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struggle with AIDS and the life of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company after his death, the memorial performance given for him, and the unfinished works that he left behind. Roemer concludes that Ludlam's feat—running his own company, for which he wrote, directed, and starred in its twenty-nine plays—was a significant accomplishment in American theatre.

For anyone unfamiliar with Ludlam's work, Roemer's book is a fine introduction to his position within the context of the American avant-garde and to his use of ridiculosity as a strategy for launching a new experimental aesthetic and advancing progressive social values. The book also includes Ludlam's "Manifesto: Ridiculous Theater, Scourge of Human Folly" as an appendix. Highlighting his many contributions to the theatre (as playwright, director, designer, and actor), Roemer demonstrates that Ludlam was a true innovator who not only changed the nature of his art form, but also "[shook] up society's rigid, intractable system of values" (159). Roemer thus succeeds in securing Ludlam's place within the history of modern American theatre, inviting further scholarly engagement with his oeuvre.

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QUEER THEATRE AND THE LEGACY OF CAL YEOMANS. By Robert A. Schanke. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; pp. 262.

In *Queer Theatre and the Legacy of Cal Yeomans*, Robert Schanke argues convincingly for the inclusion of Cal Yeomans in the canon of playwrights associated with the gay-theatre movement of the post-Stonewall era. To date, Yeomans has not received as much scholarly attention as other gay playwrights, such as Lanford Wilson, Harvey Fierstein, Robert Patrick, Terrence McNally, Doric Wilson, Robert Chesley, and Tony Kushner, to name but a few. To redress this omission, Schanke thoroughly reconstructs Yeomans's life and work, situating him within the cultural moment of the 1970s and '80s and examining his plays in relation to the discourses of the gay-liberation movement and the AIDS crisis.

Drawing from interviews with several of Yeomans's friends and co-workers, as well as his diaries, photographs, letters, poetry, and plays, Schanke presents a biography that opens up into a cultural, social, and historical analysis of Yeomans's work. The book is organized chronologically into ten chapters, with titles representative of Yeomans's writing style, such as "Horrible Misfit," "Pornography? Why Not?" and "Living with a Death Sentence." Through an insightful examination of Yeomans's life and work, Schanke convincingly establishes him as an equal among his peers.

Schanke begins by reconstructing the playwright's life in great detail, beginning with his privileged upbringing in the conservative American South of the 1950s. As Schanke discusses, Yeomans came of age in a religious environment that made him struggle with his sexuality, inducing feelings of estrangement and inferiority that haunted him throughout his life (chapter 1). Schanke also meticulously details Yeomans's discovery of drama while studying business at Florida State University and his early work as an actor and acting teacher at the Atlanta School of Acting and Workshop Theatre, which he founded with Fred Chappell in the 1960s (chapter 2). This experience led to an invitation to join Ellen Stewart's renowned La MaMa theatre in New York City in the 1970s, where Yeomans developed an experimental style that incited Stewart's objections to the explicit homosexual nature of his work (chapter 3). As this episode suggests, Yeomans's artistic vision was uncommon, and sexual expression became a crucial part of his life and work that he was not willing to stifle. Writing to a friend who was offended by the frankness of one of his plays, Yeomans explained that sex was "one of the great mysteries & motivators of life filled with humor & splendor and pathos" (qtd. on p. 102). The challenging nature of his work and artistic temperament (he was later diagnosed with bipolar disorder) not only damaged his personal and professional relationships, but also led him to be institutionalized at various mental hospitals.

In chapters 4–6, Schanke recounts Yeomans's move to San Francisco, where he was drawn by the production of two of his plays, *Richmond Jim* and *Sunsets: A Beach Trilogy*, and by his friendship with the playwright Robert Chesley. There, in the emerging gay theatre of the 1970s and '80s, he rose to success with his frank and explicit portrayals of gay male sexuality. *Richmond Jim*, for example, which premiered at the newly founded Theatre Rhinoceros in 1979, tells the story of a young man from the South whose sexual encounter with an older man in Manhattan introduces him to the world of bondage and leather sex and turns the naïve youth into a menacing leather man. *Sunsets*, which premiered in New York City in 1981 and was followed by the production in San Francisco, consists of three short plays set outside a public toilet on a deserted beach in Florida where lonely men search for love.

