Contents

Articles

Debora Biancheri
Flying Free from History and Reality: Dramatic Representations of the “Crocodile Dilemma” in the Theatre of Martin McDonagh — 217

Laura Michiels
Quoting Poetry, Translating Music (and Vice Versa): Mediation in Tennessee Williams’s Something Cloudy, Something Clear — 234

Gene A. Plunka
Staging Childhood Holocaust Survivor Trauma: Diane Samuels’s Kindertransport — 252

Sarah Roberts
“Times long contrasts:” o e d l p u s (2014) — 273

Elizabeth Sakellaridou
How Diasporic?: Psychogeographies of the New Britain in (Post-)Millennial British Theatre — 301

Daniel Schulze
The Passive Gaze and Hyper-Immunised Spectators: The Politics of Theatrical Live-Broadcasting — 315

Reviews

Elżbieta Baraniecka
Jade Rosina McCutcheon and Barbara Sellers-Young, eds. Embodied Consciousness: Performance Technologies
Nicola Shaughnessy, ed. Affective Performance and Cognitive Science: Body, Brain and Being — 327
Johan Callens

Emma Cox

Thomas Irmer
Christophe Collard. *Artist on the Make: David Mamet’s Work across Media and Genres* — 342

Julia Boll
Vicky Angelaki, ed. *Contemporary British Theatre: Breaking New Ground* — 345

Kathleen Starck

Merle Tönnies
David Mamet is certainly, next to Sam Shepard, the best-known American playwright of his generation, with at least five major plays that entered the canon. The first was *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* (1974), followed by *American Buffalo* (1975), *Edmond* (1982), *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983), and *Oleanna* (1992), all produced in theatres all over the world. A great number of academic studies has been devoted to Mamet the dramatist and his aesthetic or linguistic strategies within the context of theatre and drama history. The first book-length studies were written by Christopher Bigsby, the leading scholar of modern American drama, in 1985, and by Dennis Carroll, in 1987, as introductory monographs at a time before Mamet turned to film as a screenwriter and director. Since then, Mamet the film artist has only occasionally returned to the theatre (*November*, 2008, and more recently *Race*, 2011) while, additionally, his prolific writing includes several volumes of essays and reminiscences, the novel *The Old Religion* (1997), children’s books, and a critical examination of the film industry with the superb *Bambi vs. Godzilla: On the Nature, Purpose and Practice of the Movie Business* (2007). Thus, Mamet’s work and writing, now spanning over 40 years, need to be seen as a complex venture in various fields in order to show underlying patterns and find deeper insights. *The Cambridge Companion to David Mamet*, edited by Christopher Bigsby in 2004, offers, according to the principal idea of this series, two separate chapters on Mamet’s film and fiction by individual authors, while it devotes most of the volume to aspects of the playwright’s work. One might conclude from this situation that a comprehensive monograph of Mamet’s work ‘across media and genres’ could be more than expected and in need. For one of the fundamental questions that remains is whether Mamet the dramatist works in other genres as a means to fulfil a vision that takes him beyond the boundaries of individual genres, or somewhere between art and entertainment. Mamet’s status as a contemporary classic playwright is no doubt secured, but what remains undecided is the status of his work. Academically, the other Mamet offers widely uncharted territory, while an understanding of the dramatist paves the way for the jack-of-all-arts.

Christophe Collard, a scholar at the Free University of Brussels, sets out his study of Mamet with a long first chapter “First Principles” to analyse the founda-
tions for the overall development of Mamet’s aesthetics in theatre and, more especially, character building and language shaping. The future playwright was first of all an actor who encountered the basic rules of acting in a slightly promising rough off-theatre environment in Chicago in the early 1970s. Some of it became legend with the St. Nicholas Players, and Collard points to the significant shift from Mamet’s acting to the teaching of actors, which inspired his first short pieces and then fuelled most of his major plays like *American Buffalo*. In terms of contemporary drama theory, Collard sees Mamet’s early works “in keeping with the master trope of aporia, instead of allegorical, moralizing or even political” and highlights “the artist’s preference of process over product, i.e. his relative unconcern with the specific interpretations that his work generates, as opposed to the mechanisms it stages and the (cognitive) strategies it mediates” (115). Collard applies no evolutionary model on Mamet’s artistic development to describe these “first principles.” Some quotations from later writings are used to prove what is being said about the young artist and in the end this first chapter is more of a catalogue of thematic issues that run through many of Mamet’s works, e.g. the topics of “absurd heroism” and “deception.”

