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Jeffrey M. Leichman, *Acting Up: Staging the Subject in Enlightenment France*. Lewisburg, Penn.: Bucknell University Press, 2016. xxiii + 261 pp. Notes and index. \$85.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 9781611487244.

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It is a commonplace of Western theatre history that the art of acting first attracted extended and serious critical analysis in eighteenth century France, and doubtless the best known essay among the many works devoted to this subject is Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, published in 1830, nearly fifty years after his death. Although there are deep ambiguities in this famous work, as Leichman demonstrates, especially when considered in the context of Diderot's extensive writings on this subject, the basic "paradox" is that the most effective actor gains this effect not by the sincerity of his feeling, but by his extensive mastery of the techniques of imitation.

The conflict between these two points of view existed from the first significant treatises on acting by Saint-Albine and Riccoboni, in 1747 and 1750 and has continued to resonate through discussion of the art ever since. Leichman's study, however, demonstrates that this conflicted perspective on the art of the actor was by no means restricted to discussions of this particular art, but reflected a much more central concern in French society as a whole during the Enlightenment, a period in which the dynamics of theatre were increasingly recognized as operating in society as a whole. With the gradual breakdown of the rigidly maintained social positions and hierarchies of the ancien régime came a new sense of the negotiability of the social subject, and a growing suspicion that the self was not given or innate, but could be altered and perhaps even created through performance. The question of whether a superior actor must truly feel the emotions she was expressing (a dynamic underlying the fascination with *sensibilité*) or whether she could be even more effective by mastering and employing the external signs of these emotions, reflected a vastly more fundamental but basically identical concern over whether a participant in social life was expressing an "authentic" self and emotions or only shrewdly imitating them.

Leichman demonstrates the ubiquity, complexity, and centrality of this concern in Enlightenment France by considering in detail and in context, not only a number of key dramatic works, but also a wide variety of other documents, literary, theoretical, and polemic. Each of the book's six sections explores how this central concern was reflected in a different cultural manifestation, in most cases taking a key text for a detailed analysis of how the rhetoric of this debate provided its fundamental organizing principle.

The opening chapter deals with one of the most familiar aspects of Western drama, most notably outlined by Jonas Barish in his 1981 *Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (surprisingly never mentioned by Leichman).^[1] This is the theatre's continual condemnation by various moral reformers, particularly those associated with the Christian Church. To a much greater degree than Barish, however, Leichman stresses the ambiguity of this antagonism, while insisting that *sensibilité* underlay the most effective preaching. Religious theorists were troubled by the often equal or greater effectiveness of technique,

even to the point of recommending that priests study the techniques of successful actors. Even within the discourse of particular treatises, Leichman traces a tension between these positions and an ambiguity about the appropriateness and validity of performance, a tension and an ambiguity not only in religious theorists, but in virtually every sort of social and artistic commentator who dealt with this widely discussed matter during this era.

The following chapters turn more directly to the theatre, examined through an overview of the dramatic careers, both in theory and practice, of the three literary figures most significant in shaping the dramatic practice and discourse of this era: Nivelles de la Chaussée, the major producer of the distinctively eighteenth century genre, the *comédie larmoyante*, Denis Diderot, similarly central to the creation of the period's other major new form, the *drame*, and in the chapter between them, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, famous as a negative commentator on theatre but in fact also an ardent supporter and creator of it. The two major new forms that achieved prominence in the eighteenth century closely reflected both a change in the class makeup of the audience and a desire on the part of dramatists to create plays that would not only reflect the social position and domestic concerns of this new bourgeoisie, but also their new interest in the expression and sharing of emotions, particularly the more sentimental ones. Chapter two deals with the today little respected *comédie larmoyante*, which Leichman removes from its traditional reputation as little more than an excessive exercise in sentimentality and places solidly within his overall argument as a genre developed in significant measure to provide the new bourgeois public with models of whether and how the role-playing so central to aristocratic society could be reconciled with bourgeois moral codes and commitment to virtuous conduct. Leichman's preferred strategy, which serves his argument well, is the close reading of key texts, and his choices here are the comedies of one of the masters of the genre, Nivelles de la Chaussée, within whose works Leichman traces a subtle and complex exploration of the intertwined dynamics of *sensibilité* and self-dramatization.

