Introduction: Drama and Philosophy 2.0

DAVID KORNHABER

In his prefatory note to *A Study of the Drama*, from 1910, Brander Matthews lists philosophy as one of four primary categories to be used in assessing the merits of any playscript (v). His use of the term is essentially vernacular: philosophy, in his explanation, encompasses "a message of high importance" and a "vision of human life" (217). Yet the usage is significant. At the time Matthews was writing, drama had not yet secured wide acceptance as an art form with a capacity for speculative investigation and was just as likely to be seen as an intellectually bankrupt mode of entertainment. Matthews's suggestion that philosophy might have anything at all to do with the drama was largely a rebuke to these aspersions. "To many of us the drama gives merely unthinking amusement in the playhouse," he concedes, in *The Development of the Drama* (3). But, almost tentatively, he adds, "To some its chief quality is that it enables them to disentangle the philosophy of the dramatist himself" (3). If Matthews's writings are largely archived and forgotten today, his place in the history of drama scholarship is surely still pertinent. He held the first collegiate appointment in dramatic literature in the United States, and he took it as part of the purpose of his position to justify the standing of the material he was tasked to study. That the drama might have some capacity for and inclination toward philosophy was an essential part of that validation.

The subject of the present issue of *Modern Drama* is one that would have been familiar to Matthews and to many of the earliest professional scholars of modern drama: a consideration of the relationship between drama and philosophy. It is a subfield that, in recent years, has experienced something of a renaissance. There have been dedicated sessions on theatre and philosophy at several of the most recent conferences of the American Society for Theatre Research, the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, and other scholarly organizations, in many cases supported by standing interest groups. A new professional organization with the name of Performance Philosophy was started in the United Kingdom in 2012 and held its inaugural conference in

2013. Two years ago, "Theatre, Theory, Philosophy" was the special topic of the Mellon School of Theatre and Performance Research at Harvard University. And, most significantly, nearly a dozen new monographs or edited collections have been published on the topic within the past decade (three of them within the past year), with several more forthcoming.[1]

For many observers, the interdisciplinary study of drama and philosophy is a relatively recent critical development. Writing in their joint introduction to the collection *Staging Philosophy* – a work that can be credited with helping to inaugurate the recent spate of academic interest in this area – David Krasner and David Saltz observed, from their vantage point in 2006, that, in the previous decade and a half of scholarship, "performance theorists rarely dr[ew] on works emanating from American philosophy departments. Similarly, very few professional philosophers . . . focused in depth on questions pertaining to the phenomena of theater or performance" (1). Less than ten years later, the field looks altogether different. Publication on the intersections of drama and philosophy has reached such a level of profusion that Laura Cull even speaks of what she calls "'a philosophical turn' in the international field of theatre and performance research" in her recent *Theatres of Immanence* (2). Yet this turn within recent drama scholarship might also be considered as a kind of return: a critical re-engagement with many of the questions and concerns that were at one time, in decades past, not just grist for a disciplinary subfield but part of the larger project of studying modern drama at all. I am thinking, here, of figures and works like Eric Bentley's *The Playwright as Thinker*, Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd*, or Robert Brustein's *The Theatre of Revolt*. These figures and these works may hold a vaunted place in the history of twentieth-century drama scholarship, but they are seldom alluded to in the mainstream of drama research today; their idiom and their assumptions seem to belong to some distant past. Even more rarely do we remember the degree to which these works and others of their epoch openly concerned themselves with questions of the relationship between drama and philosophy, constituting what we might call a "first wave" of critical attention to the topic and a harbinger of many of the concerns and lines of analysis that permeate today's study of drama and philosophy 2.0.

For Bentley and the critics who followed in his wake, an engagement with philosophy was central to the project of studying modern drama, more so even than it was for Matthews. For a time, even, the study of drama and philosophy came almost to serve as a kind of synecdoche for the study of drama itself, the special valuation of dramatic literature's philosophical potential sliding into the treatment of drama as a primarily philosophical form. This mid-century fascination with the philosophical side of the drama would have a lasting, if largely unacknowledged, effect on modern-drama scholarship in the decades to follow: on early canon formation; on the forms of

interpretation deemed permissible in the professional study of dramatic literature; on judgements of dramatic merit and the exclusionary consequences of these criteria; even, arguably, on the turn to a more materialist conception of theatre scholarship at the twentieth century's end. The renewed interest in the study of drama and philosophy now underway is inevitably an inheritor to this legacy, consciously or unconsciously grappling with its prior assumptions and approaches, recasting (perhaps even rehabilitating) this field of inquiry for a new academic moment. If, as Nietzsche reminds us, the modern philosophical project is ultimately a genealogical one, then a genealogy of the study of drama and philosophy from its early practices to its recent manifestations can help to better reveal the contours and characteristics of this rich intellectual terrain.

