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***Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy.* Edited by Stephen Johnson. Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012; pp. xii + 280, 90 illustrations. \ \$80 cloth, \ \$28.95 paper.**

Kellen Hoxworth

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personal and professional complexities of a man who was certainly a virtuosic actor and advocate for a new cultural perception of racial difference, Lindfors insists on seeing Aldridge as “a thoughtful, considerate, and kindhearted man” (144).

Despite these problems, the book will be extremely valuable to a wide range of scholars because of Lindfors’s detailed research. Those focusing on African American actors, Shakespearean performance in continental Europe, or nineteenth-century theatre in general will find this book most welcome. Lindfors’s clearly presented and engaging history, filled with vivid contemporary accounts of the reception of Aldridge’s work, could also make his book of significant interest to a general audience of theatre enthusiasts.

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Reviewed by Kellen Hoxworth, *Stanford University*

Stephen Johnson begins his introduction to *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy* with a simple question: “Why has there been a resurgence in the use of blackface in contemporary society?” (1). Substantiating the persistence of blackface in twenty-first century mass and social media, and in theatrical and everyday performances, Johnson establishes the ambit of the collected volume. Blackface scholarship, which has emerged at the interstices of manifold interdisciplinary projects over the past forty years, remains a fecund site for critical analysis of representation, embodiment, and aural culture. *Burnt Cork* gathers new work by notable scholars to trace traditions and legacies of blackface performance across disparate geographies and histories through an assemblage of critical methodologies. Through eight chapters and an introduction, which are supplemented by extensive visual materials and an online database (<http://burntcorkthebook.com/>), the essays span an impressive range of material, offering both cogent models for future scholarship and generative tensions between critical approaches.

The book is divided informally in half: the first four chapters emphasize the historical emergence of various modes of early blackface performance in the United States and Britain, and the latter four analyze the uptake of blackface in new technologies and divergent localities. Johnson’s introductory chapter provides an extensive catalog of contemporary blackface performance and an exhaustive reading list of critical blackface scholarship, making it a useful text for introductory courses. W. T. Lhamon Jr.’s “Turning around Jim Crow” elaborates on his previous work on the blackface lore cycle (in *Raising Cain*, 1998), here connecting T. D. Rice’s originary performance of “Jim Crow” to contemporary American politics. This juxtaposition signals the ambivalence central to the “lore cycle” (35)— for Lhamon blackface lore is never only one thing, and it is not yet past. In contrast to this transhistorical reading, Dale Cockrell’s “Of

Soundscapes and Blackface” turns to the microhistorical, chronicling the personal politics of George Washington Dixon, the originator of the character “Zip Coon,” in his work as a moral reform journalist. Connecting the emergence of respectable morality to Dixon’s performances of blackface aurality, Cockrell turns away from the visual aspects of blackface to emphasize the form’s inherently polyvalent “motion, dimensionality, and kinesis,” as well as its dynamic functions in the political arena (69).

Johnson himself offers a third historiographical model in “Death and the Minstrel,” drawing from three documents pertaining to minstrel performers William Henry Lane (“Juba”), Gilbert Pell, and Thomas Briggs. As much a historiography as a critique of particular tropes of historiography, Johnson’s intervention challenges the definiteness of the archive, reading the historical haziness surrounding the deaths of three minstrels to glance critically at historiographies that flatten the complexity of the performers’ lives. The final historiographical essay of the book, Louis Chude-Sokei’s “The Uncanny History of Minstrels and Machines,” attends to the performance of the slave woman Joice Heth, purportedly “161 years old,” as a curiosity alongside the chess-playing automaton “The Turk” in New Haven, 1834 (105). Through a rigorous transnational and transhistorical survey, Chude-Sokei traces the uncanniness of the black(face) automaton at “the linkage of Negro, dolls, and automata, blackface and machine, [which] already operated with an unquestioned logic, each as a mask of the other” (120).

