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Political and Protest Theatre after 9/11

Patriotic Dissent

Edited by
Jenny Spencer

Political and Protest Theatre after 9/11

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For Edwin and Megan Gentzler

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Editor's Introduction

Political theatre takes place both inside and outside conventional theatre spaces, in improvised or scripted forms, for audiences who may or may not be affected by the issues it addresses. Neither a distinct dramatic form nor a stable category of analysis, it can only be meaningfully discussed and understood within the sociohistorical context that provides the targets of protest and makes the politics legible. This book is premised on the belief that the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent U.S.-led wars on terror produced a radically different sociohistorical context in both the United States and Britain for all kinds of politically engaged art, but especially for theatrical performance. First, the spectacular nature of the 9/11 attacks—designed for symbolic and strategic impact, orchestrated by spectral enemies, carried out by committed revolutionaries, broadcast live (and rebroadcast) to a global audience—provided its own kind of political theatre, prompting unfortunate comparisons to performance art and more serious analyses using concepts and vocabulary derived from the stage.[1] Second, the patriotic fervor with which President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair responded to the terrorist attacks in the U.S. and abroad helped create and maintain a nationalistic sensibility that affected audiences and artists alike. Playing on fears fueled by real and imminent threats after 9/11 bolstered the "national security state" and obscured unresolved political problems by focusing citizens' attention on future catastrophes that would surely happen without a retaliatory, open-ended war on terror.[2] Whether an effect of presidential rhetoric or the experience of trauma itself, the tragically foreclosed future made war seem inevitable, even before it began. For American citizens, the new feelings of vulnerability, shock, and anger that arose from such unprecedented attacks on U.S. soil contributed to a heightened political awareness and a prevailing emotional climate that differed considerably from the optimistic enthusiasm associated with earlier protest movements. These factors converged to create a new set of challenges, and a new set of topics, for politically engaged theatre artists.

This collection looks at political and protest theatre by artists in the U.S. and U.K. who responded directly, or indirectly, to their own government's

actions and policies during this time period, produced between the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and the election of Barack Obama to the presidency in 2008.[3] The events most subject to theatrical critique are by now familiar: Bush's polarizing declaration of a war on terror, the flawed intelligence used to justify the war in Iraq, Blair's support for U.S. policies in the Middle East, new security legislation limiting individual freedoms, and the illegal detentions and torture of detainees by coalition forces. The plays represent a broad range of dramatic and performative strategies, ghosted by their uses in the recent past, but renewed in the post-9/11 context of their production and reception. The street protests and installations, documentary and verbatim theatre pieces, dramatic adaptations of classical material, new plays by British political playwrights, and popular entertainments all provide different forms of political resistance, but they did so in a world that many found fundamentally changed. Before 9/11, a post–cold war "peace dividend" had recalibrated the balance of power in favor of the U.S. and its allies, although the influence of national governments to control the economy and address social problems was sharply limited by international financial markets.[4] After 9/11, the world seemed divided once again into ideologically driven nation-states locked in mortal conflict. Despite the high-tech, corporate, and global organization of terrorist networks that rendered older models of war obsolete, Bush identified countries harboring terrorists as an "axis of evil" to rally "us" (and other willing nations) into a vaguely articulated, poorly strategized, and apparently unending war on "them" that would eventually polarize his own citizens and become a subject of widespread theatrical protest.[5]

Being addressed as patriotic citizens of a nation-state at war had consequences. In the days and weeks after the fall of the twin towers, military enlistments were up and displays of the American flag were everywhere. Ironically, citizens temporarily united and ready for personal sacrifice were instead asked to show their patriotism by shopping and going about their business as usual to show the terrorists "we had won." As drama scholar David Román chronicles, New York City theatre performed an important social function in the days and weeks following 9/11 as Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, an "unusual" advocate for the arts, placed "going to the theatre" at the center of New York City's economic recovery.[6] If going to the theatre was experienced as a patriotic duty and tinged with an element of nationalist pride, it also showed how important the simple act of gathering in public was to artists and audiences at the time. As Román puts it, "Going to the theatre meant participating in a collective but fleeting effort to create a counterpublic space of emotion and affect that differed from the violent rhetoric of nationalism increasingly evident in the aftermath of September 11."[7] If not directly political, theatre still offered a protected space to voice alternative views about current events in the shadow of different kinds of public performance, also embraced by the community. With the 24-hour news broadcast of eyewitness interviews, candlelight vigils,

visually compelling memorial sites created by the public, and other ad hoc performance rituals, New York City came to represent an entire nation unified by loss.