WHAT WE OWE TO THE ANCIENTS

For all of his advocacy as to the philosophical potential of the drama, one of the notable characteristics of Matthews's engagement with intellectual matters is the circumscribed place that he ascribes to them. The drama, Matthews argues, must be allowed its own life and its own craft and must not become subsumed into the status of a demonstration of insights achieved through other modes of inquiry. "The merit of any message he may have to deliver," Matthews writes of the dramatist, "does not excuse him for any failure to master the technic of the dramaturgic art . . . He must master the methods of the stage of his own time, adjusting his story to the actor and to the theatre" (*Study* 217–18). Matthews essentially cautions against the impulse to elevate ideation above all other functions of a play, a warning that would prove particularly prescient. For there would, indeed, be a long moment in the history of modern-drama scholarship when the degree to which a dramatic work could be said to express a summarizable philosophical position became the primary metric of its achievement for an influential coterie of critics. At the helm of this first wave of scholarship on drama and philosophy stood Eric Bentley, the very title of his epochal *The Playwright as Thinker*, from 1946, announcing the new standard by which the dramatic artist would be judged.

In *Thinker*, Bentley speaks little of philosophy as such – in part, because he claims for drama a much larger philosophical role than that of simple example or explication. Bentley's conceptualization of philosophy is similar to that expressed by Kant in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, where he speaks of philosophy as a process of investigation rather than a settled body of thought to be expressed. "One cannot learn any philosophy," Kant writes. "One can only learn to philosophize, i.e., to exercise the talent of reason in prosecuting its general principles in certain experiments that come to hand, but always with the reservation of the right of reason to investigate the sources of these

principles themselves and to confirm or reject them" (694). Though Bentley never makes the connection to Kant, for him, the playwright in his or her proper role pursues the self-same investigation. Drama is, in his view, most itself when it is a vehicle for thought – a "river bed into which mighty ideas flow," as he would write later in *The Life of the Drama*, drawn from his Norton Lectures at Harvard (113). It was those who most lived up to the role of thinker who were the true subjects of study for the drama scholar and the best models toward which other dramatists of the age should aspire: Wagner, Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg, Sartre, Brecht – thinkers all. In fact, *Thinker*'s table of contents offers one of the earliest articulations of a pantheon that has since become familiar to any student of the modern drama, one that anticipates, to a remarkable degree, the later excision of dramatists widely deemed important at the time (Maxwell Anderson) and the inclusion of others then only dimly known in the United States (Bertolt Brecht), all based on the evaluation of what Bentley calls simply their powers of "thought" (240). In other words, one of the first drafts of the now familiar mid-century roster of modern dramatists deemed most worthy of serious study was an artefact not composed on the basis of poetry, psychology, or technique (to look back for a moment to Matthews's more inclusive criteria) but composed solely on a judgement of intellectual merit – philosophical acuity as the arbiter of the dramatist's value.

If Bentley never went so far as to declare these dramatists to be philosophers outright, others would come closer to this claim and make explicit the kinds of linkages between dramatic craft and academic philosophy that Bentley left unspoken. In this light, it is possible to consider Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961) as another example of the mid-century scholarly investment in the nexus of drama and philosophy. Here, the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus is taken as the animus of the contemporary dramatic imagination, the famous corpus of plays that Esslin groups under the absurdist banner essentially configured as bedfellows to existentialist philosophy proper. Esslin does not simply position the drama as a dissemination tool for philosophical discourse, to be sure. But his readings of the drama are always glancing sidelong toward prose philosophy. In fact, the theatrical elements of the Theatre of the Absurd, he writes, are best understood as "an expression of the *philosophy* of Sartre and Camus – in artistic, as distinct from philosophic, terms" (24; emphasis in original). Drama becomes, for Esslin, an instance of philosophy by other means: a method of articulating prefabricated philosophical positions in a language of bodies onstage and voices in dialogue. Writing on Beckett, for instance, Esslin cautions that "we must not go too far in trying to identify Beckett's vision with any school of philosophy" (61). Yet he cannot help but remark that there is "a truly astonishing parallel between the Existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre and the creative intuition of Beckett" (61). Drama

here stands not exactly in philosophy's wake but most certainly in its shadow, its own propositions and contributions always judged against the work of another discipline and another mode of thought.

