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Irish on the Move: Performing Mobility in American Variety Theatre by Michelle Granshaw (review)

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***Irish on the Move: Performing Mobility in American Variety Theatre.* By Michelle Granshaw. University of Iowa Press, 2019. Paper \$90.00, eBook \$90.00. 288 pages. 15 illustrations.**

In *Irish on the Move*, Michelle Granshaw analyzes Irish and Irish-American participation in US variety theatre between the end of the Civil War and the mid-1880s, with particular attention to this community's relationship to citizenship, whiteness, and class. She frames her inquiry through "dramaturgies of mobility," or "the repeated narratives, strategies, and performative practices emerging from society's debates surrounding movement and its meanings" (3). This mobility is primarily literal—that is, involving the subjects' movement through space (whether around a city, the US, or the globe). At the same time, she demonstrates that this physical mobility frequently had implications for social mobility. The work is particularly attuned to the ways issues of class shaped these dramaturgies of mobility, particularly as middle-class Irish Americans (and those who aspired to be middle-class) sought to cultivate images of rooted respectability.

Each of Granshaw's five main chapters offers a "microhistory" of a specific aspect or trope of variety theatre: the comic tramp character, representations of the "mobile fighting Irish," the panoramic Hibernicon productions (to which she dedicates two chapters: one on the performances themselves and one on the touring companies' relationships with the communities in which they performed), and finally the walking competitions arising from the pedestrianism movement. This microhistory structure allows Granshaw to explicitly move away from creating a unified narrative of the connections between dramaturgies of mobility and nineteenth-century Irish immigrants and Irish Americans. She uses each chapter to examine different (although often overlapping) constellations of influences and motivations while continually emphasizing the potential topics that exist outside her chosen case studies.

Granshaw locates each of these microhistories within larger issues and discourses of the period. In doing so she notes similarities, persuasively demonstrating that the performances were part of larger conversations and trends. She also identifies many contributions and approaches that were unique to performance, however. For example, in the first of her chapters on the Hibernicon, "a hybrid of an Irish-American variety show and a moving panorama" that provided audiences with "a virtual trip to Ireland," she compares the performances to travel writings of (primarily English) visitors to Ireland (101). Both versions generally featured an outside visitor who was introduced to the island by an Irish guide. In the written travel accounts, the visitor presented the guide to the reader, generally in ways that were both patronizing and stereotyped. Although the stereotypes certainly existed

in the Hibernicons, the embodied nature of performance meant that the visitor and guide were put on a more even footing. The guide could now speak directly to the audience rather than having his words filtered through the visitor/narrator.

Throughout, Granshaw resists any impulse to reduce the mobility of Irish migrants and Irish Americans to one singular meaning. She draws attention to the ways differences in class and gender shaped the dramaturgies of mobility. In particular, she notes the relative absence of women from these performances; when Irish women were represented, they were often subject to even more scrutiny and suspicion than Irish men. Similarly, she demonstrates that these dramaturgies of mobility could be used both to empower and marginalize the Irish in America. This is most explicit in her chapter on representations of the mobile violent Irish. She compares the ways this trope was used to depict the Irish as freedom-fighting global citizens in some cases, and subversive dangers to US values and stability in others. Variety theatre frequently featured heroes who had fought for the Union in the Civil War and then travelled elsewhere in the world to fight against tyranny (rather than returning home and settling down once the war was over). In these pieces, the characters explicitly connected their commitment to violently oppose injustice to their Irish identity and Irish nationalism. In contrast, other plays featured the Irish as troublemakers who stirred up industrial tensions and caused violent uprisings among workers. These depictions reflected the anxiety around the Molly Maguires, an Irish and Irish-American secret society linked with violent uprisings by Pennsylvania coal miners in the 1870s. In these pieces, the mobility of the Irish agitators was presented as a direct threat; it facilitated the spread of subversive ideas that could create violent discontent among otherwise good, settled workers. In these two instances, the meaning placed upon the mobile fighting Irishman could render him either the ideal US citizen or a threat to everything the US stood for.

This book is especially valuable for its nuanced analysis of the relationship between Irishness and whiteness in the period covered. Granshaw simultaneously draws attention to the discrimination against the Irish in America and refuses to equate it with the treatment of Black, Chinese, and Indigenous people. Rather than presenting the Irish as moving from non-whiteness to whiteness, she follows more recent scholarship in focusing on Celtic identity as a form of whiteness marginalized in comparison to the more-dominant Anglo-Saxon identity. Indeed, she notes the ways that Irish performers were able to use minstrelsy and its tropes to increase their own status and lay claim to the privileges of a white identity that were denied to Black people on and off stage. These distinctions are especially important for the beginning and the end of the book, when Granshaw puts her subject into conversation with more contemporary issues of racism, white supremacy, and anti-immigrant sentiment (particularly those of the Trump administration). While she notes many ways that a study of the mobility of nineteenth century Irish immigrants

and Irish Americans might be useful to understanding more recent events, she rejects any suggestion that their experiences or positions are interchangeable.

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***War as Performance: Conflicts in Iraq and Political Theatricality.* By Lindsey Mantoan. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. Hardcover \$84.99, Paper \$84.99, eBook \$64.99. xii + 236 pages. 16 illustrations.**

Much has been written about the theatricality of war and terrorism, but Lindsey Mantoan's *War as Performance* specifically examines the performative techniques used to promote, resist, and assess the 2003 Iraq War, in the context of the 1991 Gulf War and the rise of Daesh (also known as ISIS or ISIL). Mantoan's thesis is that the extensive political performances framing the Iraq conflict largely deployed established performative techniques rather than formal or aesthetic innovation (8). The book fills a gap in the existing scholarship about performance in war or terrorism by creating a comprehensive picture of theatricality in the Iraq War, the specificity of which has largely been ignored. Each chapter examines a different medium or mode of performance, from the Bush administration and protestors' messaging, to anti-war adaptations of Greek drama, to Iraqi theatre of the real, to satirical news, to post-apocalyptic literature and film. *War as Performance* offers a comprehensive, if not always unified, assessment of performative responses to the Iraq conflict.

The introduction sets the stakes for thinking about theatrical responses to war and provides an overview of military conflict in Iraq since the 1990s. Mantoan argues that the theatricality surrounding the Iraq War reveals "the ways in which twenty-first century warfare is waged, resisted, and understood," and is therefore important for performance studies scholars to examine (3). She defines the term *performative* as: "the actor acts with the intention of drawing the attention of an audience, and to exert influence over the shape of the world" (18), though the book tends to treat *performative* and *theatrical* as relatively interchangeable terms across media. Mantoan's historical overview shows that during the Gulf War, Americans got used to seeing war as spectacle because the conflict was broadcast on live TV, and after the 9/11 attacks, Americans were inundated with militaristic and patriotic performances, setting the stage for the theatricality of the 2003 Iraq War.

The second chapter, "Impresarios and Protestors," shows how the Bush administration stage managed the lead-up to the 2003 invasion and discredited direct protests through appeals to patriotism. Mantoan claims the US government carefully produced a narrative (however full of plot holes) through strategies