Although the outpouring of conventional patriotism following the events of 9/11 was relatively short-lived,[8] more subtle pressures remained. In his first term in office, Bush fostered a political climate in which those who protested government policies, called for troop withdrawals, or otherwise expressed their political dissent were viewed as unpatriotic, or worse—citizens who naively undermined U.S. military actions and morale, and thus supported terrorism. The passing of the USA PATRIOT Act in October 2001 tested notions of patriotism by including domestic terrorism in its definition and expanding the government's access to everything from email to telephone conversations to financial records in a nationwide effort to "intercept and obstruct terrorism" before it happened.[9] The resulting censorship, both real and internalized, affected the theatre community. Marvin Carlson writes that New York City theatre producers carefully avoided any reference to the events of 9/11 for months after the attacks; it was 2003 before artists began asking the type of questions that needed to be asked but that, until then, seemed absent in the public discourse.[10]

When the U.K. experienced its own version of 9/11 with terrorist attacks on the London transport system on 7 July 2005 (commonly referred to as 7/7), London-based artists experienced their own brief period of self-censoring silence.[11] Before that time, Britain had witnessed a resurgence of new writing for the theatre, much of which (such as the work of Sarah Kane or Mark Ravenhill in the 1990s) was political in its general orientation without being explicitly concerned with current events.[12] But the war in Iraq, far more unpopular in the U.K. than in the U.S., provided the energizing context for a revitalized political theatre scene that took specific aim at Bush's policies and Blair's unflagging support for them. Indeed, the closeness of the relationship between the U.S. and U.K. governments and artists during this time period made the inclusion of both British and American examples of post-9/11 political theatre important to this collection. Beyond the historically based "special relationship" between the two countries, Bush and Blair shared a religious temperament and evangelical sense of mission that did not falter in the face of public criticism, even when faulty intelligence about Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction, the original rationale for war, was fully revealed. Although Blair offered himself as a moderating influence on the U.S., Britain was the first and most visible U.S. ally in the war on terror, not only supporting initial airstrikes in Afghanistan and joining the Iraq war without a U.N. mandate, but also in passing its own highly controversial antiterrorist legislation in 2004. According to Andrew Hill, those new security measures stoked tensions between the Muslim communities and the rest of country, contributing to a sense of impending catastrophe.[13] The muted response of British citizens to the London bombings—in contrast to the Bush-like rhetoric of anger

and outrage that characterized Blair's public response—suggests that U.K. residents had been more aware than their American counterparts of the risks posed by military actions abroad and ethnically divisive security measures at home. Although met with surprise, the terrorist bombings had been widely predicted.[14] Jenny Hughes attributes "the stark contrast" between the lively prewar theatrical protests in London and the "relative silence" after 7/7 to precisely such tensions, arguing that the moment exposed "the limitations of existing theatre and performance forms and practices" in the U.K. and the need for more "complex, multilayered responses" from the politically engaged artistic community.[15]

This book's subtitle, *Patriotic Dissent,* captures the double stance that explicitly political theatre of the post-9/11 period embraces. On neither side of the Atlantic were theatre practitioners immune to patriotic expressions of national solidarity: they remained sensitive to losses suffered by the victims of terrorism, honored the sacrifice of soldiers fighting abroad, and shared feelings of unity with both fellow citizens and other artists. Yet from the beginning, artists expressed skepticism of nationalist rhetoric and offered trenchant critiques of the ways patriotic discourse was being deployed against others at home and abroad. Assessing the efficacy of political theatre during this time period is also complicated by the fact that American and British artists and audiences were implicated in the wars and government policies they were protesting. In view of the enormity of events, political and protest theatre of this period may seem absent, invisible, or "too little too late"—perceptions perhaps attributable to the temporary amnesia produced by trauma in addition to the serious underreporting of theatrical protest in the mainstream media. As Marvin Carlson writes, when the Iraq war seemed imminent, American theatre organizations rushed to join the international group THAW (Theaters Against War) and, in coordination with their antiwar protests, began to produce "the most concentrated and dedicated political theatre to appear in America since the 1960s."[16]

