

one another allows Black to argue that multiple subjective experiences of time coexisted simultaneously for medieval actors, characters, and spectators. For example, Black considers Kathleen Davis's reading of Christ's nativity as a "shattering" of time from the perspective of Joseph in the N-Town manuscript (44). Black argues that Joseph's doubts and conversion process complicate Mary's supersessionary narrative arc by creating "playful knots in the gospels' timeline" (66). Jonathan Gil Harris's "explosive" time (92) and Carolyn Dinshaw's "collapsed" time (96) are newly applied to the strategies of drama to tease out the many and varied ways in which acts of remembrance, conflict, and even silence can destabilize biblical beginnings for actors and audiences. Different individual perspectives are explored in turn in a productive departure from the often-invoked idea of medieval civic drama as playing a key role in building communal consensus.

Adopting her own methodological version of Serres's crumpled handkerchief model, Black writes across modern and medieval examples throughout the book. The result is that the conflicts of medieval drama speak with enduring relevance to modern issues without the dialogue between the two eclipsing important temporal distances and differences. In the closing pages of *Play Time*, Black addresses a pressing issue facing the scholarship of early theater: the myth or fantasy of a supersessionary relationship between medieval drama and the early modern playhouses. *Play Time* is a refreshing push back against the kind of periodization that sees medieval drama as the less sophisticated precursor to early modern theatrical practice. Black calls for research in the spirit of early drama itself, which, as she demonstrates, can "defend the right of each individual to experience, resist, complicate and challenge time in their own fashion" (201) even against official theological or historical narratives.

Clare Egan 

Lancaster University

c.egan2@lancaster.ac.uk

JEREMY BLACK. *To Lose an Empire: British Strategy and Foreign Policy, 1758–90*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. Pp. 256. \$95.00 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.24

If a Guinness Book record for most prolific scholar existed, then Jeremy Black of Exeter University might well earn that prize. He is the author of over ninety books and hundreds of scholarly articles and book reviews, most of which explore eighteenth-century Britain, warfare, and diplomacy. His weekly newsletter reveals him also to be a bon vivant, picaresque traveler, and humorist.

Black's latest book, *To Lose an Empire: British Strategy and Foreign Policy, 1758–90*, offers a vital corrective to so-called social scientific studies on that subject by highlighting the vital roles of leadership and chance. Black explains that to understand that or any other swath of history it is essential to emphasize "individuals, their ideas and their experiences, and that these take precedence over alleged structural determinants" (xiii). To do so reveals the complexity, paradox, and even seeming contradictions of what leaders did, why they did so, and the results. Black is making "an argument about the indeterminacy of the past, and therefore of the present and future" (ix).

Specifically, Black seeks "to bridge the Seven Years' War and the War of American Independence" (ix). In the first war, Britain's leaders, policies, and strategies led to a sweeping victory that greatly expanded the empire. Yet, a different postwar set of leaders, policies, and strategies provoked thirteen American colonies to a revolt that resulted in a humiliating defeat as the empire's most dynamic colonies won independence as the United States. One irony was

that Britain's need to incur huge debts to win the Seven Years' War and then service those debts after the war by raising taxes on the Americans provoked the war of independence. Both wars were global struggles fought in regions of North America, Europe, the West Indies, the East Indies, Latin America, and even the Far East. A treaty of Paris settled both wars. With the 1763 Treaty of Paris, Britain won Dominica, Grenada, Saint Vincent, and Tobago in the West Indies, East and West Florida, and most of Bengal. With the 1783 Treaty of Paris, Britain lost the thirteen American colonies, and East and West Florida.

Foreign policy involves seizing opportunities and thwarting threats to one's national interests. To understand how and why policies were made, Black analyzes the dynamic relationship among the king, a succession of prime ministers, other members of the Privy Council and cabinet, parties, factions, interest groups, financiers, army, navy, newspapers, and public opinion along with those of one's foreign enemies, allies, and fence sitters. Along the way he provides insights into the character, values, and ambitions that shaped the decisions of George III, William Pitt, James Harris, Lord Malmesbury, Frederick, Lord North, William, Duke Cumberland, William, Earl Shelburne, and scores of other leaders.

A key ongoing debate was whether Whitehall should emphasize a continental strategy for defeating one's enemies in Europe or maritime or blue-water strategy for defeating one's enemies and taking their colonies overseas either permanently or as bargaining chips for other interests. Complicating foreign policy was the king's second title as Elector of Hanover. Defending Hanover's interests was at once a political imperative and strategic dead-end. On the European mainland, the strategic priority was ensuring no enemy controlled the Low Countries just across the North Sea from Britain.

To Lose an Empire's most touching passage involves George III's conciliatory words to John Adams, an American revolutionary leader who in 1785 became ambassador to Britain: "I have done nothing in the late contest but what I thought myself indispensably bound to do by the duty which I owed to my people . . . I was the last to consent to the separation, but the separation having been made, and having become inevitable, I have always said, as I say now, that I would be the first to meet the friendship of the United States as an independent power . . . let the circumstances of language, religion, and blood have their natural and full effect" (157). The most prescient words come from Napoleon Bonaparte to Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Wilks, Saint Helena's governor, in 1816: "your manufacturers are emigrating to America . . . In a century or perhaps half a century more: it will give a new character to the affairs of the world. It has thriven upon our follies" (163).

William Nester

St. John's University, New York
nesterw@stjohns.edu

MATTIE BURKERT. *Speculative Enterprise: Public Theaters and Financial Markets in London, 1688–1763*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2021. Pp. 296. \$95.00 (cloth). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.21

In 1696, when the English government attempted to realign the face value of silver coins with their actual worth, it set off a nationwide depression, throwing into doubt the stability of value itself. The simultaneous explosive growth of the stock market left London awash in paper and varying degrees of faith in credit. The crucial years of this financial revolution saw similarly striking changes in print culture and in the business of theater. In *Speculative Enterprise: Public Theaters and Financial Markets in London, 1688–1763*, Mattie Burkert explores these intersections, arguing that the public theater "played a key role in debates over new financial