

The thematic of violence emerges as a strong secondary line of analysis in *Uncloseting Drama*, but the book's primary focus is trained on a queerly valenced closet drama that allowed these modernists to partially reject the theatre, while maintaining a concrete investment in the transformative potential of performance. Salvato frames his chapter titles through concepts that are mostly borrowed from sexual vernaculars: Pound "fronts" or poses; Zukofsky, depicted as a submissive and receptive modernist who eschews mastery, "bottoms" for Pound, queerly fronting him in their correspondence; Stein is revealed as a dominant "top" who is prone to sadism; and Barnes "backs" "failed utopic visions of lesbian incest" (141) in a reading that offers a very queer alternative to modernist studies' depiction of her.

Within these chapters, Salvato attends to Pound's cross-gender identifications in his translations of Japanese *Nō* plays and Athenian drama. The book also considers Zukofsky's queer translations, but shines most when Salvato reads the closet-drama penchant for polyvocality that runs throughout the poet's most central text, the epic modernist poem "A." Much of Stein's writing, including some of her more notable plays, are covered in chapter 3's investigation into the expatriate's interest in dynamics of power and dominance. The book's final chapter interprets Barnes's dramatic writing, making a case for her assertions of queer agency, where many have focused on her work as chronicles of victimization.

Salvato's readings of these primary texts are skillfully enhanced by his discussion of live contemporary performances that distill the inherent queer vitality in these modernist closet-dramatic modes, including Jackson Mac Low's riffs and the rewriting of Barnes's texts during poetry performances, the Wooster Group's incorporation of Stein in *House/Lights*, and Carey Perloff's production of Pound's translation of *Electra*. In Salvato's analysis, these live performances function as proofs for the inherently queer potentiality in these modernist dramatic texts.

Of the three masters the author sets out to serve, queer studies oddly gets the least consideration. Queer theory could have been more fully and richly engaged in *Uncloseting Drama*. The author does surprisingly little, for example, with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, a pivotal study that would have offered him a richer account of the vicissitudes of the closet and its centrality in not only modernism, but also modernity itself. Furthermore, Sedgwick's move from epistemology to queer performativity could have been of use to the author as he developed his theme of being half on and half off the stage. One also wonders how the topic of modernist closet drama might illuminate alter-

native modernisms, like those associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Fortunately, Salvato's study is persuasive enough that one can see the ways in which his model may be brought to bear on different modernist contexts. The qualms I have are minor and few, and they are most certainly eclipsed by the originality and intelligence of this exciting project. This valuable intervention makes a case for the queerness of an uncloseted closet drama that is both revelatory and significant for modernist, queer, and theatre studies.

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BULLDAGGERS, PANSIES, AND CHOCOLATE BABIES: PERFORMANCE, RACE, AND SEXUALITY IN THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE. By James F. Wilson. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010; pp. 262.

On any given Saturday night in the early 1920s, frequenters of Harlem's rent-party circuit might find jazz pianist and composer Thomas "Fats" Waller perfecting his skills as an entertainer at one of the many private residences hosting fêtes for profit. As James Wilson documents in his carefully researched and cogently written *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Chocolate Babies: Performance, Race, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance*, for Waller and many of the revelers who attended them, Harlem's rent parties proved to be significant sites of rehearsal: notably, for transgressing and subverting the boundaries of race and class, as well as gender and sexuality. Indeed, in this study, Wilson turns to the putative Harlem Renaissance to investigate the ways that "depictions of blackness and whiteness, male and female, homosexual and heterosexual, highbrow and lowbrow merged and coalesced in the theater and performances of the 1920s and 1930s" (3). It is, in part, a project of recuperation that focuses on plays—including Edward Sheldon and Charles MacArthur's *Lulu Belle* (1926) and Wallace Thurman and William Jourdan Rapp's *Harlem* (1929)—and figures—such as the inimitable performer Gladys Bentley—that have previously received little critical attention. Effortlessly blending historical, cultural, and performance analyses with biographical information, Wilson also offers fresh insights into more notable performers and events like Florence Mills, Ethel Waters, and the Hamilton Lodge's and Rockland Palace's drag balls. Across his many astute close readings, Wilson stakes a significant claim for expanding the discourses on race, class, gender, sexuality, and, crucially, performance within Harlem Renaissance studies.

