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Beya Dhraïef, Eric Négrel, Jennifer Ruimi, eds., *Théâtre et charlatans dans l'Europe moderne*. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2018. 368 pp. Tables, illustrations, bibliography, and index. €29.50 (pb). ISBN 978-2-87854-996-6.

Review by Clare Siviter, University of Bristol, UK.

This edited volume comprises the proceedings from a 2014 conference of the same name as well as a handful of commissioned essays. The aim of the editors was to disentangle charlatans from the study of medicine and analyze their relationship with the field of theatre. This latter term is understood in a very broad sense and includes the charlatans' links with actors and *mise en scène*, as well as representation in plays, literature, and other texts. The focus is purposefully large, both geographically and temporally, and the selection of essays incorporates methodologies from different academic disciplines. As such, reading the volume as a whole is an enlightening experience that will allow specialists to extend their knowledge, be this through a different geographic region, time period, or medium. Given the breadth of the volume, it is necessary first to give an overview of the contents before coming to any conclusions.

The collection is divided into four sections (“Du *triacleur* au bonimenteur,” “La médecine empirique vue par les arts de la scène,” “Les grands charlatans de l’histoire, personnages de fiction,” and “Les mille visages de l’imposture: théâtralité et critique sociale”) with nine chapters that further structure the flow of the essays. In total, there are twenty-five individual contributions as well as a co-authored preface, an introduction by Beya Dhraïef and a postscript by Jean-Paul Sermain. There is also a substantial bibliography classified along the main lines where the figure of the charlatan is likely to appear (“La médecine empirique et les arts du spectacle: charlatans, saltimbanques et comédiens *dell’arte*,” “Médecine, art dentaire et charlatanisme,” “Maladie, médecine, charlatanisme: l’art et la littérature,” and “Impostures et imposteurs”). The volume can thus be of use for its detailed contributions on a particular element of the history of charlatans, and can contextualize the reader’s knowledge through comparative examples or act as a starting point for research on the figure of the charlatan.

The first section, “Du *triacleur* au bonimenteur,” brings together six essays in two main chapters. The first, “Le nom et la chose,” starts with Jelle Koopmans’s investigation of the origins and subsequent rise of the charlatan figure during the Middle Ages by tracing its portrayal in medieval literary narratives. Pierre Baron continues this interest with an excellent essay focusing on the different sales techniques and products that charlatans adopted in France and Italy, and how this formed a performance. François Rémond finishes this first chapter with another first-rate essay which returns to the central question of the theatre and the crossover

between charlatans in the streets and on the stage in seventeenth-century Paris, showing how street theatre influenced the professional theatres. The second chapter, “Polémiques et réceptions,” commences with Jean-François Lattarico’s examination of seventeenth-century Italian Jesuits’ views of charlatans, revealing the implications of the latter’s gesture and rhetoric, while the next essay by Cécile Berger studies the tour of the Italian players to France in 1620 and the portrayal of charlatans in *Lo Schiavetto* (1620), which portrayed a real figure who was in control of the Duke of Mantua’s players, Tristano Martinelli. The final essay by Agnès Curel skips to nineteenth-century Paris, which can seem slightly jarring, but she offers an important study of how the history of the charlatan was re-written during this later period, linking it to street theatre and “boniment,” which has since informed scholarship. Given the revisionist aim of the volume, it would have been useful to have a larger discussion of this interesting point.

The second major section, “La médecine empirique vue par les arts de la scène,” is comprised of three chapters. The first, “Figurations,” opens with an essay by M. A. Katritzky that returns to the medieval period, focusing on the development of the charlatan from the Passion, notably the market scene. The focus here is very European, stretching from Spain to the German lands, and contains much original research. The next two essays return to France. Patrick Dandrey offers a contribution on how Molière expanded the representation of the charlatan, while Christelle Bahier-Porte focuses on eighteenth-century French fair theatre. The next two chapters, “Parodies” and “Ambivalence et paradoxe,” extend this study of eighteenth-century France. The first of these chapters offers two new contributions to the current scholarship on the process of parodying. The first, by Bertrand Porot, considers the first time a charlatan appears in a French opera, with *L’Amour charlatan* (1710) while the second, by Flora Mele, concentrates on Favart’s *L’Empirique* (1743) as a parody of Voltaire’s *Mahomet* (1741). The fifth chapter’s first essay by Jenifer Ruimi examines how the charlatan can be seen as an absurd or acceptable figure in theatre by examining language and the links to classical rhetoric brought up by Lattarico. The second, by the late Martine Rougemont, concentrates on the paradoxical portrayal of the charlatan by Louis-Sébastien Mercier in *Le Charlatan* (1780), the play she edited before her death that sparked the initial idea for this conference and volume.

The third section, “Les grands charlatans de l’histoire, personnages de fiction,” returns to a more European focus with two chapters, “Miroirs dramatiques” and “Vies de charlatans.” Sophie Vasset commences this section’s first chapter with an examination of the British figure John Woodward, who, contrary to most of the charlatans studied in the volume, was a respected member of the medical establishment before being caricatured and satirized in eighteenth-century British theatre. Daniel Droixhe takes another example, this time from eighteenth-century France, in the form of Mesmer’s theories and their comical application on stage. Finally, Etienne Leterrier studies the representation of the Count of Cagliostro who was based in Strasbourg but enjoyed a European career, which was dramatized by Goethe, Catherine the Great, and Roviglio. Chapter seven, “Vies de Charlatans,” focuses on more literary representations of these charlatan figures, with an essay by Constance Juri on the portrayal of Buonafede Vitali, notably by Carlo Goldoni, and subsequently how Vitali influenced Goldoni’s representation of the charlatan, while Sophie Rothé analyses Giacomo Casanova’s *mise-en-scène* of himself in his own writings.

