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## Review of "Man-Monkeys: From Regency Pantomime to King Kong" by Alan Stockwell

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the profound dissatisfactions and digressions within work such as Peter Jaeger's brave encounter with Marcel Proust in *A Field Guide to Lost Things*.

It's a book that demands close reading with appeal for both student and scholar and with insights worth sharing on a much wider scale. I would have liked more reflection on the nuances revealed through the negotiations with authors or the estates of authors. Some of the texts examined are outside copyright, and some come with living authors attached. I was involved briefly in discussions about *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*. This is a real-life tension that offers both opportunity and resistance and another critical layer of analysis.

Perhaps a book on adaptation where the stage productions of adaptations explored are so beautifully rendered is worthy of theatrical adaptation itself. A wider audience may appreciate an act of collective communion. As a book, specific and precisely argued, it's a real 'page-turner'.

Tim Wheeler

***Man-Monkeys: From Regency  
Pantomime to King Kong***

Alan Stockwell

Vesper Hawk Publishing, 2017

£8.99 pb., 220 pp., 65 ill., b/w.

ISBN 9780956501370

In this scholarly, yet entertaining study Alan Stockwell traces the theatrical trope of a man playing a monkey. Organised in roughly chronological order the sixteen chapters survey the man-monkey as a theatrical phenomenon from its first faint stirrings by posture-masters (acrobats) to *La Perouse; or the Desolate Island* (1801) by John Fawcett, in which a monkey plays a central role, into the Regency period and the height of its popularity, through the

Victorian era to its eventual decline on the stage and transition to other media. The author manages to clothe with dignity the practitioners of this unusual art form while effectively contrasting the often ridiculous details of their on-stage comic antics with their difficult, penurious and even tragic lives.

Each of the first eleven chapters focusses on a specific performer or group of performers, from the Parsloe Family in the early decades of the nineteenth century to Harvey Teasdale who died in 1904. The chapters delve into the professional and private lives of the artists, charting their triumphs and failures, injuries and injustices, legal troubles and trials, broken bones and bankruptcies. The final five chapters continue the chronological development but centre more on genres than a single performer, taking the reader from the stage to music hall, pantomime, twentieth-century forms and cinema, considering such relatively modern works as *King Kong* and the *Planet of the Apes* series, and explaining why Tarzan does not really fit the definition of a man-monkey. Throughout, audience reception ranging from adulation to disapprobation contextualizes the performances. The scholarly apparatus includes a list of key names mentioned in the main text, a glossary of theatrical terminology and extensive evidence of international archival consultation. Stockwell's use of copious illustrative material brings us directly into the milieu in which the man-monkey performers struggled to ply their trade. We see reflected in the press reports the ongoing conflicts and professional jealousies as rival performers and competing theatres vied for supremacy.

A Conjectural Time Chart at the beginning of the book helps readers follow the overlapping chronologies. Thereafter a window is opened onto the theatrical world of the day as a reflection of the

societal realities of shady theatre managers and heart-broken spouses, criminally over-worked child performers, demanding landlords and vengeful stagehands. Stockwell explains how, despite their skill and athleticism, these performers were considered inferior to, and were paid less than their actor comrades. Though most of the action centres on London theatre, Stockwell also takes us to other English locations, Scotland, France and across the Atlantic to North America. And though most of the performers are from England a few were (or claimed to be) from places as diverse as Spain, China, and Japan. The author's research also reveals that practitioners came from a variety of disciplines: contortionists, comics, actors, circus performers, mimics, and dancers.

The most well-known names mentioned in the work are perhaps Joseph and J. S. Grimaldi, and Charles Blondin of Niagara-crossing fame, who starred in the pantomime *Child of the Wreck, or the Faithful Ape*, a version of the much-reworked story of Jocko, the sagacious ape, which was one of the earliest man-monkey vehicles (138-141). And very briefly, even Dan Leno in his youth played a man-monkey (150). But the lesser lights are the real stars of Stockwell's study, as he shares the lives and careers of performers well known in their day such as Charles-Francois Mazurier, 'Monsieur' Gouffe, and Hervio Nano.

Themes addressed by Stockwell include physical courage, the role of class, injustice, originality versus imitation, the influence of the press, the fleeting nature of reputation, profit as a driving force, and disability. He depicts the significant physical and mental strain and constant dangers endured by these performers, their shifting financial fortunes, and often unfair treatment. He also highlights the role of the family. Sometimes the profession itself ran in families, for example the

Parsloes. But Stockwell also describes the toll the demanding profession took on spouses and children as some performers got into legal trouble or sank into alcohol abuse and/or met premature deaths due to the constant physical exertion and ever-present danger of accident and injury. For example, George Wieland, who became a "pre-eminent purveyor of grotesques" (51), "suffered a serious accident running a metal spike up one of his feet. In those days many theatres had a row of spikes between the pit and the orchestra to prevent angry people mounting the stage" (49). Numerous examples of accidents such as this one befell our man-monkey heroes as narrated throughout the text, but they soldiered on.

Because of the significant role that disability plays in the lives of the man-monkey performers, sometimes resulting from problems at birth and sometimes from later devastating injuries, and because of the timeliness and importance of this topic in our current era, it would have been useful to include a separate chapter devoted to disability as it relates to this unique professional trade. That said, Stockwell's treatise is thoroughly researched and useful for scholars in the fields of theatre history, film studies, and popular culture, and is also accessible to non-specialist readers.

M. Lee Alexander

***Shakespeare and the Admiral's Men: Reading Across Repertories on the London Stage, 1594-1600***

Tom Rutter

Cambridge University Press, 2017

£75, hb., 236pp.

ISBN 9781107077430

Tom Rutter's *Shakespeare and the Admiral's Men* explores the intertextual influence