



The Palgrave Handbook of Theatre and Race

Edited by
Tiziana Morosetti · Osita Okagbue

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When Palgrave approached us to compile the Handbook, it was a challenge and an honour, and we are indebted to an intelligent, sensitive and also rather patient publisher for allowing us to adjust our table of contents now and again. The volume has tried to identify emerging scholarship as well as established views on the topic, and the search for the widest range of topic possible has not always been easy but, we hope, productive. We have had to do without some promising contributors for reasons that tell a story of an academia increasingly strangled by bureaucratic concerns and idealised research products, as it would appear some universities have policies to discourage collaborative publications to promote individual work, such as monographs, that are felt to be more ‘valuable’ in REF (or other excellence frames) terms. Collaboration and a collective effort seemed, on the other hand, to be in this case not only advisable but entirely necessary, and our heartfelt gratitude goes to the contributors to this volume, who have worked relentlessly on their chapters, ploughing at times untrodden territory.

We would like to use this opportunity to acknowledge our dear colleague and friend, Dr Victor Ukaegbu, who had agreed to contribute to this book, but who unfortunately died before he could write his chapter. In preparing the book, we had the unstinting support of our two families. Tiziana warmly thanks her husband Luke and their daughter Noemi for their patience and encouragement. Osita’s wife, Amaka, and his children, Solum, Chichi and Nedonna, were always around to encourage him, as they have always done.

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Introduction

Tiziana Morosetti and Osita Okagbue

1 PREMISE

As we write, issues of racism and race have again come to public attention in the most tragic way. The killing of George Floyd (1973–2020) on 25 May, and that of Rayshard Brooks (1993–2020) less than three weeks later, on 12 June, by police forces in the United States have sparked global outrage, re-igniting protests and requests of equality and justice for black¹ communities and individuals around the world. The appalling details of these murders, as well as a lack of distraction because of lockdowns following the emergency of COVID-19, have contributed, according to some commentators, to the unprecedented support of white people for the Black Lives Matter movement and to what seems a turning point in the long history of protest against the oppression suffered by black people worldwide. Looking around us in the United Kingdom, where we live, we see the toppling of the statue of the slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol (United Kingdom) on 7 June and the announcement of Oriel College, Oxford, that they are now ready to remove their statue of Cecil Rhodes² as welcome early developments in the aftermath of these killings.³ It is essential that institutions first acknowledge the legacy of slavery, exploitation and colonialism surrounding and undermining black communities around the world, and it is paramount that young adults approaching higher education should feel safe and welcome independently of their skin colour.

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Yet, deeper, structural change is desperately needed, and while it is doubtful what the controversial Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities set up by British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, may ultimately achieve,⁴ plans for police reform in various parts of the United States should more substantially address at least police brutality, which, however, is only an aspect of the problem, if one of the most odious and shocking.⁵ The more subterraneous, subtle and widespread under-representation, stigma, and stereotype attached to black communities and individuals have a long and complex history, and it is now more important than ever that the call for action of Black Lives Matter does not become ‘an empty slogan’ (Harker 2020), prompting instead long-term reflection too. Politics and tactics matter, in our view, as much as street protest, and we agree with Barak Obama as he observes that ‘aspirations have to be translated into specific laws and institutional practices’ (2020), which require, once protests have subsided, patience, study and a meticulousness directed at ‘tailoring reforms for each community’. A scenario in which *specific* research and education become key to change itself speaks, of course, to not only the fragmentation and inconsistency of police forces in the United States (which, as is well known, are the most decentralised in the world), but also to the extreme disparity and ghettoisation of American black communities in each and every state of the United States. But specificity, research and complexity should be key words to a fuller understanding of what it means to be black, of black history *in its integrity*, also on the other side of the Atlantic. As David Olusoga has written in the concluding remarks of his *Black and British: A Forgotten History*,

[t]he history symbolized by the *Empire Windrush*⁶ has become a part of the British History [...]. The *Empire Windrush* herself has entered the folklore and the vocabulary of the nation. [...] There is, however, a potential paradox in all this. The *Windrush* story has the capacity to obscure another deeper history. Those involved in black British history talk of the dangers of the [...] misconception that black history began with the coming of that one ship. Yet this idea in turn perpetuates the notion that black British history is exclusively a history of black settlement in Britain, rather than a global story of Britain’s interaction with Africans on three continents. (2016, 523–524)

The celebration of iconic moments in history, as well as the removal of statues and symbols, and the renewed intention of institutions to refresh approaches to diversity and (eventually) education curricula are important and necessary steps towards equality, but should not exhaust themselves as facile ways to merely navigate a difficult transition.