Likewise, Michael Billington, who had attacked British theatre as late as January 2003 for failing to deal with public issues, found only three months later a gratifying upsurge in political theatre: sitting in "packed houses watching demanding political plays that initiated rather than terminated discussion" exploded the myth "that political theatre is of little interest to the wider public."[17] That this lively antiwar, anti-Bush, anti-Blair political theatre scene of 2003 now feels so historically remote is not entirely due to the topicality of the subject matter. Even the highly performative, antiwar protests of 15 February 2003, the largest on record with estimates of over ten million people participating in 800 major cities across the globe, managed to fly under the public radar and is now, according to drama scholar James Harding, "a forgotten event."[18] The distinctly conservative turn of the U.S. mainstream media after 9/11 ensured that the massive antiwar protests would not, as they had during the Vietnam War, lead the country to larger discussions of the war in

Iraq (except within internet communities with no direct link to public performance).[19] Andrew Hill connects the ineffective protest movement to a larger process of depoliticization that has affected Western societies for whom the market economy, globalization, and a highly managed political process appear outside the realm of choice for either governments or individuals, leading to "a condition of 'political depression' [that in] the context of the War on Terror encourage[s] the belief that nothing can be done to alter the course this conflict has taken."[20] Political theatre and protest did little to alleviate such widespread feelings of helplessness, except, perhaps, among the practitioners themselves.

Some feelings of disempowerment can be traced to the political theatre community itself, whose work has been defunded, curtailed, and redirected since the 1980s as a result of deep cuts in the arts by conservative governments on both sides of the Atlantic. The choices of arts councils and foundations to fund community theatre projects involving broader and more economically depressed segments of the population have often come at the expense of explicitly political, avant-garde performance art in the U.S. and activist theatre companies in U.K.[21] In the U.S., political theatre in the second half of the twentieth century—from the Civil Rights and antiwar protests of the 1960s to identity-based political theatre in the 1970s to community-based outreach in the 1980s to the civic-minded and documentary-based dialogues of the 1990s—has gradually shifted away from broad social movement politics toward individually based local initiatives.[22] A similar pattern can be traced in the U.K., despite the network of post-Thatcher government subsidies that allowed creative opportunities for a new generation of politically engaged playwrights still interested in national debates. In tune with the developments toward community-based activism, Baz Kershaw has argued for "creative radicalism" as a suitable replacement for more traditional political theatre that the cultural marketplace has co-opted or marginalized. From 1992 to 1999, he promoted community-based projects that supported dialogic exchange, participatory engagement, and local democratic action using self-conscious aesthetic practices that bridged the unproductive opposition between political theatre's modernist, Brechtian past and its postmodern, postdramatic present.[23]

Yet after 9/11, many found traditional political and documentary theatre increasingly relevant, even necessary, and community-based theatre practices too cautious for the tasks at hand. Many of the British writers discussed in this collection—Caryl Churchill, Mark Ravenhill, Gregory Burke, and David Hare—employ Brechtian-style social and historical critique, even though the relationship between unmasking ideology and activating an audience has long been questioned. Traditional forms of theatrical protest that divided the world between good and evil, heroes and villains, "us" and "them" felt increasingly unacceptable in the midst of a U.S.-led war on terror driven by the same categories. Despite these aesthetic and psychological challenges, however, the artists in this volume

have found audiences more likely than ever to embrace self-consciously political, deliberately progressive, and activist-oriented theatre.

This exploration of political and protest theatre after 9/11 also recognizes that categories themselves carry content: historical divisions using "pre" and "post" help construct a narrative through which to comprehend an otherwise chaotic and multifaceted historical moment with no reliable through-line. Like tragedy, the "before and after" scenario invariably turns on a crisis, a traumatic event, a "mistake" that cannot be called back and from which certain consequences inevitably accrue. As James Harding has noted, serious conversation about theatre after 9/11 has perhaps been unduly influenced by discussions of the tragic, beginning with David Román's roundtable on the subject in a 2002 edition of *Theatre Journal* dedicated to tragedy.[24] Although a tragic feeling may underlie the "depressive politics" of this decade, tragedy as a form rarely activates its audiences or delivers a nuanced account of historical change. Harding urges theatre historians to look closely at the political and ideological underpinnings of post-9/11 theatre scholarship, warning against too hasty a retreat from gains made in understanding political performance over the last decade.[25] The authors in the following pages answer that call: their exploration of contemporary political theatre eschews the tragic, offering analysis that supports an understanding of contemporary performance's role in examining history with a view toward changing it.

