

ment, and spaces of performance. The book is accessibly written, if sometimes over-long, and impressively scholarly in its dedication to its project and, particularly, in its extensive research. A crucial limit, however, is the book's failure to engage more fully with the political implications of its analysis. By Balme's own admission, his emphasis is on 'the aesthetic implications and processes' of syncretic mixing. But in the light of the arguments other post-colonial critics such as Homi K. Bhabha have made about the profound political possibilities of post-colonial mimicry and hybridity (similar, in many respects, to syncretism), it is disappointing that Balme concentrates consistently on describing syncretism and stops short of developing an analysis of its potential political effects.

JENNIFER HARVIE

*Helen Manfull*

**Taking Stage: Women Directors on Directing**

London: Methuen, 1999. £9.99.

ISBN 0-413-72790-4.

This volume joins a growing number of books dedicated to the study of contemporary women's theatre and to the work of women directors in particular. Manfull's narrative is woven out of the voices of thirteen directors: Sarah Pia Anderson, Annabel Arden, Julia Bardsley, Annie Castledine, Garry Hynes, Jenny Killick, Brigid Larmour, Phyllida Lloyd, Sue Sutton Mayo, Nancy Meckler, Katie Mitchell, Lynne Parker, and Di Trevis. The stated intention is to focus on the 'craft' of these directors rather than their biographies – although the book does include some delightful behind-the-scenes anecdotes. One of the most memorable of these is from Sue Sutton Mayo, who tells of writing to Trevor Nunn to tell him she just had to get out of domesticity and back into theatre: Nunn gave her a job on the *Nicholas Nickleby* tour which she juggled with organizing care for her two young children.

To unravel the 'craft' of directing, Manfull organizes her study into three parts: Part One focuses on routes through to directing, working with designers, and approaches to text; Part Two looks at workshopping and rehearsal processes and at production contexts; and Part Three examines the material conditions for the directors, their attitudes towards feminism, and their inspirations and aspirations. The 'meat' of the volume comes in Part Two which has most to say about the work of the directors. There is no single methodology which these women share, and all have different approaches, although some common features do emerge – most notably the emphasis on collaboration. Processes are illustrated through reference to specific productions. Annabel Arden and Annie Castledine both, for example, detail their

co-directed production of Marguerite Duras's *India Song* for Theatr Clwyd.

This is where the study both inspires and frustrates. The 'hands-on-detail' of the working processes and the production commentaries are all too brief. I wanted to know much more about the particular exercises which the directors used in their workshopping and would have liked more in-depth study of particular productions (possibly developing key productions, like *India Song*, into case-study examples of directing-in-practice). Moreover, the eclecticism of the volume is both a strength (there is much pleasure to be found in reading about the diversity of the work discussed) and a weakness, since no clear 'direction' emerges.

The women in the study were selected on the basis of who responded to the author's request for an interview rather than to a particular brief. That said, this is a book capable of inspiring young would-be-directors (of either sex); but it is not so much a narrative about 'craft' as a story about the passion and commitment which each of these women directors brings to her work.

ELAINE ASTON

*Gabriella Giannachi and Mary Luckhurst, eds.*

**On Directing: Interviews with Directors**

London: Faber and Faber, 1999. £9.99.

ISBN 0-571-19149-5.

This is a collection of interviews with twenty-one directors working predominantly in contemporary British theatre and performance. An edited extract from a talk given by Peter Brook in 1996 is utilized as a forward, and a brief editors' introduction contextualizes 'the cult of the director' in British theatre practice *via* an expeditious journey through nineteenth- and twentieth-century European developments, emphasizing the 'challenges to the orthodoxy of text-based theatre . . . in the 1960s' as 'powerfully' influential on the crop of current practitioners.

The interviews are arranged alphabetically, which will at least assist the general or undergraduate reader – at whom this book is obviously aimed – in forming their own connections as to shared concerns, approaches to process, and so forth. The editors are also to be commended for including directors such as Ewan Marshall, Julia Pascal, and Jatinda Verma, emphasizing the important developments in the continually under-resourced work from marginalized and ethnic constituencies. Interviews of special note include Annie Castledine's eloquent championship of socialism and aesthetics, and John Fox on cultural activism.

The evident diversity is, however, undercut by an abundance of prosaic questions repeated in interview after interview ('What is your principal