If the playwright is a kind of fellow traveller to the philosopher in Esslin's readings, that status becomes something much more like the standing of a philosopher proper in Robert Brustein's *The Theatre of Revolt* (1962). Bentley's *Thinker* openly shaped Brustein's work, and he would later credit that book as having "an untold influence on me" (Copeland 31). Yet, where Bentley celebrated the architecture of thought that was possible within the dramatic form, Brustein explicitly conceptualized such dramatic thought as part of a larger intellectual and artistic movement radiating outward from its origins in the arena of philosophy. Modern drama, Brustein posited, was essentially the theatrical arm of a Romantic movement encompassing numerous artistic modes but ultimately definable by its central philosophical figures, Rousseau and Nietzsche. "The modern drama," he writes, "rides in on the second wave of Romanticism – not the cheerful optimism of Rousseau, with his emphasis on institutional reform, but rather the dark fury of Nietzsche, with his radical demands for a total transformation of man's spiritual life" (8). The playwright, here, is not simply a thinker but a thinker who must explicitly gauge himself against the giants of philosophical thought from which the Romantic movement came. "Nietzsche remains the most seminal philosophical influence on the theatre of revolt," Brustein writes, "the intellect against which almost every modern dramatist must measure his own" (8). If not a philosopher proper, the playwright becomes, in this approach, something like the mathematical equivalent of a philosopher, constantly measuring his achievement by philosophy's yardstick. As Richard Gilman would put it a decade later, building both on Bentley and on Brustein: "Drama may in fact be a species of philosophy" (179).

Few would make such a claim in exactly that way today. In passages like these, the idiom of these mid-century works can seem particularly foreign: over-strong in its focus on the assumed value of philosophical discourse and largely dismissive of the material and performative features that most distinguish dramatic and theatrical artistry as such. The works of this "first wave" of drama and philosophy scholarship are all part of a shared conceptual moment: resolutely textualist, deeply indebted to the tenets and values of New Criticism from which they arose, convinced, almost beyond question, of the value of discursive thought, which drives nearly all their claims to the importance of the drama itself. In sometimes surprising contrast to the works that they seek to analyse, which frequently and famously take a critical stance toward liberal humanist assumptions, they are, themselves, specimens of a brand of liberal humanism that flourished in the wake of World War II, committed to the ennobling power of ideas and to the public benefit of their open airing. In the world of these works, to be

philosophical is to be valuable – rendering, by contrast, the value of theatricality itself as potentially suspect, something to be underemphasized or even excised. For Austin Quigley, in fact, the almost uncanny absence of any consideration of theatricality in these works – what he calls the "Theatre of X" tradition – is one of the movement's hallmarks (57). In such works, he observes, "textual patterns are asked to provide the basis for structural and thematic generalizations"; as a consequence, such studies consistently and problematically overlook or underplay "the constitutive nature of the theatrical environment in manifesting themes" (57) or "the centrality of space and its boundaries in the language of the theatre" (55). To be engaged with philosophy, these works seem to claim, drama must inevitably sacrifice something of its own artistry and be measured instead by another's standards – the drama's philosophical potential bought at the price of the theatre's material identity.

TURN AND RETURN

The era of the "Theatre of X" works marks what is surely the most publicly prominent moment of scholarship on drama and philosophy: books like *The Theatre of the Absurd* and *The Theatre of Revolt* (less so, *The Playwright as Thinker*) were – and, to a certain extent, still are – widely read and discussed outside the immediate circles of theatre scholarship. Yet the assumptions embedded in these studies served in the afterlife of this epoch to seed a certain degree of scepticism among theatre scholars as to the project of bringing drama and philosophy too close together—save, for a time, within the highly prescribed philosophical parameters of critical theory, which cut broadly across the humanities. Looking over the intellectual landscape traversed by performance theory in the 1990s and early 2000s, Krasner and Saltz note a panoply of disciplines harnessed for their insights into performance: "anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychoanalysis, political theory, cultural studies, feminism, and queer theory" by their count – but not philosophy (1). As Darren Gobert has recently observed, the broad tendency in past decades has been, instead, toward a materialist agenda in theatre scholarship, one that more often than not sets itself apart from concerns of philosophical position taking. "Theater historians," he writes, "have steered clear of philosophical questions and focused on the material research concerns – props and playhouses, production costs and box-office receipts, actors' and audiences' respective kinesiologies – that have helped to define the disciplinary contours of theater studies and to delimit its sometimes vulnerable position in the humanities" (3). It is a tendency, he observes, that even sometimes manifests as outright opposition: "[P]hilosophy favoring the mental; theater clinging to its material; the two

in perennial discord, like Punch and Judy in the fairground booth of the academy" (3).

