

Reviews

Peter P. Reed, *Rogue Performances: Staging the Underclasses in Early American Theatre Culture*. Palgrave Studies in Theatre and Performance History. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. xii + 249 pp. £55.00/\$90.00.

Peter Reed's *Rogue Performances* combines painstaking archival research with imaginative, even daring analysis and interpretation. Exploring America's obsession with low and disruptive characters, Reed is clearly inspired by, and building upon, the recent fine work of Heather S. Nathans and Jeffrey H. Richards. Similar to Nathans's investigation, in *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson*, of the ways in which institutions consciously constructed the new national drama, Reed's study examines how '[t]heater parlays on-stage outlawry into networks of patronage, dependency, and privilege' (13). And Reed's identification of the complex theatrical construction of lower-class identities owes much to Richards's *Drama, Theatre, and Identity in the American New Republic*.¹

The author gives almost equal attention to the theatrical and paratheatrical in his exploration of the Anglo-Atlantic landscape. While his study principally revolves around plays performed on American stages from the 1770s to the 1830s, half of the chosen plays were not written by Americans and are not works that we automatically associate with the United States. He likewise examines the on- and offstage performance and reception of the English-speaking underclasses on both sides of the Atlantic, examining 'the ways that American theatre reinvents found materials to produce its own dramatic scenes' (4).

The underclasses are here defined not merely as low and poor but 'roguish – bad, powerful, and attractive' (5). Karl Marx, in his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852), broadly classifies his *lumpenproletariat* as the unpredictable, uncontrollable, and unruly dregs left behind by the revolution, and Reed similarly casts a rather wide net in his definition of the underclasses, including in that category servants and slaves, apprentices and labourers, artisans and mechanics, pimps and prostitutes, criminals and pirates, immigrants and women: 'The theatricalized lower classes emerge from social encounters and perceived differences as much as from material conditions and collective consciousness' (5). Reed's wide latitude within his definition of 'underclass' provides limitless possibilities for interpretation, but it also gives him a tremendous amount of ground to cover. In focusing his study he articulates three broad arguments. First, these theatrical underclasses provide the foundation for social identity: 'The stagey low emerges from and destabilizes the identity formations, collective affiliations, and disciplinary practices of Atlantic modernity' (5). Second, the on- and offstage performance of the low had an enormous impact on the development of theatrical forms, including melodrama, minstrelsy, and patriotic spectacle. These theatrical genres conventionalize the behavior and perceptions of the low both within the theatre and without. Third, 'a broadly defined "print-performance culture" . . . produces, shapes, transmits, and archives the low. . . reshap[ing] performance through their respective aesthetic conventions and production practices' (6).

Reed devotes each of his six chapters to a specific work, its on-stage treatment of the low, and offstage parallels that illustrate the real-world perspective. John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) might seem an unlikely place to begin a uniquely American exploration, but

Reed provides compelling justification for England's most famous ballad opera as a foundation for his study. Indeed, he frequently returns to *Beggar's Opera* as something of a framing device for his investigation of the low, common, and criminal. And the overwhelming popularity of and familiarity with Gay's ballad opera on both sides of the Atlantic support this emphasis. However, Reed's frequent citation of Gay's rarely performed sequel *Polly* (published in 1729 but not staged until 1777) appears somewhat less relevant and useful. The story of the cross-dressing titular heroine, and of Macheath in blackface as a pirate of the Caribbean who finally gets the death he deserves, is intriguing; however, it is difficult to gauge the actual impact of this obscure work. In considering *The Beggar's Opera*, Reed also examines the paratheatrical excitement and spectacle of hanging and incarceration, thus revealing the significant extrinsic relevance of the work. Macheath's charisma and good luck provide a striking point of comparison with the real-life spectacle surrounding the executions of Levi Ames and James Mount, as well as the circus performance of Stoker, an acrobat who enacted hanging as an entertainment for the lower classes.

A number of the plays under consideration deal with issues of enslavement, captivity, and identity. Susanna Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers* (1794) enjoyed very few performances, but its story of an American family held captive in Algeria and rescued by an underclass mob provides unusual perspectives on race, class, and gender. The underclass characters are presented as comically low, but at the same time they are the only ones capable of pragmatic action. While the mob eventually does seize center stage as the heroes of the tale, their portrayal is positive only at the very end – and only for a moment. Reed examines not only the idea of captivity as a cultural, sexual, and ethnic threat, but also the simultaneous danger and seduction of conversion to Islam. Because the on-stage Algerians were played by white actors in blackface, Reed argues that this fear of conversion was subconsciously fulfilled. He also discusses contemporary accounts of captivity and conversion that built upon fears only suggested in Rowson's play. Conversely, anxieties about those held in captivity in the United States drives John Fawcett's blackface pantomime *Obi; or Three-Finger'd Jack* (1800), which tells the story of a black bandit who terrorizes white Jamaica. Even though no evidence exists to connect this tale to a fear of American slave uprisings, which Reed views as 'a fundamental repression governing interpretation of the play' (104), he argues that *Obi* restages a recurring white fear of slave revolts. While this claim may appear unsupported, Reed does find an intriguing and persuasive parallel in a black Virginia bandit who sowed fear among plantation owners in 1818, repeatedly escaped capture, and was eventually executed.

Reed likewise asserts the importance of the context of American slavery to Robert Montgomery Bird's *The Gladiator* (1831). This play, which will forever be linked to the muscular masculinity of Edwin Forrest, features charismatic, rebellious rogues fighting against oppressive Roman authorities. While typically perceived by audiences and critics as tale of rebellion by exploited commoners against a tyrannous aristocracy, *The Gladiator*, Reed suggests, is more ambiguous in its message. Certainly the play's author was aware of its potentially inflammatory anti-slavery message, but the relevance grasped by audiences appeared limited to class-based, Jacksonian ideologies. In support of a reading inflected by race and slavery, Reed identifies 'a lingering cultural memory of the theatrical blackness that had long shaped Forrest's performances' (169), a view based solely on Forrest's possible blackface performance in his teens and his frequent appearance as Othello, a favourite role among every major star of the period. More compelling is Reed's analysis of America's – especially black America's – connection to the Romans, suggesting 'that Americans understood blackness as intertwined with classical cultural relics' (171).

