

allowing its central inquiry—“who is made to pay the price for establishing, naturalizing, and maintaining a system” (ix)—to find resonance among the impressive and diverse array of genres and cultural practices it addresses.

• • •

The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary South African Theatre. Edited by Martin Middeke, Peter Paul Schnierer, and Greg Homann. Guides to Contemporary Drama. London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015; pp. vii + 384. \$122 cloth, \$39.95 paper, \$32.99 e-book.

Imagining the Edgy City: Writing, Performing, and Building Johannesburg. By Loren Kruger. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; pp. xxv + 274, 22 illustrations. \$78 cloth, \$77.99 e-book.

doi:10.1017/S0040557416000806

Reviewed by April Sizemore-Barber, *Georgetown University*

South African theatre first came to international prominence with apartheid-era protest performance in the 1970s and 1980s. As the rich bibliography surrounding and frequent revivals of these now canonical plays attest, South Africa’s antiapartheid narrative of oppression and resilience continues to resonate for both scholarly and theatregoing audiences. However, *postapartheid* performances have yet to receive the same level of theorization as apartheid-era struggle plays. The reasons for this gap are manifold. Whereas the struggle to end apartheid had a clear antagonist and moral drive, the contemporary moment—challenged by crime, HIV, economic inequality, and entrenched racism—has muddied the national narrative. Much contemporary South African performance deals with what occurs after the fight for liberation has been won and people have to learn to live with each other. As the terrain of contemporary South African theatre and performance continues to develop, two recent texts, *The Methuen Drama Guide to Contemporary South African Theatre* (2015) and Loren Kruger’s *Imagining the Edgy City: Writing, Performing, and Building Johannesburg* (2013), provide differing cartographic approaches to bridging the gap in postapartheid performance studies. *The Methuen Drama Guide* brings compelling theatre and performance from the past twenty years under scholarly study, and the editors gather an impressive array of primarily South African scholars and theatre practitioners to reflect on themes and aesthetics emerging in more than a hundred plays. Kruger, by contrast, delves deeply into the history of the performative texts surrounding a single case study: Johannesburg. Taken together, these books offer a thorough account of how theatre and performance continue to reflect and rehearse visions of nationhood.

The Methuen Drama Guide arguably provides the most complete overview of postapartheid theatre to date. The book is organized into two parts: “Overview Essays” and “Playwrights.” Part I provides necessary context through essays that highlight how South Africa’s particular history has led to a robust tradition of

physical, devised theatre. During apartheid, artists largely cut off from performing contemporary Western plays—due to the international cultural boycott (lasting from the early 1960s to the late 1980s) and government censorship—developed a method of collectively workshopped theatre. The workshop tradition mixed with other European and African forms to influence subsequent genres of devised work, three of which are detailed in subsequent chapters.

Part II focuses on twelve prolific contemporary South African dramatists, including those—such as Lara Foot, Mike van Graan, and Mpumelelo Paul Grootboom—whose work has received scant scholarly attention. The playwrights in Part II might usefully be grouped as follows: those artists whose work bridged the transition from apartheid to democracy and explored the racial and gendered anxiety and nostalgia of white South Africans; those whose work interrogates and stages the messy cultural collision and inevitable disillusionment with the new democracy; and those whose work challenges the norms of playmaking itself. Each chapter focuses on several key texts, whose analysis provides insight into the playwright's philosophies and relates these themes to larger questions of national aesthetics and identity.

Concluding the book is editor Homann's interview of Aubrey Sekhabi, current Artistic Director of Pretoria's State Theatre, who emphasizes the institutional challenges facing contemporary theatre makers, including the lack of formal mentorship structures, unresponsive arts funding policy, and the creeping influence of the international market, which limits artistic risk taking and often privileges productions that will appeal to so-called global audiences. This interview complicates the earlier chapters by detailing the material limitations to theatre making and allows Sekhabi, himself a prolific playwright as well as director and administrator, to articulate the needs for the next generation of South African theatre.

The *Methuen Drama Guide* offers a rare, well-curated glimpse into some of the most exciting contemporary work in South African theatre of the past twenty years. A long overdue contribution to postapartheid theatre scholarship, it is accessible to those with little knowledge of the topic and rewarding to those more knowledgeable. One inequity of the book that bears noting is the inescapable whiteness (and maleness) of much of the work discussed in the volume. This is less a fault of the volume itself—clearly trying to make space for nonwhite voices with overview essays and intrachapter discussion of up-and-coming, nonwhite practitioners—but an implicit critique of the failure of transformation in the arts since the end of apartheid.

Where the *Methuen Drama Guide* seeks to define the contours of an under-theorized period and genre—contemporary South African theatre—Loren Kruger's theoretically rich, discipline-crossing monograph, *Imagining the Edgy City*, purposefully deemphasizes genre and blurs the boundaries of temporality. Kruger focuses on Johannesburg—in literature, film, television, performance, and public art, as well as in lived experience—as a case study into South Africa's cultural imagination. She posits that Johannesburg, a space of ambiguous modernity, desire, and anxiety, has served as a central stage for the negotiation of South Africa's national imaginary from its founding as a gold rush frontier town to its current branding as a “world class African city” (1). Although the book's

chapters progress chronologically in twenty-year intervals, focusing on significant dates from 1936 to 2012, Kruger's analysis frequently jumps forward and backward in time, suggesting that memory is notoriously porous and, particularly in the postcolonial city, linked to competing histories and claims to space. The book aims to provide a thick cultural history of the city, and Kruger's approach is "intentionally promiscuous" (xii). As such, *Imagining the Edgy City* is difficult to categorize, its sites and theoretical engagements pivoting from literary to urban to performance studies. This rejection of boundaries produces a richly researched tapestry of a city animated by a broad conception of performance.