So perhaps it is all the more surprising that, from this scholarly context, the past decade would see a newly invigorated interest in the cross-disciplinary investigation of drama and philosophy – even an acceptance that the two fields might be, as Krasner and Saltz propose, "natural allies" more than perpetual combatants (2). What we are currently witnessing in the recent productivity of this subfield can hardly be considered a backlash against the years of materialist or theory-driven work that came before, an open return to the era of the "Theatre of X." Rather, these are works conscious of and deeply informed by recent perspectives on the proper interests of drama scholarship and often quite attuned to both materialist concerns and recent theoretical frames. They are also works that are attuned to – and, in some cases, directly inspired by – the profound rebalancing in the status equation between drama and philosophy that has grown from a deep philosophical interest in the theatre and its practices in the era of post-structuralism and after, what Martin Puchner has influentially called philosophy's "theatrical turn" (8). If drama scholars like Bentley looked toward philosophy as a register of values and a confirmation of the drama's important social role, an influential coterie of philosophers – encompassing such diverse figures as Gilles Deleuze, Alain Badiou, and Peter Sloterdijk – have turned that dynamic on its head, finding value in a theatricalist repertoire of terms and concepts. From Bentley's era of the "playwright as thinker," in other words, we have come into the age of the "thinker on stage," to borrow from the title of Sloterdijk's treatise on Nietzsche. Within those self-same aspects of dramatic form that an earlier generation of scholars cast to the margins as inimical to the medium's philosophical aspirations – issues of actor and performance, space and staging – a new generation of drama scholars has claimed to have found the very substance of the form's philosophical potential.

There is, perhaps, no greater example of this academic reversal of fortune than Puchner's recent rewriting of the history of modern drama in *The Drama of Ideas* (2010). Puchner's argument seems, at first, to be perhaps easily housed within the broad tradition defined by Bentley's *Thinker* or Brustein's *Revolt*. The modern drama, he argues, is "marked by its insistence that theater can be an intellectually serious undertaking, a theater of ideas. Not only were modern dramatists deeply influenced by philosophy, they also believed that the theater had something crucial to contribute to the formation of ideas" (73). As such, Puchner argues, modern drama is a form deeply indebted to the insights and practices of philosophy's foundational figure, Plato – "[I]t is striking," he writes, "to contemplate how many of the most salient features of modern drama can be found in Plato's own dramatic practice" (73). Here, we might say, it is Puchner's Plato, not Brustien's Nietzsche, who presents "the intellect against which almost

every modern dramatist must measure his own" (Brustien, *Revolt* 8). Yet *Drama* actually adopts a house-of-mirrors approach to the Bentlian tradition: it offers a claim, not to a philosophical prerogative that lies at the heart of the modern dramatist's work, but to a dramatic imperative at the heart of philosophy's ancient progenitor – not the playwright as thinker so much as the thinker as playwright. Plato, Puchner reminds us, is said to have turned to philosophy only after abandoning his earlier dreams of becoming a great tragic dramatist – "Come hither, O fire-god, Plato now has need of thee," Diogenes Laertius reports him to have declared as he burned his latest tragedy in the street, after hearing Socrates speak (3).

Yet the burning of these dramas and the turn to philosophical dialogues was less a matter of conflagration than of sublimation. Plato's dialogues, Puchner writes, "written though they are, demand to be performed . . . The theatrical dimension of Plato's dialogues, their particular type of participatory performance, is activated whether they are actually performed or not" (29). The same contingencies of theatrical performance always embedded in the dramatic script thus become, in Plato's dialogues, conditions of philosophical truth itself: a vision of truth as something that is "embodied and lived" (22), always subject to a "material pull" (19). It is this insight into the contingency of truth and the degree to which this contingency can be captured within dramatic form that opens the door to Puchner's long history of the philosophical drama, what he calls the tradition of "dramatic Platonism" that runs as a kind of parallel track to the traditions of the stage that follow from Aristotle. Recasting the interchange between philosophy and drama to run in a counter-direction to that described by figures like Esslin or Brustein, Puchner offers a historiography of the drama of ideas that might appear, to an earlier generation of scholars, not so much familiar as uncanny.

