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Acts of Gaiety: LGBT Performance and the Politics of Pleasure by Sara Warner  
(review)

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collection of essays that urge us to do just that, these insights add fuel to the fire of interest in the long-overlooked playwright that this collection is bound to inspire.

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***Acts of Gaiety: LGBT Performance and the Politics of Pleasure.* By Sara Warner. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012. Cloth \$55, Paper \$30.95. 296 pages.**

Sara Warner's award-winning *Acts of Gaiety* has received a good deal of critical attention and praise in the three years since its initial publication. Winner of the Outstanding Book Award by the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) in 2013, that same year it was a finalist for a Lambda Literary Award for LGBT Studies, and received an honorable mention for the prestigious Barnard Hewitt Award of the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR). Given these numerous and well-deserved accolades, my aim in this review is to contribute to the scholarly conversation already in progress, rather than reprise what has already been said.

In about a dozen pages of preface, Warner lays out the theoretical framework around which the book is organized and explains her original taxonomy. She defines acts of gaiety as: "comical and cunning interventions that make a mockery of discrimination and the experience of social exclusion" (xi). Warner convincingly argues that such acts, which include "zap actions, pageants, parades, spectacles, kiss-ins, camp, kitsch, and drag" (xi) are essential modes of performance that engender mirth and merriment, while simultaneously lobbing a powerful, often scathing, critique regarding the treatment of sexual minorities by the dominant culture. These moments of activist, political performance are celebrated as jubilant, gleeful responses to serious social struggle. In other words? You have to laugh, or else you'll cry your eyes out.

Warner identifies two foes of gaiety: homoliberalism, the hard right turn the LGBT movement took in its quest toward equality, and the elision of time. Homoliberalism, with its emphasis on traditional, conservative values such as marriage equality and the nuclear family, views gaiety as a threat to its goal of reinscribing the hegemonic norm and encouraging assimilation over diversity. With the elision of time, Warner argues that "the queer canon is almost devoid of representations of lesbian sexuality, and it is sorely lacking in depictions of women laughing, joking, or camping it up. This absence reinforces the stereotype

that dykes are dowdy and dogmatic, solemn and strident” (xviii). Warner contends that acts of lesbian gaiety from the sixties, seventies, and eighties have largely been forgotten and ignored by subsequent generations of activists, and subsumed by the homoliberal agenda. Her goal then, using five in-depth case studies, is to recover these gleeful acts as agents of revolutionary social and political change.

Before turning to the individual events, Warner provides a concise, thirty-page introduction to the field of queer performance studies. She succinctly weaves together political history and current events, tracing the origin of the word gay from adjective to identity, while highlighting major queer artists and moments in the modern LGBT movement. As an overview, it could easily be extracted and assigned to undergraduates as a helpful primer in any number of theatre courses. Although the specialist reader will benefit more from the body chapters, this introduction is accessible to even the most novice reader, making it eminently useable.

The five case studies are meticulously researched using a variety of archival and primary source material. In chapter one, Warner focuses on the “Scummy” Acts of Valerie Solanas, and primarily on the 1965 play *Up Your Ass*, correcting many persistent scholarly errors that have been made about Solanas’s life and work. Today, sadly, Solanas is typically identified only as the woman who shot Andy Warhol. Warner, however, identifies her as the author of the “earliest, most provocative, and profoundly seditious lesbian feminist play in the history of American drama...a riotous and uproarious parody of heteronormativity, racial stereotypes, and gender roles” (32). Easily her strongest chapter, this case study showcases Warner’s strengths—groundbreaking archival research, keenly situated within theoretical and historical context, and sharply observed commentary that is both humorous and biting.

The remaining chapters tackle: anti-marriage “zaps” by lesbian feminist collectives; the anti-assimilationist antics of *Village Voice* critic and columnist Jill Johnston (one of the country’s earliest, unapologetically out lesbians); the musical adaptation of Diane DiMassa’s comic ‘zine, *Hothead Paisan: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist*, by dyke punk rocker Animal Prufrock at the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival; and the 2005 premiere of *Oedipus at Palm Springs* by the storied, Sapphic, satirical performance troupe the Five Lesbian Brothers. Each chapter offers surprising revelations, accompanied by a handful of primary source images that delightfully illustrate the acts of gaiety under discussion.

In the afterword, Warner calls for more acts of gaiety to combat our “sober age of compulsory assimilation” (193). Although published just three years ago, the lightning-fast rate of change in the modern LGBT movement has meant we have seen several seismic shifts in that short time. Top among them, of course, is the Supreme Court’s 2015 decision to affirm marriage as a fundamental right for all Americans, an act Warner undoubtedly views as the apotheosis of the homoliberal agenda.

2015 also saw the announcement by festival organizers that this year will be the final year of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (concluding a 40-year run), as well as the arrival on Broadway of *Fun Home*, the Tony-winning musical with a butch, lesbian protagonist, penned by former Brother Lisa Kron. In chapter four, Warner argues that Americans do not support any kind of theatre (mainstream or otherwise) by, for, or about lesbians (140), a claim that has now, happily, been proven false.

This last point brings me to my only quibble with *Acts of Gaiety*—what seems to be an unnecessarily adversarial construction of lesbian gaiety against other aspects of queer performance. Why insist on either/or instead of both/and? Is there not room for both modes of expression? In chapter three, Warner argues, somewhat unsuccessfully, that Johnston's 1993 civil union to her partner in Denmark was something *other than* "the homonormative strivings . . . that typify the conservative case for gay marriage" (132). And yet, when asked why she consented to the union, Johnston cites access to social services and medical care as her primary reasons, hardly an ironic critique of homoliberal values (136). If an anti-establishment radical such as Johnston can participate in one of the most assimilative acts of queer culture, then surely there is room under our tent for both types of performances—the joyously mirthful AND the deadly serious.

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***Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat.* Edited by Margherita Laera. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. Cloth \$120, Paper \$39.95. 284 pages.**

Margherita Laera's edited collection, *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat*, expands scholarly and practical discussions of theatrical adaptation with seventeen interviews with theatre makers from around the world who are engaged in various processes of adaptation. Each interviewee parses the meaning of "adaptation," effectively unhinging the term from its most common definition, "a dramaturgical practice of turning . . . a novel into a play script" (2). Here the word is used to describe a range of theatre-making modalities, including puppetry, musical theatre, and devised theatre, all from European, Asian, African, and American cultural contexts. Divided into four parts, Laera's book groups the interviews by their methodological focus and argumentative position.

Part one, "Return, Rewrite, Repeat," comprises five revelatory interviews with artists whose work reinterprets canonical texts to discover new meanings. In the first interview, members of Handspring Puppet Company discuss in poignant