The final chapters of the book detail the premature end of Yeomans's career when, with the advent of the AIDS crisis, his sexually explicit material became taboo (chapters 7–8). Schanke recounts these years as

professionally frustrating for Yeomans, who rarely found production outlets for his plays—even for staged readings of his work. Yet Yeomans refused to compromise the unrestrained sexual expressiveness of his work and never relinquished his belief that all forms of sex were part of life's wonderful mystery. With his playwriting career stymied, he turned his attention to poetry and developed a new interest in photography, creating studies of male nudes until his death of heart failure due to AIDS-related complications in 2001 at age 63 (chapters 9–10). As he recorded in his journal shortly before his death: "There is no place or function for me on this earth. My birth seems a mistake. My death will be a relief" (qtd. on p. 194). In a letter from a few years earlier, he wrote, "I was born in the wrong place at the wrong time in the wrong body to the wrong family" (qtd. on p. 183).

In *Queer Theatr e and the Legacy of Cal Y eomans*, Schanke skillfully succeeds in recuperating Yeomans for gay theatre history, demonstrating his importance in making visible those aspects of gay life that were not represented or were deemed unrepresentable on the American stage in the years between Stonewall and the AIDS crisis. Schanke's carefully researched and well-written book is both a biography of Yeomans, tracing the transition from his closeted childhood in a small town in the South to his urban initiation into adult gay life, and a cultural history of a time of great change, buoyed by the sexual exuberance of the 1970s and haunted by the sexual restraints that accompanied the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. It is a must-read for those interested in LGBT theatre history and an important contribution to the full story of late-twentieth-century American theatre.

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WENDY AND THE LOST BOYS: THE UNCOMMON LIFE OF WENDY WASSERSTEIN. By Julie Salamon. New York: Penguin Books, 2011; pp. 480.

READING THE PLAYS OF WENDY WASSERSTEIN. By Jan Balakian. New York: Applause Books, 2010; pp. 244.

Wendy Wasserstein burst onto the New York theatre scene in 1977 with *Uncommon Women and Others*, a depiction of a group of women at one of the Seven Sisters colleges that was praised as a profound presentation of the confusion that young women felt during the early 1970s. For the rest of her career as a playwright (she died at age 55 in 2006), Wasserstein's major work would speak to the conflicts that smart middle-class women of her generation felt between expectations of professional success and demands that they become good wives and mothers. While her work focused on women, it reflected the playwright's scepticism of doctrinaire feminism. Her last play, *Third* (one of her best), for instance, centers on a middle-aged college professor whose leftist politics and belief in political correctness have turned her into a bigot and intellectual bully.

Wasserstein was a successful playwright, journalist, screenwriter, and novelist, but she was also a well-known personality. The Wendy that most people saw was a charming, vivacious woman who could quickly win over an audience. She was not only funny, but she also seemed to care about everyone around her. This side of Wendy, the drive to please, was reflected in her work and led some critics to accuse her of a lack of seriousness. It also was a factor in her commercial success. Behind the smile was a woman intent on being a major figure in the commercial theatre, but there was also a strong desire for a conventional domestic life. Although I find her clever title misleading—Wendy's mostly gay "boys" were in many ways less lost than she was—Julie Salamon's comprehensive, fascinating biography *Wendy and the Lost Boys* delineates the ways in which Wasserstein's life, like her work, exposes the mixed messages that many women receive about what constitutes success.

Wasserstein's powerful, eccentric mother Lola pushed her children toward affluence and professional prominence (Wendy's siblings held powerful positions in the business world), but also wanted them to have conventional families, which the Wasserstein children were not always good at doing. Lola's expectations explain the drive to motherhood that led Wendy, after fertility treatments and a number of attempts at in vitro fertilization, to give birth to a daughter when she was 48 years old. Salamon also emphasizes another Wasserstein family paradox: the desire to be in the public eye combined with a need for secrecy about the most important aspects of one's life. Wendy's parents kept big secrets: for example, the father of the older siblings was actually the deceased brother of the man thought to be the father, and hidden away in an institution was a developmentally disabled son. Wendy inherited this need for both publicity and secrecy; she hid her pregnancy from even her closest friends and the identity of the father of her daughter is still a secret.

Salamon chronicles Wasserstein's tendency to look for loving relationships with men who could not reciprocate because they were either married or