Finally, it is essential that any debate around race and racism, especially if involving the history of black communities, should not reiterate imperialist or, at best, simplistic attitudes. If it is with a heavy heart that we finalise this introduction in light of the events in America, it is also with the hope that the collection of essays here presented may inspire a reflection serving a global approach that includes, but should not be limited to, the United States and Britain. Much has been written in these past weeks on the relation between

racism in America and in the United Kingdom, with (not always appropriate) comparison between police forces, marginalisation of communities and issues of representation between the two countries. While these subjects cannot be debated enough, with some chapters (Chaps. 2, 16, 19, 20 and 21) in this volume examining theatre and race between the United States and Britain, this must not come to the exclusion of other contexts around the world, or with the assumption that these should somehow conform to ‘standards’ or comply with agendas that respond to the specific history of racism in the North. An article such as that appeared on 11 June on the South African *Mail & Guardian*, ‘Black Lives Matter? Which Black Lives?’ (Haupt 2020), may come in this respect as unsurprising. Citing the killing of Collins Khosa, a 40-year old black man, in the Alexandra township of Johannesburg by (black) police agents of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) on 10 April this year, the author ascribes the ‘disparity in responses to violence experienced by black people locally when compared to the uptake of social-media responses to events in the US’ to ‘US cultural and media imperialism’ (Haupt 2020).⁷ While several other factors are mentioned to account for the different responses, and while this should not detract us from the relevance and immense merits of the Black Lives Matter movement—as indeed, they are using what we may define as a hyper-visible position to spark long-needed global debate—the very suggestion of a hierarchy of ‘importance’ of black communities even in anti-racist discourses is troubling and deserves further scrutiny.

Where do theatre and the performing arts stand in all this? In the chapters included in this collection we have identified areas that exemplify the relation between theatre and race, ways in which the stage may have enhanced or challenged racial bias, histories of representation of diversity, articulations of black identities, as well as contexts in which, because of conflict and war, racism may have overlapped or been obliterated by nationalist discourses apparently unrelated to but profoundly grounded in ethnic divisions. That the events of the last month should be too recent to have been included in the scholarly reflection of this volume is in many ways a pity, and the briefness of this premise cannot do any justice (as nothing can) to the tragic loss of human life not only in the mentioned cases of Floyd, Brooks and Khosa, but also of the many others that this introduction could not discuss. At the same time, we hope the contribution we offer to the debate may encourage or enhance discussion of neglected nuances and communities, and provide a fuller picture of the dynamics of contrast, integration, representation and cohabiting.

2 ON RACE AND RACISM: BACKGROUND REMARKS AND LITERATURE

In his essay ‘An Idiom of Race: A Critique of Presentism’ (2000), Michael Banton quotes Julian Huxley and A. C. Haddon who, in their 1935 study *We Europeans: A Survey of ‘Racial’ Problems*, suggest strongly that ‘the term race

as applied to human groups should be dropped from the vocabulary of science because it had lost any sharpness of meaning' (quoted in Banton 2000/2009, 62). Also in 2000, then US president, Bill Clinton, in accepting the final draft of the Human Genome Project report, re-cited the 99.9 per cent mantra of the leading genomics researchers that 'race does not exist in our genes—we are all the same' (quoted by Sandra Soo-Jin Lee in Karim Murji and John Solomos eds. 2015, 26). What these two instances point to is the fact that race has always been and remains a problematic, unreliable and contested term to use as a marker of difference between human groups.

The unreliability of race as a marker is further demonstrated by the fact that even among Europeans, the very 'race' who invented the term race, its usage was confused and still is confusing. But this was more so 'during the high point of imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' when 'racialised notions of national identity were pertinent outside the colonial context' and 'imperialist ideologues had developed a racial notion of national identity to refer to other European nations as well as colonial peoples' (Back and Solomos 2000/2009, 15). The problem with race is that, as David Smith points out:

From the beginning, the idea of race was bound up with ideas of racial difference and superiority and inferiority. Considering only Europe, it is possible to find a conception of race and racial distinction in the writings of the ancient Greeks, for whom non-Greeks were generically 'barbarians' ... and usually regarded as by definition inferior to Greeks. (Smith in Hindpal Singh Bhui, 2008, 10)

Thus, it is not the term 'race' per se or the idea that human beings and social groups are different from each other that is the problem, but rather it is the hierarchical value of superior and inferior, civilised and primitive, developed and underdeveloped and so on that came to be attached to the comparative differentiation between black, white and yellow that is the issue. Race as we know it today, according to Michel Wieviorka (2002), 'is a later European invention, associated with the beginnings of maritime empire-building in the fifteenth century'; however, Wieviorka acknowledges that prior to this time, there existed what could be regarded as 'proto-racist'⁸ conceptions of race and difference in classical Greece but that the current understanding of the term emerged from the seventeenth century, 'in European accounts of the African and native American peoples whose lands they invaded' (2002, 460). This bears out Robert Miles who, in offering what can best be described as a neo-Marxist iteration of race, asserts that "'races" are created within the context of political and social regulation' (Back and Solomos 2000/2009, 8). For Miles, race is 'an ideological effect, a mask that hides real economic relationships' (Back and Solomos 2000/2009, 7); thus the value of race is really not in its reality, but rather in its objective status as both an analytical tool and a basis for human behaviours and actions (Miles 1982, 42). Using the fact of migration in Britain and Europe as context, Miles argues that race is merely a political/

