

esting albeit theatre-free book. Each of the chapters follows the same three-part structure: "a critique of conventional transitional interpretation of a given play," followed by "an assessment of the allegorization of a historically specific functional contradiction in that play," concluding with "an account of the ways in which formal constraints—character functions and generic and modal ideologies—influence a text's ultimate transitional or non-transitional characters" (13).

Cefalu moves *The Tempest*, therefore, away from the politics of cultural encounter and "western oppression of new world cultures" (25), and into the realm of class divisions between the English colonists themselves, arguing that Shakespeare uses the play to "undo the contradictions in poor law history" (34). *Coriolanus* "represents the dualistic nature of the early modern state rather than any reified class antagonism" (70) and "provides a biting, yet very local commentary on the ironies of Jacobean politics" (70). *The Merchant of Venice*, he argues, is a meditation on "money fetishism" versus "objective theories of value." *King Lear* is "a metaethical inquiry" on liberty, duty, and rights, and can be understood only in terms of early English Protestant morality and theories of justice. Lastly, he believes *Hamlet* takes an Augustinian-Protestant position on sinful habitation, arguing that vicious habits are ineradicable and that Hamlet himself is "a radical behaviorist, rather than radical innatist or precursor of Cartesian dualism" (145).

Cefalu demonstrates a knowledge of a wide range of subject areas (again, with the notable exception of performance and theatre), and the book is remarkably researched and argued. The overall work, however, reads more like a dissertation or a sermon about how many cultural materialists can dance on the head of a pin. As in Orkin's book, sometimes the choice of analytical tool in *Revisionist Shakespeare* seems arbitrary and highly subjective. Lastly, one wonders why Cefalu, who critiques New Historicists for preferring government documents to narrative texts, focuses on Shakespeare to the exclusion of other dramatists who also bear out his theories: for example, Richard Brome, whose *A Jovial Crew* also explores poor and vagrancy laws. The end result is less a book about English Renaissance drama and more a historical argument that uses drama to demonstrate its contentions.

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DISTRACTED SUBJECTS: MADNESS AND GENDER IN SHAKESPEARE AND EARLY MODERN CULTURE. By Carol Thomas Neely. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004; pp. xiii + 244. \$52.50 cloth, \$21.95 paper.

STAGES OF DISMEMBERMENT: THE FRAGMENTED BODY IN LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN DRAMA. By Margaret E. Owens. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005; pp. 332. \$59.50 cloth.

One of the most vexing challenges facing students of early modern theatre revolves around the question of influence. To what extent did the theatre of the period reflect existing cultural norms? To what extent did it challenge them? How did the early modern theatre help shape the development of cultural attitudes toward everything from gender and racial difference to the semiotics of body, mind, and soul? Two new books on the period wade into this territory: Carol Thomas Neely's *Distracted Subjects* explores the relationship between theatrical production and the conceptualization of early modern madness and healing, while Margaret Owens's *Stages of Dismemberment* traces the theatre's influence on the shaping of the post-Reformation body. Both books work primarily through the lens of a rigorous, cultural materialist historiography, and both will be stimulating reading for anyone interested in body theory, early modern studies, or Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

Neely's book has two particular strengths. First, she uses her considerable bank of research, both primary archival and carefully selected secondary readings, to debunk a series of myths about madness in both the theatre and culture of early modern England. As Neely is at pains to point out—particularly in her illuminating final chapter, subtitled "The Place of Bedlam in History and Drama"—scholars have long been plagued by a number of erroneous assumptions about the ways in which mad persons are figured in early modern culture, based on selective (mis)readings of a handful of popular stage representations. This observation leads directly to *Distracted Subjects*'s second main strength: its astute readings of canonical texts, primarily from Shakespeare, in light of Neely's own careful exploration of the archival material on madness, healing, and politics in the period. While *Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Twelfth Night* may seem too-well-trod ground to some, Neely's work on these plays is fresh, stimulating, and a worthy addition to the existing critical corpus.

