

tive rather than analytical, Shafer does, however, in her brief summary sections raise a number of interesting questions about the ways in which we reclaim and review the careers of playwrights who were once household names. Although some of the material will be familiar, it is unusual to have such a diversity of women playwrights brought together in a volume which is both accessible and useful, and which will appeal to readers at all levels.

Linda Ben-Zvi's edited collection of articles on the work of the American literary figure and Pulitzer prizewinner Susan Glaspell is more academically focused. This much-needed collection provides the reader with detailed analyses of Glaspell's plays as well as her other more literary work. Presenting her subject very much as a pioneering experimental writer, the editor sets out to place Glaspell alongside her male colleagues in the gallery of American literary history, pointing out on more than one occasion that her literary reputation has been historically overshadowed by her connections with Eugene O'Neill and the Provincetown Players.

Ben-Zvi's own chapter on the genesis of Glaspell's *Trifles* is particularly interesting, and represents solid and thoughtfully frameworked research. No less do Barbara Ozieblo's 'Suppression and Society in Susan Glaspell's Theater', Sharon Friedman's 'Bernice's Strange Deceit', J. Ellen Gainor's 'Chains of Dew and the Drama of Birth Control', Judith Barlow on Glaspell's female contemporaries, and Veronica Makowsky on 'Forging a Woman's Identity in Susan Glaspell's Fiction'.

This collection of essays holds together well, although there is a lack of detailing of theatrical context and little analysis of productions of Glaspell's dramas. Her plays could be seen as presenting real difficulties for directors and performers, and even some of the characterizations which she creates are problematic – Karen Malpede touches on this with her article on *The Verge*, but the arguments (now that Glaspell has been 'reclaimed') need to be developed further. This lack of in-depth production history perhaps highlights the problems of seeing Glaspell as a literary rather than a theatrical figure. Whether we want her work to be integrated into a dramatic canon or not, it would perhaps be useful to start looking at how her plays have worked or not worked in practice.

None the less, this book, in bringing together recent work from Susan Glaspell scholars, provides a depth and range of thought so far unparalleled. This is a tremendously useful collection, especially for those who are less than familiar with the context of Glaspell's dramatic writing, and the book is invaluable for students, scholars, and practitioners alike.

MAGGIE GALE

*Sue-Ellen Case, ed.*

**Split Britches:**

**Lesbian Practice/Feminist Performance**

London; New York: Routledge. 276p. £12.99.

ISBN 0-415-12766-1.

As so much of contemporary feminist theatre and performance disappears without a trace, it is a pleasure to see the work of Deborah Margolin, Lois Weaver, and Peggy Shaw recorded in this volume. The *Split Britches* anthology contains seven performance texts and, as an acknowledgement of the 'gap' between performance and print, production photographs and programme notes. The published scripts trace the group's history from their inaugural production, *Split Britches: a True Story* (1980), which gave the company its name, to the 1995 production of *Lust and Comfort*, produced in association with Gay Sweatshop. Other performance texts included are *Beauty and the Beast*, *Upwardly Mobile Home*, *Little Women*, *Belle Reprieve*, and *Lesbians Who Kill*.

Case's excellent introduction covers an historical contextualization of the work, a note on the company's workshoping processes, an overview of critical theorizing which the group's theatre has generated, and an introduction to each performance text. The volume celebrates the women of *Split Britches* as 'the lesbian actors of their time', and provides an invaluable and much needed addition to teaching, practice, and research in the field of lesbian/feminist theatre and performance.

ELAINE ASTON

*Peter Reynolds*

**Unmasking Oedipus**

London: Royal National Theatre, 1996.

ISBN 0-951-99432-8.

This is an educational pamphlet attached to Peter Hall's production of the *Oedipus* plays – written by an outsider, but offering an actor's eye view of the production process. How ironic is the title? Reynolds reveals that despite Hall's rhetoric about masks producing more honest and intense acting, the cast mostly rehearsed without them, and had only a single run with all the masks before departing for the chaos of Greece.

The difficulties of the chorus in working creatively as a collective are vividly portrayed. The usefulness of the documentation is, however, limited by the fact that Reynolds's expertise is in acting rather than Greek tragedy. Hall appears to have been working upon the assumption that attention to form would release the (universal) meaning of the text, yet the acoustical and visual conventions that govern the form are things we can only reconstruct, and Hall was content to take long-outmoded assumptions as historical fact.