Although chapter three touches upon Rousseau's theatrical works, its emphasis properly remains upon the complex and wide-ranging *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles*, which Leichman connects not only back to the tradition of religious objections to the theatre with which the book began and which have often been remarked in the work, but also demonstrates how the necessary inauthenticity of performance is for Rousseau as dangerous for a modern secular state as it had been for a traditional religious one. A significant side point, even if not strongly developed, is Rousseau's concern with the emotional appeal of theatre, which troubled Rousseau as being both anti-rational and feminine.

Chapter four turns to another major enlightenment figure, Diderot, and another major new dramatic form, the *drame*, of which Diderot was the first important creator and theorist. Here Leichman examines not only the famous *Paradoxe* or the first *dramas* with their important justifying prefaces, but a number of other works, especially *Le Neveu de Rameau*, to provide a nuanced picture of Diderot's constantly shifting perspective on the role of the theatre in shaping a superior society, in the interplay between actor and spectator, and in the ambiguous role of seduction in that complex relationship. Performance and spectatorship are considered as constantly reversing as the audience seeks to find moral and social certainties in a theatre apparently attuned to their social reality, and the actors seek through performance to respond in a positive and effective way to that search.

The final two chapters move on to the latter part of the century. The fifth chapter is the weakest in the book, not devoted, as are the others, to a major author, a major genre, or a major controversy, but to two highly idiosyncratic works, the 1769 *Le Pornographe* and the 1770 *Mimographe*, two early and not highly regarded efforts by a distinctly secondary figure in either literature or theory, Rétif de la Bretonne. Granted, these rambling and idiosyncratic works, especially the second, touch in many ways on the social status and responsibilities of actors, but given the eccentric, marginal, and not at all influential nature of these speculations, it is hard to see why these minor works should be accorded attention equal to that given the contributions of Rousseau, Diderot, and even La Chaussée. To make matters worse, the first four pages of the chapter are devoted to a cursory discussion of the most

important theatre figure of the period, Voltaire, who is discussed only in terms of his dissatisfaction with the way France treated leading actresses. Within the chapter itself, the same amount of space given to Voltaire, or slightly more, is devoted to a detailed plot summary of *le Pornographe*, quite unjustified either on the basis of the work's intrinsic value or to the central concerns of this book. No other work covered in the book, even the far more relevant *Préjugé à la mode* or *Mère coupable*, is given such detailed summary.

Happily, the final chapter gets back on track with the obvious figure, both in the importance of his drama and his theory, to close the century: Beaumarchais. Although few would dispute the dominance of Beaumarchais in the theatre world of Revolutionary France, Leichman takes the unusual and satisfyingly justified position of focusing upon the much-neglected final play of the Figaro trilogy, *La Mère coupable*. Leichman reads this play as a kind of culmination of the attraction/repulsion to theatricality and performance in both political and social life that has been the focus of his study. In the process, he demonstrates the common phenomenon that dramas which have not proven to have a significant ongoing stage life can often provide important insights into the major social and cultural concerns of their own era.

La Mère coupable, characterized by Beaumarchais himself as the morally significant of his works, returns to the theme of hypocrisy, made central to the French theatre by Molière's *Tartuffe*, but now inflected by more than a century of a growing awareness of the threats posed to the integrity of the nation, the family, and the individual by this activity, along with an awareness of the inherent inescapability of theatricality at the heart of each of these formations. For Molière's audience, the awareness and unmasking of the hypocrite was the responsibility of an enlightened public, and, if they failed in this responsibility, justice was assured by that ultimate basis of authority and identity, personal and national, the King. In post-revolutionary France, that solid base, eroding for more than a century, had totally disappeared, and the audiences of *La Mère coupable* were confronted with the far more difficult challenge of exposing hypocrisy in a society riddled with it and significantly sustained by it, wherein they themselves were inescapably implicated. Representation had moved to a central position in the public consciousness, where it has arguably remained ever since.

