

generating the moral subject of the civilizing mission of British colonialism" (42). The discourse of *thuggee* is used as a point of entry into the consideration of various inflections of mimicry such as the fascination with going native, English miming of Englishness, or native miming of native subject positions.

The remaining essays deal with various mimic figures within Indian nationalism—Anglo-Indians, the western woman, the Indian mimic woman—while the last essay considers Nargis—the Muslim film star—as an icon of Indian womanhood. Together these essays pursue the question of identities in various interesting configurations of class, gender, and sexuality. The essay on Kipling's *Kim* makes the rather startling argument that its primary discursive object "is to produce the idea of the nation and of the citizen" (79) and to present the Anglo-Indian as "the true insider" (85)—an argument which is not very convincingly made. In another essay the life and career of Sarojini Naidu, the nightingale of India, is deconstructed to argue that while her status as a poet in English accorded her a special position in the Congress, this mimic woman persona could not be accommodated within nationalism and had to be troped in terms of irresistible allure, extravagance, corporeality, and triviality. While Gandhian nationalism embraced the feminisation of nationalist activity, Naidu's case shows that certain forms of femininity had to be exorcised from nationalism. Although the treatment of Muslimness and of the career of Nargis's actor-son Sanjay Dutt in the last chapter leaves many questions unanswered, the essay is interesting in its focus on the figure of Nargis in whom star/icon status, Muslimness, and femininity intersect and demonstrate the problematic nature of postcolonial Indian identities and politics.

In these essays of mixed merit readers will discover a number of minor things at which to cavil. However, mimicry and impersonation are intelligently—although somewhat provocatively—theorised in a lively and thought-provoking reading of a wide range of symptomatic texts. Readers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds will find the book useful and stimulating.

**Meenakshi Sharma**

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***Shakespeare's Victorian Stage: Performing History in the Theatre of Charles Kean*, by Richard W. Schoch. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.**

Richard Schoch's detailed study of Charles Kean's Shakespearean productions is one of a number of books published recently which makes a serious attempt to place the Victorian theatre in the mainstream of Victorian cultural history. Books such as Schoch's, Gail Marshall's *Actresses on the Victorian Stage*, Elaine Hadley's *Melodramatic Formations*, and Deborah Vlock's *Dickens, Novel Reading, and the Victorian Popular Theatre* are long overdue contributions both to theatre history and Victorian studies, although they are perhaps more useful in alerting Victorianists to the significance of the theatre than in providing theatre historians with new material. But I'll return to that point later. For too long the theatre has been the discomfiting poor relation of Victorian studies—something we know is there and should be significant but somehow we keep finding reasons for dodging or dismissing. But in the last twenty years some of the intellectual reasons for the omission of the theatre from the scholarly

vision of the nineteenth century in the past have disappeared. We no longer recoil from the popular, the unliterary, and the ephemeral. The statement I heard about fifteen years ago from a senior English literature academic that the bulk of English dramatic writing between Sheridan and Shaw was rather embarrassing would no longer be countenanced in most university staff rooms. Indeed, after the critical success of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 1840 comedy *Money* at the National Theatre this (European) summer, it's not even something that you might hear in a theatre's green room. And yet, where is the ground-breaking study of George Eliot and the theatre? or the discussion of the influence of Boucicault's sensation drama on the social problem novels of the 1880s and 90s? or a study of the cultural work of the "legitimate" drama and the idea of the "National Drama"? or an investigation of the connections between electoral reform and the regulation of the London theatres, perhaps starting with the 1832 House of Commons enquiry into "the State of Dramatic Literature"? (I offer all these ideas gratis as topics which might free us from the well-trodden paths of one more study of one more well-known Victorian novelist!) Of course there are still real difficulties in dealing with the primary materials of research in Victorian theatre history—it is a field in which research tools are scanty, where there are few convenient anthologies, indexes, collections of criticism, or even adequate bibliographies. It is often quite literally a back breaking and eye straining research area. Moreover Victorian theatre history is a field with comparatively insecure disciplinary boundaries and few scholarly canons, so that working in the area can sometimes induce a kind of agoraphobia, a sense of too many connections, and too much intertwined material which reduces history to gossip.

These are not, however, criticisms which can be levelled at the best part of Richard Schoch's work in *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage*. He takes the Victorian theatre very seriously and never attempts to use the hackneyed criteria of aesthetic achievement in his analysis of Charles Kean's Shakespearean revivals. Schoch is never embarrassed by the performances he discusses; quite the contrary, he places them at the centre of English nation-making in the 1850s, arguing that we should see Kean's Shakespeare productions as a case study of the "dense interlacings of performance, history, and politics" in the nineteenth century (6). As might be expected from his statement that the book is written "under the sign of the linguistic turn" (20), Schoch's study is self-consciously informed by a post-structural historiographical approach in which the discursive formations of culture figure as importantly as the material social and political conditions. It is Schoch's contention that Kean's "archaeological" productions of Shakespeare plays, particularly of the medieval history plays *King John*, *Macbeth*, *Henry VIII*, *Richard II*, *Henry V*, and (as a coda on theatrical magic) *The Tempest*, provide "a moment in the 1850s when Shakespeare, the Middle Ages, and the theatre—that is, literary, historical, and social sites of identity—came together in an especially dynamic and popular conjunction to enact a collective model of nationhood and national identity" (15). Schoch is interested in the cultural work achieved by Kean's historical productions, both as an example of Victorian historicism and as an attempt to legitimate and make respectable the theatre of this period.

