Laurence Marie, *Inventer l'acteur: Émotions et spectacle dans l'Europe des Lumières.* Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses, 2019. 477 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. 26.00 € (pb). ISBN 9791023105551.

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At the height of David Garrick's extraordinary career, the famed eighteenth-century British actor and director was known to demonstrate his virtuosity to dinner companions by acting out the scenes of madness upon which he modeled his legendary performance as King Lear. His source of inspiration was a man whose life had been devastated by sudden tragedy. While happily playing with his toddler near an upper-story window, this man accidentally lost hold, and watched in agony as his daughter fell to her death. The father's trauma was so profound that he lost touch with reality and spent his days locked in a room, reliving the sequence of events when carefree joy turned to agonizing grief. Denis Diderot was among those who described Garrick, while on a visit to France, representing this tortured man. Garrick kissed a pillow and tossed it affectionately into the air, only to be struck by horror as this "child" slipped from his grasp and fell out of a window. His expressions of grief and despair at this catastrophic accident were so afflicting that most of the guests were overcome with emotion and forced to leave the room (pp. 69, 424).[1] Contemporaries could not help wondering how Garrick so successfully embodied this role and others. Did he skillfully imitate behaviors he had studied from real life or did he actually experience these emotions?

Europe's eighteenth-century debates about how actors do their work are at the core of Laurence Marie's *Inventer l'acteur: Émotions et spectacle dans l'Europe des Lumières.* As the title indicates, Marie argues that the actor was invented as an artist during the eighteenth century, an era that witnessed the publication of the first treatises in French, English, Italian, and German devoted solely to the craft of acting. Contemporaries challenged classical conceptions of the stage that approached theater from the perspective of poetry and rhetoric, and performance entered a fertile period of reconceptualization. Marie frames this study around what she describes as a "triple révolution" (p. 10) in writings about theatrical representation--in publishing, theory, and aesthetics--that was catalyzed by Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine's *Le Comédien*, published in 1747 (p. 10). Marking the emergence of a new genre, *Le Comédien* sparked imitations, translations, responses, and rebuttals from French, British, Italian, and later German and Spanish writers, including Diderot himself. Celebrity actors like Garrick raised new questions about just how the magic of theater happened. Acting, long disdained as mere recitation or simple mimicry, and even condemned by some as a morally corrupt act of deception, came to be appreciated as a unique art, a realm of aesthetics that engaged with poetry, painting, sculpture, and music.[2]

To be sure, scholars including Marvin Carlson and Sabine Chaouche have drawn attention to the eighteenth century as a critical moment in the development of theories of acting.[3] In detailing the rehabilitation and reconceptualization of the actor's work, this study traces conversations about acting that included Jean le Rond d'Alembert, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Louis-Sébastien Mercier, and Luigi and François Riccoboni in France, John Hill and Aaron Hill in England, and Carlo Goldoni in Italy and France, covering much familiar territory. *Inventer l'acteur* adds complexity to our understanding of the development of acting theory, however, by adopting a transnational and interdisciplinary approach. Although France remains at the center of this study, it posits that the theoretical texts, actors, and theater practices circulating across Europe "font bouger les concepts par hybridation et recomposition." It argues that these international transfers and developments "font vaciller, puis chuter, l'édifice imitatif forgé par les classiques; elle[s] contribuent [...] à former la matrice théorique du spectacle moderne" (p. 18).

Inventer l'acteur is an ambitious project both geographically and chronologically, encompassing developments across wide swaths of Europe and spanning well over a century. Positioning itself at the intersection of literary studies, performance studies, and the history of ideas, the book's seven chapters take readers through close readings of contemporary texts on acting. It is divided into three roughly chronological parts. Part one, "De l'orateur à l'acteur," traces the transition from the seventeenth-century norm of viewing theatrical performance through the lens of oratory to the innovative perspective of approaching acting as a distinct artistic practice, beginning in the 1740s.