The focus on the interplay between the theatrical and paratheatrical, between on- and offstage America, provides a particularly astute reading of *The Glory of Columbia; Her Yeomanry!* (1803), William Dunlap's reworking of his own commercially unsuccessful tragedy *Andre* (1798). Reed skillfully explores how Dunlap's change in format from verse tragedy to patriotic spectacle, which could be perceived as either a democratization or a dumbing-down, encourages a rowdy heterogeneity both on stage and in the audience. The traitorous Andre is captured by the honest, heroic, comic and low, but in considering the historical background Reed reveals these yeomen as little more than highwaymen. In his reading, theatrical parades and military musters emerge as spectacles that inherently established social hierarchy and controlled the excesses of the disorderly low.

Key chapters deal with further works imported from England, featuring unruly characters from across the spectrum of class. W. T. Moncrieff's *Tom and Jerry, or Life in London* (1821) follows two sophisticated urbanites who take a country cousin on a tour of the city. Disguised as members of the lower classes, and followed by three female friends in similar costume, they participate in underclass life. The audience voyeuristically and vicariously experienced the low as spectacle, suggesting a surveillance and social differentiation by the 'not low'. This play enjoyed great popularity in England and was freely adapted to the locations and characters of several American cities, to similar success. Reed specifically focuses on the African Grove production of *Tom and Jerry*, perhaps staged by the country's first interracial cast, and a New Orleans production that featured a famous African-American street performer. Reed suggests that this commodification of underclass black performance had an enormous impact on the future of blackface minstrelsy.

In his conclusion, Reed briefly turns to another tale borrowed from Britain, Jonas B. Phillips's *Jack Sheppard, or the Life of a Robber* (1839). Sheppard was, famously, the real-life inspiration for Macheath in *Beggar's Opera*, bringing us full circle, back to the criminality of Gay's charismatic rogue. Phillips's work presents the sumptuary display of the hero as a transgression that challenges social boundaries of class and gender, a performance of false gentility revealing potential dangers to the upper classes. Reed delineates these same tensions by examining the growth of riots in the 1830s, concluding with analysis of the Astor Place Riot of 1849, an event that publicly exposed the devastating split between high and low.

Peter Reed's scrupulously researched volume joins the recent trend, crossing disciplines, in transatlantic readings of American performance culture. In its exploration of theatre, his work adds to that of Nathans, Richards, and others, encouraging a more complex view of theatre's reciprocal relationship with the full spectrum of society, calling for an expanded awareness of and appreciation for the traditionally ignored and disempowered, and challenging scholarly assumptions about class in antebellum America. The title of *Rogue Performances* may invariably draw a connection to the recent political memoir of a former Alaskan governor. And clearly the idea of *going rogue*, of breaking rules with spirit and conviction, of charismatic misbehaviour, continues to appeal to a country born of revolution.

Karl Kippola
American University

Note

- 1 Heather S. Nathans, *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People* (Cambridge, 2003). Jeffrey H. Richards, *Drama, Theatre, and Identity in the American New Republic* (Cambridge, 2005).

Judith Buchanan, *Shakespeare on Silent Film: An Excellent Dumb Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 340 pp. £55.00; \$99.00.

Anthony R. Guneratne. *Shakespeare, Film Studies, and the Visual Cultures of Modernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 368 pp. £50.00; \$95.00.

In the last ten years to fifteen years, both studies of Shakespeare on film and of literary adaptations to cinema more generally have expanded beyond the work of 1970s and 1980s theorists such as Jack Jorgens and Dudley Andrew and the pages of long-running journals such as *Literature/Film Quarterly* to be found in an ever-increasing number of edited compilations and single-author book-length studies.¹ Advancing simultaneously, the critical consideration of the former and the theory of the latter have noticeably nourished each other to the point that each has now developed into a self-sufficient academic cottage industry fed by panels, conferences, and – as is indicated here – significant publications. Two recent books, one by Judith Buchanan and another by Anthony R. Guneratne, both intersect with and expand upon these recently invigorated discourses. Though the objects of their respective studies regularly overlap, the approach, methodology, and contexts brought to bear on these Shakespearean films diverge significantly. As a result, though their titles might seem to indicate a shared intellectual terrain, these two books perform radically divergent tasks, possess varying use-values, and – excepting fairly advanced scholars of Shakespearean cinema – are ultimately written for different audiences.

Nonetheless, these two disparate approaches do possess one significant commonality in that they both deviate from the basic pattern established by the spate of other book-length studies of Shakespeare in cinema. In this frequent model, the scholar selects an illustrative set of Shakespearean texts and considers them within the relatively recent field of film-focused Adaptation Studies, investigating the ontological, industrial, and/or cultural changes affected by the process(es) of adaptation. At the same time, these scholars nearly always remain grounded in Shakespearean Studies and simultaneously treat these moving images as any other performance of Shakespeare, seeking out novel interpretations of the Bard's works. While Buchanan and Guneratne certainly engage both of these approaches, these are not exactly the overarching goals of either book. Buchanan, as her title indicates, is particularly interested here in a very specific material form and historical moment: the silent films of the first three decades of cinema. Guneratne, on the other hand, quickly expands past the expected field of focus: his study of Shakespearean films (many, but not wholly, silent) stimulates a free and often tangential discourse on a number of (sometimes) interconnected topics, including but in no way limited to those of Shakespeare, Film Studies, Visual Culture, and Modernity that he lays out in his title.