In tracing the history of dramatic Platonism, Puchner's *Drama of Ideas* marries two strands of concern, the historical and the theoretical, that help define the contemporary wave of scholarship on drama and philosophy. The first might be described as a search for origins. Accepting that there is a kinship between drama and philosophy that manifests with particular acuity in the modern era, a number of scholars have set out to excavate the origin points of this relationship. Gobert's recent *The Mind-Body Stage* pursues such a line of inquiry back to René Descartes. If the origins of modern intellectual life owe a substantial debt to Descartes' formulation of subjectivity, Gobert argues, then the same can be said of the early origins of modern drama. "Descartes teaches us that the passions unite mind and body and that, whatever his commitment to substance dualism, the material and immaterial are inextricable," he writes, noting how such ideas would eventually come to have profound effects "in dramatic theory and plot construction, in acting theory and technique, and in theater

architecture" (6). In Gobert's account, Descartes is hardly a simple substitution for Esslin's Sartre or Brustein's Nietzsche. Deeply invested in describing the intellectual history of the drama in the wake of Descartes' contributions, *The Mind-Body Stage* is every bit as alive to the material history of the stage. The philosopher of the *cogito*, Gobert argues, influenced not only the intellectual framework of the drama but its material scaffolding as well:

> Descartes's articulation of subjectivity forever changed the way dramatic characters would be written and read, performed by actors and received by audiences. His coordinate system for geometry radically reshaped how theatrical space would be conceived and built. His theory of the passions revolutionized our understanding of the emotional exchange between spectacle and spectators. (1)

For Gobert, to reclaim the intellectual history of the drama is a project inseparable from rethinking the material history of the stage.

In Toril Moi's *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism: Art, Theatre, Philosophy*, from 2006, the intellectual roots of the modern drama run to German sources. But Moi is less interested in ascribing originary status to a single philosophical figure than in pursuing a kind of intellectual epidemiology of a philosophical outlook that permeated European thought in the moments before modern drama's emergence. Moi's reading of Ibsen is set, in part, within the context of a larger cultural history of idealism in nineteenth-century thought, a legacy built on an expansive network of thinkers, interpreters, and popularizers: Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Hölderlin, Schiller, Schlegel, Heiberg, Monrad, and Coleridge, to name only a few. "Around 1800," Moi writes,

> German idealist aesthetics produced one of the most powerful and inspiring accounts of the nature and purpose of art and literature the world has ever seen . . . *Some* version of this account, however debased, diluted, vulgarized, and simplified, shows up practically everywhere in nineteenth-century aesthetic discussions, not just in the 1810s and 1820s, but throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century. (70)

It is only in this larger intellectual, cultural, and aesthetic context, Moi contends, that Ibsen's place at the beginnings of modern drama can be properly understood. Ibsen's plays are laced with references to idealist thought and the intertwined relationship it posits between ethical and aesthetic concerns. They "explicitly and repeatedly dramatize the questions and assumptions at the heart of idealist aesthetics," she writes, serving as "important battlefields for the all-out struggle between idealists and anti-idealists" (70). What for Brustein is Ibsen's almost ahistorical role in helping to birth

modern drama as a rival to philosophy through force of his "magnificent messianic mind" becomes for Moi a historically embedded engagement with an already diffuse intellectual tradition, the cultural and the philosophical rendered ultimately inseparable (33).

If works in search of modern drama's intellectual origins offer powerful new perspectives on questions of the historical relationship between drama and philosophy, a different line of inquiry within the scholarship is pushing the field toward a more theoretical set of concerns, harnessing philosophical thought in the service of understanding the functional properties of drama and performance. This describes, in part, the project recently pursued by Cull in *Theatres of Immanence* (2012). Building from the central place that theatre holds in much of Deleuze's thought and its particular connection to his concept of immanence – "the production of difference or novelty" in Cull's description, a "multiplicity of presents" (3) – Cull sets out to "explore the implications of the concept of immanence for theatre and performance," focusing especially on practitioners who "think immanence *in* and *as* performance" (1). It is a mode of inquiry that marks a debt to philosophical thought without needing to mortgage the theatre's performative concerns as payment. "Deleuze's thought," Cull makes clear, "provides us with the resources to rethink performance *itself* as a kind of philosophy" (3). Deleuze's highly abstracted postulations are, for Cull, a tool toward essentially theatrographic ends: a means of philosophically excavating performative praxis that does not seek to treat it merely as an example of philosophical insight, a research program that affords such practices a philosophical status apart from philosophy itself.

