

whose central interest is to co-opt Rhys into the “canon” of West Indian writing. Gregg, to her credit, embraces Rhys as a West Indian voice, even as she tries to demonstrate that at the heart of Rhys’s personal and emotional angst and confusion, are her own struggle with her sense of self, her identity as one who is not quite accepted by white European society, and as a woman who is clearly disturbed by a dismissal of the activities and behaviour of white colonials—her ancestors, her relatives—as merely cruel racists. Gregg’s examination of Rhys and her life and work is an excellent excavation of her biases and preoccupations and offers some intriguing information about Rhys that can be said to explain, in many ways, why Rhys’s tendency was not to write overtly about the West Indies.

Gregg demonstrates that it is impossible for us to turn from what can only be described as racist pronouncements by Rhys in her correspondences to Rhys’s portrayal of the brutality of the Blacks at the end of the *Wide Sargasso Sea*, without realizing that her agenda, her ideological inclination is far more racially defined and driven than one could ever imagine. Through what can only be described as meticulous research and an intense desire to unearth as much about Rhys and her construction of history, race, and identity as she can muster in virtually everything that Rhys has written, Gregg has produced a substantial and impressive piece of critical writing. She demonstrates through an engaging analysis of numerous texts that Rhys was a formidable writer of significant power and grace. Nonetheless, she is more passionate about showing Rhys to be a victim of colonialism who herself came to represent the colonizing agenda.

KWAME DAWES



James C. Bulman, ed. *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Pp. vi, 218. \$23.95 pb.

This volume might more honestly have been titled “Shakespeare and Performance Theory After the Revolution.” The revolution in question is J. L. Styan’s 1977 work, *The Shakespeare Revolution*, which proposed that twentieth-century staging practices of Shakespeare (culminating in 1970 with the watershed Peter Brook production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* for the Royal Shakespeare Company) allowed audiences for the first time since the seventeenth century to see the bard’s work as it was meant to be performed. Styan argues that stage-centred Shakespeare criticism and modern(ist) directors were working closely to restore the flexibility of the non-realistic or non-illusionistic early modern staging practices, and were rejecting nineteenth-century pictorial staging techniques. (In one of the more interesting essays in this volume, “Historicizing Alan Dessen,” Cary M. Mazer utterly rejects the notion that directors and scholars were working together: they were simply both invested in a similar notion

of authority, whether that authority happened to be the director's or the author's.) Freeing up the stage meant clearing away any extraneous historical or interpretive debris, leaving us a clear access to Shakespeare's words as they were meant to be heard and understood. As many of the contributors to this collection point out, what is really at stake here is an assertion of the transhistorical and transcultural authority of the text and the author: in this case, Jonson's Shakespeare, who is "not of an age, but for all time."

This, then, is the premise from which the essays start. In essence, what the contributors are attempting to do is to bring contemporary critical theory to bear on theatre history, performance theory, and stage-centred criticism. For the most part, this means nods towards poststructuralist discussions of the author and authority, which in terms of performance theory translates into an interest in the theatre as a site for the collaborative production of meaning, rather than an unveiling of the author's original intentions. By focusing on what has been called the theatrical text, or the meaning produced by this collaborative process, the object and the means of inquiry become dangerously destabilized. What does this text mean, and for whom does it convey this meaning? More important for performance criticism, if this text is by virtue of its historicity unique and unrecordable, what can be gained by discussing it?

James C. Bulman's introduction raises some of the problematic questions that contemporary theory poses for performance criticism, although the essays that follow are more often involved in re-examining the legacy of Brook and Styan. W. B. Worthen's engaging, intelligent essay, for example, thoughtfully unravels Styan's ideas in light of Foucault's and Barthes's essays on authors and texts, arguing that "recourse to 'Shakespeare' is . . . a way of turning away from the question of how our acts of representation are implicated in the dynamics of contemporary culture, a way of passing the responsibility for our theatrical and critical activities on to a higher authority" (25).

Some of the best essays in the volume follow Worthen's lead, questioning "our acts of representation" by historicizing contemporary theatrical practice (or by historicizing critical practice, as in Barbara Hodgdon's essay on the response to Robert LePage's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and in Juliet Dusinberre's essay on playing Cleopatra). Richard Paul Knowles, for example, offers an extremely productive reading of the ideology of training guides written by prominent Shakespearean vocal coaches. Knowles shows that these texts are premised on the idea of a "natural" voice which must be freed from the constraints of civilization, in order to become the appropriate medium for Shakespeare's words. This ideology of the natural voice is, Knowles argues, akin to Brook's theory of the "empty space" of the stage, blessedly free of history and particularity: "empty spaces of whatever kind, I suggest, are to the theatre what common sense is to critical

practice: vacuums to be filled by the unquestioned because of naturalized assumptions of (dominant) ideology" (94). Knowles links this idea of the natural voice to American ego psychology and new age thinking, as Denis Salter later does with "natural" styles of acting, including Method acting: "'natural' acting is never natural—it is always artificial—a distinctive style or mode of performance that has only been naturalized by traditions, by training practices, by critical standards, and by audience values" (118). As both of these quotations indicate, the theory employed in the book is, for the most part, not exactly groundbreaking; what is original and interesting is rather its application to the material in question.