ideological construct, and that within the colonial contexts of Africa and the Caribbean, perceived biological differences between Africans, native Americans and the ‘supposed European norm were noted, described, treated as signs or causes of inferiority, and explained mainly in terms of differences in the natural environment, especially climatic differences’ (42). What emerges strongly from Miles’s study and needs to be taken note of in any discussions on race is that while the term may not be real, it was and still remains an underlying basis on which certain human actions and behaviours—whether individual or at the level of policy—are enacted. Secondly, we note, as many of the theatre contexts and plays looked at in this book demonstrate, that the impact of these behaviours and actions are also real for the perpetrators and recipients of those actions and behaviours, in which case, race without being real seems/remains real for people. There is no doubt that colonialism and imperialism in the attempt to develop the often racist ideologies and practices, which it needed in order to justify and sustain itself, made a major contribution to the construction of the images of the European ‘other’, images which still circulate and are effective today. This perhaps illustrates the fact that despite its hoped-for demise, race remains a potent factor in human relationships in various contexts around the globe; in fact, all efforts within and by scholarship and research have not as yet managed to kill race off, with the result that it still features in thinking and actions in many contexts in which humans meet, coexist and interact with one another around the world.

Thus the incontrovertible fact is that what race meant then was unclear, as it was, and today still sometimes is, confused with ideas of nation. More recently, the term ‘ethnicity’ further complicates the issue of race as a term or marker because it raises the question of whether race in fact can be an ‘ontologically valid concept’; Back and Solomos in the introduction to their collection certainly do not think so (2000/2009, 20). But our view is that this question needs to be asked so that the ontogenetic fallacy on which the idea of race was based—that is, selecting, fixing and making ‘natural’ certain biological features/qualities of social groups and using these to construct difference—and the racisms which it has sometimes given rise to historically can be exposed. Our introduction therefore proceeds, as will subsequent chapters in this book, on the basis that race is neither ontologically valid as a concept, nor is it useful or reliable in differentiating between peoples or social groups. But while we are not calling for its complete removal from the vocabularies of scholarship as Huxley and Haddon had done in 1935, we would advise that extreme caution be exercised in its deployment by anyone to ensure that the inherent problems associated with the term be always foregrounded whenever and in whatever context it is used.

The last two decades have seen a surge in studies on race and the theatre, with 11 volumes published between 2003 and 2014 only.⁹ So, why a *Handbook of Theatre and Race* then? First and foremost, the answer must be found in that permanence of racial thinking and racism in our contemporary world already hinted at above, against which, come 2020, our societies still struggle to fully

embrace diversity and equality as clearly shown by recent events in the United States and the reverberations around the world. We would, as made clear previously, certainly align our position to that of Critical Race theory, according to which ‘race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient’ (Delgado 2017, 7). However, while agreeing that race is a social and political construct, that there is no truth to it, we also recognise that race had and still continues to have a material impact on the lives of very many people; sometimes positively, but negatively more of the time. So, in spite of scholars, such as Sir Huxley and Prof Haddon advising that race as a term should be excised from the ‘vocabulary of science’, that it should not feature in any study or understanding of society and human relations because of its loss of ‘sharpness of meaning’, or President Clinton’s reiteration of the conclusions of leading genomicists that there is no race in our genes, that ‘we are all the same’; race unfortunately still persists in theory and in practice, affecting thinking and relations between peoples. It is this continued pervasive presence of race in human affairs that engenders continued interest in it, for there is still the possibility that newer and perhaps changed understandings of race can be beneficial to humanity in the long term.

Thus, while publishing yet another study on this topic may seem an unnecessary effort to ultimately confirm the very existence of these invented categories, we feel the urgency to highlight ways in which racialised thinking and political systems may reiterate the exclusion of certain groups or inform societies at particular moments of their history. If biological racism may be a thing of the past (Fredrickson 2015, 4), it is our belief, and on evidence of current events, that racism is still endemic to many contemporary instances; this is even more so in the ongoing confrontation between an increasingly narrowed, isolationist and fragmented Western world against the perceived ‘threat’ of an unwelcome ‘other’—be this Eastern European workers, Muslim communities worldwide or the thousands of refugees from Africa and elsewhere regularly dying while attempting to cross the Mediterranean into ‘fortress’ Europe, or the selective brutality of law enforcement agents against black people in America. As Fredrickson again writes, ‘racism does not require the full and explicit support of the state and the law. Nor does it require an ideology centred on the concept of biological inequality. Discrimination by institutions and individuals against those perceived as racially different can long persist and even flourish under the illusion of nonracism’ (4). Theatre can play an essential role in enhancing or challenging perceptions and constructions of ‘race’ both in contexts where racism can be an invisible but powerful undercurrent, and, indeed, in societies where institutional racism is visibly present, and Part II of this volume in particular wishes to acknowledge this central difference by highlighting how discourses on the nation and national belonging can be functional to institutional exclusion and discrimination. As Harvey Young in his own *Theatre and Race* (2013) stresses, theatre retains an important societal role in

commenting on, conveying and challenging socio-political and cultural assumptions, and it therefore constitutes a privileged point of observation to consider issues of inclusion/exclusion in relation to race, gender and class. Theatre, as an art form that deals mainly in human physicality and is thus a barometre for capturing and measuring human behaviours and interaction, has always been well placed to enact, interrogate and often times aspires to manage or alter for the better these varieties of human conduct. Some of the performances and theatre forms from different contexts included in this book do this, from the representation of whiteness and the ‘other’ explored in Part IV of this collection, through the enactment of race and its socio-political and cultural impacts on life and relationships in the postslavery and postcolonial societies, which is the theme of Part III, to the manner in which, to use Maufort’s words in his chapter (chap. 5), indigenous dramaturgies ‘challenge and deconstruct notions of race by de-essentialising both Indigeneity and whiteness’ while negating the racial purity that came about as the result of a long history of creolisation that has taken place in the Americas.

