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1930s, the personas of “golden age” and contemporary porn stars, and the recent trend of “gonzo,” or “reality-based,” Southeast Asian sex tourist videos. In her analysis, Shimizu complicates the representations of Asian and Asian American women in sex acts by considering the possibility of the performers’ pleasure. While decrying their exploitation by porn producers and sex tourists, Shimizu nevertheless resists the temptation to totalize them into victims. She analyzes the ambiguity of their faces during the sex act, noting for instance how the “facial expression of pain cannot serve as factual evidence of her oppression when the facial expression of pleasure looks similar” (178). For Shimizu, the performers’ expressions of enjoyment during sexual performance point to a form of resistance.

Shimizu ends the book with a chapter on self-representations by Asian American feminist filmmakers. In her close readings of selected films by Helen Lee, Grace Lee, and Machiko Saito, Shimizu posits that the female characters in their films desire bodily pleasure in the context of pain, a choice defended by Shimizu as a political redeployment of the kind of hypersexuality ascribed to Asian American women. Ultimately, Shimizu rejects the notion that filmmakers who embrace sexual perversity are race traitors or have “false consciousness.” Sexuality, she argues, “is not antithetical to the politics of race but essential to its envisioning” (266). In her book, Shimizu critiques the exploitive sexual and erotic commodification of Asian American women while attempting to avoid a moralistic disapproval of the performers in these representations.

Through her incisive and unorthodox readings, Shimizu expands upon traditional notions of racialized sexuality in representation, making a significant contribution to critical studies of race and feminist scholarship. Because of Shimizu’s wide-ranging sampling from different genres and media, individual chapters will be of interest to scholars of such disparate fields as Asian American theatre, pornography, and contemporary feminist filmmaking. The book is particularly recommended to critics working on representations of women of color, and to scholars of Asian American literature and popular culture.

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MAMA DADA: GERTRUDE STEIN’S AVANT-GARDE THEATER. By Sarah Bay-Cheng. *Studies in Modern Drama*. New York: Routledge, 2005; pp. xii + 207. \$29.95 paper.

Late in her book *Mama Dada: Gertrude Stein’s Avant-Garde Theater*, Sarah Bay-Cheng describes an older Gertrude Stein living in the French countryside and, for the first time in her life, working to put food on the table. No longer the center of the social elite in her famous Paris salon, this Stein is a sobering figure of frailty and hardship in 1944. It was at this time that Stein, living with her partner Alice B. Toklas amid their country neighbors, wrote *Yes Is for a Very Young Man* (1944–45), which describes common French peasants dealing with the ramifications of war-torn life. It was her most personal and humane drama, crafted in the style of the well-made play and filled with succinct storyline and character motivations. Thus it was a major departure from the avant-garde aesthetic of the woman that Bay-Cheng refers to as “Mama Dada.” *Yes Is for a Very Young Man* is also largely regarded as Stein’s worst play. These final years of Stein’s life and work—a period that could be read as anticlimax—becomes, in Bay-Cheng’s hands, the riveting dénouement of a modern avant-garde master. The reader is, by that point in the book, so deeply involved with Stein and the genre that she helped to create, that the otherwise facile explanation that Bay-Cheng leaves us with seems downright enlightening: “On the basis of this play alone, one could perhaps argue that Stein is truly an avant-garde playwright, if only because she writes so poor a realistic play” (105).

To reach that point, Bay-Cheng takes a detailed look at many of Gertrude Stein’s plays and uncovers new insights into the work of one of the least understood American playwrights. Beginning with *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1927) and ending with her final opera *The Mother of Us All* (1946), Bay-Cheng outlines three basic cultural and artistic trends of the twentieth century and uses them to examine Stein’s major dramatic works. First, the rise of the historical avant-garde—with its focus on nihilism, attacks on God and power, assaults on audience/reader, and its absence of moralizing—is shown to permeate Stein’s own work. Second, Bay-Cheng points to the development of film and its aesthetic of collage, fragmentation, and repetition as an influence on Stein’s avant-garde output. Finally, the emergence of homosexuality as an identity in the twentieth century is used as a basis for understanding cinematic and theatrical queerness. Bay-Cheng writes about the effects of duplicitous and fragmented avant-garde tactics that keep the audience/reader perpetually off-kilter and questioning the male/female dichotomy.