NOTE

[1] Jonas Barish, *Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (London: University of California Press, 1981).

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défauts. Tout d'abord, une certaine négligence vis-à-vis de la tradition antique conduit à sous-estimer la permanence du caractère sexuel de cette pathologie. Mais c'est avant tout un vice de méthode qui compromet à nos yeux la validité de l'entreprise. En effet, si le premier chapitre accorde une importance capitale à l'invention de la catégorie d'hystérie (*hysteria*) par Boissier de Sauvages dans sa *Nosologia methodica* (Amsterdam: Frères de Tournes, 1763), l'auteur se détourne ensuite de ces questions nosologiques. Ce changement de perspective, qui a ses avantages comme nous venons de le voir, s'opère au prix d'un manque de rigueur: loin de montrer comment les nosologues ont réuni sous un même terme des maux naguère conçus comme distincts, l'auteur évoque les pratiques d'écriture liées à la description de 'pathologies that would come to be called hysteria' (p. 53). Cette démarche téléologique permet à l'auteur d'assimiler cette *hystérie à venir* avec tout un ensemble de maladies aux manifestations littéraires et médicales fascinantes (hypochondrie, mélancolie, ' vapeurs'). Si la proximité des symptômes et la porosité nosologique sont bien avérés dans les écrits médicaux de cette période, leur assimilation n'allait pas de soi et était soit l'objet d'un débat brûlant (assimilation ou non des ' vapeurs hystériques' aux ' vapeurs hypochondriaques' par exemple), soit impensable (certains symptômes hystériques n'ont jamais été attribués à la mélancolie). Le vice de méthode consiste donc à considérer les termes d' ' affection hystérique' et de ' vapeurs' parfois comme relevant d'entités nosologiques distinctes, parfois comme purement et simplement synonymes, selon les besoins de l'argumentation. Ce flottement empêche l'auteur de se confronter franchement à la question de l'indétermination des ' vapeurs', certes souvent associées à la passion hystérique, mais tout aussi fréquemment confondues avec la mélancolie ou l'hypochondrie. On espérait que cette étude dompte enfin ce monstre protéiforme qu'est l'hystérie, mais c'est le contraire qui semble avoir eu lieu.

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Acting Up: Staging the Subject in Enlightenment France. By JEFFREY M. LEICHMAN. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. xxiii + 261 pp.

As has long been recognized, the eighteenth century in France was a highly theatrical age, and one fascinated and troubled in equal measure by its own theatricality. Jeffrey M. Leichman's book explores these tensions through the specific figure of the actor — and in particular through the intersections (real, perceived, and potential) between acting in a literal, professional sense and more metaphorical manifestations of acting as self-fashioning in the real, offstage world. This is not, then, a historical study of actors or acting, but rather a rich and thorough intellectual-historical exploration of acting as a paradigm — and a very troubling one at that — in Enlightenment thought on selfhood and subjectivity. Leichman's corpus is both broad enough to offer a good picture of the field, and yet focused enough to do justice to the various texts and writers he explores; his study also weaves deftly between theoretical writings such as Rousseau's *Lettre à D'Alembert* and actual plays, like Beaumarchais's *La Mère coupable*. Although Leichman's primary concern is with the Enlightenment, his first chapter sets the theoretical scene in the previous century. Indeed, this chapter provides one of the most astute summaries of tensions between the seventeenth-century Church and the theatre that I have read, particularly when it explores the ways in which writers such as Michel Le Faucheur addressed the uncanny similarities between the actor and the preacher. The second chapter helps to rehabilitate the *comédies larmoyantes* of Nivelle de La Chaussée, which dramatize two concerns that will prove crucial for the period: 'the *jeu social*, or the self-theatricalization required for taking a place on the stage of the public sphere, and the obsession with

