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Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin. *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England: A Collaborative Debate*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp x, 215.

What is the best analogy for what playgoers were doing when they went to the playhouses of early modern London? In simplest form, this is the question that *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England* sets out to answer. As its full title indicates, this book is a 'collaborative debate' on playgoing in the age of Shakespeare. Dawson and Yachnin take the idea of debate seriously, highlighting where their views diverge, alternating positions and counter-positions in succeeding chapters. Though clearly labeled, it is bound to surprise, then delight, readers who expect a tidy synthesis of its two scholars' views.

The book's body divides into four parts, to each of which Dawson and Yachnin, respectively, contribute a chapter. The introduction and afterword are both co-written. Owing to the divided nature of the book, it will be important for this review to highlight what Dawson and Yachnin think the playhouses were, what they think the playhouses resembled, and what they think playgoing was most like. They unfold most of these differences in the book's first part, 'Participation vs. Populuxe: Two Theories of Early Modern Theatre'.

For Dawson the playhouses were a great deal like church, with playgoing a kind of 'participation' in a manner analogous to a post-Reformation communicant's relation to the host. Playgoers were largely credulous, and tended to experience plays collectively. For Yachnin, in contrast, the market rather than the church serves as the best analogy for playhouses; playgoing was akin to consumption in the marketplace as playhouses retailed 'populuxe' dramatic fictions (that is, fictions which commodified social prestige [41]). Yachnin's playgoers were sophisticated, even cynical. Although both critics range widely across many kinds of plays (indeed, even discussing the same passages), they seem drawn to different genres: where Dawson's central genre is tragedy, Yachnin's is comedy. Their historical perspectives are also markedly different. To explain what the playhouses were, Dawson looks back in time, to the Reformation compromise on ceremony. In contrast, Yachnin looks forward, to the triumph of market forces during the modern age. As this difference of historical orientation may imply, and indeed as all these differences suggest, much of the book involves a split between sacred and secular. In today's terms, Dawson's playgoers could be analogized to participants in a séance; Yachnin's are more like moviegoers at a multiplex. These are my metaphors rather than

the authors', of course, and the preceding is an entirely ungainly simplification of the positions taken in the book. But it may serve, all the same, to set out the fundamental distinctions between the way the two authors understand playgoing.

In the second part of this study, 'Theatrical Pleasure and the Contest of Vision', Yachnin and Dawson advance competing models of playgoing pleasure in relation to divergent theories of early modern seeing. For Yachnin, Shakespeare and his contemporaries were involved in a larger historical transition from a chiefly materialistic understanding of vision (one's eyes as laser beams) to 'a modern psychologized visual regime where seeing and being seen operate only across the surface of things and where visual images cannot impinge unless the perceiver wants them to' (70) – Duncan's lament, in other words, about our inability to know the mind's construction from the face. To Yachnin, a large part of the pleasures of playgoing (and, in his playwright-sympathetic argument, of the writing of plays) came from the energized contest 'between the spectacular and the unseen' (70), between the dialectic of 'sight and insight' (79) noticeable in the way, for instance, 'Shakespearean persons are always in the process of receding into invisibility' (72). Although tantalizing when phrased this way, Yachnin's argument becomes less than persuasive when he adduces specific instances of performance history to make his case. His rejection of the *locus / platea* distinction, for instance – a necessary move, owing to this distinction's participatory foundation – is based on the belief in the power of single 'looks', by actors, to 'change everything' (82). That two of his three instances here come from film reveal the potential weakness of this argument: in a crowded and noisy amphitheater, the efficacy of any single 'look' seems questionable.

Dawson's response chapter takes up the crowded, noisy nature of playhouses through an examination of Henry Wotton's famous account of the Globe's burning in 1613. Far from positing a unified response to plays, Dawson admits the various 'intra-playhouse' distractions (91) – including other playgoers, prostitutes, cutpurses, eating and drinking – and sees the challenge they posed as the source of the stage's concerted effort to collectively align playgoers 'rather than separate the different members of the audience out into discrete units' (92). Participation, to Dawson, involved the stage's effort at 'scopic management' (96); collectivity came not in spite of but as 'a result of contest and negotiation' (101). For Dawson, 'Visual pleasure, even as it individuates, looks beyond itself, producing a collective act of engagement' (107). Oddly, neither Dawson nor Yachnin justifies this section's emphasis on visuality as the ground of debate. What gets left out, in my opinion, are the pleasures of the ear and

mind's eye, pleasures famously available during the 'well-spoken days' of the early modern playhouse.