The introductory chapter of *Mama Dada* is focused primarily on the first of these cultural trends and is an excellent overview of the avant-garde movement in general. Bay-Cheng's second chapter, "Eyes Are a Surprise," examines cinema and Gertrude Stein's conflicted relationship with the genre. Stein wrote two screenplays, *A Movie* (1920) and *Film: Deux soeurs qui ne sont pas soeurs* (1929), and yet insisted she was an amateur screenwriter, ill-suited to the medium. Bay-Cheng disputes that assessment by dissecting the works and calling attention to the author's intimate understanding of and experimentation with filmic language, textual framing, and a mise-en-scène that accentuated the Steinian "continuous present."

After highlighting film and demonstrating that it provided a base for Stein's avant-garde, Bay-Cheng devotes three core chapters to the theatrical output of *Mama Dada*. She uses *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1927), *They Must. Be Wedded. To Their Wife* (1931), and *Listen to Me* (1936) as reference points in her discussion of Stein's playfulness with words and skewing of reality. Stein disrupts audience expectations by erasing her individual identity and using her language to "rupture the fixed relationship between signifier and signified . . . names and nouns" (61). In her chapter devoted to *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* (1938), arguably Stein's finest play, Bay-Cheng continues to reflect back on cinema and its influence on Stein while pointing out the author's concerns about modernity and the existentiality that would eventually be a focus of the work of Beckett and Ionesco.

Anyone with a glancing interest in Stein's work will be familiar with some aspects of her aesthetic that are highlighted in this study; where Bay-Cheng's work comes alive is in the analysis of individual moments and passages in Stein's dramas. Relishing Steinian wordplay, Bay-Cheng deconstructs Stein's dialogue, leaving the reader, if not necessarily convinced of her analysis, certainly inspired by the multiple possibilities of meaning. And that, of course, is a basic goal of Gertrude Stein and the theatrical avant-garde.

The most compelling parts of Bay-Cheng's study come in her discussion of the emergence of homosexuality as an identity in the twentieth century. She traces the beginnings of that movement to Oscar Wilde, and then artfully weaves queerness into her discussion of Stein's obsession with reproduction, alienation from one's own body, and (mis)identification and depersonalization. She goes on to tie queerness in Stein's writing and syntax to Stein's personality and her ambivalence toward gender and the multiplicity of identities within her own body. These analyses are rich with insight into both Stein's

writing and psyche. One almost wishes that more of the study were devoted to this portion of Bay-Cheng's triad of avant-garde cultural trends.

The author claims that Gertrude Stein is perhaps the least well known of the great twentieth-century American playwrights. She highlights Betsy Alayne Ryan's *Gertrude Stein's Theatre of the Absolute* (1984) and Jane Palatini Bowers's "*They Watch Me as They Watch This*": *Gertrude Stein's Metadrama* (1991) as the only two previous full-length studies devoted to the theatre of Stein. Bay-Cheng borrows from those authors, but also brings a new reading to *Mama Dada*, presenting her as an integral part of the past, present, and future of American progressive theatre, with works that are constantly ripe for new analysis and deconstruction. Even more, Bay-Cheng leaves us with an intimate portrait of a person so that by the end, we are moved when we read about the aged Stein in her French country town, consumed by the destruction of war, mechanization, and the other elements of modernity that so deeply influenced her writing.

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WOMEN IN IRISH DRAMA: A CENTURY OF AUTHORSHIP AND REPRESENTATION.

Edited by Melissa Sihra. Foreword by Marina Carr. *Performance Interventions*, no. 2. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; pp. xix + 241. \$84.95 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

In 1902, Maude Gonne made a sweeping entrance into the Abby Theatre minutes before she was to take the stage in the title role of the iconic production *Kathleen ni Houlihan*, written by W. B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory. This production, loaded as it was with political, social, and cultural meaning, serves as a focal point for the contributors in *Women in Irish Drama* "to interrogate the signification of 'woman' as idealized trope of nation and to look at the ways in which the work of later Irish dramatists either contests or perpetuates this legacy" (1). In doing so, the writers examine a wide range of representations of "woman" on the Irish stage by male and female Irish playwrights. Their examinations are simultaneously acts of feminist recovery through their expansion of the male canon, and of interpretation as they investigate the ways in which gender and nation collide.

The essays in the collection provide reflective analyses of previously marginalized work and fresh perspectives on acclaimed work. More importantly, however, they indicate the diverse avenues from