The chapters that follow move generally from mainstage productions and alternative theatres to street protests and popular entertainments that responded to the events following 9/11 without being in perfect alignment with progressive politics.[26] Overtly political musicals, for example, are rare; *Tony! The Blair Musical* and *Tony Blair: The Musical* appeared at the 2007 Edinburgh Fringe, but the expectations of political critique audiences bring to alternative spaces seems inappropriate for twenty-first-century Broadway musicals that are often years in the making.[27] Yet, in "The 2003–2004 Season and Broadway Musical Theatre as a Political Conversant," Stacy Wolf unpacks academic assumptions about the essentially conservative and apolitical nature of mainstream musical theatre. Without collapsing the coincidentally political with the deliberately so, Wolf details the differing strategies through which three popular musicals of the 2003–2004 Broadway season—*Avenue Q*, *Wicked*, and *Caroline, or Change*—articulated a political stance that was necessarily affected by the events following 9/11.

Joshua Abrams considers three British mainstage revivals of well-known earlier works that also respond to contemporary concerns: *Children of Herakles* (2002), *Measure for Measure* (2004, 2006), and *Hair* (2005). The intertextual dynamics inherent in adaptation make it a useful strategy for political commentary, one popularized for twentieth-century political theatre makers by Brecht's own adaptations of the classics (e.g., *Antigone, Coriolanus*, and *The Resistable Rise of Artuo Ui*). In "The Ubiquitous

Orange Jumpsuit: Staging Iconic Images and the Production of the Commons," Abrams finds the use of visual iconography in contemporary adaptation particularly relevant now. The images and photographs produced and circulated in the media after 9/11—from the attacks, the wars, and Abu Ghraib prison—gave audiences access to a kind of shared, public memory that could shape and distort personal recollections and deflect deeper analyses of the situations to which the images referred. Yet these same politically charged images offer theatre practitioners a method of visually "speaking" to audiences in ways that can accentuate or undermine the words of a script. Abrams finds hope in a politically inflected theatre that works more indirectly to revitalize the public sphere—providing audiences with the space, and the prompts, for the kind of meaningful conversation and analysis of current events that rarely happens elsewhere.

Given Britain's tradition of public subsidy for the arts and a theatre culture predisposed since the early 1970s to welcome politically challenging work, committed U.S. scholars and practitioners have often turned to the U.K. for inspiration. Amelia Howe Kritzer and I look at two established playwrights associated with different generations of British political theatre—Caryl Churchill and Mark Ravenhill—both of whom turn their talent to highly imaginative critiques of the war on terror still raging at the time of their productions. Churchill's short, one-act play *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?* (2006) provides a stark contrast to Ravenhill's massive, seventeen-play epic *Shoot / Get Treasure / Repeat* (2007), yet both playwrights assume an audience frustrated with post-9/11 politics, and both write with uncharacteristic directness and anger about current events. In "America as Rogue State: Caryl Churchill's *Drunk Enough to Say I Love You?*" Kritzer finds that Churchill dispenses with the nuanced political analysis for which she is known; the resulting combination of allegory with realistic acting interferes with the clarity of Churchill's message in a way that may undermine the play's intended political effect. I would further argue that the play's dark humor, the sense of hopelessness, and the anger that such hopelessness covers over, may perfectly capture the structure of feeling prevalent on the political left two years before the end of Bush's second term in office.

Ravenhill's epic cycle of plays depends on a similar combination of allegorical form, realistically acted characters, recognizable language, aggressive humor, and rage. By 2007, the facts surrounding the rush to war had been settled, and what remained were the emotional consequences of repressive, but increasingly normalized, government policies that can terrorize the very subjects they intend to protect. In "Terrorized by the War on Terror: Mark Ravenhill's *Shoot / Get Treasure / Repeat,*" I examine a political critique that focuses on the subjective experience of individual citizens at a sociohistorical moment in which the violence of the state, as it imposes "freedom and democracy" on a planetary scale, is both hypervisible and difficult to resist. Although Ravenhill and Churchill are both writing in a

Brechtian tradition, their work may also arouse shame, an affect more useful for activating audiences than the rational exposure of contradiction on which older Brechtian models depend.