transcending class boundaries that underpins and motivates this activity' (p. 46). Indeed, social class — and the increasing shift towards performance and behaviour rather than birth or wealth as determining social status — turns out to be, along with gender, one of this study's two recurrent themes. The next two chapters focus on Rousseau and Diderot in turn, reading their key drama-theoretical texts against a range of their other writings (such as *Narcisse*, the *Discours sur l'inégalité*, *Le Neveu de Rameau*, and *Est-il bon? Est-il méchant?*). Chapter 5 explores the odd blend of utopianism and brutality underlying Rétif de La Bretonne's curious compendium *La Mimographe* (1770), whose hero proposes a state-sanctioned ritual humiliation of actors, and of actresses in particular, believing that 'only an authentic and thoroughgoing debasement of the actress, in her physical and social self' can save men and male virtue from destructive female sexuality (p. 143). Finally, the last chapter explores Beaumarchais's *La Mère coupable* as dramatizing a new relationship towards acting and hypocrisy in a new, supposedly egalitarian world. All in all, this is an excellent and persuasive study. Although the basic paradigms may in themselves be broadly familiar to any *dix-huitième*, they are explored here with a rigour and a subtlety, and with a careful balance of close reading and informed contextualization, that make this a very important addition to recent scholarship on self- and subjecthood.

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L'Orientale allégorique: le conte oriental au XVIII^e siècle en France (1704–1774). Par JEAN-FRANÇOIS PERRIN. (Dix-huitièmes siècles, 186). Paris: Honoré Champion, 2015. 312 pp.

In this book Jean-François Perrin traces the naturalization of the oriental tale by French writers, starting with the publication of Antoine Galland's *Mille et une nuits* in 1704, and ending, seventy years later, with Voltaire's *Taureau blanc*. The Introduction sets out the book's three central themes, the first being the idea that the early French orientalist, including Jean Chardin, Barthélemy d'Herbelot, François Pétis de La Croix, and Galland, were people of great learning, committed to compiling and diffusing authentic knowledge about Asia, specifically its languages, literatures, and cultures. The achievements of these authors are a monument of European civilization and, according to Perrin, an expression of the 'meilleur esprit des Lumières' (p. 23). The second of the book's themes is one that is more familiar: the depiction of the Orient as a foil to Europe. Following Galland, the great public debates of the eighteenth century were often presented through an oriental looking glass, the best-known example of this being Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*. Visitors from the East provided a convenient way of commenting on French society through foreign (and ingenuous) eyes. Readers laugh at the visitors and their observations, but then discover — too late — that they are laughing at themselves. The third theme is closely related to this. Perrin argues that Antoine Hamilton adapted the *conte oriental* in works such as *Le Béliet* and *Les Quatre Facardins* (1730), re-inventing the genre in a self-conscious and satirical vein. According to Perrin, two branches of French literature were directly influenced by Hamilton's reading of Galland: Crébillon's libertine novel and Voltaire's philosophical tales. The affiliation with Voltaire is unmistakable: Hamilton's predilection for persiflage and *double-entendre* seems ready-made for the author of *Zadig*. The case of Crébillon is different: more dream-like and erotic in its approach than Voltaire, and less concerned with verisimilitude. Organized into four parts ('Genèses', 'Poétiques', 'Problématiques', and 'Épilogue'), Perrin's book examines how the oriental tale crossed over into French literature and mixed with established genres such as the *conte merveilleux* and the heroic novel. This first part draws attention to the stylistic and thematic

H-France Review Vol. 17 (June 2017), No. 84

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Jeffrey Leichman's book opens a new series, "Scènes francophones," launched by Bucknell University and edited by Logan J. Connors. Investigating fictional and non-fictional discourses on the actor's performance in ancien régime France, this study offers a very adequate opening to "the only North American book series dedicated to French-speaking theater" (as editors present it).

The title, "Acting Up," is situated in two interrelated semantic fields that are crucial for the historically optimistic, and perhaps somewhat utopian as I will argue, understanding of the actor's performance deployed in the book. On the one hand, to act up is to merely show off, to put oneself on display. On the other, acting up refers to unruly behavior, provocative or disrespectful of conventions. The book's goal is to demonstrate that, within the rigid social structures of absolutist France, the former meaning necessarily led to the latter. According to Leichman, stage acting is "an inherently rebellious gesture that...is essential to understanding the radical departure from a fixed and eternal order to one that takes its cues from the actor's freedom of self-invention, the uncanny ability to embody a convincing person where none existed previously" (p. 163). By developing this argument, the author reinvests the consensual, if regularly contested, historiographical narrative about the eighteenth century, but also nuances it through inscribing acting into the story of the gradual decline of the moral authority of the Church and religion: "The actor's endless perfectibility signaled a new age, which would severely challenge the authority of the Christian worldview. After the age of belief come the age of the actor; after faith enlightenment" (p. 33).

