

tourist performances, political events and contemporary evocations of Tlaxcalan identity as Mexican in relation to the westernized Mexico City. The monograph would have not been as successful if it had pursued the well-trodden path of outlining the identity politics of an indigenous society. However, Ybarra consciously chooses not to tidy up the messy relationship between culture and capital in Mexico, and is wary of romanticizing her subject by uncritically affirming its special position in Mexican history or reading into its cultural products narratives of resistance and opposition. This makes her approach methodologically responsive and responsible, as well as making the subject accessible to those unfamiliar with Mexican history and theatre. Theoretical reference points for the work are Michel de Certeau, particularly visible in the book's emphasis on local history, and its use of de Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics; Diana Taylor's notion of repeated gestures and scenarios; and Hayden White, whose insistence on the close relationship between historiography and dramatic narrative constitutes an important pillar for Ybarra's own interpretations of Tlaxcalan history writing. The close readings of playtexts with historical references and well-researched intertextual links are much more convincing than the descriptions of statues in the city square, tourist pamphlets and impressions of political rallies, which tend to be too associative and random at times.

The book argues that the theatrical and political performances of conquest in Tlaxcalan history oscillate between resistance and complicity. They should not be read as simple representations of the nation state oppressing the indigenous minorities, nor should they be seen as serving a revolutionary, oppositional politics. Ybarra analyses the legacy of a paradoxical view which implies that Tlaxcala is both exemplary and exceptional in Mexican history, presenting this society as a showcase, on the one hand, of the real Mexico, and glorifying it, on the other, as unique and different to all other parts of the country. Rather than contesting or verifying these claims, the study attempts to unsettle each of them in detail. It identifies acts and performances that can be seen as both oppositional and complicit, and thus situates the Tlaxcalans on the ground of being 'neither powerless nor powerful, but making do somewhere in the middle' (p. 201).

Theatre Research International, 36.3 doi:10.1017/S030788331100037X

***Sex, Drag, and Male Roles: Investigating Gender as Performance.*** By **Diane Torr and Stephen Bottoms.** Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010. Pp 304 + 19 illus. £23.95/\$26.95 Pb; £62.50/\$70 Hb.

*Reviewed by Lesley Ferris, the Ohio State University, ferris.36@osu.edu*

Thought-provoking and a significant contribution to the ongoing debate on performing gender, this study combines a number of narrative strategies that epitomize the impossibility of telling a single story. Torr, a well-known performer on the drag-king circuit, articulates her lifelong experimentation with the art of the body as a site for gender play. This is a double act in which Torr provides an autobiographical centre and Bottoms provides context and scholarly clout. Their performance is a success.

They begin with a short prologue entitled 'Pissing Contest #1 (Homage to Nam June Paik)'. Here Torr describes her participation in this event organized by Larry Miller, a well-known Fluxus artist. It involved six people, five men, and one drag king – Torr trying out her new working-class Scots persona Angus McTavish – standing, facing a wall, and peeing into buckets. To her astonishment, Torr had the longest pee and was declared the winner. When her fellow contestants found out she was a woman, they were not pleased. Torr's account offers three aspects that continue throughout: her proficiency in performing drag, the important interface between her work and the experimental performance world of New York, and the anger and celebration she has evoked in others in relation to that work.

The book is divided into three sections. Part 1, entitled 'Foundations', starts as a memoir of Torr's growing up in Scotland, where, as a four-year-old, she found herself observing a pissing contest in the woods between her two older brothers. The chapter continues on to her multifaceted study and training of the body, from Paxton's contact improvisation to the martial art aikido, capturing with clarity and élan a particular historical moment. Torr was one of the early participants in the WOW Café, and her at-times out-of-kilter WOW a-Go-Go performances, like the prologue's pissing contest, unsettled many. Part 2, 'Applications', shifts chronologically to the rise of the drag king, which began its ascendance in the mid-1990s. Here she finds an artistic home in which her king personas bleed into the role of teacher and mentor. A particular signature of king gatherings is the workshop, where anyone can learn the techniques and tricks of gender transformation from the more experienced performers. Part 3 of the book features four of Torr's performance texts followed by her 'Man for a Day: Do It Yourself Guide'. Here, in a straight-faced parody of 'do it your-self-ness', Torr offers her wisdom, from breast binding to body language, from packing to the five o'clock shadow.

Throughout, Bottoms provides a critical historical overview that parallels Torr's memoir. The effect is an ongoing dialogue between an artist who articulates her evolving aesthetic and a critic who provides the backdrop to this remarkable story. The inclusion of the performance texts is a particular highlight. A powerful and affecting work, the Torr–Bottoms discourse is an excellent initiation for those who want to start thinking about gender as performance and equally significant for those who already have thought about it.

Theatre Research International, 36.3 doi:10.1017/S030788311000381

**Thomas Betterton: The Greatest Actor of the Restoration Stage.** By **David**

**Roberts.** Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. vii–xi + 258 + 10 illus. £55 Hb.

*Reviewed by Kenneth Richards, University of Manchester, Krrdids48@hotmail.com*

The dust jacket description justifiably calls this 'the most substantial study available of any seventeenth-century actor'. The implication that it is the first biography since Robert Lowe's in 1891 is, however, less justified, for it is hard to write a biography of Betterton: we simply do not know enough about his personal and domestic life. Roberts