

pieces were so astonishingly original that it was truly incumbent to somehow convey their significance, whilst simultaneously including space for the tributes and reminiscences of those who knew Howells well. It is a testament to the editors that they managed to address both an intimate audience of close friends and the larger academic audience of the live-art sector.

The book itself is simply gorgeous, a fitting paean to a sensitive boy fatally attracted to glittery things, to paraphrase two of the four video titles screened for *An Audience with Adrienne* (2006–10). Copiously illustrated with colour photographs, the book is leavened with personal accounts and tributes to Howells, my favourite being that of Marcia Farquhar, whose pyjamas were turned into a muddy-coloured mess during a performance of *Adrienne's Dirty Laundry Experience* (2005). Johnson and Heddon also include scholarly articles that address the structure and psychological impact of one-to-one performances (Heddon, Helen Iball and Rachel Zerihan), the documentation of the intimate encounter (Jon Cairnes), the implications of Howells's affective labour in a neo-liberal economy (Stephen Greer), and a compelling discussion of the medieval and Christological history of the foot/sole in Howells's best-known performance, *Footwashing for the Sole* (Kathleen Gough). The entire book is framed by an excellent introduction that situates Howells's work in relationship with relational aesthetics, immersive performance, dialogical aesthetics and the politics of feminine/queer labour. Mindful of the audience that would not be familiar with Howells's work, the editors included a biographical survey of Howells's *oeuvre* that spanned his beginning in high school to his final performance, *Lifeguard*. An extensive bibliography concludes the volume.

As an artist, Howells used the material of his own life – his sensitivity, his childhood bedwetting, his queerness, and his severe depression – in order to craft a body of work that ultimately moved away from the particulars and towards the universal and authentic, as problematic as those terms might be. As Jennifer Doyle, whose essay concludes the volume, wrote, 'these performances yield a basic encounter with one's own vulnerability – why would we think they didn't do that for the artist, or that they shouldn't?' *It's All Allowed*, the title taken from Howells's motto, is as vulnerable and beautiful as its subject.

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**Performance Art in Ireland: A History.** Edited by Áine Phillips. London:

LADA/Intellect, 2015. Pp. 336 + 149 illus. £25/\$36 Pb.

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I write this review from Dublin in September 2016, days after the fifth March for Choice has taken place in the Irish capital and simultaneously in cities around the world. The annual demonstration demands that the Irish government call a referendum to repeal the eighth amendment to the country's Constitution, which since 1983 has featured a

ban on abortion, equating the life of the foetus (regardless of viability) with the life of the mother.

I mention the ongoing 'Repeal the 8th' campaign because at the heart of Phillips's edited collection is a clear sense that (a) performance art in Ireland, from its origins in the 1970s, has always been concerned with exploring the body as a site of conflict, an agent of meaning, and a catalyst for performance; and (b) women practitioners have always been leading figures in Irish performance art. These two points are inextricably linked: as Phillips puts it, '[f]eminist artists embraced performance art . . . to speak what was before unspeakable and do what was unthinkable for women in this conservative society . . . Performance became an artistic strategy enacting social change both in terms of sexual politics, [and] social justice' (p. 8). Women's names, voices and bodies rise loudly from the pages, in resistance and opposition to dominant social and legal norms. Thick description and political analysis of performance pieces by Amanda Coogan, Mary Duffy, Alanna O'Kelly, Kira O'Reilly, Anne Seagrave and many others reveal a constant, urgent problematizing of the complex relationship between Ireland's patriarchal, Catholic heritage and the work of its women artists.

