Call For Papers: Special Section

*Theatre History Studies*

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Co-Editors: Matthieu Chapman and Miles P. Grier

The Materiality of Racial Performance 1500-1815

Too often studies of racial representation in theatre and performance rely upon *intellectual* histories of how Europeans reacted to their encounters with a roster of nonwhite peoples in the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Pacific worlds. Retelling how Europeans came to see black, red, or yellow peoples “after contact” stabilizes Europeans as unraced subjects who racialized Others. It also reifies the very categories it claims to reveal as contingent. Yet, there are ways not to recreate these impasses.

In their study *Racecraft*, Barbara and Karen Fields identify immense social and mental terrain under the jurisdiction of race, including “what goes with what and whom (sumptuary codes), how different people must deal with each other (rituals of deference and dominance), where human kinship begins and ends (blood) and how [members of one racial community] look at themselves and each other.” They reveal race as fundamentally *material*, pointing to its encoding in costumes, political ceremonies, and initiation rites. By positioning race not as a scientific concept but as a product of collectively pursued, significant social action, their work calls out for an approach informed by the methodologies of performance studies, exemplified in Erika Lin’s *Shakespeare and The Materiality of Performance*.

The Fields sisters contribute to ongoing efforts across a number of disciplines, including theatre history, to consider cross-cultural contact and representation anew, with Europeans as objects of racialization and non-Europeans as agents who think and act across the terrain of race. We might now ask, for instance, do the performance modes of Japanese Noh theatre or African Ritual Dance produce racial distinctions? What are their genealogies and protocols? What theories of race and conversion are implicit in the adoption ceremonies Indigenous Americans performed on European adoptees? Theoretical models in which race is a material practice and not a European intellectual project will allow us to ask these and many other necessary questions.

This Special Section of *Theatre History Studies* seeks to present global perspectives on how societies, cultures, nations, and peoples used the stage and other ritual practices to communicate, adjudicate, and deploy ideas of race. The co-editors of this special section invite papers considering how global cultures, performance modes, theatrical conventions, and staging practices from the Early Modern World (Circa 1500-1815) used objects and materials—including but not limited to costumes, props, locations, cosmetics, colors, spaces, scenery, and puppets—to
make race a material reality. We are particularly interested in articles that engage with people, cultures, and practices from outside of Europe and those that treat Europeans as objects of racecraft.

Please email the co-editors with your proposed manuscripts no later than January 1, 2022
Please direct Special Section inquiries and manuscripts to:
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Theatre History Studies is the official journal of the Mid-America Theatre Conference and is published by the University of Alabama Press. Please send manuscripts prepared in conformity with the guidelines in the Chicago Manual of Style and the University of Alabama Press style sheet located on the MATC website. Illustrations are encouraged. Essays should be between 6,000-8,000 words and use endnotes rather than footnotes.

Theatre History Studies accepts submissions for its general issue on the full range of topics in theatre history on a rolling deadline. Please send manuscripts for the general section to:
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