

a Boyce Davies to simply “add woman and stir.” But the different emphases of these two texts raise interesting questions about the critical agendas attendant upon black male cultural production and its female counterpart, about the degree of authority evident in the critical voice of the former and the continuing sense of anxiety that marks the latter.

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Susan Bennett. *Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary Past*. London: Routledge, 1996. Pp. viii, 199. \$23.95, \$16.95 pb.

Arguing that the past has become a powerful commodity in the cultural market place, Susan Bennett maps the performance and reception economies of a range of twentieth-century theatrical and cinematic productions, rewritings or appropriations of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, particularly Shakespeare. *Performing Nostalgia* recognizes, first, the extent to which the “authentic” text frequently exercises a traditional and colonial influence “that its performance might not often resist” (155). Bennett’s detailed study of multiple productions of *King Lear* suggests a “tenacious web of nostalgia and tradition” (40) in the productions themselves as well as in the voices of theatre reviewers and directors. Attempts to go beyond the play’s “original” discursive formations are contained by reference to the text’s prior “authenticity”; in this way dominant cultural capital continues to be reinvested and recirculated. At first glance, the appeal of other “Jacobean” texts—viewed from the 1960s onwards as markers of political dissatisfaction and an emergent sexual revolution—speaks to a desire for a past “which subverts History at the same time as confirming its progressive trajectory” (83). But Bennett explores ways in which various productions of works, including *Bussy d’Ambois*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, and David Lynch’s film *Wild at Heart*, offer a merely aesthetic denotation of moral decay, excess and violence, mask class, gender, “race,” and sexuality, and provide little or no analysis. Such productions point to a less than perfect past, but one which can help legitimate a defective present, providing what Stalleybrass and White describe as “exotic costumes which [the bourgeoisie] assumes in order to play out the disorder of its own identity” (117-18).

At the same time, *Performing Nostalgia* offers an impressive record of multiple ways in which a postcolonial/postmodernist age enacts the past in order to de-regulate it, to escape its containing effects, to achieve a dissidence that may respect and explore difference. It does so, however, in the midst of a contradiction—which in the course of her work Bennett’s own study unravels—between her claims regarding the notion of a “global” nostalgia for particularly the Shakespeare

text, on the one hand, and the importance of geographical location on the other. Bennett acknowledges that her book, "as an effect of its topic, centres on cultural productions emanating for the most part from Britain" (151). She also pays detailed attention to a number of North-American productions, particularly Canadian and some European ones. Beyond that, she looks in detail at relatively few productions. These include an Australian project to render a Balinese version of *The Tempest*—what she calls "cultural tourism" (146)—and a *Kathakali King Lear*, produced by Australian and French theatre practitioners based in Paris, together with the (largely unspecified) involvement of the Kerala State Arts Academy in India—a production which in performance and reception suggested "the contradiction and conflict between two powerfully inscribed performance traditions, both carrying and demonstrating the weight of national histories" (73). These ventures and their weaknesses underline the point made by Ania Loomba in Bennett's citation of her work on *Hamlet* in Mizoram, on "the vulnerability of performance, even of something so inscribed in Western tradition, to cultural forces which remain unexpected and unaccepted" (157). They also point to the limits of Bennett's use of the term "global Shakespeare" in denoting much, if anything, beyond an "international" (English-speaking) middle-class identification with, use of, or appropriation of the (Western) past. Moreover, the experience of productions she sometimes assumes in her discussion is of course available only to those who have access to them. From this point of view Bennett's book is interesting primarily as a study of certain North American, European, and particularly British cultural practices and thinking not only about the postcolonial/postmodern present with the help of the past, but also about its future.

Given this, *Performing Nostalgia* is importantly engaged with the use of the past as means, in performance, towards the attainment of agency and change. Bennett's comments throughout the book on the postcolonial script and her chapter on *The Tempest* are pivotal in this respect. Her preoccupation here and elsewhere is with the denaturing of assumptions about the present as well as the past. These challenge the apparatus of the canon for gaps and omissions, foreground understandings, which hegemonic authenticities work to negate and expose the assumptions and privileges of the text's own system. "H/history" emerges as always only one possible, particularly positioned narrative, among multiple other different ones, and Bennett particularly seeks the "profoundly and determinedly queer . . . fracturing of History which generates contrary (oppositional and perverse) ways of seeing" (10).