Of course, the work of hugely influential artists such as Alistair MacLennan, Nigel Rolfe, André Stitt and many other men populate Phillips's collection with creative precision, political power and embodied resonance. Crucially, the arrivals from the UK of MacLennan and Rolfe to the north and south of Ireland respectively are seen as a definitive moment of origin in the history of performance art in the country. Indeed, the collection's subtitle, 'A History', invokes a number of ways of thinking about what a history might be and do, and for whom it might be written. Phillips includes chronicle-style histories of performance art through the lenses of particular cities (Stitt's discussion of Belfast, Mags Morley and Danny McCarthy's of Cork), periods of time (Coogan explores the years between 1970 and 1990, Cliodhna Shaffrey the 2000s and beyond), companies (Karine Talec shows us the work of Bbeyond, Fergus Byrne recalls Performance Collective), and analyses of genres (El Putnam on sound art, Helena Walsh and Kate Antosik-Parsons on feminist performance art). There are snapshots of particular moments (Anthony Sheehan's 1984 article for *High Performance* about Irish performance south of the border) and wide-ranging descriptions of Irish performance artists' practices abroad (Phillips's own chapter).

The volume's ability to comfortably and skilfully rove from the broad contextual brushstrokes to the tiny, sensory pinpricks is, in many ways, its greatest strength. In interview with Morley, McCarthy recalls the smell of rotting fish after a performance by MacLennan in the basement of Cork's Triskel Arts Centre in the early 1970s (p. 124). Walsh provides an extraordinarily thoughtful analysis of the term 'post-conflict' in an Irish performance context, deftly traversing fifty years of political struggles and negotiations from 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland to the investigations of clerical sexual abuse across the country (pp. 211–14). These are just two examples of the sense the book provokes that the vibrant, churning, frequently invisible history of performance art in Ireland is very much worth investigating. I fervently hope that Phillips's volume and the names and works it brings to a wider audience for the first time

pave the way for further exploration and analysis of these artists and their performance practices.

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***The Theatre of David Henry Hwang.*** By Esther Kim Lee. London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015. Pp. x + 207. £21.99 Pb.

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David Henry Hwang is one of the foremost contemporary American playwrights, a Tony Award winner, and the only Asian-American author to have not one but four Broadway productions under his belt. Esther Kim Lee has now produced an essential new monograph on Hwang's *oeuvre* over the past thirty-five years. Comprehensive in scope and written in accessible yet engaging style, Lee's study retraces Hwang's career from his initial steps into playwriting in the early 1980s to his remarkable achievements as a leading voice in Asian American theatre. Unlike previous scholarship, Lee offers valuable analysis of hitherto overlooked texts, such as *Face Value* (1993), as well as of his most recent production, *Kung Fu* (2014). The book comprises an introduction and six chapters, in addition to an extensive bibliography and a chronology of Hwang's life and work.

In the introduction, Lee details Hwang's numerous accomplishments while also asking the crucial and still-debated question of why he is 'the only Asian American playwright to have been produced on Broadway' to date (p. 2). Lee outlines what Hwang himself has dubbed his 'assimilationist', 'isolationist-nationalist', and 'multiculturalist' phases (the latter is Lee's own coinage), while exploring key motifs in his dramaturgy such as race, identity, autobiography, family relations, notions of 'face', mask and 'deception' (pp. 4–5), irony, and meta-theatre. She further underscores the role of music and sound – as well as silence – in his plays, and the integration of traditional Chinese theatrical aesthetics.

The first five chapters offer perceptive readings of Hwang's plays from 1980 to 2014. In addition to providing detailed textual analyses, production histories, and new commentary on the works that earned Hwang international fame, Lee delves for the first time into scripts that have hitherto received scant scholarly attention, yet are equally essential to grasp the underlying concerns of his poetics.

Chapter 1 surveys Hwang's 'Trilogy of Chinese America' (1980–1) from the perspective of magical realism and the 'Californian cool', as Lee terms it (p. 10). Chapter 2 investigates four lesser-known plays written between 1983 and 1986, which testify to an expansion of Hwang's thematic range beyond Chinese America, and exploration of new playwriting styles. These include the 'Japanese plays' *The Sound of a Voice* and *The House of Sleeping Beauties*, both of which premiered in 1983. Lee places Hwang's dramas within Asian-American culture, with references to the writings of Maxine Hong Kingston and Frank Chin, while also providing a global context through discussions of his affinity with such authors as Sam Shepard, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter and Yasunari Kawabata. Lee emphasizes the dialectical quality of Hwang's writings, which resist univocal readings by