Though very different in its ultimate outlook, Cull's project has a similar structure to that put forward by the American philosopher Paul Woodruff in *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched* (2008). A student of classical philosophy, Woodruff takes his impetus from the very work that began the tradition of the philosophical investigation of drama, Aristotle's *Poetics*. "All who write about theater work in the shadow of Aristotle," he concedes. But "instead of writing about Aristotle, I have written a kind of poetics of my own" (ix-x). Only lightly footnoted for a work of its scope – a characteristic that calls to mind that other, earlier rewriting of the *Poetics*, Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* – Woodruff's treatise is essentially an act of philosophizing as much as a study in philosophy: an active attempt to understand the theatre's ontology (and, in turn, that of drama as a precursor to certain forms of theatre) premised on a series of deductions from basic principles. Far from a subordination of the theatre to the terms and assumptions of a foreign discipline, however, Woodruff's work ultimately regards the theatre as a means of idea production that is both dispositionally aligned to and functionally quite distinct from philosophy. He asks not "what theater as such might contribute to our wisdom" but rather "what

our minds can do for themselves on the basis of theater," rendering the stage its own status as an intellectual technology (212). As in Cull's analysis, theatre, drama, and performance are permitted a philosophical role that exceeds any simple instance of example or explication.

Ultimately, all of these recent authors describe what might be considered a series of dialogues between disciplines – what Freddie Rokem elegantly calls "encounters" (19), in his study *Philosophers and Thespians* (2010). In Rokem's reading, the history of drama is studded with such potent interactions – from the drunken confrontations of Socrates and Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium* to the friendship of Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht in the dark days of the 1930s. Rokem takes it as his task to chart the history of the drama as a history of these conversations, mapping the "interesting border landscape" of such discussions and describing the moments in which "each partner in the dialogic encounter desires to take over the other's practices" (3). Tellingly, the cover of Rokem's work features an image of a chair design by Robert Wilson: a long, shared bench with backs facing in two directions. The figures who might sit in such a chair place themselves together within the same structure, yet can just as easily look entirely away as turn toward one another. Rokem's work is the story of that turning toward, a meeting on common ground that neither collapses nor denies fundamental differences.

THE CURRENT ISSUE

The articles gathered here represent a continued exploration of such encounters, instances in which the drama scholar turns toward the study of philosophy as a means of understanding her subject anew. These pieces represent only a small sample of the work being done within the subfield of drama and philosophy today, a total output that far exceeds the ability of any one journal issue to begin to encompass. The hope is that these essays might shed light on the manifold questions being pursued under the aegis of this topic, the diversity of critical approaches employed, the breadth of subject matter that the field encompasses, and the multiplicity of insights that can be generated in the encounter of these traditions, the dramatic and the philosophical. It is a small snapshot of the subfield at a particular moment in time, but one that consciously gestures toward its broader contours and parameters.

The issue begins where the mandate of *Modern Drama* itself officially starts: with Ibsen. Toril Moi's evocative reading of *Hedda Gabler* in "Hedda's Silences: Beauty and Despair in *Hedda Gabler*" focuses on the question of the enigmatic character's mysterious silences at three pivotal moments in the play. From a consideration of Ibsen's language and dramaturgy in the presentation of these moments, Moi opens onto larger questions of Hedda's pervasive despair, forever twined to a yearning for beauty and

freedom. Hedda's despair, Moi argues, is not unlike that described by Kierkegaard in *The Sickness unto Death*, though Hedda has only beauty as a possible ideal in the absence of religion. "Ibsen and Kierkegaard illuminate each other," Moi writes, and it is on the nature of this cross-illumination that her essay concludes. Moi describes her critical practice as an act of reading "philosophy alongside literature," a process that can help reveal the unique ways in which literature itself "expresses thought, knowledge, and truth." It is an instance of reading drama against philosophy, without any diminution of the former, a practice that actively invites further philosophical reflection – even on the act of performing criticism itself.