Judith Buchanan's *Shakespeare on Silent Film* extends her previous, more truncated consideration of Shakespeare in the silent cinema undertaken in her previous book, *Shakespeare on Film* (2005). A scholar of early modern literature, Buchanan brings to this project a strong background in Shakespeare, which she effectively pairs with a strong grasp of moving image media's theoretical and historical concerns, honed as Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of York. While certainly intersecting regularly with current perspectives of adaptation, this book is not a theoretical consideration of adaptation in cinema, silent or otherwise.

In many ways, her thesis in this newer work can be understood as a limit-case test of both her previous book and other moving image adaptation studies of Shakespeare's plays. While

most studies of Shakespeare on screen highlight the emphasis of the visual over the aural, her study absolutely foregrounds it, as 'the most noticeable characteristic of these films is the thing conspicuously missing from them' (xvii). Though she readily admits that contemporary audiences and scholars alike tend to view silent Shakespeare as 'oxymoronic,' she also points out that, regardless of this apparent contradiction, between 1899 and 1927 the American and West European film industries produced between 250 and 300 films adapted from Shakespearean sources² and that during this period *Hamlet* was adapted to the screen more often than any other literary or theatrical source. Yet rather than trying to recuperate or reclaim these works as more central to the filmic and Shakespearean performance histories she engages, Buchanan instead celebrates their status as 'awkwardly and provocatively liminal' and, in fact, it is exactly their 'fringe position' and 'roguish marginality' that has drawn her to analyze a body of films that appear 'wonderfully well placed to disappoint both' the cinematic and theatrical forms they simultaneously engage as voiceless adaptations (6-8). No study of silent film Shakespeare could successfully escape from engaging Robert Hamilton Ball's significant and still valuable book *Shakespeare on Silent Film: A Strange Eventful History* (1968), nor does Buchanan try, but wisely sets herself up early as continuing rather than contradicting his work, drawing on the advances in theoretical sophistication and, probably more significantly, the greatly expanded archival records, availabilities, and discoveries of the past forty years.³

Her first chapter – one that is especially relevant in our context here, focuses on Shakespearean forms of the nineteenth century that accentuated the ocular. In addition to tracing the theatrical histories of both 'Wordless Shakespeares and Spectacular Shakespeares,' she examines tableaux vivants, illustrated storybooks, and – with particular emphasis and acuity – magic lantern slides. By connecting the practices of filmic silent Shakespeare to a longer nineteenth century visual lineage of screen and stage practices that privileged image over word, Buchanan places the rest of her work in the cinema industries within a larger context of screen practices that shaped both the choices filmmakers made and the references with which audiences were (potentially) familiar. This chapter effectively establishes her larger methodological perspective on silent film adaptations, viewing them not as a genesis of techniques but as an intermediary stage of development. At the same time, this chapter establishes the first of her two key frames of inquiry; in the study of films that follows this chapter she regularly complements this emphasis on preexisting visual traditions with considerations of extant turn-of-the-century performance modes.

The rest of her book is broken up into chapters that simultaneously engage a chronological progression and thematic organization. Each chapter not only offers a different selection of films, but also adjusts her critical emphasis so that each set of films is most productively engaged. While the first chapter traces visual representations and transmedial adaptations of Shakespeare in the late nineteenth century before the inauguration of cinema, her second chapter offers a close reading and detailed study of the first Shakespeare film, *King John* (1899) and examines the degree to which the process of appropriating Shakespeare in this early moment of film history is both similar to and distinct from what came before and after. Chapter 3 focuses on the inconsistent and often contradictory aesthetic and formal properties of early one- and two-reel Shakespearean adaptations from 1908 and 1909. Beyond its own merit as historical analysis, this also helps establish a background for the investigation of industrial and marketing conditions of Vitagraph's series of Shakespeare films from the same period that makes up the fourth chapter. Chapter 5 takes two high-profile stage productions of *Hamlet* that were made into early feature-length films, one in England and one in Italy, looking at them for not only their varying performance styles

but also for issues of international distribution and textual mobility. Using *The Real Thing at Last* (1916), J. M. Barrie's filmic burlesque of performance styles on both sides of the Atlantic, as reference, her next chapter looks closely at several films from the 1916 tercentenary celebration of Shakespeare to test the validity of this satirical critique. Chapter 7 concludes her study of the silent screen with a close consideration of two later films, both from the Weimar Cinema of the early 1920s, that have received significant ink from other scholars: Asta Nielsen's *Hamlet* (1920) and Emil Jannings' *Othello* (1922). Coming at the end of such a study, her analysis here allows Buchanan to position these two celebrated works as culminations of previous artistic and industrial developments in screen Shakespeare.

Just as filmmakers of the period were forced to address the 'oxymoron' of silent Shakespeare, Buchanan also recognizes the need for scholars to directly address this apparent discordance by revisiting the variety of filmic solutions these early moving image practitioners offered. By focusing her critical attentions on what these films contain and display rather than on what they lack, she is able to amplify connections other scholars have ignored or misinterpreted, especially silent cinema's intermediate position between not just live theater and synchronous sound cinema, but also between twentieth-century representational technologies and the visual precursors of the nineteenth century. Moreover, her reduced focus results in an ability to ground more adequately the techniques and practices of later screen Shakespeares in a medium-specific history that, while eventually re-introducing the spoken word, had to traverse an influential if relatively (in terms of Shakespearean performance histories) short-lived mute variation.

