

THEATRE INTERNATIONAL

Vol. IX

Essays on the Theory & Praxis of World Drama

Eds.

Amitava Roy, Bryan Reynolds, Antony Johae

Subir Kumar Dhar, Tapu Biswas



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Essays on the Theory & Praxis of World Drama

Edited by

**Amitava Roy, Bryan Reynolds, Antony Johae
Subir Kumar Dhar, Tapu Biswas**

Theatre International Vol.-IX offers a veritable intellectual feast to academics, scholars, critics and the informed "common reader". Research, criticism and performance studies of masterpieces as well as of most recent texts and playwrights range far and wide. This volume showcases Prof. Ronan Paterson's (UK) work on *Shakespeare's History Plays*; Protima Das' *Hindi translations of the Prologue and Epilogue of Henry V*; Dr. Manisha Sarkar on *Colonialism and the Tempest* vis-a-vis African and Caribbean cultures; Nivedita Karmakar on women characters in *Hamlet* and *Hemlat*. Exciting new research on Theatre includes Dr. Sujato Ghosh on Albee's *Zoo Story*, Panchanan Haldar on *Marginality in Mahesh Dattani* and major interventions by Dr. Tapu Biswas, Lopamudra Dey, Swati Roy Chowdhuri, Laki Molla et al.

TI vol. IX is a must for the libraries of Colleges and Universities, and institutions of Higher Learning across the globe as much as for the private collections of scholars, educationists and intellectual elites.



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From the Editors' Desk

Volume IX of *Theatre International* presents to you, our very dear and critical readers, a plethora of specialist papers from academics and performance experts of national and international repute and renown from India and abroad, from the east and the west. This prestigious international journal is headed for a same-day double Book release ceremony. First at the inaugural of the 9th world Shakespeare conference at Kolkata hosted by the Shakespeare Society of Eastern India (SSEI) in collaboration with *Indian Council of Cultural Relations* (ICCR) on Saturday January 28, 2017 before a packed audience of researchers, scholars, teachers, professors, performance artists gathered together for the great occasion. Then again at the *Kolkata Book Fair 2017* (KBF) on the same evening before a different set of publishers, book lovers, scholars, critics, and theatre experts attending the KBF (reputed to be the world's largest Book Fair in terms of footfall and books bought) from all over India and abroad.

The History Plays of Shakespeare has generally not had the same amount of critical attention or stage productions as the Bard's tragedies and comedies. Only recently the world has seen a revival of interest in Shakespeare's core ten histories and other related historical works. Ronan Paterson, renowned scholar, critic theatre director and Shakespeare expert from the UK brings his vast experience to bear on the moot questions relating to the Bard's Histories in the first TI paper:

What is the special quality of Shakespeare's mastery over this genre, a genre worked upon by many of his contemporaries like Marlowe, Ben Jonson and the University Wits? The relation between the text of the Histories submitted by the author to the Master of the Revels for licensing and the frequently altered performance script; is the Bard a Tudor propagandist or a critical commentator on and re-creator of the menace, order-disorder dialectic and ethos of the Elizabethan-Jacobean period? Are the History Plays to be seen as single texts focusing on a particular king or aspirant(s) to the throne or a series of related plays that comprise a National Epic of England? The roles of the Percys and the enigma of Falstaff; the relation between Shakespeare's Histories and the Old and New Historicists and the Cultural Materialists.

Ronan Paterson addresses these questions and more in his characteristically witty and wise way to bring fresh light on the Bard and his and our tumultuous times. Paterson's in-depth explorations of Shakespeare's Histories is followed by acclaimed translator Protima Das' first-ever Hindi translation from India of the Prologue and Epilogue of *Henry V*. Ms. Das has established a special niche for herself through her modern day Hindi transcreations from *Hamlet* and the Songs from Shakespeare's plays. Currently she is a Research Scholar at the SSEI working on an ambitious project of translating a select number of the Bard's plays into Hindi, the national language of India. On the anvil is her soon-to-be-published book of Hindi translations of all the Prologues, Epilogues and Choric passages in Shakespeare.

Dr. Tapu Biswas' 'Murderers in the Plays of Shakespeare' is a brief but revealing insightful glimpse into assassinations, murders and homicidal violence in Early Modern English drama with special reference to Shakespeare. Dr. Biswas has established himself globally as the pioneer researcher in the reception of Beckett and the Absurdist in India and the subcontinent. He is also the acknowledged authority on Badal Sircar in translation and in performance. Here Biswas breaks new ground in his Shakespearean avatar.

Dr. Manisha Sarkar provides a masterful de-construction and re-construction of George Lamming's *The Pleasure of Exile*. Ms. Sarkar highlights the Caribbean and African debates over decolonization and the Prospero-Caliban relationship in its manifold dimensions. This is a major outstanding work on postcolonial and transcultural questions in both Afro-Carib and global contexts.

From the Caribbean and Africa we travel 'down under' to colonial Australia for the emergence and changing developments of 'Convict Theatre' in that Penal settlement. Swati Roychowdhury's thoroughly documented fascinating study of 'Convict Theatre in Australia' reveals a hitherto little-known but richly interesting terrain of dramatic activity in a Nation with a chequered and controversial history.

Youthful lecturer Ms. Nivedita Karmakar gives us a feminist reading of Gertrude and Ophelia where she constructs a spirited defence of the two complex and controversial much-maligned women in *Hamlet*. Karmakar studies both texts and performance to provide new insights (through a valuable interview with theatre director and actor Amitava Roy) into not only Shakespeare's *Hamlet* but also its Indian avatar- Bratya Basu's Bangla appropriation *Hemlat, Prince of Garanhata* (2006).

Ms. Lopamudra Dey, research scholar from Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, enters the domain of critical battles between Feminists, Neo-Historicists and Cultural Modernists to reveal her own critical perspectives on 'Bonds of Love' and 'Bonds of Labour' in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Dr. Sujato Ghosh explores in detail the problems of identity, alienation, and miscommunication in Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*, perhaps the most produced American play by Campus theatre groups both in the USA and India.

Panchanan Halder currently Asst. Professor in a West Bengal College carries on the tradition of outstanding blind scholars (mainly from Jadavpur University, Kolkata) which Bengal seems to regularly produce. Perhaps the most outstanding among them is the much-awarded Dr. Somnath Paul (a recently retired Head of Deptt. In English of a premier Kolkata College) who has authored many acclaimed books and papers including a massive definitive bibliographical Ph. D. Thesis on Faulkner and has also featured in previous issues of the Journal.

Panchanan Halder approaches Mahesh Dattani's acclaimed play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* from the twin perspectives of Subaltern Studies and Marginality theories. This excellent paper is ultimately about the social responsibility of the playwright and goes beyond the text in question. Here Halder introduces us to the latest confessional, semi-autobiographical testimonies of 'the third gender' (usually labelled as Hijras/ Eunuchs in India or more sophisticated as transgenders) who are fast breaking out of their 'invisibility' the world over as also in India. Halder's is not just a critical work on a playtext but a polemical and courageous manifesto for 'Human Rights' for the "Hijras" living out embattled existences in a unfeeling, hostile, oppressive heteronormative patriarchal system.

In *Nur Jahan*, Laki Molla makes a comparative estimate of one of the most enigmatic personages in Indian history of the Mughal Period - the Queen Nur Jahan beloved of Princes and Kings who ultimately belonged to neither husbands nor lovers. Molla highlights the depiction of Nur Jahan in Indian novel and drama and reveals how history is fictionalised and fiction historicized when appropriated by forms of literature.

Wishing you all a good read

Amitava Roy & Antony Johae
For the Editors

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