

concerns and arguments: following a brief summary of Heywood's personal and literary life, Rowland uses *The Rape of Lucrece* to exemplify some of the key concerns of his material. He also suggests why Heywood has not received as much attention as some of his fellow dramatists, establishing (in what I would argue is a reverse order in terms of responsibility) a limited modern performance tradition of Heywood's plays, a less detailed knowledge of the playhouses for which he wrote, and the lack of a complete edition from which to read, study, or perform his dramatic writing.

Rowland's book seeks to plug this gap in Heywood criticism, and succeeds admirably. His approach integrates intricate consideration of each text with Heywood's biography, the circumstances of writing, performance, and printing, as well as contextualizing it politically, culturally, and historically. He is most keen to emphasize the performativity of Heywood's dramatic writing, expending substantial passages of analysis on the script's original performance possibilities, and in examining the performance history and directorial choices made by modern productions where they do exist, a case in point being *A Woman Killed with Kindness*.

It is this holistic approach which makes the book such a rich contribution to early modern studies; however, the extremely detailed analysis and in particular the extensive footnotes also make for a dense read which might deter all but the most dedicated of undergraduates. This is certainly aimed at the postgraduate and scholarly community, and for these the extended references and notes will provide a rich vein of extra information. The end of the study was somewhat marred in lacking a conclusion, although perhaps the comprehensive introduction was intended to fulfil both functions. Also disappointing was the absence of a bibliography, so that readers will have to source references to areas of interest using the index and tap into Rowland's extensive source of critical and primary reading via a rather circuitous route.

ELEANOR LOWE

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Barry Anthony

The King's Jester: the Life of Dan Leno, Victorian Comic Genius

London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010. 219 p. £22.50.

ISBN: 978-1-84885-430-7.

Dan Leno embodied the changes in British popular performance in the late Victorian period as the urban music hall became a national industry of entertainment. He adapted older performance styles – clog-dancing, minstrelsy, the class imper-

sonations of the *lions comiques* – into a conception of stage comedy which emphasized bizarre monologue and eccentric characterization. Profiting from a new kind of popular celebrity, he was recorded, filmed, and patronized by royalty while also defining the modern narrative of the self-destructive comedian who is racked by longings to be judged a serious artist.

Barry Anthony's lucid and well-illustrated biography of Leno is a product of a strong non-academic tradition of music-hall scholarship, and its limitations are mainly those intrinsic to any study of popular culture aimed at a general readership. There is little historical context for the professional clog-dancing competitions in which Leno first achieved fame, for example, or much cultural analysis of the radical experiments of Augustus Harris's Drury Lane pantomimes in which Leno starred. His importance for later developments of British comic performance is also left largely unexplored, even though Ken Dodd still uses Leno jokes in his act's unstated homage to music-hall traditions – and still gets laughs with them.

SIMON FEATHERSTONE

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Diane Torr and Stephen Bottoms

Sex, Drag, and Male Roles: Investigating Gender as Performance

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

291 p. \$26.95.

ISBN 978-0-472-05102-1.

Having grown up in Scotland in the 1950s, then moving to New York in 1976 after graduating from Dartington College of Arts, Diane Torr is one of the key artists responsible for the rapid popularization of drag-king performance in the international cultural mainstream of the 1990s. *Sex, Drag, and Male Roles* presents its reader with an extremely interesting account of the life and work of such a pivotal actor of the queer scene of the late twentieth century.

Written by Diane Torr and performance theorist Stephen Bottoms, the book alternates between the affective intensity of Torr's first-person storytelling and Bottoms's critical and historical contextualization of Torr's work, beginning with her first experiments in dressing up as a man in New York in the 1980s and the international success of her drag-king performances and *Man for a Day* workshops, which she has been taking around the world since the early 1990s. But this is not just a book about the work of a queer artist or a queer art form; it is also about the history of the (trans)gender/queer movement itself on both sides of the Atlantic, a history punctuated by episodes of hope, optimism, pleasure, and liberation, but also by AIDS, uncertainty, death, and the

urgency of new, queer, forms of mourning. Additionally, the book is about the her/history of theatrical male impersonation since the seventeenth century, fragmented accounts of women playing male roles in both 'high' theatrical forms such as Shakespeare and 'low' performance genres such as early cabaret and vaudeville.