The book unfolds in six chapters, the chronology of which stretches beyond the eighteenth century. The story starts in seventeenth-century Paris, the setting of the institutionalization of French theater under the patronage of the cardinal Richelieu and reaches the late 1790s in the last chapter. After a short introduction and an excursus on the seventeenth-century "quarrel over acting" offered in the first chapter, each following chapter builds around a text or several texts and their authors: Nivelles de la Chaussée, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Diderot, Rétif de la Bretonne, and Beaumarchais.

Acting Up results from a doctoral thesis defended in 2008 at Yale, to which the author has added one new chapter (on Rétif de la Bretonne's peculiar work *La Mimographe*, chapter five). It is, in other words, a first book, which concentrates years of learning, cautious writing and revision, and the original ideas of an emerging scholar. At the same time, it is a book of a teacher, who not only patiently engages with original texts and secondary literature in two languages, but also recycles his readings into a clearly structured and highly readable, if sometimes packed, narrative. [1] The material economy of the book reflects these qualities of the work: there are some 175 pages of the core text and sixty-nine pages of notes.

The subject of the book is, more precisely, theories and “concrete manifestations” of acting, the latter being understood as a practice and a technique in which multiple tensions between social and political selves were negotiated, sometimes—as the author claims—for the first time in history. By “concrete manifestations,” Leichman does not mean historically reconstructed material practices, but normative and critical discourses on theater and performance: treatises on the acting authored by its detractors and its defenders, as well as dramatic paratexts. In addition, a corpus of dramatic texts is approached in the book from a similar perspective as a series of reflections on the actor-subject, attuned to the changing rules of poetics and to the social transformations related to the “rise of the bourgeoisie.”

While the study takes into account literature on the history of theatrical practices and material culture of performance, its assumption is that philosophical and aesthetic treatises are a more relevant source for the reconstruction of the “epistemological stakes of performance” and their affective scenarios than “a taxonomy of postures and grimaces whose evocative power is inaccessible to the present age” (p. xvi). Apart from refusing to take the path of this kind of semiotics, which are, in his view, historically irrelevant, Leichman also seeks to delineate himself from literary studies dedicated to eighteenth-century “theatricality.” If, for many of these studies, theatricality is a synonym for the artificially created illusion of existence, Leichman theorizes acting as an innovative “esthetic practice of personhood” (p. xiv) that offered the individual new ways of interaction with society and its power hierarchies: “...the subject who first stepped onto the stage of modernity was an actor” (p. xxiii).[2]

While the author affiliates his work with the broad field of “performance studies,” allowing a hybrid approach of the studied objects and sources, his book remains firmly inscribed in the broadly defined field of French cultural history, encompassing, in this case, literary studies, the history of theater, and intellectual history. In this respect, it follows a larger trend in the scholarship of the 2010s dedicated to pre-1800 France, including recent books by Logan J. Connors, Cecilia Feilla, and Joseph Harris, to name just those quoted in the footnotes of the reviewed book.[3] All these works reexamine French cultural history through the lens of the theories and practice of theater.[4]

Joseph Harris’s book, in particular, places the question of subjectivity at the center of the investigation into the spectator’s experience. Harris’s and Leichman’s studies could be seen as two parts of one broad inquiry, dedicated to the main individual human components of a theatrical event: spectator and actor, respectively. They engage with two dilemmas, or paradoxes, that still shape our thinking about human agency in the theatrical experience. These dilemmas problematize the juxtaposition, in performance, of esthetic and social experience, asking: should the actor/spectator be involved in the performance up to the point of forgetting him/herself and leaving all space to the theatrical illusion? What kinds of moral effect can such absorption or distance produce?