Neely begins by offering careful distinctions between three related terms: distraction, madness,

and melancholy. Distraction, she argues, is the most precisely coded of the three terms in the period, and represents not a lifelong condition but a "temporary derailing" (2) that is envisioned by the early moderns as eminently curable through the therapeutic interventions of family and community. Here lies the beginning of one of the book's most valuable threads: Neely consistently challenges the validity of Foucault's reading of madness in the seventeenth century by exploring the myriad ways in which the distract not only were *not* isolated and pathologized in Renaissance England, but were in fact treated with genuine care, within a community framework. The stage, she argues in two early chapters ("Initiating Madness Onstage" and "Reading the Language of Distraction," featuring readings of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Lear*), is the locus through which discourses of distraction gradually shift from supernatural to secular in the period, while the languages of madness developed by the drama "teach audiences how to identify and respond to" madness in extratheatrical contexts (49). This line of argument comes to full fruition in Neely's final chapter on representations of Bedlam, in which she convincingly argues that Bethlem Hospital has been mistakenly assumed by scholars of the period to be central to the early moderns' conception of the mad as theatricalized spectacles. On the contrary, Neely's evidence demonstrates that Jacobean stage representations of Bedlamites as spectacle (in, for example, *The Duchess of Malfi* or *The Changeling*) constitute a "dramatic innovation" that "circulate[s] emergent attitudes" toward the mad (such as those Foucault would later chronicle), rather than reflecting either the material place of Bethlem in seventeenth-century London, or contemporary beliefs about the role of confinement in the constitution of the distracted subject.

Distracted Subjects paints a picture of the activist, though not always benign, powers of the early modern theatre: it is a vehicle for developing new, secular languages of distraction, yet toward the middle of the seventeenth century girds its own legitimacy by othering the mad, "displac[ing] onto madpersons and the houses where they reside those offenses for which antitheatrical polemic attacked the stage" (199). This theatre is also, for Neely, one vehicle through which madness is "regendered" (6) in the period. Neely argues that madness "is not a distinctively female malady" (1) in early modern England, but nevertheless comes to receive increasingly gendered scrutiny, both from the medical establishment and on the stage. Two chapters midway through the book (featuring readings of *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*) do a nice job of exploring the rise of the new subcategory of "women's melancholy" (69) by focusing in part on

the respect accorded female desire by the diagnosis of lovesickness. Far from tracing an early modern pathology of women's sexual appetites, Neely's readings demonstrate how keen the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries appeared to be in ensuring that women were thoroughly satisfied with their love relationships—albeit at home, with their husbands.

While Neely's book ably rethinks several early modern studies commonplaces about madness, gender, and spectacle, Margaret Owens's *Stages of Dismemberment* works through the changes in early modern corporeality that accompanied the move away from embodied devotion after the Reformation. Owens's touchstone for examining this shift is the representation of decapitation and other forms of dismemberment on the late medieval and early modern stages. In contrast to Neely's focus on canonical dramatic material, Owens prefers to explore these phenomena in lesser-known texts.

Like Neely, Owens is interested in the epistemological connections between theatrical production and cultural change, and she relies on substantial archival and other historical evidence to back her claims, making her book for the most part a convincing, compelling read. She begins by tracing the maimed / dismembered body in late medieval drama, exploring in particular the central place of Eucharistic ritual in "the symbolic drama of fragmentation and (re)integration" (53) that characterized pre-Reformation performance, especially Saints' plays. While this early context is essential to the claims Owens later makes about the corporeal shifts enacted by post-Reformation drama, there are some problems with the way she frames this material. Her two chapters on late medieval work are divided, somewhat awkwardly, into a chapter that rehearses evidence, and one that offers a range of interpretations of that material. While Owens offers a reasonable rationale for this division, the result is a painfully dull first chapter that seems in hindsight to be rather superfluous. Ultimately, this early problem points to what became, for me, a pervasive frustration: the book is too long, and can be repetitious. I had to consistently admire Owens's historical and critical diligence, but I did find myself wishing the book had been more rigorously edited.

