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Ze-Ami and His Theories of Noh Drama by Masaru Sekine (review)

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Comparative Drama

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

368Comparative Drama matte and mimetic importance of self-conscious devices and believes that the "artificialities" present at the close of tragedies like The Spanish Tragedy, Othello, and Macbeth reveal the protagonists' awareness of the roles they have played as "authors" of their tragedies. He defines tragic identity in these terms: "The world is a stage on which each man must play a part, but the part, whether of his own or another's authorship, is the man. A man is free to determine his own character, but once determined, character is fate" (103). And he examines the use of parody scenes, plays-within-plays, dreams, and final narratives and proposes that "at death a man becomes a character in a story," "self-possessed" as well as "self-alienated" by the artificiality of his contrivances (111-13). Macbeth's theatrical images provide him with

a way to assess the role he plays, and Othello's final narrative is punctuated by a "bloody period." Hamlet, however, escapes the "self-imposed mimetic artifices that limn the ends of other tragic heroes" (114) by "playing" only the part Providence provides him. His role is one that "passes show." Slight's and Hyde's essays are indeed complementary. Lois E. Bueler's subject is incest, not so much in its sensational appeal as in its structural use in Jacobean and Caroline drama. Her finely researched and written essay offers a useful table of "incest" plays and provides an analysis of the actual, fictional, witting, and unwitting "kinds" of incest found in these plays. Claude Lévi-Strauss' theories of kinship and incest prohibition are adduced to show the cultural and structural underpinnings of incest and to lead us to see the societal ills and solipsistic mazes characters create when they indulge in forbidden pleasure. Indeed, incest is a "distinctive motif" because it realizes an absolute clash between "individual urges and social demands." It is "society's anti-image" (144-45). Bueler's essay rounds out the volume's examination of social and histrionic identity. Margaret Scott's reassessment of "Machiavelli and the Machiavel" and Walter Cohen's discussion of what he terms "intrigue tragedy" push into new areas. Once again, however, the atrical conventions and generic categories are brought into question as Scott reconsiders the similarities between the stage figure and the master political theorist and as Cohen cuts across international boundaries to compare similar plays in Spain and England. In these essays, as in the others in the volume, new historical, sociological, and cultural theories are used to redefine formalist notions about Renaissance dramatic conventions and genres. These essays raise larger theoretical questions about the relationship between artistic form and cultural poetics.

MICHAEL E. MOONEY University of New Orleans Masaru Sekine. Zeami and His Theories of Noh Drama. Gerrards Cross, England: CoUn Smythe, 1985. Pp. 184. \$29.95. If Zeami had ever been a popular subject of study, one could well speak of a Zeami renaissance. The Japanese discovered the fascination Reviews 369 and worth of Zeami's sometimes down to earth and sometimes recondite treatises soon after the beginning of the twentieth century when the so-called "secret" writings surfaced in a second-hand bookstore in Japan. Since then, scholars in the West have been slowly translating and interpreting these fundamental writings on the Noh, writings which for centuries were treasured and passed on only to those at the highest levels of learning and rank within the Kanze school, heirs to Zeami. Among the translations and commentaries that Sekine lists in his bibliography are several of the works that have marked important developments in Zeami studies in Western languages: René Sieffert's 1960 *La Tradition secrète du nô*, Komparu Kunio's *The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives*, 1983, and Thomas J. Rimer's and Yamazaki Masakazu's *On the Art of No Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*, 1984. Strangely enough, although he lists a number of articles from the prestigious publication *Monumenta Nipponica*, Sekine fails to include in his bibliography any reference to the brilliant translations and commentaries of Mark Nearman which appeared in that publication beginning in 1978. Nearman's work on Zeami's *Kyûi* and *Kyakuraika*, for example, strikes a depth...

matic and mimetic importance of self-conscious devices and believes that the "artificialities" present at the close of tragedies like *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* reveal their protagonists' awareness of the roles they have played as "authors" of their tragedies. He defines tragic identity in these terms: "The world is a stage on which each man must play a part, but the part, whether of his own or another's authorship, is the man. A man is free to determine his own character, but once determined, character is fate" (103). And he examines the use of parody scenes, plays-within-plays, dream, and final narratives and proposes that "at death a man becomes a character in a story," "self-possessed" as well as "self-alienated" by the artificiality of his extrivances (111-13). *Macbeth's* theatrical images provide him with a way to assess the role he plays, and *Othello's* final narrative is punctuated by a "bloody period." *Hamlet*, however, escapes the "self-imposed mimetic artifices that limit the ends of other tragic heroes" (114) by "playing" only the part Providence provides him. His role is one that "passes show." Slight's and Hyde's essays are indeed complementary.

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Butler's essay rounds out the volume's examination of social and historic identity. Margaret Scott's reassessment of "Machiavelli and the 'Machiavel'" and Walter Cohen's discussion of what he terms "intrigue tragedy" push into new areas. Once again, however, theatrical conventions and generic categories are brought into question as Scott reconsiders the similarities between the stage figure and the master political theorist and as Cohen cuts across international boundaries to compare similar plays in Spain and England. In these essays, as in the others in the volume, new historical, sociological, and cultural theories are used to redefine formalist notions about Renaissance dramatic conventions and genres. These essays raise larger theoretical questions about the relationship between artistic form and cultural poetics.

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Masaru Sakino, *Ze-Ami and His Theories of Noh Drama*. Gertrude Cross. England: Colin Smythe, 1985. Pp. 184. \$29.95.

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