Buchanan's work in *Shakespeare on Silent Film* is well-researched, clearly organized, and effectively articulated. She does at times display a slight bias toward a readership that is, like her, more familiar with Shakespeare than with silent cinema, yet she also presents her work in such a way as to accommodate as many different scholars as possible. In both her text and in her footnotes (which, though sometimes extensive, are rarely distracting) she provides important clarifying contextualization from a wide range of sources and discourses, including Shakespeare studies, early film history, performance studies, visual culture, archival information, and biographical information on creative personnel. To her particular credit, she effectively pushes this study of Shakespeare beyond a cinema-specific history by bringing into dialogue these other complementary fields. Though she occasionally neglects what would seem to early cinema scholars to be a useful secondary text, her familiarity and command of these extra-Shakespearean areas of study is notable.⁴ Her efforts are further assisted by an extensive use of supporting images, with fifty-seven black and white images from a variety of sources interspersed throughout the book, as well as a successful balancing of primary and secondary sources. Her analyses impressively provide an introduction for those readers less familiar with these films and their Shakespearean sources while simultaneously presenting interesting and detailed case studies for scholars already familiar with her subject matter. As a result, the book itself can be a valuable tool for interested scholars in any of these various disciplines. Intellectually sophisticated without being inaccessible, the book can also be read by a wide range of scholars and pedagogues, including advanced undergraduates.

Anthony Guneratne's *Shakespeare, Film Studies, and the Visual Cultures of Modernity* is a wide-ranging and often interesting peregrination on even more topics than his title can contain. Less a direct consideration of adaptation than a prolix discussion of the theoretical, critical, and material aspects of filmmaking and art-making in a commercial and political world that inform and determine the choices made in the process of adapting a work across media and eras, Guneratne's book is written with a certain poetic flair. Unfortunately this

often results in a book that is at least as frustrating as it is stimulating. It is also a work of scholarship that is decidedly, and purposefully, dense – in its language, in its content, and in its form, with 249 pages of small-font tightly-packed text accompanied by only six images (seven with the cover art).

Despite this density I regularly found myself invoking Gertrude's admonition of Polonius: 'More matter, with less art.' Yet the book as a whole contains much 'matter,' as he writes expansively on Shakespeare, Film Studies, and any number of other interrelated (though not always clearly so) topics that enter his purview. While most pronounced in his overlong seventy-two page 'Something Like an Introduction' (his phrase), his pontifications are by no means limited to that section. Whereas Buchanan's diversification lends her work a robustness not always present in historical studies, Guneratne's reads instead like a lack of focus. While his multidisciplinary breadth, bibliographic scope, and ruminative sweep are easily his greatest offering, they simultaneously foment a lack of focus which is the book's crucial deficiency.

Though his title invites scholars from a number of different fields, the writing often trades clarity for loquaciousness and jargon. In discussing Herbert Beerbohm Tree's *King John*, for example, he claims that 'Tree's innovative film is a paradigmatic refutation of one of the commonly encountered pseudo-evolutionary mythologies embedded in what we regard as film history' (76); in describing Peter Greenaway's treatment of *The Tempest* (*Prospero's Books* [1991]), we read: 'This is a New Historicist who might have chanced upon Derrida, transforming the idea of writing's anteriority to the spoken word into cheeky insouciance' (233). As such, this book seems to hark back to a previous moment in Film Studies where an expansive yet digressive approach assembled under a loose thematic rubric was, if not *en vogue*, at least acceptable. Yet if it is these theoretical and philosophical writings on cinema rather than studies of Shakespeare on screen that are used to frame this work and inform readers' expectations, Guneratne's book becomes liberated from its historiographic horizon and thus much more enjoyable and potentially valuable (at least in places) as a new work. Treated in this context, as an eclectic and idiosyncratic intervention and reflection on film theory and film history developed in response to Shakespearean adaptations, this book becomes an engaging read.

Like Buchanan, he opens his film-based discussions with a sustained treatment of Tree's *King John*. His purpose in this first chapter, and in fact the majority of the book, is to demonstrate that the previous considerations of these films 'have yet to provide a sufficiently thoroughgoing historical contextualization' (76). Drawing on a wide range of supplementary sources, both primary and secondary (including here a caricature of the stage production probably drawn by Max Beerbohm, Tree's half-brother and the chief theatrical critic for the *Saturday Review*), Guneratne attends to a series of these (re)contextualizations. Such an open-ended thesis allows him to match theoretical and methodological approaches to his chosen sub-set of films, maintaining some consistency, such as (like Buchanan) his interest in performance histories and authorship, yet also varying his tactics dramatically across chapters. He ultimately works to justify this approach in the introduction to his final chapter (he has no concluding chapter and, in fact, his chapters and their internal sections all tend to end without any concluding remarks or attempts to recapitulate or clarify his arguments) when he claims that each of the previous chapters 'encapsulates a different dimension of the idea that adaptation consists not of a single process of translation but, instead, of a multitude of simultaneous interpretive acts' (211). While this is a valid (though not necessarily novel) critical insight for adaptation studies and could have provided a strong focusing thesis near the beginning of his work, as a retrospective attempt to provide

a framework for what came before, it does not overcome the structural vagaries of the book to this point.

His second and third chapters also cover material similar to Buchanan's *Shakespeare on Silent Film* – transitional era Shakespeare and a series of silent cinema *Hamlets* – though, as mentioned already, both his purpose and the resulting interventions are markedly different from hers. If his first three chapters intercut, among other things, considerations of authorship and performance, the final two chapters emphasize authorship to an even greater degree in their consideration of distinctive synch-sound adaptations by filmmakers from Orson Welles to the present.

Upon reflection, the one underlying issue for Guneratne's book as a whole may be this concern with authorship and the cultural politics of adaptation that it brings to the fore. In fact, by selecting only Shakespearean texts he has purposefully and effectively chosen a worthy foil to the authorship of the filmmakers and performers he considers. The absolute consistency of a strong *preexisting* authorial presence across a variety of films and adapting filmmakers is what, taking the book in summation, I sense ultimately made Shakespeare's films so uniquely attractive to Guneratne and thus why he chose to structure a project such as this around these plays.

