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Food and Theatre on the World Stage ed. by Dorothy Chansky and Ann Folino White (review)

Sarah Blissett

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building façades that portray popular subjects as Marian devotional surrogates. The examination of Daniel Santoro's framing of the First Lady as a holy national figure leads into Graham-Jones's substantial exploration of the virtual (and kitsch) representation of quasi-religious icons, such as the deceased pop singer Gilda. In "Argentine Madonnas, Pop Stars, and Performances of Immediacy and Virtuality," the author effectively brings her take on the nature of Argentine *femicons* to the contemporary and virtual realms. She looks at how devotional practices have thrived in social media, and speculates about what the proliferation of such kinds of iconography can tell us about a nation's sociopolitical identity.

Ultimately, Evita's many names and slippery identities make us confront "the problem of veracity" (77). In the absence of a final truth, Graham-Jones offers multiple entryways to what she calls *aproximaciones* to Eva's birth, death, and afterlives, as well as into a firmer understanding of the emergence of *femicons* as cultural phenomena. The author successfully uses the tools of discursive, visual, and performance analysis to expand on the existing Evita scholarship. Graham-Jones's theoretical insight and fluency in a range of artistic fields makes *Evita, Inevitably* into a most valuable contribution to the study of Latin American theatre.

CLÁUDIA TATINGE NASCIMENTO
Wesleyan University

FOOD AND THEATRE ON THE WORLD

STAGE. Edited by Dorothy Chansky and Ann Folino White. Routledge Advances in Theatre and Performance Studies. New York: Routledge, 2015; pp. 286.

Dorothy Chansky and Ann Folino White's collection of essays, bold in ambition and scope, seeks to unravel the relationship between food and theatre, "in all of its sociopolitical, material complexity" (2). The book has its origins in an American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) working session, co-convended annually between 2008 and 2011. The volume is organized into five sections and is the first of its kind to consider the intersections of food and theatre across genres, historical periods, and cultural contexts. This compendium offers a broad range of chapters that critically reflect on staged comestibles and modes of consumption in performance, providing tasters of significant areas of analysis in this field and serving as a vital reminder of this rich area of scholarship.

The first section, "Dramatizing Gluttony and Famine," presents key dramatic figures in relation

to dramas embedded in cultural narratives and politics surrounding national cuisine and identity. Will Daddario and Joanne Zerdy's essay examines the plays of sixteenth-century Paduan actor Ruzzante against their socio-agricultural setting, drawing inspiration from Jane Bennett to analyze food as an actant within this context. Recasting food as a nonhuman actor allows the authors to explore the network of relationships unfolding beyond staged drama, and the way that food informs and shapes cultural narratives. This dynamic is considered throughout the section and is particularly evident in the third essay by Praise Zenenga, which highlights the vital role played by theatre activists in engaging with political protest. Zenenga offers an insightful and provocative commentary on the Zimbabwean play *Super Patriots and Morons*, underlining the politics of food production and the dehumanizing effects of the food crisis on both the agricultural and theatrical stage, evoking how acts of consumption can be complicit with methods of exploitation.

The second section, "Staging Nationalism and Culture via Cuisine," is organized around notions of national identity, juxtaposing culinary and cultural traditions from Japan, Germany, and China to consider how edible acts challenge the geopolitics of taste. Notable here is Claire Conceison's essay, which presents Maoist nostalgia as a form of re-gurgitating the past in "red" restaurants while also engaging in the "politics of forgetting" (113). These restaurants operate as sites of reenactment through cuisine, memorabilia, and performances of songs reminiscent of 1950s and '60s China on the cusp of revolution, leaving a bitter taste for some audiences while serving up a sweet, hazy memory for others.

Part 3, "Food Labor and Consuming Symbols," contains chapters that meditate on food economics in relation to capitalist ideologies, reflecting how Brechtian politics, a post-9/11 dinner party from hell, and a series of medieval Passion plays are connected through subtle tensions between literal and figurative body politics. Outstanding here is Jocelyn Buckner's essay "Slaughterhouse and Sensorial Affect" in which she explores Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* in relation to Naomi Wallace's *Slaughter City*. Buckner skillfully cuts to the heart of the politics of labor and production in her examination of an affective materialist dramaturgy, through the "meeting and meating" (120) of bodies and philosophies in both plays, reminding us how different bodies are implicated in, and through, a variety of modes of consumption. These are evident in the actions of characters and audiences, challenging the corruption of systems that "purport to nourish us" (133). Chansky and White reflect on the hellish feast in *Omnium Gatherum*, a play set around a dinner party in post-9/11 New York, where characters

representing figures from Edward Said to Martha Stewart come alive in an exposition of contrasting political viewpoints. Here too we are reminded of the complexities of audience relations, where the “culinary optic” (145) challenges the way we perceive and engage with food in a theatrical context.