The uncanny imbrication of blackface and technology comprises the organizing concept for the second half of the book. In “Surprised by Blackface,” Linda Williams analyzes D. W. Griffith’s *One Exciting Night* (1922) to argue for attentiveness in interpreting film blackface. In contrast to the incendiary blackface of Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*, Williams tracks *One Exciting Nights*’ inversions of blackface through the simultaneous contestation and reification of minstrel tropes. Nicholas Sammond also analyzes film blackface, taking the Mickey Mouse short *Trader Mickey* (1932) as a prime example of the “vestigial minstrels” (165) of early animation. Through Mickey’s capitalistic journey to Africa and his encounter with cannibals of imperial lore, Mickey, like other animated figures, exemplifies “the minstrelsy of animation [. . .] deeply embedded in the visual, auditory, and performative traditions of the genre” (165). Turning to television, Alice Maurice’s “From New Deal to No Deal” juxtaposes the commodification of blackface spectacle modeled in Spike Lee’s *Bamboozled* to the sublimated blackface in the reality television of *Deal or No Deal*.

The book’s final chapter, Catherine M. Cole’s “American Ghetto Parties and Ghanaian Concert Parties,” scopes outward to consider the transnational routes of blackface circulation. Cole offers a survey of transnational blackface before presenting a comparative study of early twentieth-century blackface in Ghanaian Concert Party theatre and the emergence of “ghetto parties” at college campuses throughout the United States in the early twenty-first century. Cole ends her chapter with a reflection on the 2010 “Blackout” at Berkeley, a protest against the racially insulting 2010 University of California, San Diego “Compton Cookout” parties. She interprets the performance as a “deeply transformative ritual” (252)

of solidarity, reaffirming the political urgency attendant on performances of blackness and their unpredictable reverberations.

The success of *Burnt Cork* originates from its commitment to rigorous, dynamic critical interpretations. As Johnson aptly notes, “Every essay emphasizes the complexity of intention and reception in blackface performance,” attending to the historical specificities of each performance and the open-endedness of blackface’s futures (3). Occasionally, the emphasis on ambiguity in the critical interpretations occludes other interpretive possibilities. In their close attention to the gendered, homosocial communities of male practitioners of blackface, the authors generally abstain from sustained readings of gender and sexuality that might further complicate presumptions about audience and reception. Also, though the volume gestures toward transnationality, it tacitly underscores the centrality of the United States and Britain in blackface scholarship even as it expands its scope. These gaps and absences are in many ways legacies of blackface scholarship writ large and remain underresearched areas. Despite these omissions, the volume marks a significant turn toward these emergent issues. *Burnt Cork* contributes vitally to the expanding scholarship on blackface and signals generative potential interdisciplinary projects in theatre and performance studies.

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**Theatre & Race.** By Harvey Young. Theatre&. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; pp. viii + 80. \$10 paper.

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Reviewed by Kevin Byrne, *University of Arizona, Tucson*

The wonderful Theatre& series aims to put innovative scholarship on a wide variety of subjects into the hands of students, an admirable goal assisted by low costs and short lengths. Harvey Young’s *Theatre & Race* is another worthy volume, a clearly written book that engages with recent theories of race and performance studies. As Young states in the introduction, “*Theatre & Race* actively encourages the consideration of topics—race and racism—that most people would prefer not to address and applies them to a medium—theatre—that many incorrectly view as being escapist” (3). A key contribution of this volume is to help make a conversation about race and racism possible in the classroom. Young realizes that, even in a college setting, students shy away from open discussions of race for fear of speaking in error or voicing an unnuanced opinion. The book provides readers with basic terminology for use in research and in critical conversations with others.

At the outset of the book, Young offers a concise definition of race and performance. For Young, race is a construction that changes and shifts over time; however, it also dictates social interactions and imposes limitations upon bodies and identities. Race’s “broad acceptance, seeming materiality, and staying power are anchored in its ability to provide a narrative that unifies a collective social history with the variances in individuated social perspectives” (6). Utilizing