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“More Books” Reviews.

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More Books

***Performing Hybridity in Colonial-Modern China.* By Siyuan Liu. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; 260 pp.; 32 illustrations. \$90 cloth.**

In this book, Siyuan Liu explores the *wenmingxi* (civilized drama) of early 20th century China. In so doing, he seeks to remedy the academic blind spot regarding hybrid dramas situated outside the modern/traditional binary that organizes much Chinese theatre scholarship. Liu traces the influence of European-style spoken theatre that contributed to the revolution in Chinese theatre forms during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The popular appeal of Western dramas intertwined with the influence of the Japanese *shinpa* (new school drama) to inspire Chinese theatremakers, who forged *wenmingxi* as an intentionally hybrid new form within the discipline of *huaju* (spoken theatre). The nationalist and revolutionary ambitions of *wenmingxi* are considered, as are the various production models that were later adapted to make this form commercially successful. Liu considers the textual sources of *wenmingxi* (scripts and scenarios) alongside performance styles (movement, music, cross-dressing). The book will be of particular interest to those studying Asian theatre from

a global perspective, as well as scholars engaged in colonial-modern Chinese theatre and history.

***Grotowski, Women, and Contemporary Performance: Meetings with Remarkable Women.* By Virginie Magnat. New York: Routledge, 2014; 244 pp.; illustrations. \$125 cloth.**

This volume seeks to redress the omission of female practitioners from the majority of scholarly analyses of the work of Jerzy Grotowski (due both to the relatively limited extant literature and the focus on masculine embodiment of Grotowski's rigorous physical training by performers such as Ryszard Cieslak). In order to illuminate the roles that women have played as collaborators and inheritors of Grotowski's methods of intercultural exploration of performance, Virginie Magnat analyzes the work of key female practitioners from several generations; both original Grotowski collaborators and female practitioners whose work has been profoundly influenced by his legacy. As both a scholar and a performer herself, Magnat's research relies upon an interdisciplinary methodology, combining multi-sited fieldwork, artistic collaboration with her subjects, and articulating her embodied research through writing. The result is an insightful account of the work of such artists as Rena

Mirecka, Ewa Benesz, Katharina Seyferth, and Ang Gey Pin. .

This book will be a valuable resource for scholars interested in the work of Grotowski, Polish theatre, women theatre practitioners, as well as those engaged in practice-as-research.

***Theatre in the Expanded Field: Seven Approaches to Performance.* By Alan Read. New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013; 296 pp.; illustrations. \$140 cloth, \$44.95 paper.**

Assisted by Beryl Robinson's simple and elegant line illustrations, Alan Read synthesizes theatre history with other interdisciplinary approaches to trace his path through the evolution of performance. Read divides *Theatre in the Expanded Field* into seven distinctive historical and theoretical "approaches" for analyzing the fields of theatre and performance studies. Each of these approaches - pre-historical & archaeological 38,550 BCE, pastoral & anthropological 429 BCE, theological & historical 1613, digital & technological 1720, psychological & legal 1889, social & sensible 1964, tactical & critical 2012 - seek to braid together two theoretical frameworks within the locus of a historical moment. However, the range of performances discussed in each section are pulled from a multi-faceted,

synchronic selection of theatre history and the author's own contemporary experiences. For example, as part of his chapter, "Third Approach: Theological & Historical," Read particularly focuses on seventeenth-century theatre (especially the contributions of Inigo Jones) through the lens of Hans Thies-Lehmann's theories of the postdramatic, but also weaves together such diverse connections as *Les Misérables*, Romeo Castellucci's 2011 production *On The Concept of the Face*, and the role of monarchy in contemporary Britain.

***Lives in Play: Autobiography and Biography on the Feminist Stage.* By Ryan Claycomb. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012; 272 pp.; 1 B&W photograph. \$55 cloth, \$30 paper.**

Building on the 1970s feminist mantra, "the personal is political," Claycomb focuses on female artists who, in his phrase, are "performing real life to reveal real life as performative." (Claycomb 2) This book investigates feminist artists from the 1970s up to the present day who use personal narrative as agitation or as a mode of questioning cultural norms. Part I focuses on feminist performances of autobiography, highlighting the work of artists such as Kate Bornstein, Bobby Baker, Holly Hughes, Terry Galloway,

and Karen Finley, and ends with a detailed discussion of Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*. Part II examines productions that focus on a historical personage as way of reframing accepted sociohistorical narratives, including works such as Hélène Cixous's *Portrait of Dora*, April De Angelis's *Playhouse Creatures*, Maria Irene Fornes's *The Summer in Gossensass*, Suzan-Lori Parks's *Venus*, Isabelle Eberhardt's *New Anatomies*, and Judith Thompson's *Palace of the End*, along with a more general overview of biography plays by feminist playwrights. This volume will be of particular interest to feminist scholars, and those studying the epistemologies of solo, biographical, and autobiographical performances.