However, studies on race and the theatre have been largely focused on the trans-Atlantic context, with discussion of US-UK relations and related articulations of blackness, and/or on specific periods such as the Renaissance—with, unsurprisingly, great attention to Shakespeare¹⁰—or the immediate contemporaneity. If Roberta Uno’s *The Color of Theatre* (2005) ‘is an effort to create the primary perspective of a discourse and resource on race and performance emanating from artistic practice’ (5), this is done with a dedicated focus on the twenty-first century that only partly allows for a global or historical perspective. Young’s *Theatre and Race*, while being centred on ‘how race is performed and how western theatrical practice has historically engaged with the topic’ (2013, 2) over the centuries, also retains a heavy focus on the North American context, with extended examination of performances from the United States. The same author’s *Embodying Black Experience* (2010) is equally concerned with the American scene, as is Daphne Brooks’s *Bodies in Dissent* (2006), which examines black trans-Atlantic activists, actors and singers moving between the United States and the United Kingdom from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. While studies such as Shannon Steen’s *Racial Geometries* (2010), which examines ‘performances that intertwine black and Asian racial signifiers’ (5), or, more recently, Faedra Chatard Carpenter’s *Coloring Whiteness* (2014) provide a widened scope on (and original points of entries in) intersections between theatre and race, a prevalent interest in the North American scene is still firmly in place. There are, of course, ample reasons why this should be the case; nonetheless this clearly creates an imbalance, in that the example of the United States, already overwhelmingly present in debates about racism in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, risks being assumed as the *typical* or primarily relevant context to be taken into account also when it comes to examining race on stage. This overshadows literary productions from other continents that, while overlapping at times with American history, may have little to nothing to do with constructions of race in the

United States. Building on these studies, the *Palgrave Handbook of Theatre and Race* brings together productions in English from diverse geographical areas, as well as performances in languages other than English, in the wish to offer a more diversified overview of the interaction between theatre and race in the modern and contemporary world. We have therefore deliberately limited contributions focusing on the United States not to repeat, but complement the excellent studies mentioned so far, while including chapters on other areas of the Americas, as well as on theatre from the South Pacific, Eastern and Central Europe, China, Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East.¹¹

We share with Steen the sense that ‘race is not a domestic, internally derived national formation, but is shaped by international dynamics as well, and shapes those dynamic in return’ (2010, 5), and that binary systems revolving around white/non-white, and/or American/foreign juxtapositions (6) should be further challenged and complicated. To do so, alongside addressing the imbalance of a long-term focus on the United States, the other two directions we have taken in putting together this collection are, first. A more nuanced approach to ‘colour’ generally by not making this necessarily our central scope (not even in title) but acknowledging, rather, the larger implications of perceived ‘racial’ or ethnic difference. While we acknowledge that colour has undoubtedly become a main and most defining feature of ‘difference’ in the history of racial thinking and racism, we have strived to include contributions that examine how ‘race’ has been articulated in terms (such as national belonging, ethnic difference or cultural distinctions) that do not primarily entail a difference in complexion. This means that even contributions, such as those in the last two sections of the collection, that mostly deal with representations of ‘blackness’ and ‘whiteness’ on stage, do so by not establishing or encouraging facile binaries between the two—which are, rather, put in scope and questioned—and examine ‘colour’ as only one factor that may account for difference or even discrimination.

Secondly, as discussions of ‘colour’ are to an extent somewhat inescapable in the light of the stress that has been put on this from the mid-nineteenth century to the present time, we have opted for including, alongside explorations of ‘blackness’ on stage, a further consideration of ‘whiteness’ and its construction in confrontation with non-white cultures, which we discuss, within the general context of representations of the ‘other’, especially in Part IV. This is not, to be clear, to suggest all societies, groups or indeed ‘races’ are or have been, after all, racialised or equally targeted by racism over time. This is, rather, to acknowledge ways in which whiteness itself has been defined, as well as the important differentiations on stage between similarly white (but not necessarily, socially and economically, equivalent) groups or cultures. As Lorimer (1978) has affirmed in his *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, ‘[t]he question “does a black man equal a white man?” had little meaning in an age [the nineteenth century] when few thought all white men deserved equality’ (15).