While some Victorianists will find Schoch's exploration of theatrical representations of the Middle Ages a useful addition to other studies of Victorian medievalism, his discussion of nation-building is for me the most exciting part of the book and its most intellectually adventurous element. In chapters three and four Schoch

traces the ways in which the theatre was vital in the discursive construction of the English nation. Schoch's detailed analyses of Charles Kean's productions of Shakespeare's history plays at the Princess's Theatre in the 1850s provide a convincing demonstration of the importance of theatre in providing a focus for Victorian conceptions of nationality and national history. Schoch's argument here is another example of the profound influence of Benedict Anderson's work on nationalism in theatre history, *Imagined Communities* (Julie Carlson's 1994 book *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* is another). Schoch argues that "the restoration of the Middle Ages in the nineteenth century satisfied a deeply felt desire to derive an imagined community from a myth of national origins" (122), and the book as a whole is a convincing argument about the essentially theatrical and performative nature of that process. Such recognition of the role that popular theatre played in Victorian debates over the state of the nation is long overdue, and in passing Schoch also offers a useful rethinking of the 1850s. While he doesn't reject the idea of the 1850s as a period of calm between the conflicts of the 1840s and the 1880s (121), Schoch offers a subtle adjustment to the historiographical truism of the "age of equipoise" by viewing it as a moment when "the nation paused to savour and consolidate its hard-won victories" (121). But, he adds, the very triumph of liberalism over aristocratic traditions ran the risk of placing the "triumphant liberal agenda" outside history: the way that liberalism in the 1850s averted the dangers of separation from history was to appropriate other histories: in this case the traditions of the Middle Ages (121). Thus Schoch shows that the dominant mode of social and political thought of the period was vulnerable to disintegration from within, and shored up by an equally paradoxical use of history.

Schoch draws clear boundaries for his study: he focuses on Charles Kean's Shakespearean productions in the 1850s and while these provide him with material for a detailed and persuasive argument about Victorian nation-building and history, the focus on a very narrow range of primary material leaves me with some questions. Schoch does not deal with the question of the broader popular theatre in London during this time nor does he pay much attention to theatrical productions which can be seen to precede Kean's historically and nationally informed work. A quick scan of the playbills of the "illegitimate" theatres on the South bank of the Thames in the 1820s and 30s shows that these theatres were vociferously engaged with theatre as a politicised forum for the "imagined community" of Englishness and also with the use of history to establish the theatre as a respectable site for such nation making. This context makes Schoch's argument that Kean's theatre was a socially inclusive space less convincing than it should be. Furthermore Schoch does not discuss the rest of Kean's repertoire at the Princess's so his surprise at the audience reading Ellen Kean's performance as the Chorus in *Henry V* (recast as Clio the muse of history) intertextually as a character from a pantomime or musical extravaganza is not a feeling that an historian of nineteenth-century popular theatre would share. Given Jacky Bratton's recent work on "intertheatricality" as a concept analogous to intertextuality<sup>1</sup> the reading of a "legitimate" theatrical role in terms of spectacle or sensation is to be expected rather

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<sup>1</sup> In "Jane Scott the Writer-Manager," *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin (Cambridge UP, 1999) 95-96).

than wondered at. Again Schoch's stated astonishment at audiences' interpretations of antiquarian revivals of Shakespeare in the context of Dion Boucicault's sensation dramas (164) is evidence of twentieth-century expectations about genre categories rather than a sensible commentary on audience tastes which could have been avoided if Schoch had offered something more of the popular theatrical context for his study. Schoch's book is of more significance for the Victorianist than the theatre historian, but perhaps that's as it should be as his work is a powerful argument against Victorianists' continuing tendencies to neglect the theatre as an important cultural and political site.

### **Katherine Newey**

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***Edward Neville (1995), by Marianne Evans (George Eliot); Branwell's Blackwood's Magazine (1995), by Branwell Brontë; The Twelve Adventurers (1993) and My Angria and the Angrians (1997), by Charlotte Brontë. Alberta: English Department, U of Alberta, 1993-97.***

The productions of the Juvenilia Press are designed above all as pedagogical exercises in which the early writings of famous authors are edited by means of a collaborative effort between established scholars and their students so that, as founding editor Juliet McMaster eloquently explains, "both can benefit, and all can participate in the satisfying consummation of a book published, an early work of genius duly highlighted and given to the world in a tenderly loving scholarly format" ("A Word from the Editor").<sup>1</sup> To date the Press has published eighteen volumes, and while this review will deal with only four of them—those pertinent to the Victorian period—it is important to note that the pedagogical nature of the whole enterprise links every one of the volumes together in a spirit of enthusiastic editorial problem solving. This is an ongoing learning experience for both teachers and students alike, and the emphasis for the Press, quite rightly since the material edited is a foretaste of adult success, is on bigger and better things. McMaster makes the point: "This is a little press, its authors are young by definition, and many of its editors are young, too, and on the threshold of a literary career. This is a place where we pay close attention to those budding geniuses who are still trailing their clouds of glory" ("A Word from the Editor").

The Press certainly tips these budding editors straight from the clouds into the deep end: for any editors, regardless of their age, nothing could be quite as problematic as producing for publication the fragmentary early writings known as juvenilia. The need to preserve the flavour of the original if the exercise is to be a success is obvious; yet in some cases the very flimsiness of the piece might rule out publication unless some scholarly weights are appended (Branwell's tiny 5.4 x 3.1 versions of *Blackwood's Magazine* for instance). How to develop a rationale that could accommodate this seeming "ephemera" in a scholarly manner must have been the subject of hours of debate; there is a real danger of burying the childish texts beneath the full paraphernalia of scholarly editing—introduction, textual notes,

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<sup>1</sup> References in this review, except where otherwise noted, are taken from the Juvenilia Press Website at <http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/juvenilia> and were accessed on 1 November 1999.