

Davis succeeds in systematically applying rigorous theatre and performance theory to the Cold War defence procedures marshalled by Canadian, British, and US civilian groups facing the perceived threat of nuclear attack in the mid- to late twentieth century (p. 2). These procedures included not only staged exercises in emergency response, triage and evacuation, but more broadly the indoctrination of rehearsed behaviour in the populace, from the early ‘duck and cover’ drills to more insidious normative inscriptions of gender roles: men save the wounded and trapped, while women do the clean-up and supply cheery moral support (p. 36 ff).

The study demonstrates how theatre was used by civil defence organizers to assign to the abstract and unknowable future of nuclear war a set of consumable narratives that could be responded to. In this respect, chapter 2, ‘Rehearsals for Nuclear War’, is the most theoretically important contribution, parsing the complex intersections of realism and the real, of acting and authenticity, in defense exercises. Yet the most gripping pages are in chapter 7, ‘Acting Out Injury’, which describes the actors in the ‘Casualties Union’ and other groups who played the wounded and dying in defence simulations – so persuasively in some instances that they challenged the paradigms of emergency response planning (p. 219).

While the reader must at times navigate dense prose and complicated charts, the reward is a manifestly more complex notion not only of performance and war simulations, but also of how social anxiety was and is mobilized for state purposes through rehearsal. It is disturbing enough to witness the futility of the performative preparation for nuclear war, knowing now that the devastating reality of such a war would render any anticipated post-attack scenario moot (p. 330). Most disturbing for theatre scholars, though, might be Davis’s (near) indictment of theatre as the culprit in the inculcated disbelief in this futility. Moreover, as Davis points out, we rehearse an analogous complicity today each time we remove our shoes at airport checkpoints, having been trained in the received hegemonic narrative that the war on terror is necessary and inevitable. The question with which Davis charges us, in the end, is whether we will ever stop rehearsing for ‘risk abatement’ and the ‘mitigation of consequences’, and start rehearsing for peace.

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***Entertainment, Propaganda, Education: Regional Theatre in Germany and Britain between 1918 and 1945.*** By **Anselm Heinrich**. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2007. Pp. 288. £25/\$50 Hb.

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Theatre history still tends to privilege narratives of elaborate productions and artistic achievements. Combined with the too rarely challenged paradigm of ‘national theatre’, the so-called ‘provincial theatres’ remain largely invisible in many accounts. Heinrich’s study responds to this problem by venturing into Yorkshire and Westphalia in the period between 1918 and 1945. That particular comparative perspective, for a time when Germany and Britain only held somewhat scant cultural relations, eventually embarking on a war with each other, initially surprises. Heinrich shows, however, that

the depression after the Wall Street Crash in 1929 affected both countries deeply, and the use of theatre as an instrument of mental mobilization took a similar course – notwithstanding utterly different initial positions. Whereas theatre in England had always been a place of commercial entertainment, theatre in Germany was heavily subsidized. With the end of the German Empire after the First World War, the newly founded democratic municipalities took over the former court theatres and started to provide a broad spectrum of repertory theatre. While these institutions were conceived as ‘moral institutions’ in the vein of Schiller, Heinrich’s analysis reveals astonishing similarities, with stages in both countries offering entertainment and amusement.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the English attitude towards theatre then changed radically. Within a short period of time, the government realized the political potential of the performing arts and offered financial support, preparing the ground for the (post-war) Arts Council. In Germany, the Nazis immediately took control of the theatres and attempted to implement a repertoire fitting their ideology. When these attempts showed no success – the audience simply did not respond to the new *völkisch* drama – theatres returned to their routine offering of classics, light comedies and a few contemporary plays. The study emphasizes the different political approaches behind the similar repertory: the Nazis tried to directly control the theatres by creating bureaucratic structures to exert influence on programming and even casting processes; the British government created a system of subsidies and incentives to gain the artists’ support. Heinrich stops at the end of the war, just to leave the reader curious as to what could be learned from such a continuing comparative perspective on the following Cold War period and its construction of ‘Western culture’. His study is meticulously researched, complex in its analyses and built on impressive archive work. Even if his argumentation appears at times too detailed and too narrow, his conclusions as well as the principal approach are exemplary in developing new historiographic perspectives, beyond ‘great’ productions and national narratives.

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***Forgeries of Memory & Meaning: Blacks & the Regimes of Race in American Theater & Film before World War II.*** By Cedric J. Robinson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007. Pp. 456 + 21 illus. \$65 Hb; \$22.50 Pb.  
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Despite the clunky title, Robinson’s book offers a copiously researched and compelling study of what he calls ‘Black history written through the filters of film and capitalism’ (p. xv). He examines the economic and cultural forces perpetuating stereotypical representation onstage and in film during the early twentieth century, and portrays black filmmakers and performers who resisted these derogatory images. His study foregrounds the conflict between films such as *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and images of blackface minstrelsy that reinforced racism, and black actors and filmmakers who created their own artistic value systems. Robinson’s argument situates the emergence of racism in the Elizabethan period, where it surfaced simultaneously with capitalism: ‘Shakespeare drew his audience into the twisting psychological geometry of racism’ (p. 28). From this