While the present age may not as effectively distinguish between white ‘races’,¹² we find it important to stress that other factors (class, gender, sexuality) may well (as Brexit has perhaps demonstrated) affect perceptions of equally

white-but-not-so-equal groups—so that, if whiteness remains undeniably conducive of mostly privileged backgrounds, its definition and perception deserve further scrutiny. In fact, some of the plays and indigenous performances from Africa and the Caribbean examined in this volume show how whiteness can be constructed often not as the prevalently dominant and privileged ‘other’ that it is in the Western literature or theatre (or when and where the West held sway), but rather as a disempowered, dismembered and silenced husk. This is particularly the case in Okagbue’s chapter about the Caribbean in which the three plays discussed show whiteness paradoxically as powerful yet marginalised, bumbling and occasionally voiceless and hollow, and Adeyemi’s on indigenous African (Yorùbá) theatre in which the white characters are presented as blundering and comically strange beings from elsewhere. It is interesting to note that these constructions of whiteness as comical and floundering ‘other’, especially in indigenous African(-derived) contexts and theatre, completely challenge the imperial and colonial superiority-inferiority gradation of white and black ‘races’. In fact, these constructions of otherness illustrate two things; first, that as humans, we are each other’s ‘other’; and, second, that every ‘other’ is a packaged strangeness to another. All chapters tend to make a distinction between racial thinking and racism. We would agree with Fredrickson that while ‘race’ may just describe a group with coherent characteristics, ‘[i]t is when differences that might otherwise be considered ethnocultural are regarded as innate, indelible, and unchangeable that a racist attitude or ideology can be said to exist’ (2015, 5). On the other hand, we also share with Young the sense that ‘[d]espite the historical baggage of race, the concept is not unredeemably negative. Although divisive [...] it can be used to rally a sense of cultural pride that is not necessarily dependent upon the denigration of others’ (2013, 7). This is indeed at the core of Part III, in which blackness is described as conveying, alongside other things, a sense of belonging and cultural specificity, such as to challenge systematic oppression of black communities around the world.

3 SECTIONS AND CHAPTERS

The contributions in this volume have been divided into four parts with different focuses, and, within these, chapters have been arranged in loose chronological order. These parts intend to dialogue with one another and have been conceived as porous and not absolute; given that chapters examine several overlapping areas, their subdivision merely reflects common themes and has been devised as a guideline for the reader rather than to suggest rigid interpretations. While Part I, ‘Race and Racism in Contemporary Theatre’, privileges the contemporaneity, this does not imply that others in the volume may not discuss recent or even ongoing performance; this is very patently the case, for example, with Annette Bühler-Dietrich’s ‘Fighting Racism on the Contemporary Francophone Stage’, which, however, has been included under Part III, ‘Blackness and the African Diaspora’, as this chapter specifically addresses

African and black theatre—a subject for which we very much wanted a separate section. If blackness is variously discussed (Chaps. 20, 21 and 24) in Part IV, ‘Constructions of Whiteness and the ‘Other’, this is through a different angle, that of the portrayal, representation and often stereotyping of other cultures, rather than a stress on their *active* creativity. Part II, ‘War, Conflict and the Nation’, groups chapters that offer insights into the history of specific regions of the world and their theatre, with a focus on territorial conflict, nation-building and/or the expression of racism in explicit war scenarios. This is not to assume, again, that other chapters in the collection (such as Maufort’s on Canada) may not equally share the sense of nations that are still in progress, wanting much in terms of justice, balance and equality. In a wider perspective, in fact, tension, conflict and violence unfortunately and unmistakably emerge from all the chapters in this volume. In summarising sections and chapters, then, we have also taken the liberty to highlight common themes and possible connections to keep the dialogue going between contributors and areas of investigation.

Jami Rogers’s piece ‘The American Theatrical Canon and the Struggle for Racial Equality in British Theatre’, on inclusive casting practices, opens *PART I, ‘Race and Racism in Contemporary Theatre’*, as it sets the tone of the discussion by questioning ideas of Americanness and Britishness in theatre, and examining influences between the two sides of the Atlantic that problematise the relevance of American culture in European debates around racism. It is thus a good starting point for a section that investigates how theatrical practices or individual playwrights have challenged racism in a variety of contexts, from North America to the South Pacific to continental and Eastern Europe, in the last 50 years. Other relevant sub-themes include issues that are specific to these contexts, such as the (re)construction of national identities and racialisation processes in the aftermath of the Second World War in Stewart and Layne’s ‘Racialisation and Contemporary German Theatre’; colonialism/imperialism in O’Donnell and Lal’s contribution on ‘“Dangerous Dialogues”: Questioning Constructions of Race in South Pacific Theatre’; indigeneity and performance in Marc Maufort’s ‘Staging the Ambiguities of Race: Polymorphous Indigenous Dramaturgies in Canada’; and the demise of the Eastern Bloc and the persecution of the Roma people in Benea’s ‘Representing the Roma Experience on the Contemporary Romanian Stage’.

These chapters speak to others in different sections of the volume. Maufort’s discussion of Canadian First Nations playwriting, the work of Tomson Highway in particular, to question binary oppositions in the construction of Indigenous and white identities; and O’Donnell’s and Lal’s analysis of how the work of playwrights Larry Thomas (Indigenous Fijian and European) and Victor Rodger (Indigenous Samoan and European) challenge racist narratives of European import in the South Pacific can both be complemented by that of Mazer on New Zealand Maori. On the other hand, Stewart and Layne’s chapter, which surveys changes in debates around race from the Second World War to the present day, examining the work of racialised theatre makers on the

contemporary German stage, is in dialogue with Heinrich's chapter on theatre practices in Nazi Germany. Benea's chapter on the work of the Roma theatre company Giuvlipen in contemporary Romania, which addresses questions of identity, representation and discrimination, is a good introduction, together with Barnett's chapter on contemporary Serbian performance, to theatre dynamics in post-communist Eastern Europe. On American theatre, Rogers's chapter may itself be accompanied by Byrne's discussion of blackface masking in contemporary American performance and Couture's analysis of Susan Glaspell's work.