Readers learn that in seventeenth-century aesthetic theory in France and the Continent, "le poète dramatique règne en maître" (p. 23). Writings on rhetoric by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilien informed the few contemporary texts on theater. According to the Abbé d'Aubignac, whose *La Pratique du théâtre* was published in 1657, it was the playwright who spoke through the lines delivered onstage. The actor merely recited. In the early eighteenth century, the reigning French declamatory style, governed by oratorical codes, was challenged by the more corporeal style embraced by English actors and Italian commedia dell'arte troupes. Critics Luigi Riccoboni and Aaron Hill took aim at what they viewed as the artificiality of their local theatrical traditions. Their calls for a more "natural" style, echoed by various French writers, are the focus of chapter two. Prominent actors such as Adrienne Lecouvreur and Michel Baron at the Comédie-Française in Paris introduced new styles onstage that were praised for their authenticity. By this time, theater reviews were becoming common in contemporary print culture, featuring critical assessments of actors' styles and talents. It was in this context that Sainte-Albine penned *Le Comédien,* sparking a chain of responses and inaugurating a sustained conversation on acting (p. 83). The legitimation of acting as a new art form, despite long-standing anti-theatrical prejudice, is explored in chapter three. The actor was given credit for giving life to a text, a job that required much more than rhetorical skills. Sainte-Albine argued that the actor needed to "non seulement exécuter, mais créer." In fact, recognizing that a look, a gesture, and even silence can be as powerful as words, he argued, "Il faut qu'il devienne auteur lui-même" (p. 124).

A central claim in *Inventer l'acteur* is that innovation in theater practice shaped theory, an influence that Marie claims was unidirectional until the late eighteenth century: "il est peu probable que les ouvrages théoriques se soient véritablement taillé une place dans l'enceinte des théâtres" (p. 139). Most influential of all was Garrick himself, whom contemporaries credited with instigating a veritable revolution in acting. Garrick's travels to the Continent in 1751 and again in 1763-65 exposed new audiences to his extraordinary talent and the "realism" of his roles.

"Très vite, Garrick devient le modèle du jeu natural dans toute l'Europe" (p. 67). Theorists who saw Garrick or other celebrities such as Mlle Clairon perform were moved to write about just how they did what they did. Meanwhile, calls mounted to enhance the realism of the theatrical experience in Britain and France by removing spectators seated in benches from the stage itself. With reforms in these areas, as well as improvements in lighting, the spectator's experience became more immersive: the distinction between realms of fiction and reality were more sharply drawn. As French and British spectators became particularly stagestruck and actors such as Garrick emerged as international celebrities, acting's newly elevated status allowed the theater to serve as a laboratory for exploring the nature of emotion and even the science of man during the Enlightenment. In constructing an aesthetics of dramatic performance, theorists increasingly drew on language and concepts borrowed from painting, dance, sculpture, and music.

Part two, "Le corps en scène," features two chapters that highlight the new emphasis on emotion and especially embodiment in the discourse of acting. This focus on the body, according to Marie, proved decisive in undermining and ultimately overturning the classical definition of theater (p. 153). Driving these debates were questions about how actors could produce the greatest effect on the spectator and achieve the most complete illusion. Chapter four places particular emphasis on movement and gesture. French acting styles had long emphasized use of voice and facial expression to express emotion, but pantomime and the physicality of British acting, put on display by Garrick, sparked a reconceptualization of the possible. This era brought further cross-fertilization with theories of artistic representation in the fine arts and scientific treatises on the passions. Chapter five interrogates the debate on the nature of the relationship between an actor and her role, focusing attention on Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien* within a broader European theoretical context. Most eighteenth-century theorists, according to Marie, argued that an actor must actually feel authentic emotions and experience passions in order to represent them effectively on stage. Diderot's groundbreaking text, written around 1769 but circulating only minimally prior to its publication in 1831, opposed this position. He argued that actors paradoxically do their best work when they are cool-headed and maintain a critical distance from their roles. This "thèse du sang-froid" marked a critical turning point in the theory of acting (pp. 275-276). By the later eighteenth century, theater could no longer be categorized by national styles. Exchanges among actors, critics, and theorists took place on a European scale, with Germany and even Spain joining the conversation. "En circulant d'un pays à l'autre, les idées se répondent, se régénèrent et se précisent" (p. 293).