Documentary and verbatim theatre provides one of the most prevalent forms of theatre after 9/11. With U.S. and U.K. government policies being promulgated with deliberately misleading information, and leaders appearing increasingly untethered from reality, playwrights sought to ground the fictional "truths" of their plays on solid facts, actual interviews, and public documents. In "Unraveling the 'Golden Thread': Performing the Politics of *Black Watch*," Marcia Blumberg demonstrates how Scottish playwright Gregory Burke crafts an astute political analysis combining verbatim strategies, Brechtian techniques, and stunning theatrical spectacle. With precise military choreography, powerful soundscapes, and strong language, Burke invites audiences to confront the real cost of military service and political contradictions surrounding Scottish participation in the war in Iraq—concerns that cannot possibly be resolved from the perspective of the production's central figures, the men fighting the war. Yet the nationalism that marks this first National Theatre of Scotland production remains problematic; its alluring spectacle of Scottish military pride inadvertently glorifies the martial subject Burke attempts to deconstruct. Whether the play's immense popularity both inside and outside the military is an accurate gauge of its political effectiveness remains an open question.

In "Voices of the Other: Documentary and Oral History Performance in Post-9/11 British Theatre," Ryan Claycomb also examines popular, fact-based British plays dealing with the war on terror: David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (2004), Robin Soans's *Talking to Terrorists* (2005), and Victoria Brittain's and Gillian Slovo's *Guantanamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* (2004). Distinguishing between documentary in the style of Piscator, which uses theatre as a juridical space and attempts to intervene in the actual writing of history, and verbatim theatre practices that emerge from oral history and autobiography, Claycomb usefully parses the variations of this highly contested and politically important genre, noting that the privileging of historical documents may unintentionally reinscribe nationalistic and bureaucratic discourses, and thus exclude the voices that most need to be heard.

One problem with fact-based theatre is its underlying assumption that the audience's opinions, actions, and political views are rationally driven. Since the 1970s, a different kind of civic-minded drama called theatre of witnessing or testimonial theatre has arisen in which victims of state violence or survivors of genocide provide first-hand accounts of their traumatic experiences within a broader process of conflict resolution, reconciliation, and healing.[28] Testimonial theatre does not depend for its effect on the audience's emotional connection to those speaking onstage; it differs from interview theatre, in which actors empathetically play the interviewees, and

from Brechtian-inspired documentary that favors the rational demystification of social contradictions. In "Antiwar Activism and the Structures of Trauma in the Plays of Eve Ensler and Kathryn Blume," Emily Klein shows how feminist artists Blume and Ensler build on the testimonial genre, confront their own trauma, and activate their audiences toward specific political ends. Comparing the projects they produced before the Iraq war to work they wrote later, Klein suggests that each playwright makes use of a "performative transmission of trauma." Interestingly, both Ensler and Blume refuse credit for earlier works in which trauma played such an activating role—for Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues* and for Blume, The *Lysistrata* Project. Facing the debilitating experience of a persisting war their work did nothing to stop, and with a renewed sense of personal responsibility after the war began, both playwrights turned to reflective and thought-provoking performances that testified to their own limitations, and by extension, those of political theatre itself.

In "Why We Have Failed: Culture Project's Iraq War Plays," Jeanne Colleran considers the commitment of the Culture Project in New York City and the Tricycle Theatre in London to staging politically engaged work that extends and deepens public conversations about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Colleran focuses on the plays of two established and influential journalists who adapt their previously published work for the stage. George Packer's *Betrayed* (2008) and Lawrence Wright's *My Trip to Al-Qaeda* (2007) both address audience members who may or may not have initially supported the wars, but who now agree they were misguided, mishandled, and ultimately ineffective responses to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Colleran argues that traditional political theatre often plays on the ground of an already polarized discourse as it seeks to unify its members, strengthen resolve, and activate more effective protests. Packer and Wright, on the other hand, ask audiences to reflect on the failures and strategic mistakes of Americans in their execution of the war on terror and to consider the way in which even a well-educated public continues to be guided by a lack of trustworthy intelligence (in both senses of the term) about Iraq and the long-term effects of U.S. policies there. In their decision to write for a medium guaranteed to reach a smaller audience, these playwrights reinforce the unique characteristics of live political performance and its ability to create a sense of urgency about the future.

