

akosian outlines the evolution of penance as a “personal act of reconciliation” (129) and the impact of Purgatory on religious thought in the thirteenth century. In her battle to overcome the sins of the flesh, Christina’s penitential practices constitute a “severe self-punitive seven-year-long programme of ‘secret penance’” (137) which, performed in the service of others, effects the release of souls from Purgatory. In her fragility Christina embodies the Passion of Christ, her private penance bringing about what might be seen as a ‘public’ good. In the case of Elsbeth von Oye, the corrective punishment and extreme suffering inflicted on her body ultimately serve as an “Akt der Kontrollübernahme und Selbstermächtigung” (164). Punishment and penance perform a devotional function, turning Elsbeth’s body into a “Medium der religiösen Erkenntnis im Rahmen der *imitatio Christi*” (164). Chastisement becomes an “aktiv betriebene Selbstheilung” (162); the body itself an “Austragungsort des religiösen Geschehens” (169).

Finally, punishment and suffering are also discussed by Katharina Mertens-Fleury, who outlines their function in Konrad von Würzburg’s *Pantaleon*, the legend of a fourth-century doctor martyred under Emperor Maximianus. In her study of punitive sanctions against violations of social norms, reward and punishment as social control, and the assertion of power, familiar themes emerge: the centrality of the body (here its renewal or decay); the re-signification of human suffering as spiritual healing; punishment and pain as means of revealing or appropriating power; and sanctions imposed on the individual body as a strategy in the salvation of others, here spectators of Pantaleon’s martyrdom.

The essays in this volume impress in a number of ways: first, the painstaking textual analysis on which each study is based. A lucidly outlined theoretical framework always supports this analysis, but the literary and historical sources are allowed to speak for themselves. Second, detail is used not just to build a specific argument but to point to broader contexts and connections, so that, third, the essays interact, commenting on and complementing one another. Through such intersections the volume illuminates the complex interconnectedness of medieval life, provides thought-provoking answers to the questions it poses, suggests new approaches to punishment and penitential practice, and proves its value not just to Germanists (or, indeed, medievalists) but to any scholar working on these topics.

University of London

—Anne Simon

The Persistence of Folly: On the Origins of German Dramatic Literature.

By Joel B. Lande. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018. 354 pages + 4 b/w images. \$95.00 hardcover, \$24.95 paperback.

Lande’s book is a complex and interesting investigation into the role of the comic in the development of German theatre from its popular origins in the 17th century to its ‘classical’ phase around 1800. The volume, divided into four parts each containing four chapters, is based on an impressive quantity of historical, literary, and theoretical sources, and it contains an archaeological (in the Foucauldian sense) investigation of the forms of the comic and their social and political function next to an analysis of the formal mechanisms of comedy as well as a treatment of the question of the emergence of a German national literature.

The focus of Lande's genealogical reconstruction is the figure of the stage fool, understood as a "historically variable form" (8) that, depending on the cultural context, took on different configurations and names, such as Pickelhering, Hanswurst, or Harlequin. Against what he considers to be the dominant scholarly narrative—namely, that the banishment of the stage fool in the context of the theatre reform of the early Enlightenment gives way to the creation of a high-profile German national theater—Lande maintains that this phase actually represents a setback in a process of transformation and integration in the dramatic literature of comic forms originating from the performance modes of traveling troupes.

The first section links the advent of the fool on German stages (with the exception of Austria and southern Germany) to the activity of companies of traveling players arriving from England in the 17th century. The reconstruction is mainly based on the analysis of acting scripts. At the same time, it examines the spatiotemporal mechanisms that characterize this type of comic. The structural function of the stage fool essentially depends on his partial unrelatedness to the play, which allows him to evoke laughter by intervening with salacious or coarse comments on statements and scenes as well as by addressing the public directly. The fact that the fool operates both on a fiction-internal and on a fiction-external axis of communication as well as in a momentary dimension (*Kurzweiligkeit*) causes him to break the continuity of the action. In general, the action of the stage fool, which exaggerates the bodily and gestural dimension of the acting, introduces "a moral transgression that the course of the drama means to exclude" (72).