Katherine Biers follows with a reading of Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* in "Stages of Thought: Emerson, Maeterlinck, Glaspell," which looks at Glaspell as an intellectual descendent of Ralph Waldo Emerson by way of European engagements with his thought, particularly in the symbolist drama of Maurice Maeterlinck. Biers's essay is, in many ways, an act of reclamation. It claims, for one, a philosophical position for Glaspell, a writer only rarely considered in this light. Likewise, Biers reclaims a space for the American philosophical tradition in the study of drama and philosophy, a line of scholarship that can be decidedly Eurocentric in its philosophical sources. At the same time, Biers fashions the interaction of drama and philosophy as a process of ongoing and often reciprocal exchange. Glaspell's debt to Emerson, Biers argues, comes not in a straight line of descent but via a circuitous, trans-Atlantic route, grounded in the refashioning of Emersonian thought in Maeterlinck's short symbolist dramas. Like any intellectual or cultural exchange, the interaction of drama and philosophy is subject as much to a networking of influences as to instances of direct transmission, and Biers's work takes steps toward defining and investigating one of these multinational networks.

David Krasner, in "Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* and Postmodern Jewish Philosophy," places philosophy within a confluence of cultural factors that manifest in Pinter's most famous work. Krasner presents Pinter's engagement with philosophy in this play as one strain of a larger grappling with Jewish tradition, theology, and thought. Pinter's elliptical and elusive dramaturgy – and especially his reluctance to accept any overture of transcendent meaning – owes a debt of influence to what Krasner calls "Jewish philosophy and postmodernism," an anti-representationalist tradition encompassing such figures as Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-François Lyotard, where "God is invisible and unknowable and cannot be a reductive project of banal idolatry." In contradistinction to a long tradition of scholarship in drama and philosophy that treats the intellectual lineage of a play as an element that can be studied in isolation, as if in some laboratory environment of the mind, Krasner makes a concerted case for the study of philosophy's role in drama as one that is always embedded in and not to be disentangled from other cultural, historical, and psychological concerns.

Laura Cull's "Philosophy as Drama: Deleuze and Dramatization in the Context of Performance Philosophy" turns its attention away from the dramatic text and toward the philosophical text, offering a reading of the ways in which Deleuze employs drama as a conceptual model within his philosophy. As a complement to and extension of her theorization of performance within Deleuze's thought in *Theatres of Immanence*, Cull gives special attention here to the "method of dramatization" that Deleuze describes. For Deleuze, according to Cull, dramatization is a process "that produces subjects and concepts alike," offering a means of approaching philosophical texts that sidesteps the traditional representationalist account of philosophy's work. The philosophical text, in this perspective, becomes a kind of stage direction, the philosophical concept becomes a character waiting to perform. Cull argues that Deleuze's concepts offer the groundwork for a vision of the drama as a form that is capable of pursuing philosophical meaning without being reduced to philosophical methods or serving only as philosophical example – a strong case for an identification between drama and philosophy grounded in drama's own terminologies and frameworks.

In Freddie Rokem's essay, "The Logic of/in Tragedy: Hanoch Levin's Drama *The Torments of Job*," the question of the relationship between drama and philosophy becomes one of dramaturgical form. Rokem brings together the study of Levin's 1981 play with considerations of both its biblical precedent and its classical dramatic models. Arguing for a formal kinship between the logical sequence of the syllogism and the tenets of Aristotelian dramatic structure, Rokem reads Levin's work as a study in the breakdown of reason after the horrors of the twentieth century. To look at Levin's drama syllogistically is to follow a string of broken logical connections and contradictory logical statements, a mockery of the tight connection that Aristotle espoused between proper dramatic form and careful logic. Ultimately, the broken tenets of classical logic become a kind of map for understanding and approaching the very contemporary terrain of the playwright's depiction of personal and political misery. What might have once been encapsulated in a properly ordered tragedy must become something else entirely at the end of the twentieth century: a harrowing study in despair that quite literally demonstrates the breakdown in logic that marks the modern experience.