This is a book rich in both critical and historical content as well as personal narratives, and it fills a gap in the critical literature dealing with gender impersonation, which up to now has been primarily concerned with theorizing the social and political implications of drag queens.

JOÃO FLORÊNCIO

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Rakesh H. Solomon

Albee in Performance

Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010. 304 p. \$24.95.
ISBN: 978-0-253-22205-3.

As Rakesh Solomon points out in his introductory chapter to this book, almost all scholarly attention to the work of Edward Albee has to date been concerned with his work as a playwright rather than as a director. *Albee in Performance*, he argues, now gives us a comprehensive examination of the means by which this leading dramatist completes his holistic theatrical vision in the move from page to stage.

The book comprises seven main chapters, which detail rehearsal processes observed by Solomon on productions dating between the late 1970s and early 1990s (it's not clear why it has taken a further two decades to get the book out). These include chapters on revivals of Albee's most famous plays *The Zoo Story* (in 1978) and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (in 1990), as well as a fascinating account of the world premiere production of *Three Tall Women* (Vienna, 1991) and the way it gradually evolved into the Pulitzer Prize-winning New York production of 1994 (which although credited to director Lawrence Sacharow retained Albee's fingerprints all over it). Particularly interesting here is Solomon's emphasis on Albee's almost sculptural attention to the fine details of texture and colouring in costuming, set, and lighting. In directing a new play for the first time, Albee took particular care to ensure that it looked, on stage, just as he saw it in his mind's eye.

Solomon usefully contextualizes Albee in relation to Beckett, Pinter, and other dramatists for whom such totality of vision is (or was) a significant dimension of their practice. At the same time, though, one of the strengths of this book is in demonstrating just how collaborative a theatre artist Albee is: rather than insisting dogmatically that his plays be performed according to some

pre-existing template, he allows actors in particular a great deal of room to find their own readings of his texts. As he remarks to Solomon, 'With any production, 90 per cent of it is casting.'

Having found actors he trusts, Albee will try as far as possible to hold back from imposing external guidance while they find their way around his plays – a point confirmed by the various interviews with actors on which Solomon also draws. Albee offers clarifications and suggestions when asked for them, but keeps direction to a minimum and prefers a spare, simplified staging style rather than elaborate theatricality. Blocking typically emerges organically from the actors' intuitive moves around the stage. Moreover, even in the most abstract of his plays (such as *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse Tung*), Albee directs his actors to work in a primarily naturalistic manner, asking that they excavate the subtextual emotions of their characters from within the stylized dramatic form.

Ironically, since Albee's directing exists primarily to facilitate the clear theatricalization of his texts, this book will be of most use to those interested in Albee's *writing*. Solomon records many of the author-director's explanations to actors as to how he sees particular characters, or what he intended when writing particular lines. As a book on directing practice *per se*, however, it is largely unremarkable, and in several chapters Solomon could have been more judicious in presenting a leaner, more focused summary of his notes from the rehearsal room. 'Sometimes after a scene he reminded actors to pick up their cues' is one of many statements that will surprise nobody.

STEPHEN BOTTOMS

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Mike Bradwell

The Reluctant Escapologist: Adventures in Alternative Theatre

London: Nick Hern Books, 2010. 302 p. £14.99.
ISBN: 978-1-85459-538-6.

While a student at East 15, Mike Bradwell was able to enjoy all the cutting-edge theatre and rock music to be found in the London of the late 1960s, from Grotowski to the Living Theatre to Pink Floyd. Since then he has always been in the thick of alternative theatre, working with anyone from Mike Leigh to Ken Campbell, appearing as an escapologist in a hippy circus one moment and directing an improvised play the next. In this book he gives a Bradwell's-eye-view of more than forty years of theatre, being by turns opinionated, controversial, scabrous, elated, and above all laugh-out-loud funny.

While far from dispassionate, he manages to retain a sense of even-handedness, acknowledging the excitement and significance of the

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