The second part of the book (Chapters 5–8) examines the project of literary codification of the theatrical practice in the early Enlightenment. Initiated by Johann Christoph Gottsched, who promoted the publication of a large number of theatrical texts and critical studies, it was aimed at orienting the production of new plays through criteria of compositional unity and moral utility. The tendency of the fool to break the unity of the action made him the scapegoat of this reform. According to Lande, the "foundational myth" of the German national theatre, the "banishment of Arlequin" advocated by Gottsched and put into practice by the actress and director Caroline Neuber, was in fact an attempt, soon questioned and destined to have little impact on the public, to create a "culturally ennobled stage" (95).

Among the critics of Gottsched's conception of comedy, special attention is paid to Lessing, who in his early critical studies as well as his translations and adaptations of Plautus emphasized the use of the *Niedrigkomische* as a means of adapting the comedic genre to the public's taste. Although Lessing, like Gottsched, advocated the internal continuity of the play, his celebration of Plautine comedy—violently opposed by Gottsched, who favoured the other great Roman comic author, Terence—"is indebted in large part to the use of a figure known as the parasite" (124), which (like some figures of slaves) can be considered as a precursor of the modern stage fool.

The social function of laughter and the historical dimension of humor are the red thread of the third part (Chapters 9–12) of Lande's study. As an introduction to the survey on "social ontology of the theatre," he proposes in Chapter Nine an instructive examination of the eighteenth-century treatises on *Policey* (or *Polizeiweisenschaft*), that is, on the mechanisms regulating the relationship between government and social institutions, aimed at optimizing the general welfare. In this discourse, a functional role as "a compensatory mechanism rooted in the staccato rhythm of work

and play” (178) is attributed to the theater. A significant example of the use of *Policey*-connected arguments for the defense of the comic function of the fool is the influential *Harlekin oder Vertheidigung des Groteske-Komischen* by Justus Möser, whose import, in its focus on delight, “consists largely in its repurposing of the commonplace notion that spectatorial pleasure counted as a key mechanism of civic engagement” (178). In the second half of the eighteenth century, a further impulse to the re-evaluation of laughter in opposition to a more intellectualistic response to comic representation (Gellert) is given by the anthropological discussion of the bodily-emotional component of human experience.

But the main topic of this section is the contribution of the comic to the formation of a German national culture. In short, since comedy, despite Gottsched’s instances of “naturalization,” is intrinsically conditioned by mentality and by the socio-historical context, it is more suited than tragedy to the creation of a theatrical literature with genuinely national characters. In an apparently paradoxical way, Lande therefore reverses the current image of a humor-resistant literature, stating that “the putatively native tradition of the stage fool provides one of the foundational elements in the effort to develop a culturally specific German theater” (168).

The last section of the book (Chapters 13–16) can be seen as a demonstration of the last thesis through the interpretation of two masterpieces, Goethe’s *Faust* and Kleist’s *The Broken Jug*. In both cases, Lande’s basic claim is that the traits of the fool are implemented in an innovative way in these works. As a projection of the fool, Mephistopheles represents the ironic counterpart of the tragic hero, thus granting “a distorted reflection of the scholar Faust” (290) that significantly contributes to the complex construction of Faust’s character. And in the figure of Adam, the fool’s excessive corporality, his tendency to derailment and digression as well as his double position, internal and external to the plot, converge. From this hermeneutical exercise one can draw valuable insights for the discussion of the philosophical status of the tragic and the comic in romantic and idealistic aesthetic theories. Lande has moved in this direction by dwelling on Jean Paul’s conception of the reversed sublime, but the discourse can be extended to other Goethezeit theorists, from Schlegel to Solger to Hegel.

A less convincing aspect of this study is that it takes into consideration only a single line of tradition, that of the English travelling companies, and explicitly excludes theatrical phenomena of great importance such as the *commedia dell’arte*. While it is true that the *commedia dell’arte* was mainly received by the educated public of the courts, the persistence of its names (Arlequin) and especially its influence on popular puppet theatre suggest the existence of a more articulated historical setting. Yet this critical remark is in no way intended to detract from the value of this substantial monograph, which will no doubt represent a useful reference for anybody interested in the theory of the comic and the history of theatrical forms.

Università del Molise

—Giovanna Pinna

Heine and Critical Theory.

By Willi Goetschel. London: Bloomsbury, 2019. xii + 311 pages. \$153.00 hardcover, \$122.41 e-book.

Willi Goetschel’s aim in *Heine and Critical Theory* is to establish a secure connection between the two entities in his title. Goetschel recognizes that this connection has not