PART II, 'War, Conflict and the Nation', gathers chapters that are mainly, as mentioned, dedicated to the relation between racist thinking and the construction of the nation in scenarios of war or conflict around the world. The section opens with Anselm Heinrich's chapter on Nazi Germany, which examines productions of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* during the Third Reich, as well as the work of Richard Euringer and Eberhard Wolfgang, in contrast with the Jewish *Kulturbund* theatres in Berlin. Sharon Mazer's 'Māori Theatre in Not-Quite-Post-Colonial Aotearoa New Zealand' examines, on its part, the relation between Maori theatrical practices and issues of national identity, with a focus on two plays from the 1990s by Hone Kouka, *Nga Tangata Toa* ('The Warrior People') and *Waiora: Te Ūka-ipō*—'The Homeland'. Dennis Barnett's 'Racial Nationalism and the Serbian Theatre: From *Radovan III* to DAH' explores theatre in former Yugoslavia with a survey of theatrical practices during and after Tito, and a focus on performance in twenty-first-century Serbia. This chapter also proposes a reading of 'racial nationalism' that clarifies intersections between national stances and racist thinking in the Balkans. Dan Urian's 'The Palestinian in Israeli Theatre' and Deniz Başar's 'Faces of a Long Unspoken Collective Trauma' both deal with Middle Eastern theatre, exploring the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians on the one side,¹³ and the Kurdish-Turkish war on the other. Urian examines the fluctuating images of the Palestinian in mainstream Israeli theatre, with a focus on the last two decades, which follow the Second Intifada (2000–2004); Başar, on her part, investigates alternative theatres in Turkish and Kurdish in contemporary Istanbul that have strived to promote different understandings of Kurdish people and culture and peaceful cohabitation. Both chapters demonstrate how theatre makers do in fact actively work to overcome division, and how the theatre stage, both mainstream and in the fringe, can provide a space for more constructive conversations. The conflictual contexts examined by Urian and Başar are not necessarily *explicitly* about race, but build on racist assumptions that rather provide a dangerous undercurrent to political thought; these assumptions further highlight the imprecision and consequent blurring of the boundaries between notions of race and nation pointed out earlier in the introduction. Last but not least, David Peimer's 'Staging Race in White South African Afrikaans Theatre' investigates theatrical representations of race during and after Apartheid, examining in particular the work of the female white Afrikaner playwright, Reza de Wet.¹⁴ Issues of race representation and the

construction of 'whiteness' and 'blackness' in contemporary South African theatre are both addressed by this chapter, which complements the reading of Bühler-Dietrich and Adeyemi on, respectively, Francophone and West African theatre.

PART III, *'Blackness and the African Diaspora'*, centres, as per its title, on questions of race and identity in the theatre of black artists in the diaspora; while this section is well complemented by the chapters of Couture and Morosetti on representations of blackness between the United States and Britain in the nineteenth century, as well as by the contributions of Peimer and Adeyemi on African theatre, we have decided to group together discussions of contemporary diasporic black artists in acknowledgement of their common challenges and aspirations—albeit the significantly different contexts in which they live. This part opens with Okagbue's chapter, 'In the Prison of their Skins: Performing Race in Caribbean Theatre', which contextualises discourses of race in the 'New World' arguing that, while the category of 'race' has itself been disqualified by contemporary scientific thinking, race and racism remain a long-lasting issue and presence in diasporic contexts, where racist thinking still affects people of colour specifically, both psychologically and materially. Examining three playwrights in particular, Derek Walcott from St. Lucia, Dennis Scott and Trevor Rhone from Jamaica, Okagbue reveals the continued presence and influence of race as a marker of difference as well as a measure of social positioning in postslavery and postcolonial Caribbean society. Focused on central and southern American theatre are also two chapters, Lilianne Lugo Herrera's 'Black Women in Post-Revolutionary Cuban Theatre', and Victor Hugo Leite and Roberta Matsumoto's 'Black Performances and Black Artists Performing in Contemporary Brazil'. Herrera's chapter examines articulations of female blackness by juxtaposing theatre strategies from the 1960s and from the twenty-first century, while discussing the work of Maité Vera, José Milián, Eugenio Hernández Espinosa, Rogelio Orizondo, Georgina Herrera and Fátima Patterson. Matsumoto and Leite, on the other hand, examine the black theatre scene in Brazil from Abdias Nascimento's *Teatro Experimental Negro* to the contemporary work of theatre companies *Bando de Teatro Olodum* (Bahia) and *AMOK Teatro* (Rio de Janeiro). Both chapters highlight the permanence of racism as an influential undercurrent in Cuban and Brazilian societies that is interpreted in the light of, respectively, the Cuban revolution and Brazil's claim to a 'racial democracy'. As they both deal with constructions of the nation, these chapters furthermore add to contributions on this topic in Part II. Kevin Byrne's 'Lackface: Blackface Masking in Contemporary US Performance' takes the book back to the United States to explore contemporary theatre works that incorporate the tropes of the minstrel show and the blackface mask; these tropes are questioned through an analysis of Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's and Young Jean Lee's plays, as well as the musicals *The Scottsboro Boys* and *Shuffle Along*. This chapter would therefore intersect quite well with Morosetti's chapter on representations of blackness on the Victorian stage that capitalise on the blackface minstrelsy tradition, as well as with Davis's contribution on the