In "Descent as Dissent: Arab American Theatrical Responses to 9/11," Dalia Basiouny discusses performance artist Rania Khalil's *Flag Piece* (2001), written immediately after the attacks in New York, alongside playwright Laura Shamas's *Pistachio Stories* (2005). Both works examine problems faced by the U.S. Arab American community in the aftermath of 9/11. Despite the government's rhetorical attempts to promote America as a multicultural society that included Muslims and citizens of Middle Eastern heritage, the heightened security and constant news coverage of suspected

and arrested terrorists led to more discrimination against Arab Americans, making Arab American citizens eager to show their patriotism, but resentful they were required to do so in ways other Americans were not. As Basiouny explains, the aftermath of the bombings put the dual allegiances of Arab Americans under intense scrutiny, tested their patriotism, and provided the conditions for the creation of a new Arab American identity, especially among theatre artists who openly embraced it. The result was a flurry of theatrical work and collaborations among Arab American artists eager to present the issues facing their community. Heather Raffo's interview-based *9 Parts of Desire* (2004) is perhaps the most well-known Arab American play exploring the effects of the war on Iraqi women, but Basiouny focuses her discussion on Arab American theatre that emerges in direct response to the artists' personal experiences negotiating a newly visible identity both shortly and several years after 9/11.

In stark contrast to Shamas's use of humor to defuse racial tensions and appeal to a community outside her own, The Living Theatre's 2007 revival of their own 1963 production of Kenneth Brown's *The Brig* offers a harsh and difficult viewing experience. Judith Malina and Gordon Beck returned from Italy to lower Manhattan to restage the production in response to the revelations of torture at U.S. military prisons. In "A View of *The Brig*: From the Cage to the Street," Katy Ryan analyzes this fact-based and aggressively political play that puts audiences through an excruciating experience of witnessing the torturous, everyday routine of a military prison. The fact-based nature of the work is embodied in the disciplined and devastating accuracy with which the troupe performed the routines, thanks to brutal training exercises with a retired U.S. military drillmaster hired to work the actors after their already challenging, seven-hour rehearsal schedules. Positioned behind a barbed wire fence, looking in at a cage, the audience of *The Brig* helplessly reenacts the pain of its own complicity in the dehumanizing systems of power that make the line between inhumane torture and routine incarceration impossible to see. Ryan suggests that such embodied witnessing, however uncomfortable, may be a necessary corollary to informed activism around this issue, which is not limited to U.S. prisons "over there." The routine use of torture in a popular television show such as *24* highlights the significance of The Living Theatre's production and points to one reason audience members can remain insensitive to the ethical and politically relevant dimensions of the play.[29] As Ryan notes, whether audiences who needed to see the play were the audiences who attended the theatre is a question The Living Theatre took up as it moved revised sections of *The Brig* to ground zero, where the even more vulnerable actor-prisoners offered their bodies in a display that supported the antiwar effort while honoring the dead.

This move from the theatre to the street anticipates the subject matter and arguments of Jenny Hughes's and L.M. Bogad's discussions of post-9/11 street performance. In "Camping on the Streets, Squares, and Wastelands

of Power: Theatrical Protest and the 'War on Terror' in the U.K.," Hughes takes up three British protest performances: the first occurring as part of the 15 February 2003 global day of action against the war; the second, Brian Haw's ongoing protest camp on Parliament Square; and the third, a Manchester performance art installation *This Is Camp X-Ray* (2003) designed by Ultimate Holding Company as a replica of the Guantánamo Bay internment camp. Hughes demonstrates how each performance strategically employs a "camp critical mimetic" approach that both mirrors and subverts the state's sovereign power. To varying degrees of success, all three performances mobilize critical agency through the destabilizing theatrics of "queer camp" alongside the tactical unsettling of the local environment that occurs in "protest camps." Hughes's concept is not simply a theoretical construct, but rather a protest strategy that fully deploys performance's capacity for "double negation" and offers a different measure for judging the relative success or failure of contemporary theatrical protests.