In considering the 'sociopolitical dimensions of both the theatrical and cinematic versions' of Tree's *King John*, Guneratne puts a different emphasis on this reliance on Shakespeare: 'Precisely by being transculturally and transtemporally significant texts, Shakespeare's plays offer the cultural historian valuable insights into the changing role of media and society, about questions of authority vis-à-vis technologies of communication and performance practices, and about the process of symbiotic intermediation' (92). Both scholars reviewed here employ the Shakespearean texts for exactly these reasons and both work hard to recontextualize the Shakespearean films they consider. Buchanan, on the one hand, keeps her work well grounded in the specificities of adaptation – rarely engaging purely theoretical issues even as she makes inquiries across a variety of processes that symbiotically interrelate in the transposition of a text across media. Guneratne, as a self-proclaimed cultural historian, takes a purposefully broad approach and affords himself no such restriction and, as a result, though his point of textual departure is often the same as hers, the points of arrival offer little in the way of a cohesive whole. Nonetheless, for scholars interested in any of the three significant overlaps of cultural objects, or silent cinema adaptations of Shakespeare more generally, Buchanan and Guneratne provide an extremely interesting point/counterpoint – not so much in oppositional readings but rather by approaching these cultural materials in radically different ways, adding important perspectives to the limited extant discourses and introducing important supplementary and complementary historical and cultural contexts into these considerations.

W.D. Phillips
New York University

Notes

- 1 In addition to its more general study of adaptation, *Literature/Film Quarterly* has, since it began publication in 1973, intermittently devoted entire issues solely to Shakespeare; this has been an annual practice since 2004.
- 2 Only approximately forty survive. This percentage is, however, somewhat higher than silent films more generally. Buchanan attributes this to the cultural cache associated with these films even in their original moment.

- 3 For example, Ball had never seen *King John* and though his consideration of the film was based on the resources he had, including printed reports on Tree's theatrical staging and the memory of one of the actors in the film who was still alive in the 1960s, his hypotheses regarding this film were largely conjectural. The remnant of this film accessible today (one shot, the King's death scene, running approximately one minute) was not rediscovered until the early 1990s during an inventory at the Nederlands Filmmuseum. It has since been released on the BFI *Silent Shakespeare* DVD (2000) and is also viewable online. Four stills from the film (two from the death scene and two from two other scenes/shots) that had been printed contemporaneously along with an article in the illustrated paper *The Sketch* were discovered shortly thereafter; Buchanan reproduces these photographs on page 65.
- 4 Two notable examples here would be Rick Altman's *Silent Film Sound* (New York, 2007) in her discussion of the live lectures and vocal re-enactments that accompanied projected Shakespearean images (10-16) and Richard Abel's *Americanizing the Movies and 'Movie-Mad' Audiences, 1910-1914* (Berkeley, 2006) in her consideration of Vitagraph's Americanization of Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar* (1909) (112-121). The exclusion of these sources does not, however, undermine her critical engagement with their shared subject matter.

Paul S. Moore, *Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008. 250 pp. \$24.95.

For many years now, film historians have been working to produce fine-grained accounts of localised moviegoing that also contribute to a more generalised account of early cinema. While earlier works in the film studies "historical turn" were concerned primarily with providing an empirical counterpoint to the totalizing description of spectatorship produced out of psychoanalytic theory, more recent studies have attempted to situate carefully detailed, and contextual research within broader terrains of modernization, regulatory developments, and urban experience. Paul Moore's book on moviegoing in Toronto between 1906 and 1916 contributes in important ways to this trend, presenting a painstakingly researched account of local moviegoing that still—despite its particularity—illuminates more general issues around the emergence of cinema as a mass entertainment and globalised cultural practice. Moore's work is the first book-length and scholarly investigation of early moviegoing in Toronto. As such, it presents a welcome account of this historical context in much greater detail and conceptual nuance than ever before. Moore also carves out new and significant sets of connections between the regional reception of motion pictures in Toronto and their more cosmopolitan existence elsewhere.

Early moviegoing in Toronto was distinctive in a variety of ways that Moore discusses over the course of the book. In contrast to major urban centers elsewhere in North America—New York, Chicago, even Montreal—the early appearance of nickelodeons in Toronto (where they were known as 'theatatoriums') was not characterised by immediate controversy and moral panics. Rather, it was integrated into existing policing structures that were already well regarded and helped characterise the city as 'Toronto the Good.' One reason for this relatively quiet introduction was the comparatively small number of nickelodeons that first emerged in the city, most opened by the same entertainment entrepreneur and each of them much larger than the typical storefront shows in other cities.

While Toronto's movie theatres would quickly become integrated into American circuits of film exhibition, Moore traces the ways in which this development came on the heels of local theatre regulation. Eventually, the mass nature of moviegoing in Toronto made the entertainment experience comparable to what was found in other mid-size North American cities. Nevertheless, the period of heightened nationalism that accompanied Canada's participation in World War One resulted in a more culturally distinct mode of film exhibition.