‘Yankee’ impersonation of Charles Mathews in Georgian Britain. Annette Bühler-Dietrich’s ‘Fighting Racism on the Contemporary Francophone Stage’ examines plays by Koffi Kwahulé (Ivory Coast) and Dieudonné Niangouna (Congo) that deal specifically with (black) boxing and the persona of Muhammad Ali. The chapter also examines one additional playwright, the Nigerian British Mojisola Adebayo, to further contextualise the interest for and in Ali’s career and achievements, while exploring articulations of blackness on the contemporary African (and diasporic) stage. The final chapter of this section, Michael Pearce’s “‘Though we are written into the landscape you don’t see us” (Testament, 2018). *Black Faces in White Spaces: Whiteness as Terror and the Terror of Un-belonging in Black Men Walking*’, explores constructions of whiteness in contemporary Black British writing and it thus complements well contributions such as Davis’s on Victorian British theatre, Couture’s on Susan Glaspell and Adeyemi on Yoruba masquerade theatre that similarly discuss notions of whiteness. By focusing specifically on Testament’s play *Black Men Walking*, Pearce’s chapter examines ways in which black-authored dramas in Britain challenge white authority by providing a representation of whiteness as terror, and can thus also be read in connection to Rogers’s and Guarracino’s chapters on the contemporary British theatrical scene.

PART IV, *‘Constructions of Whiteness and the “Other”*’, specifically focuses on representations of non-white cultures in European theatre (Britain and France), and, on the contrary, of whiteness in contexts like Nigeria and China. The title of the section hints at an ambivalence in discussions of whiteness; while this is made the target of revision, reinterpretation and subversion in Yoruba culture (Adeyemi) and in contemporary Chinese work (Mazzilli), it is also at once the target and the origin of theatrical interpretation in Mathews’s impersonation of the ‘Yankee’ (Davis), Artaud’s writing on Mexico (da Costa Dias) and Glaspell’s understandings of American expansionism (Couture). Morosetti’s chapter and Guarracino’s deal, at the other end of the spectrum, with (white) European representations of non-white cultures, but in doing so, the chapters also highlight intersections with class and gender that complicate readings of race on the British stage.

Jim Davis’s “‘A Wretched Caricature...Unworthy of America’: Charles Mathews’s Representation of the Yankee” discusses Mathews’s less-known impersonations of white Americans in his series *At Home* (1818–1834), and related notions of nationality and race in Georgian Britain. Morosetti’s chapter ‘The Language of Blackness: Representations of Africans and African-Americans on the British Stage after *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’ also examines the linguistic strategies adopted in the representation of the black character on the Victorian stage, exploring the legacy of the ‘minstrelised’ stereotype promoted by black-face minstrelsy and later by theatrical adaptations of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel. Selena Couture’s ‘Susan Glaspell’s *Trifles* and *Inheritors*: White Settler Hunger, Debt and the Black Hawk Purchase Lands’ discusses the construction of settler colonial whiteness as reflected in early twentieth-century American theatre, specifically in Glaspell’s canonical work *Trifles* (1916), which Couture

re-reads in relation to issues of precariousness and ‘hunger’ in American expansionism. These three chapters deal in many ways with constructions of the nation and are therefore in dialogue with contributions in Part II. Luciana da Costa Dias’s ‘Beyond the Peyote Dance: The Raramuri Tribe and “Mexico” Representations in Antonin Artaud’s Work’ examines, on the other hand, ways in which primitivism and the work of the great French artist intersect, focusing on the impact of Artaud’s Mexican experience on his writings. While the focus is on the reception of Mexico, the discussion of Raramuri culture makes this chapter a good reading in connection with those on Central America in Part III. Sola Adeyemi’s ‘Representing and Re-presenting Others in Yorùbá Performance’, which deals with a specific Nigerian culture and can therefore be read together with chapters on Africa in Parts II and III, examines representations of whiteness and the colonial encounter in the Egungun masquerade of Imesi-Ile, which subverts (Western) images of whiteness as automatically associated with superiority, ‘seriousness’, efficiency and power. The final two chapters, Serena Guarracino’s ‘Pigs and Dogs and Bogus Women: Racialized Performance in Anglo-British Women Playwrights’ and Mary Mazzilli’s ‘Race, Occidentalism/Orientalism and Sino-centrism in Contemporary Chinese Theatre’ deal, respectively, with the reception of racially marked characters in the work of Caryl Churchill, Sarah Kane, Shelagh Delaney and Kay Adshead, and—in reversed perspective—with notions of Chinese Occidentalism and the reception of Western culture in Wang Chong’s *Revolutionary Model Play 2.0*. If Mazzilli explores how Sino-centrism disguises under a deconstructed racial fluidity, and examines ways in which white Western culture enters the Chinese through translations and adaptations of the Western canon, Guarracino discusses the intersection between white textual authorship and the performing black body.