Owens's argument hinges on a shift, which she traces to the half-century or so following the Reformation in England, in the value placed on the fragmented body and in the role it is able to play in resolving certain tensions in the culture. As that culture was no longer freely able to resort to a veneration of Saints' relics, the consumption of Christ's body within the Eucharistic frame, or other embodied pieties characteristic of Catholic veneration

tion to resolve the "anxieties about purity and pollution" (83) circulating both in religious ritual and in broader cultural space, the early modern drama came to trope the fragmented body as excessive rather than localizable, semiotically unstable rather than a cipher for anticipated reunification. Although Owens is careful to qualify her assumption of a clear break in the culture at and after the Reformation, I found the book to be at its best while working through this tricky argument—in particular during chapters on R. B.'s *Apius and Virginia*, a mid-century martyr play that encodes subtle moves from pre- to post-Reformation martyrology, and on the "return" of the "repressed" pre-Reformation body in revenge tragedy.

While on the whole Owens's thinking stimulated my own, I did find myself frustrated by her use of psychoanalytic paradigms to explain early modern relations to the dismembered body. Freud figures more heavily than Lacan here, but the problem, for me, was an overall lack of commitment to this methodology. I, like Owens, am a firm believer in the value of thinking early modern culture through psychoanalysis, but this book seems, with a couple of moments of notable exception, to bracket its own interest in the *corps morcelé* of Lacan and the uncanny body of Freud with a parallel interest in the grotesque, folkloric body of Bakhtin, ultimately a fruitful but perhaps less original critical paradigm for this material. Owens is very good at reading the early moderns psychoanalytically, and I think the book might have benefited from a stronger commitment to this methodology. That said, other readers may find the mix of history, cultural semiotics, and psychoanalysis in Owens's writing just right.

Both of these books are timely interventions into ongoing debates about how the early modern theatre helped frame and shape attitudes toward the body in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English culture, and both will be valuable reading for scholars and students alike.

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EDWARD ALBEE: A CASEBOOK. Edited by Bruce Mann. New York: Routledge, 2003; pp. 168. \$120.00 cloth.

Edward Albee criticism follows closely the chronology of the playwright's professional ups and downs over the past forty-five years. The first period dates from the early 1960s to around 1983 and the disastrous reception of *The Man Who Had Three Arms*; the second starts in the wake of Albee's tri-

umphal return to New York in 1994 with *Three Tall Women* and shows no signs of abating. Bruce Mann's *Casebook*, covering plays through 2001, is, I believe, the first collection of essays on Albee's theatre published after this second coming. It is a slim book: ten essays, a chronology, and an interview with the playwright contained within 168 pages. In the case of a few contributions (Emily Rosenbaum's seven-page discussion of *All Over* and Ronald Rapine's eight-page study of *The Lady from Dubuque*), their brevity makes it impossible for the writers to go beyond a cursory outline of an argument. So, too, the underdeveloped but promising discussion by Lisa Siefker Bailey, who uses Richard Slotkin's theory of regeneration through violence in American society as the basis of a cultural critique of *The Zoo Story*, removes the play from the absurdity box into which first-generation Albee critics tended to place it. In Norma Jenckes's "Postmodernist Tensions in Albee's Recent Plays," which analyzes *Marriage Play*, *Fragments*, and *Three Tall Women*, the length is less an obstacle than the vague use of terms such as modernist, high modernist, and postmodernist, and Jenckes's shifting position on which category to place Albee into and why. This said, the book as a whole does offer some interesting new readings of familiar Albee successes and several generally neglected plays; and while it does not break much new critical ground, it suggests that the field is again open for play.

Mann's introductory essay begins appropriately with *Three Tall Women*, which he reads biographically, arguing that the play "brought new life to Albee," an "internal, self renewal" (14), marked by the overcoming of "his mirror stage crisis" and acceptance of the inevitability of death, both personal experiences encoded in the play. While Mann may be correct, such blanket assertions and conflation of writer and work are off-putting, implying an insider's knowledge of the motivations not of character but of creator. He is more successful in his placement of the play alongside O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* and Williams's *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*, also autobiographical dramas in which an aging playwright looks back to his sources of inspiration.

Anne Paolucci, one of the most perceptive and consistent of Albee critics over the years, in "A Retrospective (and Beyond)" offers a summary of early critical and audience reactions to Albee's works, revisiting her own well-known comparative studies between Albee's plays and those of Pirandello, particularly *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *Each in his Own Way*, and *Tonight We Improvise*. She also uses Pirandellian parallels to segue into a long and illuminating discussion of *The Man Who Had Three Arms*, teasing out its paradoxes, humor, pathos,