In his account of early moviegoing and Toronto, it is the city's regulation of entertainment that provides ballast for Moore's inquiry. The trajectory of regulation as it pertained to motion pictures developed from generalised policing of pre-cinematic amusements; to the policing of theatres for fire safety; to specific policing of films by a board of censors. In this development, Moore highlights the theatre owners' desire for clarity and transparency in regulation and the regulators' efforts to satisfy this desire. What is striking in Moore's account is that in Toronto, public safety issues preceded the kind of moral and cultural concerns that were quickly identified with movie exhibition elsewhere. In order to develop the set of linkages that developed from this initial kind of regulation, Moore introduces the idea of cinema's 'social combustibility'. This phrase metaphorically connects the efforts of early regulations, which were focused on the film's flammable material base, to subsequent alarmist concerns about the medium's social consequences. This is a compelling set of connections, and it effectively highlights the shifting terrain of public discourse—and subsequently regulation—around movie exhibition during this early period. Moore's discussion of the development of movie regulations in Toronto also has geographical breadth. Though different from circumstances in Montreal and other major Canadian cities, regulations that developed in Toronto exercised a strong influence on the emergence of Ontario's provincial regulations (and board of censors), and subsequent national regulations (as other provinces followed suit). So while Toronto was much different from other locales, Moore effectively demonstrates the important role it played in developing the contours of Canadian moviegoing as a mass, publicly accepted practice.

Moore's investigation of the early regulation of cinema in Toronto is closely linked to what he describes as 'showmanship', understood here as the ways theatre owners promoted moviegoing as a safe and unthreatening activity. For Moore, much of the fascination of this historical moment is located in the ways theatre owners understood (and sometimes *misunderstood*) the best opportunities for promoting the new amusement, and situated it as an unthreatening middle-class entertainment. In this vein, Moore illustrates how theatre owners cooperated with the development of regulations in order to achieve a mass audience. According to Moore, Toronto showmen were eager to avoid the kinds of controversy and crusades that attracted negative attention to nickelodeons in New York and Chicago. But even while there is a great deal that is illuminating about this account, one can't help but feel that it neglects some of the less laudable aspects of movie promotion. While Moore cites a few examples of theatre managers advertising directly to children or engaging in other dubious practices, these are characterised as anomalous in an otherwise upstanding field of early movie exhibitors. Overall, Moore's account cuts against a received, and perhaps romanticised, tendency to see early moviegoing as a marginal or socially disruptive activity. Paradoxically, one of the more fascinating cases Moore discusses concerns the efforts by a community organization in a nearby suburb to prevent the establishment of commercial movie theatre there. But why should they have created such obstructions if moviegoing was successfully being conveyed as an unthreatening, middle-class activity? Instances such as these suggest a more Janus-faced aspect of showmanship than the portrait Moore sketches, as theatre managers sought to publicly appeal to middle-class regulators and audiences,

while simultaneously profiting by promoting motion pictures to whatever audience (children, working-class, immigrant) could be snared. By 1914, Toronto's theatre owners were highlighting the ways in which moviegoing was consonant with the war effort. This 'patriotic showmanship,' as Moore describes it, is a productive idea that gives contextual detail to critiques of 'national cinema' that have circulated for many years now. Moore demonstrates how it was film exhibition—and not production—that became the locus of national cinema experience in Toronto during World War One.

Finally, the research methodology employed by Moore in *Now Playing* is noteworthy for both its impressive meticulousness and its invitation for further discussion. Employing a multidisciplinary approach that draws on both Film and Urban Studies, the author's principal tool of inquiry in this work is an examination of local newspapers and civic documents. In Moore's work, these sources are not only used as empirical evidence of events in Toronto, but also interpreted as representative of certain kinds of mass cultural recognition. In particular, these newspapers index a predominantly middle-class readership, so for Moore, advertising and writing in daily and weekly newspapers represents the emergence of the cinema's acceptability to that group. The presence of motion pictures as a subject of newspaper discussion itself marks a fascinating trajectory in the book, from first ethnographic articles about moviegoing to later, more typical movie reviews and theatre advertisements. This is excellent and careful research; so much so, that I often wanted to have my curiosity satisfied by reading more about particular instances that Moore only touches on in passing. Because his concern is more often with the structure of newspaper discourse than it is with the specific details of its content, Moore leaves some tantalizing, and often provocative, claims under-explored. For example, his suggestion that an early Toronto journalist (pseudonymously known as 'Thespis') made such fascinating observations about cinema as to warrant comparison with Kracauer's early film writing certainly calls for much more discussion.

In a similar vein, Moore's research would be productively complemented by a discussion of the reception and textual operations of particular films that were being viewed in Toronto. While the analyses of regulations and structures of discourse—or how film is situated as a cultural practice—are clearly the focus of this book's investigation, the substance of the films shown is crucial to an understanding of those discourses. Moore's work is not atypical in this approach to 'film history without films'; this is a trend that has gained some currency in works about film cultures and institutional practices in recent years. But even though histories that productively trace regulatory and discursive practices, as *Now Playing* does, can illuminate a great deal about a particular moment in film history, they frequently miss out on opportunities to place these discoveries into salutary dialogue with the textual and thematic operations of the films themselves. For example, a consideration of the reception of D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) in Toronto theatres might intersect with Moore's discussion of 'patriotic showmanship' in a number of different ways. An examination of reviews and screening accounts from southern Ontario reveals that this American civil war epic was interpreted by wartime Canadians in a very particular way: audiences recognised in Griffith's film a narrative of pathos and sacrifice that related directly to their own experience of an increasingly tragic First World War. In this sense, the Canadian reception of this film illustrates a desire for self-recognition on screen—even as a mode of film reception—a nationalist ideal that has persisted from this early stage in discussions about media in Canada up to the present day.

Now Playing illuminates a great deal about the particular ways in which moviegoing became embedded within Toronto's context of showmanship and theatrical regulation. This

is rich and important work that makes an important contribution not only to the history of moviegoing in Canada, but also to discussions about the emergence of film as a regulated mass entertainment. Situating the reception and textual operations of particular films within the contexts of regulation and showmanship that Moore highlights might push these insights even further and remind us that moviegoing operated not only within the spaces of newspaper discourse and urban practice, but also the spaces of darkened theatres and spectators' imaginations.

