

thematize the notion that such public-forming sites can all too easily be co-opted for private interests at the expense of the public good.

Part II comprises two chapters that investigate how the theatre–finance nexus responded to a financial crisis that has since come to define modern ideas of speculative enterprise: the South Sea Bubble (1720–2). Chapter 4 covers Richard Steele’s short-lived periodical *The Theatre*, which ran for three months in the wake of the bubble in 1720, as well as his play *The Conscious Lovers* (1722). In a fascinating excavation of Steele’s reflections on the bubble and its aftermath, Burkert shows how his work, like Centlivre’s, ultimately gives “voice to the concern that elites could use new market structures and dynamics to hijack what appeared to be middling-class sentiments” (123). The book concludes by returning to Cibber and a late comedy, *The Refusal; or, The Ladies Philosophy* (1721), to show how another writer with middling-class sympathies used his position within the theatre to “theoriz[e] the relationship between changing class structures, speculative investment, and public opinion” (156). Burkert ends with a brief coda that discusses the Half-Price Riots of the 1760s, showing how the theatre–finance nexus persisted into the second half of the century.

Burkert’s thesis is highly compelling, and I cannot do justice here to the erudition and deftness of her argumentation and analysis. Through her careful contextualization of the plays and other works within the history of financial crises, she overturns long-held critical assumptions about, among other things, sentimental comedy and its relationship to the emergent middling class. This stimulating account shows how the early eighteenth-century theatre responded to the economic crises that so materially determined its own opportunities for success and failure. The book will prove an extremely valuable contribution to scholars working on the theatre history of the period, as well as on cultural representations of, and engagements with, finance and economics in the early eighteenth century.

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The Theatre of Nuclear Science: Weapons, Power, and the Scientists behind it All

By Jeanne Tiehen. *Routledge Advances in Theatre & Performance Studies*. London: Routledge, 2021; pp. 166. \$170.00 cloth, \$39.71 e-book.

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Jeanne Tiehen’s *The Theatre of Nuclear Science: Weapons, Power, and the Scientists behind it All* theoretically investigates theatrical representations of nuclear science.

Focusing on a series of nuclear science plays that span the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and including performances of nuclear science in museums, film, and media, the book argues that theatre and its particular traits can offer essential perspectives on this critical topic. The discourse regarding convergences of nuclear science and theatre has come a long way since the publication of Charles A. Carpenter's influential work *Dramatists and the Bomb: American and British Playwrights Confront the Nuclear Age, 1945–1964* and Jenni G. Halpin's pioneering study *Contemporary Physics Plays: Making Time to Know Responsibility*. Taking phenomenology as a methodological approach, Tiehen not only focuses on nuclear science plays but also explores the cultural understanding of the threats and consequences of nuclear weapons and disasters brought by those plays. In the context of the Russia–Ukraine War and its looming nuclear threat, Tiehen's thorough examination presents a chance for us to reflect on how we got here, what we are doing now, and why we need to be concerned.

The book is divided into five chapters and an Introduction, in which Tiehen introduces the central theme (i.e., nuclear science plays), explicates her motivations in writing this book, and explains its theoretical and methodological basis, in particular its use of phenomenology. In Tiehen's opinion, "phenomenology is well suited for looking at how nuclear threats, which due to secrecy, invisibility, or inexperience, are essentially intangible as a phenomenon; yet they become something more perceptible when we experience them through plays" (11).

Drawing upon the phenomenology of time, two body chapters focus on the theatrical representation of the past and future in nuclear science plays. Tiehen examines Michael Frayn's historical play *Copenhagen*, the Bradbury Science Museum, and the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History in Chapter 1. This chapter highlights the idea that theatre, due to its unique relationship with time, provides vital opportunities to revisit the past. According to Tiehen, "[w]hile we may have transcended an age of persistent nuclear threats, this is a past from which we may still glean some lessons" (43). Similarly, taking three future-oriented plays as case studies—Robert Nichols and Maurice Browne's *Wings over Europe*, Arch Oboler's *Night of the Auk*, and Lorraine Hansberry's *What Use Are Flowers*—Chapter 5 explores theatrical representations of the future of nuclear weapons. By evaluating the playwrights' use of defamiliarization and distancing techniques, as well as the futuristic settings in these plays, Tiehen concludes that comprehending the future is phenomenologically difficult, for "[t]he future of nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants is rife with near and far uncertainties, and it is on the stage we get a chance to witness this tension performed" (133).

After the first chapter, the next two walk readers through the human and nuclear power plants onstage. Through Heinar Kipphardt's docudrama *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* and Richard Rhodes's play *Reykjavik*, Chapter 2 investigates the stressful circumstances that public figures like Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Oppenheimer confronted. From Tiehen's point of view, nuclear science plays provide the audience an opportunity to see how "humans of ordinariness who were given exceedingly huge amounts of influence and power" (51) make decisions about nuclear weapons. Chapter 3 then moves away from nuclear weapons to address the threats of nuclear power plants. In examining Lucy Kirkwood's *The Children* and the HBO miniseries *Chernobyl*, Tiehen delves into the quandary

that political leaders and scientists face when confronted with the possibility of a nuclear power plant disaster. Tiehen believes that through watching nuclear catastrophes onstage, the audience may experience the sense of impending doom, allowing them to sympathize with the characters and become concerned about the dangers of these plants.

The most compelling chapter of the book, in my opinion, is the fourth, which changes the tone from gloomy to amusing. Looking at the nonsensical and illogical scenes in Arthur Kopit's satiric *End of the World (with Symposium to Follow)*, Friedrich Dürrenmatt's absurd *The Physicists*, and the iconic film *Dr. Strangelove*, the chapter explores the role humor plays in the representations of nuclear weapons. According to Tiehen, most of us have no direct control over anything involving nuclear weapons due to our lack of status and power. She contends "it is this distance of power and status that makes us satirize nuclear weapons and the fear of nuclear threats" (127). In watching these performances, we laugh at the ones pushing for nuclear destruction as mad and equally as buffoons, which is quite phenomenologically fascinating, as doing so "receives a phenomenon (the play and all its many moments of humor) but also projects a phenomenon (our laughter), creating a social feedback loop of humor" (127).

The concluding chapter comes full circle, adjusting the focus back to the long relationship between theatre and nuclear science. Tiehen believes that, compared to other media for conveying nuclear physics, the theatre has phenomenological potential to compel audiences to care about and take action to address the issue of nuclear weapons, because "[t]hrough plays, the timeline of nuclear weapons and power plant disasters is a past, present, and future we get to experience in the shared presence of audience and actor/character that exists uniquely in the theatre" (155).

One of the book's strengths is its treatment of the realities of the world. Writing during the pandemic, Tiehen connects nuclear weapons and their possible dangers to the overwhelming pandemonium, such as a lack of testing, vaccination hesitation, and the rejection of scientific expertise. What's more, this book adopts a mode of narration that combines various phenomenological experiences, theories of the theatre, and multimedia representations of nuclear weapons.

The Theatre of Nuclear Science provides a thoughtful exploration of the role nuclear science plays in the contemporary English-speaking world. Students and scholars of theatre, politics, and literature interested in the landscapes of nuclear science plays will find this an excellent book. But even far beyond those for whom the book feels directly relevant, as Tiehen notes in her Introduction, "we all are implicated in the consequences of nuclear weapons and disaster" (16).

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