Wilson shuttles between theatrical and extra-theatrical spaces throughout the book. Chapter 2, for example, moves from Harlem's rent, or "whist," parties, which Wilson discusses at length in chapter 1, to their theatrical representation in Thurman and Rapp's melodrama. He argues that, in addition to offering a social outlet for attendees—primarily members of the black working class—and evidencing Harlem's communal spirit, rent parties provided a venue for the expression of same-sex desire and alternative performances of gender. Not surprisingly, these affairs did not escape the anthropologizing and exoticizing gaze of those interested in the "Harlem vogue," which was fueled, in part, by the popularity of Carl Van Vechten's controversial 1926 novel *Nigger Heaven*. Wilson writes that Thurman and Rapp conceived *Harlem* as an "educational drama"—that is, as a rejoinder to those stereotypical representations of blacks often found in cultural productions like Van Vechten's fiction. Indeed, with the play, they "stroved to 'present the [N]egro as he is'" (45). Despite this desire to offer a more complex portrayal of black life, *Harlem* became best-known for its raucous rent-party scene. Wilson notes that Thurman and Rapp initially incorporated the scene at the request of their backers and director David Belasco and as a means to attract audiences "who craved the exuberant and sensational side of Harlem" (73). Ultimately, the scene undercut the authors' intentions to complicate racial representations: "The pressure of accommodating the demands of a popular theater apparatus—intent on confirming racial stereotypes—all but [made] the work of two artists trying to transcend racial categorization burst at its seams" (59). Even so, Wilson shows, *Harlem* inspired considerable debate about the limits, burdens, and politics of representation during the period.

In chapters 3 and 4, Wilson further illuminates these debates with his incisive examination of the influence of Lulu Belle, the eponymous character of Sheldon and MacArthur's 1926 play. Originally performed by a white actress, Lenore Ulric, in blackface, the character of Lulu Belle, Wilson writes, "unleashed a host of racial and sexual desires and let loose a maelstrom of anxieties revolving around black womanhood" (89). For those invested in an ideology of racial uplift, Lulu Belle, through her unabashed disavowal of middle-class ideals, morals, and values, became an emblem for the lack of black social and cultural advancement; despite being crafted by white authors, she was deemed a problem for her race. Besides resonating with Broadway audiences—the play was one of the biggest hits of the 1920s—*Lulu Belle* also "struck a chord among the disenfranchised" (81), according to Wilson, especially among the denizens of Harlem's drag-ball communities, who adopted the character

as a symbol of defiance. Likewise, Wilson argues, Florence Mills and Ethel Waters, two of the most famous black entertainers of the period, deployed the character as a way to "allude to the masquerade of race, class, and gender" (116), and to forge new possibilities for black, working-class, and gay and lesbian sensibilities. To be sure, Lulu Belle vitalized many of the period's ideological tensions.

Gladys Bentley, the "blueswoman" famous for donning a white tuxedo and remixing popular songs with her own brand of ribald lyrics, similarly surfaced many of these tensions. Chapter 5, which is the book's most compelling, offers a biographical sketch of Bentley and probes the ways in which she challenged images of femininity and heteronormativity during the 1920s and '30s. Although she would later renounce her carefully constructed drag persona, Bentley tested the limits of social decorum during the height of her success. Wilson argues that she actively destabilized racial, class, gender, and sexual logics in her popular performances and, in so doing, further spurred the "category crisis" that permeated much of the Harlem Renaissance (173).

As evidenced best in the book's consideration of Bentley, Wilson's mining of the archive nets a treasure trove of examples of destabilizing acts and marks *Bulldaggers*, *Pansies*, and *Chocolate Babies* as a significant addition to the scholarship in Harlem Renaissance, theatre, performance, and queer studies. Not only does Wilson's analyses of figures and performances previously relegated to the margins make evident their importance in understanding the fluidity of identity during the 1920s and '30s, but the book also offers a rigorous model for grappling with historical constructions of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Scholars across myriad fields will, no doubt, find the book an invaluable resource and teaching tool.

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**FEMINIST VISIONS AND QUEER FUTURES
IN POSTCOLONIAL DRAMA: COMMUNITY,
KINSHIP, AND CITIZENSHIP.** By
Kanika Batra. New York: Routledge, 2011;
pp. 194.

Feminist Visions and Queer Futures in Postcolonial Drama is a welcome addition to postcolonial studies, in which drama receives, in general, less critical attention than fiction. Even within postcolonial theatre studies, as Kanika Batra points out, the field is "often defined by the canonized work of a few male dramatists" (12). Thus, in identifying "the cen-