Other common threads in the book include the challenges to Shakespeare's authority that are posed by the bodies of actors, and by the translation or transplantation of his texts. In the latter discussions, the locales in question are, oddly enough, Canada and Eastern Europe, rather than, say, India or the Caribbean, which might have yielded more interesting challenges to Shakespearean authority; one wonders what understanding of postcolonialism is in play when Denis Salter says that for English Canadians, Shakespeare's English is "the distant yet nevertheless powerful language of the oppressor" (115). Reading the body as a site of resistance to the text, along with the related question of how the body signifies (or resists signification), surfaces in a number of the essays. Anthony B. Dawson offers intriguing suggestions regarding the relation of the actor's body to the character being bodied forth, and a bodily eloquence that asserts "the primacy of its art *over* criticism" (42) in an interesting if overly mystified argument. In a related investigation, Juliet Dusinberre discusses the differences between the way a woman's body and a boy's body signify when playing Cleopatra, and what that might tell us both about our perception of actors' bodies and the way our ideologies of gender condition that perception.

The final essay, by Douglas Lanier on Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books*, offers an insightful discussion of the relations between Greenaway and Shakespeare, and deftly shows how Greenaway, through video technology, challenges the authority of the Shakespearean text. Of course, the source of this challenge is politically questionable—what kind of revolution is taking place when a straight, white, politically conservative English film-maker is seizing control?—and the film itself is on very dicey political grounds with its positioning of Caliban as an exotic, sexualized other, the addition of the rape of Claribel by her African husband, the reduction of Miranda to an ethereal, mostly unconscious cipher, and the film's fetishization of high culture totems. This essay may in fact be unfortunately emblematic of the volume as a whole, which, although it makes gestures towards feminist and postcolonial theory, does not offer substantial engagements with either. This, along with a complete absence of discussions

of queer performativity—a major area of interest in studies of early modern theatre and contemporary performance—is a serious lacuna in a book essentially about Shakespeare and authority. Ultimately, the volume may be a little like the “Shakespeare-plus-relevance” productions of plays that the volume occasionally critiques: making gestures towards a politics, but not ultimately shifting the grounds of production or discussion in a substantial way.

JIM ELLIS



Stephen Bygrave, ed. *Romantic Writings*. London: Routledge/Open University, 1996. Pp. x, 352. \$90.95, \$27.95 pb.

Romantic Writings, a textbook published by Routledge for Britain's Open University, is one of four in a series called “Approaching Literature”; the other three are *The Realist Novel* (edited by Dennis Walder), *Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and the Canon* (edited by W. R. Owens and Lizbeth Goodman), and *Literature and Gender* (edited by Lizbeth Goodman). The Preface is not explicit about how these four volumes divide up the literary field, but we may recognize in the first three a version of the familiar triad of poetry, fiction, and drama.

Stephen Bygrave, the editor of the book and author of four of its eleven chapters, is the author of a book on Kenneth Burke and articles on Coleridge and Gray; the other contributors include Amanda Gilroy, who has published on Anna Jameson and Edmund Burke; Nigel Leask, who is the author of *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (1992); and Susan Matthews, who has co-edited the Romantic listings in *The Year's Work in English Studies*. The book proper is followed by a sort of anthology, including extracts from Freud on the uncanny, René Wellek on the concept of Romanticism, Raymond Schwab on Orientalism, Stuart Curran on women poets, and from *The Corsair*; it is accompanied (for another twelve pounds) by a ninety-minute cassette of readings of poems by Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Barbauld, and Smith, and a discussion of Romanticism featuring Peter de Bolla, Paul Hamilton, and Anne K. Mellor. Without knowing more about the specific pedagogical uses to which the Open University puts the book, it is hard to assess the value of these supplements.

Bygrave's Introduction explains that the book is called *Romantic Writings* because it addresses “questions about which texts from the past are selected for attention and how they are described. . . . To have called it, say, ‘Romantic Literature’ would have begged these questions. ‘Literature’ can mean anything that is written, but it now implies a specially privileged body of writing (indeed, it can be argued that such a notion was an invention of this period)” (ix). After this promising beginning, however, the book turns out to be mostly devoted to canonical poetry. Of the Romantic writings quoted at length and/or