The issue concludes with an afterword from Martin Puchner, entitled "Please Mind the Gap between Theatre and Philosophy." A reflection on the methodological quandaries that beset the study of drama and philosophy, the piece offers a warning against ignoring or collapsing the distinctions that have separated theatre and philosophy as cultural and intellectual practices since antiquity. It asks that we avoid the temptation to make of theatre's ideational potential a purely philosophical project, or conversely to see in philosophy's theatrical elements a purely dramatic enterprise. To hold theatre and philosophy distinct and to recognize their basic incommensurability

is vital to the drama scholar, Puchner argues. It is even the source, he says, of some of the most productive work within both fields. In this way, Puchner's essay brings us back to the same body of concerns with which the study of drama and philosophy in a modern context arguably began, to Matthews's warning that the philosophical intent of a dramatist "does not excuse him for any failure to master the technic of the dramaturgic art" (217). Drama must always point back "to the actor and to the theatre" in a way that philosophy never can, must always remain cognizant of its unique history, practice, and form (218). In this way, the question of drama's relationship to philosophy always ultimately asks us, directly and inescapably, to try to understand the nature of drama itself.

A WORD OF THANKS

There are a few people to whom I must offer my sincere thanks for their work in bringing this special issue together. First, I want to thank the small battalion of external readers who contributed so much time and intellectual energy to this issue and who helped it to take its current shape. I am also deeply grateful to the outstanding production team at the University of Toronto Press – most especially the journal's copyeditor, Rosemary Clark-Beattie, as well as Shannon Mooney, Lizzie Di Giacomo and Nara Nadesan. I want to also offer my thanks to Isabel Stowell-Kaplan, editorial assistant for *Modern Drama*, for her help in stewarding this issue from beginning to end. Likewise, I must acknowledge my great debt to my two graduate assistants here at the University of Texas at Austin, Courtney Massie and Elliott Turley, whose tireless work was invaluable in helping to prepare the manuscripts of these articles. Most of all, I wish to thank, in general, the members of the editorial Board of *Modern Drama* for approving and supporting the topic of this special issue and specifically Alan Ackerman, editor of *Modern Drama*, for the encouragement, support, guidance, and mentorship that made this issue both a possibility and a reality.

NOTE

1 These include David Krasner and David Saltz, eds., *Staging Philosophy* (2006); Toril Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism* (2006); Paul Woodruff, *The Necessity of Theater* (2008); Freddie Rokem, *Philosophers and Thespians* (2009); Laura Cull, ed., *Deleuze and Performance* (2009); Puchner, *The Drama of Ideas* (2010); Simon Bayly, *A Pathognomy of Performance* (2011); Laura Cull, *Theatres of Immanence* (2013); Darren Gobert, *The Mind-Body Stage* (2013); and Laura Cull and Will Daddario, eds., *Manifesto Now!* (2013). A selection of forthcoming works includes Tom Stern, *Philosophy and Theatre*; Klaus Mladek, *Stages of Justice*; and my own *The Birth of Theatre from the Spirit of Philosophy*.

WORKS CITED

Bentley, Eric. *The Playwright as Thinker: A Study of Drama in Modern Times. 1946*. 4th ed. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010.

Brustein, Robert. *The Theatre of Revolt: An Approach to the Modern Drama. 1961*. Boston: Little, 1964.

Copeland, Roger. "The Critic as Thinker: A Discussion at the Philoctetes Center of New York City." *American Theatre* 25.2 (2008): 30+.

Cull, Laura. *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance*. London: Palgrave, 2013.

Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. 1961. 3rd ed. New York: Vintage, 2004.

Gilman, Richard. *The Making of Modern Drama: A Study of Büchner, Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Pirandello, Brecht, Handke*. 1972. New Haven: Yale UP, 2000.

Gobert, R. Darren. *The Mind-Body Stage: Passion and Interaction in the Cartesian Theater*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2013.

Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1998. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511804649.

Krasner, David, and David Z. Saltz, eds. *Staging Philosophy: Intersections of Theater, Performance, and Philosophy*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2006.

Matthews, Brander. *The Development of the Drama*. New York: Scribner, 1912.

Matthews, Brander. Prefatory Note. Branders, *Study*.

Matthews, Brander. *A Study of the Drama*. New York: Houghton, 1910.

Moi, Toril. *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism: Art, Theater, Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.

Puchner, Martin. *The Drama of Ideas: Platonic Provocations in Theater and Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010.

Quigley, Austin E. *The Modern Stage and Other Worlds*. New York: Methuen, 1985.

Rokem, Freddie. *Philosophers and Thespians: Thinking Performance*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010.

Sloterdijk, Peter. *Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche's Materialism*. Trans. Jamie Owen Daniel. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989.

Woodruff, Paul. *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195332001.001.0001.

DAVID KORNHABER is Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Texas at Austin. He is currently is completing a monograph entitled *The Birth of Theatre from the Spirit of Philosophy: Friedrich Nietzsche and the Development of the Modern Drama*.