In France, these parallel debates culminated around 1750, generating hundreds of polemical texts and inspiring major writings by Denis Diderot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, two emblematic representatives of the dispute. By no coincidence, the chapters dedicated to these two authors are at the center of Leichman’s book. Indeed, while the author of *Acting Up* demonstrates the importance of lesser known aesthetic treatises and dramatic texts, such as La Chaussée’s *comédies larmoyantes*, canonical texts by Diderot and Rousseau and their original interpretation are crucial to his argument.[5]

Concisely described, the architecture of the book is defined by the encounters between Leichman’s reading of marginal and lesser-known texts and the interpretations of more familiar texts stemming from the author’s broadened corpus. By addressing lesser-known texts with the canon in mind, Leichman revivifies both readers’ and his own interest and curiosity. The less positive side of this *remise en perspective* is that it seeks to nuance existing narratives and established views on the cultural history of the studied epoch rather than offer a critical reappraisal of them. Rousseau’s play *Narcisse* thus “prefigures a central concern uniting Rousseau’s literary and political works” (p. 65), Beaumarchais’s

drame La Mère coupable “also deserves to be considered in the company of its comic predecessors,” i.e. *Le Barbier de Séville* and *Le Mariage de Figaro* (p. 145), and so on—the canon provides a seemingly indispensable frame for Leichman’s analyses. Hence, too, passages legitimizing the author’s interest in a genre or a text in teleological terms, such as: “Saint-Albine and Riccoboni provide the initial framework for a debate that, through Diderot, would become fundamental to modern acting theory” (p. 28). Both attention given to the emergence of a phenomenon and perspective set by “modernity” are recognizable features of some versions of intellectual history.

Perhaps as a result of this approach, Leichman’s close readings, generally insightful, lead to sometimes trenchant conclusions. After stating the importance of the “emotional effusions and complicated intrigues” of the *comédie larmoyante* for posthumous literary developments, the author declares *sensibilité* a “mainstream affect in the eighteenth century” (pp. 58-59). The elimination of the comic in favor of the pathetic fails, I think, to account for the complexity of the theatrical repertoire featuring a heterogeneous corpus of performed texts, which include Molière and his epigones, as well as the moralizing comedy. Voltaire, in his comedies (e.g., *L’Enfant prodigue*, 1736), and Diderot, in his theoretical writings, stressed the interest of bringing comic and touching effects together in one dramatic narrative.

The overarching project of the study is to offer an account of the troubling and crucial link between the modern subjectivity and acting. In contrast to existing accounts, critical of the “society of the spectacle,” skeptical towards the status of the autonomous subject in modern societies or questioning the mechanisms of representation, Leichman’s book places the acting subject and its emancipation through performance at the center of discussion. The latter is defined as a praxis where philosophical discourse and “aesthetics of individual freedom” or “self-fashioning freedom” merge in a liberating and potentially socially transgressive interplay. “By framing and objectifying the individual subject’s interactions with the world, modern dramatic imitation allows spectators to recognize the theatrical structures that govern their lives outside the theater,” affirms, optimistically, Leichman (p. xviii). This claim, however, remains in the state of hypothesis, as the study investigates neither the lived experiences of theater, nor the lives of spectators: historical actors who occupy both the stage and the auditorium are substituted in the study by the different models they were offered to follow.

While Leichman posits that his book aims to look at both practice and “theoretical modeling” of stage performance, the study is primarily dedicated to discourses on acting. The link between performance and audience remains in the sphere of the author’s intuitions as in this hypothesis about the acclaim received by the *comédie larmoyante*: “...this success can be attributed to the genre’s representation of a status-conscious urban public overcoming social obstacles through carefully modulated domestic performances” (p. 45). Indeed, although recent studies of Parisian theatergoers by Jeffrey Ravel and others offer a variety of insights into the sociology of the eighteenth-century theater-going public, any claim about the mechanisms of dramatic success is bound to remain a guess that is more or less supported by fragmentary evidence.[6] And Leichman’s study does not provide any original evidence on this aspect of theatrical life of the old regime.

