

tems, forces, and complex socio-political and embodied relationships and experiences’.

Early chapters show how architecture (for example, Lina Bo Bardi’s theatres in Brazil) can be responsive to social, political, and cultural agendas and capable of operating dialectically and dramaturgically. But alongside suggestions that architecture and performance might be analogous and overlapping, the book also reflects tension between them: dynamical difference and dialogue between spaces, structures, and bodies might tip over into metaphorical or actual violation of site and performer (as in Cliff McLucas’s scenography for Brith Gof).

Elsewhere, artistic projects that blend architecture and performance, such as Alex Schweder’s *In Orbit*, show how playing with and in spatial structures is a way to investigate and rehearse new ways of being together. The final section on pedagogies offers some very useful insights and examples into how architectural practices and thinking might enhance, extend, and challenge theatre and performance teaching and vice versa.

In the area of theatre and performance, this book will be a valuable addition and complement to existing publications on theatre architecture, site-specific performance, and scenography, but it deserves to be considered far more widely. As several contributors point out, all postdramatic, participatory and socially engaged kinds of performance in different ways place a renewed emphasis on the political, structural, and compositional dimensions of performance, and an architectural outlook has much to offer all scholars and teachers who concern themselves with the ways that performance operates in and through space.

JOSLIN MCKINNEY

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Carolyn Williams, ed.

### **The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama**

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

324p. £18.99.

ISBN: 978-1-107-47959-3.

Books on melodrama are like buses, they all come at once. This addition to the ‘Companion’ series brings together scholarship from both sides of the Atlantic and is a welcome celebration of a form that resists erasure, embracing changes of mode and media in its enduring appeal to readers, audiences, and scholarship. Students at all levels will find background, context, and insights into melodramatic technique, cultural discourse, gender, and politics. Chapters on acting, and particularly the vital element of music, act as an excellent introduction to another important publication in the field, *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and*

*Theatrical Culture 1790–1820*, ed. Katharine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks (University of Chicago Press, 2018). The broader, European view of melodrama in this latter publication cuts more deeply into theatrical modes from the perspective of the musicologist while reaching beyond to the politics of cultures (then and now) to where melodrama, and those who write about it, enjoy a ‘lively dialogue among disciplines’.

*The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama* offers a gentler introduction to such debates and is notable for including the latest works by established leaders in their fields, while also making room for different perspectives and new research voices. Part One offers anyone interested in melodrama, in all its shape-changing manifestations, stimulating engagements with the histories of this popular and often political expression of resistance as played out in the novel and on the stage. While backdrops of gothic castles, nautical adventures, and the domestic are returned to again and again, as Jim Davis reminds us: ‘While melodrama may have been fashioned to stimulate generic response, we should be wary of assuming the existence of a generic audience.’

Music and acting are the foundations for Part Two, ‘Melodramatic Technique’, and Hayley Jayne Bradley’s chapter ‘Stagecraft, Spectacle, and Sensation’ offers new insights into the technical innovations that ensured melodrama’s ongoing stage appeal. Part Three includes incisive chapters on gender, class, empire, and, in Sarah Meer’s timely and neatly argued chapter, ‘Melodrama and Race’, the representation of race as differently worked out in novel and stage production.

Part Four explores ‘Extensions to Melodrama’ in film and that most powerful and enduring entertainment, the musical. Sharon Aronofsky Weltman convincingly picks up the contemporary meeting place of hit musicals such as *Phantom of the Opera* and *Les Misérables* as expressions of ‘melodrama’s tension between escapism and cultural critique’ that continues to fill theatres today.

This useful companion combines mature scholarship in the field with new perspectives on the ever-changing but always appealing engagement that is melodrama.

GILLI BUSH-BAILEY

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Molly Mullen

### **Applied Theatre: Economies**

London: Methuen Drama, 2018. 265 p. £67.50.

ISBN: 978-1-350-00170-1.

At a global sociopolitical moment in which neo-liberalism is being questioned, Molly Mullen’s *Applied Theatre: Economies* offers insights into the intersection of applied theatre and resources. The

book is primarily written for advanced undergraduates, postgraduate researchers, and scholars interested in the complex relationship between applied theatre and economics. Practitioners may also benefit from reflecting on the multiple case studies that flesh out the theoretical bones of the text.