Protest performer Bogad also recognizes that unrevised models of protest theatre may not effectively critique the imperialistic actions of the U.S. and their allies in the aftermath of 9/11. In "Patriot Acts: All-American Tactical Performance in the Age of Permawar," Bogad documents a broad and energetic array of street performance over the past decade by groups such as Patriots Against the Patriot Act, Billionaires for Bush, the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA), Oil Enforcement Agency, One Thousand Coffins, Iraq Veterans Against the War, and Grandmothers for Peace. Whether focusing on the use of humor (as used by the Billionaires) or silent, stark displays (as used by One Thousand Coffins), Bogad makes a case for political theatre that fights on many fronts with all the tools in the performer's repertoire: creativity, surprise, timing, humor, irony, visual display, and embodied presence, in addition to tactical thinking, anticipation of audience response, and detailed planning. Far from the belief that street protest is an outmoded or ineffective mode of political theatre, Bogad argues that street performance models active citizenship, providing cultural and media support to broader social movements—the kind that would propel Barack Obama to the presidency in 2008. Although some of the groups perform internationally, this landscape of street theatre suggests a uniquely American sensibility that relies on a history of free speech and government protests, promotes pragmatic flexibility, and expresses optimism even in the face of insurmountable odds.

Jennifer L. Chan and Sara Warner end the collection with discussions of cultural performances that took place well outside the conventional theatre world: *The Concert for New York City* benefit held on 20 October 2001 in honor of those who died in the World Trade Center attacks and a musical adaptation of the lesbian comic zine figure *Hothead Paisan* at the 2004 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Despite stark differences in the entertainments they discuss, Chan and Warner both explore disappointing, disturbing, or shocking moments that make visible the ways performance

participates in the construction of national citizenship. In "Performing Citizenship: *The Concert for New York City* and the Construction of Post-9/11 America," Chan notes that despite the promised unity, the 2001 Concert for New York also reinscribed the boundaries between what is, and is not, America—squarely in the face of many New Yorkers whose transnational affiliations had suddenly become problematic. Describing the ideological pull of the concert, Chan finds that one agency-compromised participant resisted performing citizenship in the expected manner, even as his gesture reinforced the concert's hegemonic national ideal. Her case study reminds us not only that performance of the social self is the medium of social change, but also that live performance, far more than any other medium, offers subversive potential.

In "The Maladapted *Hothead Paisan*: A Lesbian Comedy of Terrors," Warner discusses the failure of Animal Prufrock's alternative musical to live up to its subversive potential, illustrating how current events can overtake even a politically progressive forum such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and render its absence all the more visible. Warner finds the unreflective deployment of the lesbian terrorist figure at the height of the U.S. war on terror and soon after the release of the Abu Ghraib photos to be symptomatic of the homonational, neoliberal politics of both the festival and the broader social movement it represented at the time.

The sampling of political and protest theatre analyzed in this collection explicitly emerges from anger, sadness, and dismay over a post-9/11 course of events whose impact is still felt today. Like older forms of political theatre, the artists discussed seek to activate their audiences and to intervene in the current state of the world. But unlike theatrical protest that arose alongside broader movements for social change—the labor and socialist movements, the anti–Vietnam War youth movement, the New York–based Black Arts movement, the feminist and gay rights movements, among others—post 9/11 political performance in the U.S. and the U.K. emerges from a less rational, more complicit place within a social moment already characterized by polarizing political discourse. In the face of heightened anxiety and escalating state violence, an aggressively confrontational political theatre practice seems counterproductive (although the brutality of the Living Theatre's production of *The Brig* makes visible the connection between terrorism and state violence that governments work hard to deny).

Rather, the move of post-9/11 political theatre toward more fact-based, open-ended work suggests that a fully informed electorate, meeting together in a public space, can agree on politically charged issues and collectively demand social change. Such hope may be misplaced for contemporary audiences of the 24-hour news cycle and the politically energized blogosphere—audiences who feel well-informed despite the increasingly blurred distinction between fact and opinion, analysis and belief. Within this sociohistorical context, the fictional space of theatrical reenactment cannot be expected to redress the injuries and situations it belatedly sets out