The final section, “Les mille visages de l’imposture: théâtralité et critique sociale,” builds on a thread that runs throughout multiple essays, the figure of the charlatan offering a space for

social critique. The first chapter, “Mises en abyme,” combines three essays by Goulven Oiry, Blandine Daguerre, and Isabel Ibáñez. The first by Oiry studies the “soldat fanfaron” in a little known corpus of French plays from the period 1550 to 1650, and the social criticism that resulted. The next two chapters turn to two Spanish case studies. Daguerre’s essay centers on the figure of the innkeeper in *El Pasajero* (1617), studying the lexical fields used around this character in particular, while the second by Ibáñez offers a very interesting study of *El Amor medico* (ca. 1622) and its intertextuality with other contemporary Spanish plays. Of particular note about this essay is its focus on the use of female charlatan figures, contrasting with the majority of other case studies in the volume, and the fight between theatrical authors and practitioners. The final chapter, “Le politique et l’intime,” returns to focus predominantly on France but with an even larger definition of “charlatan.” It opens with an essay by Eric Négrel on the use of the charivari as a way of criticizing noble members of the army and denouncing second or invalid marriages. This denunciation is also at the heart of *Le médecin par occasion* (1745), analysed by Karine Bénac-Giroux, a contribution that also returns to the earlier contribution on Molière by Dandrey. Between these two essays, Sabine Chaouche analyzes the development of the charlatan figure in the work of Jean-François Regnard, and Claire Trévien closes the chapter with an essay on the representation of charlatans in late eighteenth-century French prints and how this allowed for extensive social critique. Her use of iconography also allows the volume to come back full circle since the first essays relied heavily on iconography, albeit for an earlier time period.

Having encountered “charlatans” under multiple guises, Sermain’s postscript does an excellent job of concluding the volume, uniting the various threads that have run throughout and returning to the ever-difficult issue of defining the charlatan.

As the above shows, *Théâtre et charlatans dans l’Europe moderne* covers an impressive temporal, geographical, and subject range, combining broader comparative essays with specific case studies. This range also allows for a variety of approaches. For example, Ibáñez is much more theoretical in her approach to seventeenth-century drama than other contributors, while authors like Ruimi and Daguerre study the language surrounding these charlatans, and others place the performance and music center-stage, with Porot actually classifying different types of music associated with charlatans. Multiple essays also focus on the role of iconography from over five centuries, and the volume contains twenty-eight rich color illustrations that aid this analysis.

Although the volume is structured in sections and chapters, there are a number of threads that run throughout. One such is the focus on non-traditional forms of theatre which are often sidelined from scholarship, such as street and fair theatre (Baron, Rémond, Bahier-Porte, for example), and the role of music in these theatrical representations (including Porot and Bahier-Porte). Consequently, this study combines the analysis of spoken and musical drama, which has so often been divorced in French theatre historiography[1] and contributes to the growing field around these other theatrical forms.[2] Another example of a recurring topic is genre, which comes up frequently, from the stabilization of farce in France (Rémond) to the hybridity of genres and whether these succeed or not (Porot and Leterrier). Likewise, there are multiple individual chapters, like those by Berger, Droixhe, Juri, Daguerre, Négrel, and Trévien, that treat the representation of the different social classes in their case studies, and that are then supplemented by a whole section on the figure of the charlatan and social critique. The range of essays allows for numerous comparisons, though these could have been pulled out slightly

more by references to other chapters in the volume, especially when authors mention the same play or topic.

This is a French volume which is very much set in the format of “actes du colloque.” It brings together a series of important essays, but a little more attention could have allowed the volume to have a more significant reach. The preface by all three editors and introduction by Dhraïef alone touch on some very interesting points, including the circulation of the figure of the charlatan between countries. These enticing points are not sufficiently developed, however, before launching into a literature review and an overview of the volume’s contents. The editors readily admit that their focus on the charlatan became ever larger, ranging from studying the charlatan as a historical object to their portrayal in various forms of literature and texts, to examining the relationship between them and different forms of players (p. 9). This ever-expanding focus does mean, however, that the volume can feel somewhat unbalanced in places. Likewise, a little more editing could have helped underline the volume’s significance: the focus of the volume purports to be from the sixteenth century to the French Revolution (p. 9), but the earlier chapters take the study back to the thirteenth century, Curel’s chapter skips to the late nineteenth century, and there are chapters on the German lands and Russia as well as the cases of France, Italy, Spain, and England cited by the editors. This greater coverage is a positive attribute to the volume, and the essays on the earlier period by Koopmans and Katritzky genuinely allow for greater comparison with other contributions, but they need to be integrated into the scholarly presentation of the work. One final point is the title itself. While theatre is at the heart of many of these essays, as a whole they are more about the performance of the charlatan. As Ruimi, one of the editors, recognises in her own essay, this is a much more fitting term than *théâtre* given the subject matter and the sources at hand, and from a reader’s point of view, it would help further unite the essays.

Minor points aside, this is a rich volume that offers a significant contribution to a variety of fields for scholars and students. Its remarkable breadth makes it an enjoyable, engaging, and enlightening read for both experts and newcomers alike.

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## NOTES

[1] See for example, Mark Darlow, “Introduction,” in Michel-Jean Sedaine, *Théâtre de la Révolution*, ed. Mark Darlow (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2017), p. 1.

[2] Important recent contributions include Roxane Martin, *La Féerie romantique sur les scènes parisiennes, 1791-1864* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007); Pauline Beaucé and Françoise Rubellin, eds., *Parodier l’opéra: pratiques, formes et enjeux* (Les Matelles: Editions Espaces 34, 2015); and Stéphanie Fournier, *Rire au théâtre à Paris à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2016).

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