The third part of this book, 'Objects of Wonder and Desire', focuses on the responses generated by stage properties. The debate here ultimately centres on whether those responses were lowbrow and secular, like marketplace spectacle-gazing (Yachnin), or highbrow and sacred, akin to participation in religious rituals (Dawson). Yachnin's argument is a radical one: he holds that the reverence for charismatic objects we typically understand to be produced by early modern plays (especially those of Shakespeare) is actually a byproduct of the historical process – a process spurred by performance and print culture – by which the *literary* resonances of these plays have dominated our attention. As Yachnin argues, 'the particular kind of wonder that modern critics often find in plays such as *The Winter's Tale* or *Othello* is in fact an attribute that they read back into the plays, and . . . is a product of the text and the history of reading rather than a reflection of the text's staging in the Renaissance theatre' (114). In responding to this position, Dawson invokes the strong legacy of iconoclasm as well as the charge which playhouses typically lend the objects they display; these motivational forces, he argues, augmented the potency of objects in performance. When Dawson speaks, however, of a 'delighted recognition that it is the theatre, not the market, that confers a charge on objects as they appear on stage' (142), one wonders whose delight he is actually talking about, and why he feels so confident that playhouse and market were distinct. In any case, both chapters in this section would have benefited from attention to Peter Platt's foundational study of wonder in Shakespeare: *Reason Diminished: Shakespeare and the Marvelous* (1997).

The divergence in historical perspective that characterizes so much of the debate in this book occupies its fourth part, 'National Pastimes'. Memory is the central topic here: in Dawson's description, ceremony toward social remembering; in Yachnin's terms, news. Dawson sees the playhouses as inheriting the ritualistic ceremonies dampened (though not eliminated) by the national cataclysm of the Reformation, whose trauma the Elizabethan theatres responded to by repeating what had been repressed. The playhouses seek legitimacy, he argues, not to sell populuxe dramatic fictions, 'but to establish a place from which to speak as custodians of memory and social meaning' (166). Yachnin, in contrast, sees the theatres as interested in the very recent past, 'retailing popular, inexpensive accounts of events which passed as inside information about court and government affairs' (183). Disbelieving that the English nation existed in the form Dawson appears to grant it, Yachnin's orientation is 'in relation to the future of the nation' (186). Differences of genre

characterize these accounts. Where Dawson reads *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Hamlet* to make his case, Yachnin offers up *The Staple of News*, *A Game at Chess*, and *All's Well That Ends Well*. Ironically, it is in this chapter that the two critics' views seem most compatible. Both agree that the playhouses took special interest in representations *of* representation. For Yachnin, that process looks forward to the newspaper and scandal sheet; for Dawson, it looks backward to the cultural cohesion of rituals in catholic England.

What's refreshing about this wonderful book is its intellectual seriousness. Both authors are aware that positions, as well as ideas, have consequences. So while it is possible to finish this study and grant to both authors their respective points, it is unlikely that a serious reader will feel comfortable saying (merely) that the heterogeneous audiences of early modern London probably featured some Dawson-like playgoers and some Yachnin-like ones. Although such may be true, it is not enough. The stakes, as Dawson and Yachnin realize, are higher than easy rhetorical compromise admits.

Well written and cogently argued, *The Culture of Playgoing* is one of the most exciting books on its topic in recent years. It deserves a wide audience, and Cambridge University Press would do the field (and itself) a favor by reissuing it immediately in paperback form. Anyone interested in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and in the history of performance, will find its arguments stimulating.

Douglas Bruster

Ben Jonson. *Every Man Out of His Humour*. Ed Helen Ostovich. The Revels Plays. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001. Pp xvi, 400.

Considered an experimental failure by many modern critics, *Every Man Out of His Humour* was in fact Jonson's most notable early success and the first of his plays to be published, receiving an unusually large print-run of three quarto editions in the course of 1600. Exploiting the notoriety of the recently banned genre of formal verse satire, Jonson labelled the play a 'comical satire' and described it as 'strange and of a particular kind by itself, somewhat like *Vetus Comedia* [ie, Old Comedy]' (Induction 227–8), thereby emphasizing its connections with the satirical comedies of Aristophanes rather than with earlier Elizabethan 'humour' comedies. In fact, however, *Every Man Out* was original