that fixity has receded just as has the notion of a fixed value to money. Despite his title then, Dietrick is less interested in money than in language in his analysis of the plays. *Death of a Salesman* explores “the distinction between saying and doing, talk and action.” And *American Buffalo* “complicates the naturalist distinction between talk and action, soft currency and hard value, exploring the dislocating effects of both money and language.” *Joe Turner* “disrupts the positivist fantasy at the heart of aesthetic naturalism by foregrounding the very gap between the symbolic and the real that naturalism would repress. Moreover, each vision looks for a way of transcending the logic of naturalism by emphasizing the limits of language.”

Annette Saddik’s “‘Drowned in Rabelaisian Laughter’: Germans as Grotesque Comic Figures in the Plays of Tennessee Williams” (*MD* 55: 356–72) finds another kind of subversion of the realistic in the minor characters in *Night of the Iguana*. She describes Williams as “particularly drawn to German expressionism, believing that its dream-like distortions were an effective means of accessing the truths that exist beneath the surfaces of constructed social realities.” The result in this play, drawing on Hieronymus Bosch, Peter Paul Rubens, and François Rabelais, is that “Williams’s depiction of Germans is filtered through a sensibility borrowed from particular German literary traditions—primarily expressionism and the Romantic grotesque—that rely on distortion, exaggeration, and, particularly, contradiction, dissolving the binaries we rely on for certainty and safety and allowing access to a deeper truth through the fantastic.”

Finally, Marc Silverstein’s “‘Our Wounded Tongue’: Language and Subjectivity in *The Flu Season*” (*JDTTC* 27, i: 70–91) is one of those most difficult articles I’ve read. Silverstein has found the perfect embodiment of Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan in this play by Will Eno, who first gained acclaim with his *Thom Pain (based on nothing)*. Reviewers initially took refuge in the idea that *The Flu Season* was some kind of “existential” drama. Silverstein does employ that term, but locates a better explanation in Lacan for the play’s exploration of language and its characters’ loss of subjectivity. Appropriately, *The Flu Season* is set in an asylum. MAN and WOMAN have been separately committed because they have quite lost their identities. Their problem is summarized at the start when MAN can’t answer “the fundamental existential question, ‘who are you?’” Silverstein, who tests our patience throughout

this article as he loses us in Eno's and his own endless reflecting mirrors of language, posits that MAN's confusion reveals the gap between language and what words one might offer as an answer. But what answer can anyone give ultimately to "Who are you?" "He presents an image of himself 'baying at the moon and earth, crying, "Mother Mother," or "Not Mother, Not Mother," crying, "Writing." Crying, nothing. Wanting only to be . . . home.'" Silverstein makes sense out of Eno's cryptic image, observing that it begins with the desire to be one with the maternal body as in infancy, then cut off as the child is separated from mother. In Lacan this separation is imperfectly bridged by language, as a way to define oneself, to create some subjectivity through "writing." Silverstein describes the tragic situation of continual self-alienation that follows separation: "Naming the impossible moment of self-identity, the 'fusion' with being that it had seemingly experienced with the mother, 'home,' however, constantly eludes the subject, because of the inevitable loss of the mother's body, and because the language that supplants it, whether speech or 'writing,' stands as a barrier between the subject and the 'elsewhere' of being." Silverstein argues that this sense of alienation of both MAN and WOMAN arises from the gap between who they are and what they say. How this labyrinth of language becomes at all visual or dramatic remains to be revealed.

vi Concluding Thoughts

While Wallace Shawn and Will Eno write plays at the more abstract end of the spectrum, most of the other plays and playwrights examined in these books and articles are grounded in some greater specificity. As a result, problems arise continually in defining realism and establishing the relation of the fiction to outside reality. Playwrights have often sidestepped these issues that Harrigan's plays raise by recontextualizing, and in this effort overly simple views such as stereotypical or realistic depiction tend to dissolve. What emerges instead is that plays, in recontextualizing "public iconography," reveal to these scholars that there are many more perspectives than might first appear in a single report or image. When Christopher Shinn examines New York apartment dwellers around 9/11, he reveals much deeper splits than that between Christian and Muslim in his depiction of homosexuals and straights, rich and poor, blacks and whites. Christopher Bottoms's employment of Alain Badiou's attack on binaries might be used as another through

line within much of this year's scholarship. A number of plays reexamine President George W. Bush's worldview of "an axis of evil" and find much greater complexity in the Middle East and Afghanistan. So too with the issue of slavery, perhaps oversimplified in *The Octoroon* but revealed by contemporary scholars to be much more complicated, even among the abolitionists. And so too with the Holocaust, identified as similarly multivalent. Indeed, as Zander Brietzke implies, every new production of a play is not an excavation of the original staging, but instead a recontextualization of that original. And with each new production, as the times and context for the play change (as with Tony Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul*), new and unexpected perspectives emerge alongside those of the original, expanding the meanings and relevance of the drama itself.

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