Charles Tepperman
University of Calgary

André Gaudreault, (ed.) *American Cinema, 1890–1909: Themes and Variations*. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009. 258 pp. £22.50; \$24.95.

At the risk of posing a question that has been capably articulated before, André Gaudreault's collection of essays for Rutgers University Press's first volume in its Screen Decades series asks (again): what is cinema? The question is not an idle one for the subject the anthology undertakes. Asking 'what is cinema?' parallels asking 'when is there cinema?' at this time, according to Gaudreault (2). In other words, when does cinema *as we know it now* come into existence? When Charles Musser begins his entry on the beginnings of cinema with the statement "The cinema," defined here as projected motion pictures in a theatrical setting, was one of the major technological and cultural innovations of 1896-97, he tacitly rejects another possible direction cinema might have taken—outlined in detail in the essay immediately preceding his, by Paul C. Spehr, where briefly in the history of cinema, a device with non-projected, individual viewings (the Kinetoscope) formed a crucial step in the development of projected cinema. Part of the excitement captured in this volume derives from the idea of missed futures inherent in the early phases of cinema exemplified in the discussion of the Kinetoscope. How long does it take—while the medium is being forged by filmmakers' ambitions, producers' fiscal motivations, and audiences' divergent backgrounds and fickle tastes—to drive out the various lost futures of the cinema in favor of the future we now enjoy? The awkward viewing practice of hovering above a box to watch individual films spool out before a single spectator and a partiality for an aesthetics of display, shock, and titillation had first to be channeled into a demand created for communal viewing experiences and legible narratives before we could have the sort of cinema we experience today.

Unless you, like Gaudreault and several of his contributors, agree that cinema's lost futures have lurked there in cinema all along. Individuals hovering over a small screen in a singular viewing space? Ever hear of an ipod? Display, shock, and titillation? Gone to the movies lately? *American Cinema 1890-1909: Themes and Variations* asserts the key points of access important to an understanding of film history without ever losing sight of cinema's debt to roads less frequently taken, roads that arguably nonetheless cover a great deal of historical ground. And though thankfully the volume almost never leaps into the future—it remains immersed in the past decades which it so beautifully explores and at times even seems to recreate—it feels deeply relevant to the whole scope of cinema's history, up to the sometimes inglorious present. In fact, rather than promoting a teleological history for the cinema at this vital beginning point, the essays of this collection almost universally envision cinema's horizons as encompassing much broader vistas. Narrative is not only not

inevitable, it is not always desirable, especially prior to approximately 1906-1908. Other concerns predominate.

The anthology runs chronologically, with three essays devoted to the 1890s and seven to the first decade of the 1900s. The greater weight given to the second decade can be accounted for in part by Musser's statement above: what we often think of as cinema (film projected before an audience) comes into existence in this country in April of 1896, over half-way through that first decade. Paul C. Spehr's essay, the first in this volume, covers the five years prior to that point. It boasts extraordinarily detailed, useful, efficient information about the emergence of technologies and personalities that made the cinema possible and sets the tone of rigorous archival research as the basis for all of the essays of the collection.

Charles Musser extends Spehr's brief discussion of the subjects used for early film formats—dance films, boxing films, firefighters, military subjects, etc.—and draws conclusions about the nature of the film experience for spectators at the time through both the films' content and accounts of their reception (from one review of a film, *Charge of the Seventh Cavalry*: 'the introduction of noise and battle din [. . .] "stirred the audience to a pitch of enthusiasm that has rarely been equaled by any form of entertainment"' [56]). Most remarkable in his chapter is Musser's discussion of the role fight films and versions of the Passion Play performed in negotiating the fraught issue of presence in entertainment and religious practice: while at the start of the decade, boxing matches and performances of the Passion Play were outlawed for most the United States, cinematic representations of both were eventually allowed, leading then to the legitimization of the real thing: 'once virtual performances were allowed, the banning of embodied performances seemed foolishly out of date' (60). For Musser, 'projected images somehow cleansed and purified' subject matter that was otherwise prohibited, and led to momentous cultural transformations (60). Building initially from the use of lantern slides depicting the Passion Play to the cinematic representation of it to the public performance of the real thing, Musser makes a subtle case for cinema as a bridge (a bridge that allows passage both ways) between the real and the virtual, ultimately changing the nature of representation more generally.

Musser likewise outlines the competition that provides the impetus for perfecting the mechanisms of projection and production, a theme that recurs in nearly every chapter that follows, especially Patrick Loughney's entry on the entrepreneurial (if not cutthroat) spirit of early cinema's practitioners. The lawsuits between Thomas Edison, one of cinema's main inventors and technological territorialists, and everyone else who laid a claim to patents and copyrights relative to the cinema, had an impact on the development of film production, exhibition, and form. So did various economic imperatives. For example, because exhibitors had to buy prints from producers (rather than, as only slightly later, renting them), they were able to exert an extraordinary amount of control over how films were received, selecting music or sound (lecturers, for example) and arranging scenes in an order aimed to please their audiences. Similar to Musser, Loughney argues that cinema in 1898-1899 'developed into a force of communication that began to transform society' (89). The argument for cinema's transformative influence finds further supporters, again, in several of the essays of the collection, none more so than the first, middle, and last essays of the next decade: Jean-Pierre Sirois-Trahan's essay on 1900-1901, Lauren Rabinovitz's work on 1906, and Jennifer Bean's on 1909. All begin consciously with perspectives aligned more closely to the turmoil of the modern society out of which cinema develops, for example with Rabinovitz (after Walter Benjamin) noting that 'early twentieth century spectacles, including motion pictures, transformed modern consciousness and modified the institutions of mass society [. . .] by adjusting [their audiences] to contemporary features of city

life, its modernization, consumerism, and alienation' (158). Sirois-Trahan reminds us that the first years of the twentieth century were marked by strikes, monopolies, and general class unrest, all of which directly shape the nature of cinema. And Bean elegantly and with infinite subtlety draws a comparison between two 1909 D. W. Griffith films—*A Drunkard's Reformation* and *A Corner in Wheat*—to demonstrate ideologically and stylistically how one filmmaker wrestled with social issues of the moment.