Underlying her approach is a faith in the potential for unfixing which notions of performativity foster, the recognition of "how contingent and radically heterogeneous, as well as how contestable, must be the relations between any subject and any utterance" (Parker and Se-

dgwick 14). Thus, in her chapter on *The Tempest*, Bennett sees the intervention of the performing body as one means of questioning the text's presentation of "othered" bodies (Caliban and Miranda). Derek Jarman casts a punk artist as Miranda in his film version of *The Tempest* to underplay the traditional romanticization of Prospero's daughter, to question the apparent naturalness of the match with Ferdinand, and to foreground Prospero's need to regulate and control sexual desire. In Peter Greenaway's film *Prospero's Books*, almost all the characters' lines are spoken by Prospero to foreground similarly this control. Bennett also explores the attempts in academic criticism, in Césaire, and in Retamar to find a voice for Caliban/difference and the problematics this entails. She emphasizes that the frequent imbrication of forms of neocolonialism and/or the suspect postulate of a precolonial purity may contribute to over-inscription by the discourses of the erstwhile colonial master/mistress on the performing body. But Bennett is convinced that the postcolonial body, as paradigmatic of the endeavour in performance to locate difference, nevertheless "holds out the hope of exceeding the regulated performances of the past" (148). For her, a production such as Philip Osment's *This Island's Mine* points to the gap between knowledge and performance and to the possibility of bodies "that can proceed beyond and apart from the agencies which (still) attempt to control [them]" (148). Osment stages bodies and languages that cannot be reconciled and assert their resistance by way of this contradiction.

Bennett provides detailed descriptions of a range of other productions, rewritings, or appropriations that interrogate past texts. For example, in addressing a female, feminist spectatorship and questioning the genealogy of "false fathers," the Women's Theatre Group's *Lear's Daughters* offers a "herstory" which produces gaps and absences not only in Shakespeare's but also in Edward Bond's and Howard Barker's rewritings of *King Lear*. Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*—a "decay of the nation film" and a "comedy charting the return of the repressed" (105)—which, in his own account draws on Jacobean theatre and particularly *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, explores "what we repress or fetishize in our attempt to succeed in the maintenance of a bourgeois subjectivity" (104). Derek Jarman's *Edward II*, in seeking out an expression for sexual identity which cannot be easily contained or denied by hegemonic codes of heterosexual visibility, has a clearly articulated dissident politics.

In all of this, *Performing Nostalgia* repeatedly rehearses and demonstrates the by now well-known contention that, as Terence Hawkes (whom Bennett quotes) has famously argued, "we mean by Shakespeare." But Bennett provides rich and stimulating detail, raising a host of important issues. Her study is valuable also because of its awareness of complex tensions—within projects that attempt to rearticulate or disarticulate the past—between impulses or rememberings that

work for change and ones that resist it. Jarman's *Edward II*, his contestatory position notwithstanding, is "breathtakingly misogynistic" (110); the dissidence in Barry Keeffe's *A Mad World My Masters* or Howard Barker's *Women Beware Women* "at the same time seems largely to be an expression of heterosexual males whose panic in the face of sexual, racial, and gender difference activates the grammar of Jacobean performance" (110) and theatre practitioners, proclaiming radical intent, repeatedly pay simultaneous obeisance to the "beauty" of the Shakespeare text. The "shifting" Shakespeare in her subtitle therefore denotes not only the continual return to and deviation from powerfully regulatory texts. She finds this in the voices of theatre practitioners, within particular productions and within the reception economies identifiable in reviewers, academic critics, and audiences within which each performance is situated. Her book is also intelligently sensitive and thoughtful about the multiple and sometimes contradictory impulses or positions evident in projects, particularly in performance, to provide "new maps with which to chart the possibilities of 'post'" (150).

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WORK CITED

Parker, Andrew, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. *Performativity and Performance*. New York: Routledge, 1995.



Anne Compton. *A. J. M. Smith: Canadian Metaphysical*. Toronto: ECW, 1994. Pp. 262. \$25.00 pb.

While A. J. M. Smith's status as a pioneering anthologist and critic has long been relatively secure in Canadian letters, his reputation as a poet has been less so, for reasons that arguably have more to do with the vagaries of poetic fashion than with the quality of his poetry itself. Despite some excellent critical articles on his work over the last two decades, Smith's poetry has yet to receive the fuller attention it merits. Anne Compton's book, growing out of her PhD thesis, is the first published full-length study of Smith's poetry,<sup>1</sup> and it goes some way to redressing past neglect. Yet, while the work is extensively researched, well-documented (although sometimes excessively), and comprehensive, it falls somewhat short of what its title and the preface promise. I had expected a greater emphasis on the metaphysical qualities of Smith's work and the resultant knotty theoretical implications of his most challenging poems, but Compton's quite insightful discussion of this subject is essentially limited to two or three chapters of the entire nine-chapter study.

Compton adopts a traditional critical approach, asserting that her "work does not participate in the theoretical conflicts ongoing among contemporary critics and theorists" (7). This is true; and while such