

# New Theatre Quarterly

<http://journals.cambridge.org/NTQ>

Additional services for *New Theatre Quarterly*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



---

## **Alan Read *Theatre in the Expanded Field: Seven Approaches to Performance* New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013. 296 p. £24.95. ISBN: 978-1-4081-8495-0.**

William Lewis

New Theatre Quarterly / Volume 31 / Issue 01 / February 2015, pp 93 - 93  
DOI: 10.1017/S0266464X15000147, Published online: 30 January 2015

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0266464X15000147](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0266464X15000147)

### **How to cite this article:**

William Lewis (2015). *New Theatre Quarterly*, 31, pp 93-93 doi:10.1017/S0266464X15000147

**Request Permissions :** [Click here](#)

Roche engages energetically with his double brief, drawing rewarding conclusions from detailed archival and performance research. 'Synge and Germany: Drama as Translation' is particularly suggestive, not least for its justification of Roche's bold claim that Brecht's acknowledgement of Synge's influence on *Señora Carrar's Rifles*, 'from an idea by J. M. Synge', applies in important respects also to *Mother Courage and Her Children*.

'Yeats, Synge, and an Emerging Irish Drama' has the author in full flow, drawing from the question of 'what they made of each other, not primarily as people, but as writers', a richly textured and critically suggestive account of their works' interrelationships not only with each other but with plays by Shaw and Samuel Beckett. 'Joyce, Synge, and the Irish Theatre Movement' offers new and intriguing insights, grounded in bold intertextual readings.

The other new essays – on Synge and Beckett and the application of postmodern perspectives to Synge's work – are substantial reflections, negotiating a wide range of reference and interest. They testify to Roche's exemplary dedication both to seeing plays in performance and engaging with multiple, often competing perspectives on his subject. These approaches combine to make this a collection which deserves a wide readership, not least specialist academic peers and their students. Anthony Roche is an able guide to Synge's scholarly and creative interpreters, and this book is both an elegant review of critical discourse and an important critical intervention in its own right.

VICTOR MERRIMAN

doi:10.1017/S0266464X15000147

Alan Read

**Theatre in the Expanded Field:  
Seven Approaches to Performance**

New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013.

296 p. £24.95.

ISBN: 978-1-4081-8495-0.

In this lucid and playful book on theatre in the performative era, Alan Read challenges the reader to view theatre as a perpetually 'abandoned practice' that rises 'Lazarus like', refusing to retreat quietly into extinction due to the 'irritant gene' of performance. This tenacity, allows theatre to be a particularly adept tool to address community in the twenty-first century.

The book introduces a densely comprehensive theory, made up of seven distinct performance approaches to validate this claim. Using meticulously researched historical perspectives and astute contemporary case studies, Read paints theatre and performance as inextricable forces and calls for a relaxing of biased inclinations towards performance studies perspectives, which delimit theatre's legitimacy. In each chapter, a new

approach to performance connecting historical and material lenses by way of a liminal '&' is developed. It is this '&' that takes the reader on an 'excursion through performance', uncovering the irritable nature of theatricality in the social fabric of humanity. Approaches include 'Digital & Technological', 'Theological & Historical', and 'Tactical & Critical'.

The book, though situated in a linear temporal frame, makes no claim to a 'chronological development of the discipline' but rather marks specific appearances of each approach tied back to contemporary examples. The first and foundational approach, 'Pre-Historical & Archaeological', explores Plato's cave as the original metaphor for theatre, marking a locus in which performance is contained before written history. If the pre-historical is the approach to theatre before the written word, the archeological affirms performance as representation looking to be uncovered.

The excursion continues through the 'Pastoral & Anthropological'. Here the book examines a re-enactment of the abandoned practice of circular migratory shepherding as a performative example of the politics of theatricality. It uses an anthropological performance lens likening sheep to humans who remove themselves from community while simultaneously constituting its formation.

Echoes of community occur throughout the book. In the 'Psychological & Legal' approach, we are exposed to Freud's departure from the performative practice of hypnosis in favour of the theatrical contract of psychoanalysis. From here, Read slyly links law and, in turn, theatre as society's immune-system responses with imperatives to make a difference. Throughout the book, the reader is urged to reconfigure the ways we question, regard, and look at theatre through performative examples. The book's theory deftly foretells and reconciles theatre's potency in the age of performativity and is a must-read for any serious scholar working on the limen of theatre and performance studies.

WILLIAM LEWIS

doi:10.1017/S0266464X15000159

Scott Palmer

**Light: Readings in Theatre Practice**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 318 p.

£20.27.

ISBN: 978-0-2305-5190-9.

Whether it is the warm but faint glow of a flickering candle, the crystalline brightness of winter sunshine, or the neon overload of a city centre, light is both fascinating and troublesome. It is also something we too often take for granted. While philosophers, scientists, and artists down the ages have explored and attempted to explain this strange but essential phenomenon in words,