The middle essays for the 1900s—by Tom Gunning (1902-1903), André Gaudreault (1904-1905), Lauren Rabinovitz (1906, the essay mentioned above), Eileen Bowser (1907), and Matthew Solomon (1908)—primarily grapple with the struggle between visual and narrative imperatives in film form from 1902-1908. Those readers familiar with Gunning and Gaudreault's articulation of the 'cinema of attractions'—or to use Gaudreault's related term (but less-tidy terminology), 'cine-attractology'—will recognize the importance of these chapters and this idea to the period. In the essay he contributes here, Gunning demonstrates that the principle of a cinema of attractions—cinema 'evoking surprise and wonder rather than suspense' (116), a cinema based on visual display and exhibitionism—is in constant tension with the impulse to narrate during 1902-1903. In his reading of *The Gay Shoe Clerk*, for instance, a film where a male shoe clerk flirts with a female customer, eventually leading the film to provide a closer (and more scandalous) view of her ankle, Gunning claims that the film 'demonstrates how early cinema blended display and story-telling, creating a scenario based on the act of display' (120). Like others in the anthology, Gunning posits precedents for such non-narrative exigencies founded in non-narrative sources—magic lantern shows, advertisements, and fairy pantomimes, e.g.—rather than in literary sources. While it began to tackle the problem of how to represent the unfolding of time and the relationship of disparate spaces to one another (problems which Gunning details through dazzling readings of a selection of films from these years), the cinema appears at this moment to be less concerned with causes and effects than with visual surprises and climaxes.

Gaudreault's entry uses the ubiquity of a special genre of film—the chase film—to assert some of these same tensions and to demonstrate how filmmakers resolved some of the same problems concerning the articulation of time and space from 1904-1905. The chase film functions simultaneously as a miniature story and a spectacle: as Gaudreault suggests, 'what is an early chase film, in the end, if not the narration of a series of attractions?' (143). Importantly, too, Gaudreault makes special note of how disruptions and interruptions in stories as they develop (see, for example, his excellent discussion of Edison's *The Watermelon Patch* [1905]) provide a marker for the shifting tension between narrative and spectacular concerns in early cinema, a tension which persists throughout the period (and, certainly, beyond).

With both Gunning's and Gaudreault's essays moving us apparently toward the greater stolidity of narrative integration from the glitter of attractions, it seems somewhat surprising that Rabinovitz's essay about 1906, 'Movies and Spectacle', focuses almost exclusively on spectacle itself rather than on how it begins to be channeled toward narrative purposes, particularly because Gunning's initial formulation of it argues that the cinema of attractions is on the wane by 1906. But Rabinovitz makes a compelling argument for the persistence of spectacle in the sensationalism of pictures based on real events (the murder of Stanford White by playboy Harry Thaw, for example, or the San Francisco earthquake); in the role of the variety program of which cinema was still a part, even in the more stable environment of the increasingly popular nickelodeons; and in such phenomena as Hale's Tours, where spectators would be moved bodily in simulation of travel. After this brief stutter back to the

hegemony of spectacle, it takes Eileen Bowser's essay to navigate the more definitive move toward narrative forms in her essay on 1907, 'Movies and the Expansion of the Audience.' As she describes it, this year delineates the shift from presentation (attractions) to representation (narrative). Linking the new focus on independently legible films (i.e., those not in need of a lecturer or other aids for understanding) to economic as well as stylistic concerns, and to the constituency of the cinema's growing audience, Bowser with elaborate and telling detail describes how specific films (e.g., Wallace McCutcheon and Edison's *The 'Teddy' Bears* [1907]) mobilize innovations in film form and struggle with how best to represent shifts in time and space.

Those shifts are taken up in detail in Matthew Solomon's entry as well, but with an important emphasis on how other media—both high- and low-brow—inflected film form. For instance, his consideration of Biograph's film *Osler Joe* (1908) focuses in part on the popular poem that was the source of the film, and how the film diverges in telling ways from that source. Ultimately, as Solomon argues, the film negotiates titillation and the demand for moral closure (although the immoral heroine is punished in the end, her visually suggestive transgressions are not fully eradicated by moral denouement) in such a way that calls attention to ambivalent audience expectations from this moment in cinema's history. He describes this moment as 'fundamentally Janus-faced, looking backward . . . to the exhibitionism of the "cinema of attractions", as well as forward . . . to the absorption in story characteristic of the "cinema of narrative integration"' (223). As such, he describes the trajectory of the whole collection, which likewise looks forward and backward simultaneously, toward origins and legacies of the cinema at once.

There are several moments of repetition throughout the collection, in part because of too-minute divisions from year to year for each entry, where several authors seem to strain to remain within those confines. However, two undeniable benefits derive from such repetitions: first, one can read the essays separately without loss of understanding of the contexts from which each is derived. Second, the anthology has the effect of asserting the key issues of interest if not to film history then at least to film historians, by dint of the recurrence of a number of concerns: exhibition formats, historically important moments that seem to impact cinematic production, etc. And though it may be something of a truism to make a claim for any particularly 'transitional' period in history—things are always changing, after all, as the current medial environment demonstrates—nevertheless, André Gaudreault has edited an estimable, profoundly informative and enjoyable collection that highlights and delights in the volatile and, yes, highly transitional nature of the cinema's coming into being.

Sarah Keller
Colby College

Copyright of Nineteenth Century Theatre & Film is the property of Manchester University Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.