The second chapter turns to Mamet’s work in different media that Collard also treats as a specific question of genre, which he sees as problematic because “the term connotes conventionality and functionality” (136). Thus, he combines the problem of genre with Mamet’s works in radio, film and television that generated and shaped their own genres, while this question was seemingly unimportant for a discussion of his theatre plays. One might not agree with this in general, but Collard discusses each of his examples in a convincing way with regard to this problem. Typically, Mamet’s first radio play was *The Water Engine*, which was first a play for the stage (after the material had been discarded as a short story and screenplay) (142). Collard also shows how Mamet’s first original radio play, *Prairie du Chien* of 1979, was a kind of bridge on his way to becoming a screenwriter. For his screenplay for Bob Rafelson’s remake of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1981) is indeed a matter of genre film (147).

Mamet’s “authorship in popular media” is the crucial point in Collard’s study. He states “that popular media laws taught him that bigger budgets meant more personnel and less creative autonomy,” and “on top of that, making a profit implied generic compromises” (148). Collard’s focus is now exclusively on how Mamet as an author and director in the film industry can operate on what had previously been introduced as “first principles” of aesthetic strategies. Mamet’s work for film in the early 1980s, when “New Hollywood” merged and dissolved into the Spielberg era, was characterized by the reworking of genres and their hybridization (172). In that sense *Postman* and Mamet’s later films must be noted as examples of a larger trend in which Collard sees Mamet working in a “schizo-
The renowned playwright in the film industry has his role in the systematic and strategic reshaping of established genres, yet he remains “a pragmatic humanist with a knack for mind games” (186). At this point, Collard hybridizes what is commonly separated in film, theatre and literary studies. His genre is the all-encompassing Mamet, with his manifold works across media.

“Mamet Merging Media,” the third chapter, is therefore devoted to various aspects of adaptation, a rich field, as Mamet adapted some of his own plays for film and television or, within the world of theatre, made adaptations from three of Chekhov’s plays. Instead of examining the typical issues of appropriated originality and the doctrine of fidelity, Collard sees adaptations as a special form: “A palimpsest, the adaptation effectively stages multiple texts simultaneously. However, rather than to be lamented for its parasitical ‘impurity,’ the ‘double vision’ it stimulates is generative at heart” (213). Such a positive approach to adaptations allows for a deeper analysis of Mamet’s work, most comprehensively with the 1992 film adaptation of his most successful play, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (238–46). Collard applies the term “transmedial authorship” (244) to this phenomenon of Mamet adapting his own work, while *Wag the Dog*, probably the best-known film Mamet has written and an adaptation of Larry Beinhart’s novel *American Hero*, is analyzed as a case of conflicting approaches to adaptation between novelist, director and a second screenwriter before Mamet took over (267). Here we can see how the practice of an author is framed by the different interests in the movie business. Another example, Mamet’s bold adaptation of *Faust* for the stage and radio has been chosen for “the dynamic that drives Mamet’s relentless explorations of media and genres, his adaptations, as well as the ‘militantly intermedial’ works” (288). It is no surprise that Neil LaBute, a writer-director between film and the stage with popular and critical success, is presented as a “spiritual successor” to Mamet (300–02).

In his concluding remarks Collard again takes up the title of the book, which is itself an adaptation of *City on the Make*, the title of Nelson Algren’s book about Chicago (1951), to have Mamet himself note “the particularly Chicagoan admixture of the populist and the intellectual” (317) that underlies this detailed study of an expanded authorship.