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Law as Performance: Theatricality, Spectatorship, and the Making of Law in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Europe By Julie Stone Peters. Law and Literature. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022; xv + 350, 27 illustrations. \$115 cloth.

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important, the absence of a discussion of “women playwrights” as a fraught category. The seven broadly titled parts are successful in their even distribution of four chapters each, yet some of the categorizations seem forced, and many overlap. This interconnectedness is mentioned briefly in the introduction but could also be creatively highlighted by the editors in other ways. Finally, during a moment when groups from The Kilroys to the Jane Chambers Award committee to Planned Parenthood are expanding their language around identity and inclusion—and in some cases even omitting the word “women” from their lexicons—the unquestioned adherence to the category of “Plays by Women” seems like a missed opportunity for inquiry. For a volume that is otherwise so comprehensive in scope and skillful in its treatment of feminism’s complex intersectionalities, the absence of this conversation is unfortunate, and certainly one that students will read as telling and meaningful. All the more reason that a third volume of this collection can’t come soon enough; there is much to say about theatre, womanhood, and life since 2020 that haunts the gaps and margins of this prescient work.

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Law as Performance: Theatricality, Spectatorship, and the Making of Law in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Europe

By Julie Stone Peters. *Law and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022; xv + 350, 27 illustrations. \$115 cloth.

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Law as Performance: Theatricality, Spectatorship, and the Making of Law in Ancient, Medieval, and Early Modern Europe is a long-awaited book in the field of law and literature, as well as theatre and performance studies. The book’s author, Julie Stone Peters, is a veteran in law and literature, whose 2005 essay “Law, Literature, and the Vanishing Real: On the Future of an Interdisciplinary Illusion” helped shape the field precisely through its salutary skepticism. She is also an erudite theatre historian known for her *Theater of the Book: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe, 1480–1880* (2000). Her 2014 essay “Theatrocracy Unwired: Legal Performance in the Modern Mediasphere,” which begins with Plato’s *Laws* and ends with the fate of law in the age of digital media, announces a new project: the history of legal performance and spectatorship in theory and practice. The book under review shows that this project has come to fruition.

As it happens, two and a half millennia of legal performance and spectatorship, from the Athenian lawcourt with its raucous audience of jurors to the twenty-first-century digital media with its ever-online spectators, cannot be crammed into one single book. This volume traces the history up to the seventeenth century. It is a weighty tome by any measure. With her characteristic sophistication, Peters examines a vast trove of material, including rare visual material culled from libraries, museums, and archives across Europe and the United States. It is worth mentioning that the book reproduces some images in color, which livens up its dense discussions of learned treatises, trial reports, lawyers' manuals, and other written material. At the same time, the wealth of material is subjected to penetrating theoretical analyses, which draw out every imaginable subtlety of law's delicate balancing act: it needs theatrics and spectators to achieve its goals but must resist theatrical extravagance and the sway of spectators for the sake of its integrity.

The book comprises six chapters, with two each dedicated to classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern period. The first chapter begins by evoking the theatricality of the Athenian lawcourt and its simultaneous discontent with theatricality, quoting more than once Demosthenes' characterization of the three most important elements of forensic rhetoric as "first, delivery; second, delivery; third, delivery." It then analyzes Plato's argument that would become the leitmotif in the book's story of legal performance as a whole: law must resist theatrocracy, not by renouncing theatre but by replacing seductive, deleterious theatre with wholesome, better theatre. A discussion of the Aristotelian conception of delivery and pathos completes this chapter on classical Athens. The second chapter focuses on Cicero's and Quintilian's forensic rhetoric. Rebutting certain established scholarly opinions, the middle two chapters of the book explore performance and spectacle as an integral dimension of medieval law as well. Yet the rhetorical theories of the Middle Ages (Chapter 3) prove to be rather different from Aristotle and Cicero, paying attention instead to apocalyptic spectacles and the fallen nature of the human body, among other things. The practice of legal performance (Chapter 4), in the meantime, is remarkable for the unruliness of legal actors, which is manifested in such behavior as mooning the judge or spitting at the inquisitor. In the final two chapters, Peters's profound knowledge of the early modern period is on full display. Chapter 5 unfurls a panorama of legal spectacles in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, while scrutinizing the theoretical reflections of the age on the ethical and political ramifications of the likeness between courts and theatres. Shifting to a more technical register, Chapter 6 reconstructs legal performance education in early modern England, which includes not only forensic rhetoric, moots, and disputations, but also dancing, singing, and stage acting.

Law as Performance has the potential of inspiring further research in at least four directions. First, considering the intimate affinity between legal performance and theatre, it is undoubtedly productive to study the history of theatre against the background of the history of law. A good example is the political scientist Quentin Skinner's *Forensic Shakespeare* (2014). This is a flourishing field of study duly recognized by Peters. Second, given the theatricality and spectatorship in the operation of law, it makes sense to speak of what the German scholar Cornelia Vismann in *Medien der Rechtsprechung* (2011) calls the "theatrical apparatus" of law, with

the concept “apparatus” used in the Foucauldian sense. Since not only law but also other domains of society, such as religion and politics, are undergirded by a theatrical apparatus, it deepens our understanding of legal performance if we study it in relation to religious, political, and other social performances in a given historical context. Medieval and early modern Europe was rife with performances of all kinds—ceremonies, rituals, spectacles, festivals, and the like—which are documented in such encyclopedic tomes as Johann Christian Lünig’s *Theatrum Ceremoniale Historico-Policum* (1719–20). Legal performance could be productively brought into relation with such performances, in particular with the liturgy of the Christian church, which inaugurated the legal system of Europe in the Middle Ages. Third, once we bring legal performance in relation to performances in other domains of society, such as ceremonies of the state and liturgies of the church, we would be able to engage in broader theoretical reflections on its significance and function. A good example in this regard is the French thinker Pierre Legendre, whose frustratingly rambling prose contains one profound insight: legal performance, as liturgy does in religion, stages a mythic reference—the always absent ground of law. Finally, Peters’s book will hopefully inspire scholars to study legal performance in non-European traditions, for instance in China, where theatre and lawcourt mirrored each other since the fourteenth century, when theatre began to flourish. Cross-cultural comparison promises to shed new light on the nature of legal performance.

The final two lines of Peters’s book read: “we know that performance matters to how we make law and how it makes us. This book constitutes not an ending to that story, but its beginning” (302). It is a beginning that challenges us to continue telling the story.

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Unfixable Forms: Disability, Performance, and the Early Modern English Theater

By Katherine Schaap Williams Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2021; pp. xiii + 309. \$59.95 cloth, \$38.99 e-book.

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Representations of disability in the early modern English theatre have garnered increasing scholarly attention in volumes such as *Dissembling Disability in Early Modern English Drama* (Lindsey Row-Heyveld, 2018), *Early Modern Theatre and*