Part three describes a "révolution esthétique" that took place between 1780 and 1815, as a new generation of theater stars, including the power siblings John Philip Kemble and Sarah Siddons in England and François-Joseph Talma in France, used their prominence to push for actors' artistic legitimacy. Theory and practice converged as theater practitioners began to publish their own acting methods. Two positions began to take shape, contrasting an authentic truth with a deliberately constructed beauty. Chapter six explores "la théorisation du sublime…[qui] fait exploser le cadre imitatif" (p. 319). Chapter seven highlights writers who contested imitation in favor of "le beau idéal" (p. 355). Those adopting this position, popular mainly in England and Germany, drew on the theories of Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Joshua Reynolds in elevating art above nature. Here, we see the strongest proof of the artistic convergence of theater with painting, sculpture, and other forms of artistic expression in Sarah Siddons, who explicitly informed her performances with the artistic theories of the painter Joshua Reynolds, aspiring to create a sublime illusion. In conclusion, *Inventer l'acteur* suggests that debates over reason versus emotion in acting paved various conceptual paths, influencing twentieth-century developments

such as the Russian actor-director Constantin Stanislavski's Method Acting and Bertolt Brecht's distancing effect.

Methodologically, this study joins a growing body of scholarship that locates eighteenth-century theater, which has typically been approached as part of distinct national traditions, within expanding European (as well as imperial and Atlantic) literary, cultural, and economic circuits.[4] *Inventer l'acteur* convincingly demonstrates that in acting theory, Europe was an interconnected field of theoretical--and material--exchange. At the same time, it remains oddly limited in its use of the rich secondary scholarship on the eighteenth-century stage. Focused so exclusively on primary source analysis, it neglects to engage critically even with work such as Joseph Roach's *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* that has notable overlap. Given the book's claim that changing theater practices spurred new developments in acting theory, the missed opportunities to leverage innovative recent work exploring these changing practices— including, for example, studies of the circulation of French acting troupes and plays throughout Europe, of the eighteenth-century reinvention of theater architecture, and of the newfound economic and social influence enjoyed by actresses and other celebrities by Rahul Markovits, Pannill Camp, Felicity Nussbaum, Antoine Lilti, and others—are striking.[5]

Especially in parts two and three, *Inventer l'acteur* can be a challenging read. The study mixes thematic and author-based analysis, moving back and forth across time and space. The repeated revisiting of writers, actors, and texts, many already introduced in part one, creates a sense of déjà-lu. When taking into account the wealth of material presented within chapters that can top 60 pages, readers are asked to work rather hard to discern the hierarchy of arguments presented. Yet, there is compensation in the book's reproduction of twenty-five lively paintings and sketches of actors, acting scenes, and expressions of human emotion, many in full color.

Overall, this book successfully conveys the variety and conceptual richness of eighteenth-century thinking about acting and aesthetics across Europe during an era when theater was reaching new heights of popularity. After reading this book, the next time that you watch a performance that makes you laugh, cry, or lose yourself in a different world, you may find yourself much more attuned to the work that went into it. What mix of talent, training, and preparation allows the best actors today to accomplish that ultimate feat, what David Garrick achieved more than 250 years ago with nothing more than a sofa cushion as a prop: to make an audience *believe*?

NOTES

[1] The real-life inspiration for Garrick's role is discussed in Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1993), p. 141.

[2] Although actors were long viewed with suspicion and even contempt across Europe, in France the Gallican Church went so far as to formally censure and even excommunicate actors. The civil status of actors was only normalized in France when they were granted full citizenship in December 1789. Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981); John McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2: 312-342.

[3] The scholarship on acting theory is extensive, especially work focused on individual theorists. Two overviews include Marvin Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical*

Survey, from the Greeks to the Present, Expanded Edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) and Sabine Chaouche, *La Philosophie de l'acteur* (Paris: Champion, 2007).

[4] For scholarship on theater that looks beyond national boundaries, see for example, Rahul Markovits, *Civiliser l'Europe: Politiques du théâtre français au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2014); Lauren R. Clay, *Stagestruck: The Business of Theater in Eighteenth-Century France and Its Colonies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013); and Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). On theater in France's colonies, especially Saint-Domingue, see also the database https://www.theatreinsaintdomingue.org, directed by Julia Prest. Although the eighteenth century was an era when both French and British theater became an imperial phenomenon, *Inventer l'acteur* remains grounded in Europe.

[5] Markovits, *Civiliser l'Europe*; Pannill Camp, *The First Frame: Theatre Space in Enlightenment France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Antoine Lilti, *Figures publiques: L'invention de la célébrité, 1750-1850* (Paris: Fayard, 2014).

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