Shifting from an alimentary focus on politics to social dramas played out around food, Ariel Strichartz’s essay in the fourth section, “Food Activism on Stage,” examines cooking as a “creative strategy of resistance” (171), where restaurant and kitchen spaces engender unstable power relations. Strichartz analyzes the presence of food in two South American plays, *Puesta en claro* (Argentina) and *Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido* (Chile), which creatively reminds us of the importance of material agency in the ontological divide between “nature (the raw) and culture (the cooked)” (182). Stephanie Etheridge Woodson and Tamara Underiner’s essay charts the progress of chef Robert Farid Karimi and his work *The Diabetes of Democracy*, affirming the crucial sociopolitical context around food practices and their staging. Kanita Batra echoes this notion as she investigates the celebratory narrative of the Green Revolution in India, where increased agricultural production is underscored by the darker gastro-politics of food within a stratified society.

The final section, “Food on the Other Side of the Footlights,” analyzes how processes of consumption intertwine theatrical convention with life beyond staged edible acts. This is an effective final chapter, considering how performers and audiences engage in shared experiences through food and the implications of eating habits. Dror Harari presents a multi-layered analysis of Israeli performer Tamar Raban’s *Dinner Dress—Tales about Dora*, which conveys both the phenomenological and political imports of food in the broader context of semioticity, symbolism, and materiality. Ruminating on this complex performance system, enmeshed through meta-narratives and understandings of cultural identity, Harari’s essay epitomizes many of the themes explored throughout this collection through its focus on food as the “very matter of the theatrical event” (237).

The kaleidoscopic approach of this volume features an original collection of essays in an experimental melting pot of food and staged drama. Chansky and White describe the collection as “less like successive courses in a meal than like items on a plate” (8), but this also works as an à la carte menu on the subject, covering an extensive range of cultures, traditions, and geographic and historical territories. The variety of scholarship, case studies, and performance critiques makes this an excellent resource for any student or performance scholar, and an exciting addition to the critical discussion around

the multisensory, gustatory, and metaphorical complexity of food in theatrical encounters.

SARAH BLISSETT
University of Roehampton

KITCHEN SINK REALISMS: DOMESTIC LABOR, DINING, AND DRAMA IN AMERICAN THEATRE. By Dorothy Chansky. *Studies in Theatre History and Culture* series. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015; pp. 304.

The October 2008 issue of *Theatre Journal* was bookended by articles from Jill Dolan and Dorothy Chansky that separately reevaluated two stalwarts of the second-wave feminist movement: Wendy Wasserstein (Dolan) and Betty Friedan (Chansky). Together, they marked one unofficial beginning of what has since become a vibrant contemporary movement (including my work with Roberta Barker in Canada, as well as work by Elaine Aston in the United Kingdom, and Varun Begley and Cary Mazer in the United States) to rethink, reframe, and reclaim stage realism in all of its fraught complexity. While it is impossible to recuperate stage realism naively, thanks to the robust critique leveled against it by feminist and critical race scholars over the past four decades, it is—as the above writers contend—nevertheless necessary to parse that critique with care, to distinguish among the multiple practices and strategies (dramaturgical, technical, and performative) that constitute the thing(s) we mean when we talk about “realism,” and to take the measure of the different kinds of cultural work that multiple “realisms” can do—sometimes separately, sometimes in tandem, and sometimes at tantalizing cross-purposes with one another.

Now, nearly a decade after her essay on Friedan was published, Chansky offers us a thickly historicized, informative, lively, and intelligent addition to the burgeoning critical literature we might call “Realism 2.0.” *Kitchen Sink Realisms* is a provocative, unabashedly “feminist history” (3; emphasis in original) of American theatre that spotlights the role that domestic labor has played, as both dramaturgical device and sustained performance action, in a wide range of popular (and a few avant-garde) works written and performed between 1918 and 2005. At the center of Chansky’s history is a careful revaluing of the often-derided genre in her title, and while the book does not offer a thoroughgoing engagement with genre per se, it structures all of its readings around the questions that ghost the label “realist”: How does the American theatre stage our