Following a contextualizing introduction, the first chapter charts the competing modernities around Johannesburg's 1936 Jubilee, particularly as expressed through the late imperial pomp and pageantry surrounding the Empire Exhibition's "White City" (21). It also analyzes the emergence of "New African" (37) intellectuals who strategically drew on American culture—from "Negro spirituals" (38) to O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (28)—to claim modernity divorced from the commonwealth, even as the laws further entrenched their spatial segregation and disenfranchisement. Chapter 2 traces narratives attached to the early apartheid city, particularly those surrounding Johannesburg's sole interracial neighborhood, the cosmopolitan Sophiatown, whereas Chapter 3 focuses on literature surrounding the Soweto student uprisings. Kruger contextualizes this moment, often thought to be the beginning of the end of apartheid, alongside both the birth of the Market Theatre, a rehearsal space for new narratives, and the frantic upward expansion of white-only inner-city skyscrapers. This expression of white optimism, she argues, was spatially dependent on the hyper(in)visible counterpoint of John Vorster Police Headquarters on the other side of town, where black Soweto activists were regularly tortured and thrown out of windows.

The book's final chapters trace the vast changes in the wake of apartheid. Chapter 4 lays out the psychological topography of Johannesburg immediately following the transition to democracy. As white capital emptied out the inner city, immigrants from the rest of the continent crowded in, and crime skyrocketed, the city was increasingly viewed by both artists and planners as evacuated of meaning: "unimaginable as well as unmanageable . . . not merely to elude representation, but rather to sabotage it" (151). Kruger focuses on this representational anarchy in popular television crime dramas, novels, and short stories to find narratives of nihilism, generosity, displacement, and longing. The book concludes with its most extended engagement with performance and the contemporary: "2012: City in the World," where Kruger evaluates artistic engagements with urban space. She argues that urban renewal (that is, a remaking of urban space) comes not in the incursion of gentrifying lifestyle communities but through the productive engagements between public art projects and everyday uses of space.

Although much has changed across the decades, Johannesburg remains a site of contradictory urges and insurgent temporalities: impatient hope for a better future warring with nostalgia for a lost, romanticized past. Though not a text about theatre per se—the few plays mentioned are linked by their relative obscurity—*Imagining the Edgy City* is a performative evocation of Joburg's particular rhythms, histories, and genres. As someone who has spent substantial time living

and walking in Johannesburg, I was especially impressed with how closely Kruger was able to evoke the city's particular textures and contradictions. That said, the very specificity and density that give the book its analytical gravitas may also pose challenges to casual readers with little background on Johannesburg or South Africa, or interest in its literary cultures. Nevertheless, *Imagining the Edgy City*'s interest in performative space and postcolonial cosmopolitanisms makes it significant to a number of current interdisciplinary conversations.

While quite different in their approaches and intended audiences, both the *Methuen Drama Guide* and *Imagining the Edgy City* make significant interventions into the once-aspirational and now woefully outdated Rainbow Nation narrative still popular in global imaginings of postapartheid South Africa. By focusing on the voices and locations of contemporary South African theatre and performance, these texts together wrest the narrative from the limitations of apartheid's Manichaean logic and make space for nuance, ambivalence, and joy in a still-evolving form.

• • •

Performance and Media: Taxonomies for a Changing Field. By Sarah Bay-Cheng, Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, and David Z. Saltz. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015; pp. vii + 179, 30 illustrations. \$75 cloth, \$26.95 paper, \$26.95 e-book.

doi:10.1017/S0040557416000818

Reviewed by Josephine Machon, *Middlesex University, London*

The *raison d'être* for *Performance and Media: Taxonomies for a Changing Field* is summarized at the end of the book: "not to perform theoretical and interpretative analyses for passive consumption, but to provide critical tools for others to employ, adapt, and expand upon" (132). Authors Sarah Bay-Cheng, Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, and David Z. Saltz foreground "taxonomies" in their title and approach by organizing systems for study that draw on extant research to define and analyze developments in the *interactions* among theatre, performance, and media. The critical frameworks proffered pinpoint ways in which scholars, artists, and audiences understand and continue to shape those interactions. Historical productions are compared alongside recent performance practice to demonstrate the effectiveness of applying analytical paradigms to interpret any mediatized exchange in the theatre.

Three initial contextual chapters, written collectively by the authors, set up the book's premise in an accessible fashion and invite the reader into the debate around approaches to, and the usefulness of, taxonomies for the interlocking of performance and media. The "Introduction" provides an overview of the field and clearly sets out the strategy that the authors take throughout the book, establishing a discourse for examining and interpreting the broad range of work that fits under this banner. Three questions are posed in framing the scope of the book: (1) How might new scholarship "keep up with a dynamic, growing, and globally