In all the contributions included in this volume, the body of the performer as a signifier of overlapping racial identities and national and political constructions emerges clearly, theatre becoming a symbolic as well as a physical *locus* of the intersection of communities and culture, and for conversations about identity, heritage, resistance and struggle, and future perspectives especially at moments of change and of conflict. It is our hope that, while many areas and topics could be added to those we present in this collection, the chapters of this volume will further shed light on the complex, long-lasting and often very practical issues of race and racism, clarifying the dynamics of a category that, although seriously questioned and ultimately dismissed in theory, still in practice affects so significantly communities and individuals around the world.

NOTES

1. The terms ‘black’ and ‘white’ will be capitalised in this volume only when they indicate groups (e.g. Black Germans, Black British).
2. The statue has been at the centre of controversy since the Rhodes Must Fall campaign started their activity in Cape Town (2015) and Oxford (2016) amongst other locations.

3. Steps in this direction have been taken by University College London, which has renamed three facilities formerly entitled to eugenicists Francis Galton and Karl Pearson (see <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jun/19/ucl-renames-three-facilities-that-honoured-prominent-eugenicists>), and by the curator of the parliament's collection of art at Westminster, Melissa Hamnet, who has declared an intention to revise appropriateness and strategies behind the display of some items, and to commission new work portraying BAME and female MPs (see <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jun/19/houses-of-parliament-art-has-a-lot-of-racist-history-says-its-curator>). We use BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) as the acronym is used explicitly in the article from the *Guardian* mentioned above; it is important, however, to point to the growing problematisation of this definition, which is being rejected by several groups as fundamentally reductive and incorrect.
4. See <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/black-lives-matter-uk-government-review-white-working-class-boris-johnson-a9566581.html>, and <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/14/johnson-criticised-over-victimisation-comment-as-he-sets-up-racism-inquiry>.
5. It is worth noting, though, that plans from Democrats, Republicans and the White House differ significantly in approach; for comparison of work-in-progress intentions see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-53083560>.
6. On the *Empire Windrush* and the history of the West Indian community in Britain post-1948 see also Onyekachi Wambu (ed.), *Empire Windrush: Fifty Years of Writing about Black Britain* (London: Gollancz, 1998) and Paul Arnott, *Windrush: A Ship Through Time* (Stroud: The History Press, 2019).
7. See also <https://freewestmedia.com/2020/06/04/death-of-collins-khosa-elicits-no-protests/>.
8. For more on the term 'proto-racism', see Benjamin Isaac's *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006.
9. *Constructions of Race in Southern Theatre: From Federalism to the Federal Theatre Project* (Southeastern Theatre Conference and the University of Alabama Press, c2003), Roberta Uno's (ed.) *The Color of Theater: Race, Culture and Contemporary Performance* (Bloomsbury, 2005), Daphne Brooks's *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (Duke University Press, 2006), Harvey Young's *Embodying Black Experience* (University of Michigan Press, 2010) and *Theatre and Race* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), Shannon Steen's *Racial Geometries of the Black Atlantic, Asian Pacific and American Theatre* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), Angela Chia-yi Pao's *No Safe Spaces: Re-casting Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in American Theatre* (University of Michigan Press, c2010), Frieda Ekotto's *Race and Sex across the French Atlantic: the Color of Black in Literary, Philosophical, and Theater Discourse* (Lexington Books, 2011), Anne Crémieux, Xavier Lemoine, and Jean-Paul Rocchi's (eds.) *Understanding Blackness through Performance: Contemporary Arts and the Representation of Identity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), Faedra Chatard Carpenter's *Coloring Whiteness: Acts of Critique in Black Performance* (University of Michigan Press, 2014) and Warren Hoffman's *The Great White Way: Race and the Broadway Musical* (Rutgers University Press, 2014). See also Helen Gilbert's *Sightlines: Race, Gender, and Nation in Contemporary Australian Theatre* (University of Michigan Press, 1998).

10. See Ayanna Thompson's (ed.) *Colorblind Shakespeare: New Perspectives on Race and Performance* (Routledge, 2006) and *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America* (Oxford University Press, 2011), Lara Bovilsky's *Barbarous Play: Race on the English Renaissance Stage* (University of Minnesota Press, c2008), Scott L. Newstok's (ed.) *Weyward Macbeth: Intersections of Race and Performance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), and Delia Jarrett-Macauley's *Shakespeare, Race and Performance: The Diverse Bard* (Routledge, 2016).
11. Areas such as Japanese theatre, Native American performance in the United States, theatre in the Indian sub-continent or Southern Europe are not included in the volume; this is not, clearly, because they are not relevant to the subject but due to reasons all related to the long and at times difficult gestation of this volume. We deeply regret that seeking contributions on these areas did not ultimately bear results.
12. For an extensive discussion of Victorian perceptions of white races and scientific racism see Richard McMahon's *The Races of Europe: Construction of National Identities in the Social Sciences, 1839–1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
13. We have tried to contact Palestinian companies and academics in the hope to have a chapter by a Palestinian voice on the subject, but this was not in the end possible, to our great regret.
14. One contribution that was due on black writing in contemporary South African theatre could not in the end be included.

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