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***Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater.* By Jason Shaffer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007. Pp. 230. £29.50/\\$45 Hb.**

Amy E. Hughes

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is little analysis of how the words are staged outside the book, or how the different worlds are performed outside the playscript. In spite of this, Bulman's carefully researched study is an important addition to the field for the ways in which it demonstrates that drama is a powerful site for aesthetic and collective reconfigurations of imagined nations.

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Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater. By Jason Shaffer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007. Pp. 230. £29.50/\$45 Hb.

Reviewed by Amy E. Hughes, Brooklyn College, hughes@brooklyn.cuny.edu

This nuanced study of early North American patriotic drama underscores the troubled, complex and omnipresent relationship between British and colonial theatre during the eighteenth century. Like other scholars who have explored the dynamics of circum-Atlantic exchange, Shaffer examines a wide variety of performances to reveal the tangled and tense rapport between the two cultures. As a result, he is able to offer valuable insights into the theatrical dimensions of politics and protest.

His method centres on identifying thematic echoes across time and texts – ‘repetition[s] with revision’ (p. 9). Closely reading dramas and paratheatrical material (from poetry to oratory and statuary), Shaffer discovers cross-cultural references and resonances that are seemingly hidden in plain sight. Each chapter focuses on a particular play or performance medium. After a brief prologue in which he meditates on *The Patriot* (2000), the cinematic Revolutionary drama starring Mel Gibson, in his first chapter Shaffer describes three characters – the tyrant, the sacrificial victim and the patriot – that generate the ‘spectacle from which sentiments of patriotic fellow-feeling can spring’ (p. 21). The second chapter explores North American appropriations of a British tragedy, Addison’s *Cato*. In addition to detailing its popularity in the colonies, the author tracks what he calls ‘the Catoic effigy’ (p. 39) in political pamphlets, dramatic prologues and public speeches, such as the legendary final words of Continental Army captain Nathan Hale. Next, he analyses repertory choices of early American professional touring companies (including *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*, Rowe’s *Tamerlane*, and Farquhar’s *The Recruiting Officer*, among others) in light of shifting politics and tastes over time.

Two comparatively understudied genres – amateur theatricals on college campuses and Revolutionary propaganda plays – serve as the subjects of the fourth and fifth chapters, respectively. The study then concludes with an epilogue about how Royall Tyler’s post-war comedy, *The Contrast*, seems to revise and temper previous depictions of American patriotism. Employing an ‘Atlanticist rather than a nationalist perspective’ (p. 69), Shaffer participates in the ongoing scholarly reconsideration of ‘American drama’ as a genre defined by performance conditions and context rather than by authorial nativity. Assessing how British plays were presented, quoted and invoked by North Americans, *Performing Patriotism* suggests that such

iterations of a text reveal the anxieties, hopes and aspirations of a nation in progress.

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The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century Theatre's History. Edited by Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007.

Pp. xiv + 271. £55 Hb.

Reviewed by Katherine Newey, University of Birmingham, k.newey@bham.ac.uk

This collection of essays marks the distance travelled in the last two decades in scholarship on nineteenth-century theatre. Thirteen essays, collectively and individually, weave history and historiography together in what are uniformly exemplary demonstrations of 'new theatre history'. The volume also reminds us that it is in this formerly most maligned of theatre-historic fields that some of the most interesting, innovative and critically engaged work is being done.

The editors draw our attention to this in 'sketching two major shifts in the historiography' of the period, identifying the significance of earlier work to establish the 'scholarly credibility' of nineteenth-century theatre studies, and then its 'robust engagement' with contemporary critical theory (p. 3). The necessity of establishing such a scholarly credibility seems only just to be redundant, and the thought that nineteenth-century theatre studies lacked credibility only just risible. But I wonder if that long abjection is precisely the reason for the close engagement with critical theory that the best of contemporary nineteenth-century theatre historiography demonstrates? This collection is rich and various, with barely a false note. Several themes resonate through the material offered and link the different approaches. Throughout, the contributions examine with precision and insight the cultural, political, legislative and experiential terms in which audiences and citizens in the nineteenth century understood 'theatre' and what constituted performance. Richard Schoch and Jacky Bratton consider the gulfs between legislative and popular definitions of theatre, while Gilli Bush-Bailey and Tom Postlewait drill down into the practices and repertoire of individual entrepreneurs to further our understanding of the social functions of performance in Britain.

Tracy Davis offers a historian's view via anthropology of the cultural work of fairies and fairyland. Other essays (those by Jim Davis, Mark Phelan and Emily Allen are good examples) take up a central theme of new historicism by working through the notion of British and Irish culture as performance, while remaining securely anchored in the material practices of specific performances. Of particular value are essays by Heidi Holder, Jane Moody and Jeffrey Cox, which examine the centrality of melodrama to the recuperative studies of nineteenth-century theatre ever since the work of Michael Booth and Peter Brooks, offering not only new material, but also new interpretations. Also, Edward Ziter and Catherine Burroughs connect dramaturgic and cultural theory in their discussions of the overlooked genres of 'low comedy' (Ziter's thoughts on the 'low' in that term are particularly productive) and closet drama. The tools of critical theory deployed in these essays are powerful