

many previously untranslated remarks by Mnouchkine, LeMêtre, mask-maker Erhard Stiefel, Cixous, the actors, and others directly and indirectly involved in the productions traces the intriguing profile of a unique troupe that, in a labor of love, places the necessity and redemptive power of Theatre above question.

JEAN GRAHAM-JONES. *Exorcising History: Argentine Theater under Dictatorship*. London: Associated University Presses, 2000. Pp. 259. \$44.50 (Hb).

Reviewed by Diana Taylor, New York University

Jean Graham-Jones's *Exorcising History: Argentine Theater under Dictatorship* provides a careful, well-documented overview of theatrical production in Argentina during and immediately following the "Dirty War" (1976–1983). During a particularly virulent period, Graham-Jones attests, Argentinians still produced and attended theatre. The numbers tell the story: in 1979, at the height of the military brutality against its own population, 2,200,000 people went to plays and 278 plays were written. Dramatists and critics agree that theatre served a special role during the "Dirty War." The physical act of bringing an audience together defied the dictatorship's prohibition against gatherings. The plays offered the public a "reality" check, ironically reflecting the brutal truth of everyday violence in a society predicated on fabrications and make-believe. Even though the plays were censored and sometimes suspended, the censors faced the next-to-impossible job of policing every performance of every show. A gesture or an inflection could say what the censored words themselves could not, and audience members became highly sophisticated readers of double-coded cultural acts of resistance. Censors may control texts, but how do they control the living bodies of performance?

Exorcising History is divided into four chapters organized along chronological lines. The first, "1976–1979: Theatre 'Metaphorizes' Reality," offers an overview of some of the plays of the period, with particular attention to Ricardo Monti's *Visita* and Roberto Mario Cossa's *La nona* and *No hay que llorar*. In the face of censorship, Graham-Jones argues, playwrights turn to metaphor as a means of expressing the unsayable. A grotesque reality requires oblique forms of representation in periods of such extreme political violence. Chapter two, "1980–1982: Myths Unmasked, Unrealities Exposed," again begins with an overview, next looks at machismo through the analysis of Ricardo Halac's *Un trabajo fabuloso* and Susana Torres Molina's ... *y a otra cosa mariposa*, and then goes on to explore other plays having to do with "national identity" (69). Chapter three, "Vigilant, Vigilante Theatre: Teatro Abierto (1981–1985)," focuses, as the title suggests, on the various offerings of Teatro Abierto between 1981 and 1985, just as the military dictatorship

began to lose its hold and, later, its power. Graham-Jones follows the same structural outline, first providing an overview and then getting down to the analysis of specific plays – here, Mauricio Kartun’s *La Casita de los viejos* and *Cumbia Morena Cumbia*, Aída Bortnik’s *Papa querido* and *De a uno*, and plays by Cossa and Eugenio Griffero. The final chapter, “1983–85: Settling Accounts,” looks at the immediate post-dictatorship context and the theatre produced under the hopes of “redemocratization,” including works by Griselda Gambaro, Cossa, Jorge Goldenberg, and Eduardo Pavlovsky. The change in the sociopolitical context has clearly made itself felt both on the subject matter and on the aesthetic framing chosen by playwrights. As Graham-Jones writes, “The tragic structure of the 1976 written text was exploded by the 1985 theatrical text, with the addition of distancing, fragmenting, and self-parodying techniques that would become basic elements of Buenos Aires post-Proceso theater” (155). *Exorcising History* ends with a conclusion and two useful appendices, the first listing the works staged during the period in question, the second listing major political events.

While *Exorcising History* is a complete and helpful overview, it reads like an early work to me. I have always admired Jean Graham-Jones’s grasp of her subject and the detail-oriented nature of her work, but in this book she seems reluctant to engage in the theoretical issues and debates that seem central to her project. How, for example, can one dream of “exorcising” history? How does this understanding of history – as a violent event/wound that can be “exorcised” – relate to similar questions posited by recent trauma studies? Cathy Caruth argues, in the introduction to her edited volume *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, that “[t]he traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (5). The Argentines – playwrights and audience members alike – carried and continue to carry an “impossible history” within them, one that has not been “exorcised” or “settled.” Organizations such as H.I.J.O.S. (made up of children of the disappeared and political prisoners) demonstrate that violence affects several generations simultaneously and that the trauma evident now in the younger generation is not about to “disappear” anytime soon. The Argentine theatre of the 1990s shows the same preoccupation with trauma. Plays like Gambaro’s *Atando cabos* ask how people continue to live with their torturers and how they cope with the pain, violence, and loss. The problem with a strictly chronological approach to the subject matter is that it imposes a pseudo-linearity on the event. Graham-Jones’s chapters implicitly follow this trajectory, and the reader experiences the events as a kind of “social drama,” in Victor Turner’s sense of the term, with a breach, crisis, redressive action, and reintegration (37–42). Trauma studies, however, quite rightly reject this linear narrative and stress the reiterative nature of the traumatic repeat: it is not “over”; it can never be “over.” This circular, more inclusive form of thinking about trauma – both as subject matter

for the dramatists and as a shared experiential situation of all Argentines who felt at risk during the "Dirty War" – would demand greater theoretical reflection on Graham-Jones's part. How does theatre depict trauma without further inflicting it? How do audience members act as witnesses both to the violence inflicted on others and to the trauma they themselves experience?

Theatre, Graham-Jones states convincingly in *Exorcising History*, provides a vital space for encounter and reflection during periods of criminal violence. In her more recent work, she is beginning to tell us how and why.

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Reviewed by Jonathan Chambers, Bowling Green State University

Long held to be one of the major players in twentieth-century American theatre, Arthur Miller has, for over six decades, been the focus of much discussion in the popular press and academic theatre circles. The fiftieth anniversary of the New York debut of his 1949 play *Death of a Salesman* might well be viewed as the pinnacle in a recent trend of renewed interest in his work. Indeed, in the years immediately preceding this 1999 anniversary, there were numerous newspaper and magazine commentaries, as well as high-profile television appearances on *Charlie Rose* and *Larry King Live*, all celebrating the life and achievements of one of America's premier playwrights. In addition to the often overly nostalgic musings in the popular media, the 1990s saw the publication of a number of significant scholarly studies that reconsidered the playwright, his plays, and notable productions in light of emerging theories and methodologies. Noteworthy among these works are David Savran's