The book’s thesis concerning the actor is more solid, but also raises a series of issues that are not addressed in the study. Leichman demonstrates, for instance, that acting becomes a laboratory where new concepts of the subject have been created, and this for a number of reasons. The primary historical reason was a tension shaping the actor’s social condition: both marginal, because of the ecclesiastical ban on the profession, and prominent, thanks to his/her place in the economy of urban entertainment. This feature of the socioprofessional status brought about a technique that later could be transferred into the broader realm of everyday interactions by various social groups: “Once the world is acknowledged as a mutable play-script, individual actors are empowered to take advantage of the formal limitations to the social world’s play-like structure in order to secure their personal goals” (p. 44). From this realization, Leichman comes to the conclusion that acting is always potentially “acting up,” that is “an infraction

against the established order that denies the authority to define the relationship between the individual and the expectations of his or her society” (p. 163). This thesis resonates with some of the influential projects of philosophical and historical reconciliation of performance practices and historically situated forms of social domination, such as Mikhail Bakhtin’s investigation into carnival or the Situationist International struggle against the oppressive structures of everyday life. However, the results of Leichman’s research sharply contradict the sociological paradigms with which I am familiar, starting with Pierre Bourdieu’s reading of symbolic interactions in the social world. In the closer disciplinary environment, Sarah Maza’s revision of the “myth of the French bourgeoisie,” referenced in the bibliography, is not addressed in *Acting Up* either. As a result, the optimistic narrative of Leichman’s study seems to belong to a different epoch in cultural history.

Bringing into this review issues and questions that are situated beyond the scope of literary studies and intellectual history, the original disciplinary domains of the book, may not seem entirely fair. In my view, however, this is justified by an important quality of performance studies—that of a heterogeneous and constantly developing discipline, a discipline to which Leichman’s study offers a valuable contribution.

NOTES

[1] The reader will enjoy the accuracy of translations from French, just as much as Leichman’s lively academic prose. Among minor disagreements regarding the former, should be mentioned the translation of Voltaire’s essay *Sur la police des spectacles*, rendered as *On the purity of spectacles* (p. 131). The ancien régime use of the word “police” referred to political and administrative organization and supervision of a given entity. Its meaning is broader and more technical than Leichman’s equivalent (see the translation of the discussed title in the 1760s’ London edition of Voltaire’s works: “On the management of publick shows”). Besides, Voltaire’s short piece on the issue of the excommunication of actors and actresses was originally published in 1745 in the Ledet/Desbordes edition of Voltaire’s works as a separate *Lettre sur les spectacles* and not as an entry in the *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764), as Leichman writes. Since Leichman cites David Williams’ critical edition of the essay (published in the Voltaire Foundation edition of Voltaire’s *Complete Works*), I assume that he is aware that the editors of the Kehl edition had the idea to print *Police des spectacles* as an entry in the *Philosophical Dictionary* in the 1780s (see *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. 28A [Oxford : Voltaire Foundation, 2006], pp. 65-75).

[2] Leichman’s study resonates with Ziad Elmarsafy’s book that looks at theoretical foundations of the self using a different dramatic and literary corpus from the same time period. See Ziad Elmarsafy, *The Histrionic Sensibility and Identity from Corneille to Rousseau* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2001).

[3] Logan Connors, *Dramatic battles in eighteenth-century France: philosophes, anti-philosophes and polemical theatre* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012); Cecilia Feilla, *The Sentimental Theater of the French Revolution* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013); Joseph Harris, *Inventing the Spectator: Subjectivity and Theatrical Experience in Early modern France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[4] The field of performance studies as such is much less represented in the book, as is the philosophy of the subject. It is noteworthy that performance studies have recently shifted their focus from the isolated study of onstage performance to collective theatrical events. See, for instance, William Sauter, *The Theatrical Event. Dynamics of Performance and Perception* (Iowa City: The University of Iowa Press, 2000).

[5] In this and some other respects, the closest model for Leichman’s book seems to be David Marshall’s *The surprising effects of sympathy : Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988).

[6] Jeffrey S. Ravel, *The Contested Parterre. Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680-1791* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).

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