

roles of women who wrote plays as part of their contribution to the family business of theatre, such as Caroline Boaden, Mary Ebsworth, and – a paradigmatic invisible woman in Newey's thesis – Mrs Denvil: she argues that, while family connections normalized and rendered accessible the industry of theatre, patriarchy simultaneously devalued talent and effaced careers.

Newey's scholarship recovers and makes visible playwriting experiences of all kinds. But, at each step, she is particularly concerned to understand the industry of writing. She argues that 'The industrial practices of theatre, its sociability, public exposure, physical engagement . . . required women writers to engage all the more actively as professionals'; and proposes that adaptability and flexibility – that is, professionalism – defines the experience of women writers across the period.

But her focus is not confined to history: Newey has a reformist purpose, too. She argues that 'these active, busy women of the second and third rank of writers provide us with an important alternative model for the professional women writer in the Victorian period'. For Newey, then, the professional woman playwright is no exception, no cuckoo proving a rule of the exceptional (or aberrant) talent, but an inherent and embedded part of the industry. It is her thesis that this has resulted in a failure of scholarship and that the study of women playwrights, while in itself important and even revelatory, also facilitates a way to engage with 'the marginal, the feminine, the popular, and the non-literary' in a new history of theatre practice and history.

Finally, the place of women writers is underlined by Newey's checklist of plays by nineteenth-century British women playwrights that usefully updates a range of catalogues, indexes, and handlists, including aspects of Davis and Joyce's indispensable *Drama by Women to 1900* (1992), and clearly exemplifies at least one part of her thesis: that the invisibility of women playwrights of the Victorian period is more about historiography than it is about history.

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Mary F. Brewer

### Staging Whiteness

Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005. 236 p. \$ 24.95.  
ISBN: 0-8195-6770-1.

This is an epic undertaking in which Brewer surveys the twentieth-century landscape of 'staging whiteness' in American and British drama. Underpinning the study are fundamental questions about and analysis of theatre 'as a site of ideological struggle over the meanings attached

to race'. Brewer's monograph is organized into eight chapters which follow a chronological time line from the early twentieth century through to the 1990s or, in terms of plays, from G. B. Shaw's *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* to David Hare's *The Absence of War*. Chapters reflect different American and/or British episodes of social and cultural history, including post-imperial Britain, postwar US culture, the political radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s in Britain and the US, the neo-conservative politics of the Reagan 1980s, and the post-Thatcher 1990s.

Individual chapters are organized in two parts: a charting of the period in question, followed by play analysis, with formations and constructions of whiteness as the overarching concern and focus. This two-part presentation of chapters will be particularly helpful to a student readership: the general context combined with specific play analysis will enable students to select from plays they might be studying at the same time as being given a solid framework of social and cultural reference.

Moreover, Brewer's selection of plays includes drama that can be argued as endorsing rather than challenging a white hegemony, along with theatre that offers critical, resistant readings of whiteness. This will also encourage students to develop a critical awareness of theatre generally for its role in the formation of whiteness. A personal highlight for me was to find a discussion of Bridget Boland's *The Cockpit*, while Brewer's analysis of whiteness helps to see better known and more widely studied plays in a new light. Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*, for example, is investigated in terms of the play's racial rather than its gender politics.

Finally, in her introduction, via a personal anecdote, Brewer touches on the affects of whiteness as potentially shocking, disturbing, or surprising, and, at times, I would have liked to have felt those effects more in the writing of her chapters. Otherwise and in other ways, *Staging Whiteness* is a valuable addition to theatre studies and a book that deserves to find its way onto the reading lists for courses on twentieth-century British and American drama.

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### Applied Drama: the Gift of Theatre

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 208 p.  
£14.99.  
ISBN: 978-1-4039-1646-4.

This is an ambitious and hard-working book that incorporates reference to a huge range of theoretical perspectives. It is not a book for beginners,