The book is broken into two parts. In the first, Mullen overviews the pre-existing literature on the intersection of applied theatre and economics. She addresses both how applied theatre is resourced by various forms of funding and support, as well as how it can be understood as part of wider cultural economic frameworks.

The four chapters that make up this part offer a comprehensive look at multiple theorists, performance practitioners, and organizational models that are differently entangled with economics. Mullen draws attention to how donor 'conceptions of social value can affect the aesthetic and pedagogic values of an applied theatre process', complicating creative autonomy. These conceptions extend to wider issues of generating income, receiving state subsidies, and 'self-provisioning' that often goes uncompensated. Mullen concludes Part One by positioning applied theatre within new cultural economic forms such as corporate sponsorship and crowdfunding.

In Part Two, Mullen cedes the spotlight to seven applied theatre case studies from a range of geographic and economic contexts. Examples from Chile, Canada, New Zealand, Hong Kong, the UK, and the US deepen the theoretical thrust of the first chapter. Each of the projects or companies profiled has a differing relationship to the state, economics, and applied theatre writ large. These range from a theatre and gardening co-op working primarily with young offenders in Santiago to a collective of un(der)paid artists being priced out of high-cost Hong Kong, and from a multidisciplinary regional community arts organization in the southern US to an applied theatre partnership that allies with a city council in Bolton.

Mullen is quick to recognize that across all the case studies, 'no simple, singular understanding of applied theatre's relationship to the economic conditions in which it is produced emerges' but rather, following feminist economic geographer J. K. Gibson-Graham, economic relationships are 'contingently rather than deterministically configured'. The constant negotiation required of these organizations and practitioners occurs relative to the political, aesthetic, cultural, and pedagogic economies in which they find themselves. With this work, Mullen's contribution is one of highlighting that the relationship between applied theatre and economics is contingent, particular, and complex, no matter where it may be found.

ASIF MAJID

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Eleanor Margolies

### Props

London: Palgrave, 2016. 213 p. £25.99.

ISBN: 978-1-137-41335-2.

Eleanor Margolies's *Props* is an insightful overview of the ways in which props are considered variously as objects, things, items separate from the actor, and items that compel actor and audience, as well of as the liminal status of puppets, operating somewhere between object and actor, and the making or procuring of props. The book is part of Palgrave's 'Readings in Theatre Practice' series which prioritizes thinking about doing and so gives equal space to practitioners and theorists. In *Props* this results in some delightfully practical asides from Margolies (whose own expertise in puppetry and making is evident throughout) about, for example, the most effective way to simulate earth that looks convincing but is easy to sweep up.

The ease with which she moves between theories, interview excerpts, examples from plays, and devised performances and 'how-to' guides from the nineteenth century to the present suggests a writer deeply committed to the subject and, like a stage manager, entirely in control of their well-ordered materials. The introduction economically and impressively outlines theoretical approaches to objects on stage, considering semiotics, phenomenology and 'thing' theory, and the frequent neglect of materiality by textual scholars. There is an enormous amount condensed and presented here in just sufficient detail to allow the reader to follow the lines of argument: from Bill Brown's 'things' to Jiří Veltruský's 'action force' and spectrum of animation, and Barba's ideas of constraint, to early modern properties and craft knowledge. The subsequent ten chapters examine the role, construction, and use of props from various perspectives.

Chapters Two and Three consider props from the point of view of the performer: first in actor training, drawing its examples from Stanislavsky, Lee Strasberg, Uta Hagen, and Brecht; second looking at how devised work is made through 'improvisation with stuff', with particular attention to the work of Complicite and Improbable. Chapters Three and Four take the perspective of the dramatist and director. The former, particularly useful in its discussion of 'little objects' and naturalism, includes a wonderfully illuminating exchange about 'period' design between designer and director Tobias Hoheisel and social historian Judith Flanders which I will be recommending to students for years to come.

Next is the perspective of the designers and makers in the prop workshop and rehearsal room; and finally the prop emerges as 'an autonomous

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