

Kolin also makes connections between Williams's biography and themes within the play. This becomes especially enlightening throughout Kolin's analysis of homosexuality in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, drawing lines of connection from the obviously homosexual characters (Jack Straw, Peter Ochello, Skipper) to the at least homosexual characters (Big Daddy, Brick) to Williams's own often-troubled identity as a gay man.

In the sections that follow, Kolin locates elements of McCarthy-era paranoia in the play's multiple layers of lies, whispers, and secrets. He also explains different versions of the script and gives extensive explanations on the play's structure and language. Additionally, there are in-depth character analyses of each of the major characters, providing psychological profiles, motives, and behaviors, and even possible sources and models from Williams's biography. Finally, Kolin ends his "Commentary" with a detailed production history, both on Broadway and internationally, as well as a brief description of film and television adaptations.

This edition also includes an abundance of reference information for further reading, discussion questions, and particularly useful notes on the text itself. Kolin has painstakingly defined terms from the play with which most readers would be unfamiliar, especially Southern terminology, particular places, and other examples of local culture and color. These features make this edition of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* particularly useful to students. My only criticism is that, within the text of the play itself, there is no reference made to the notes to inform the reader when a term is defined. Otherwise, Kolin has done a remarkable job of providing cultural and biographical contexts and illuminating analyses of one of Williams's most psychological complex dramas.

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Tratado de la superstición occidental. Alberto Ortiz. Zacatecas: Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, 2009. x + 193 pp. \$15.

During the sixteenth century a large number of texts on magic, witchcraft, and demonology were published in Europe. These included inquisitorial trials, books of wonders and secrets, manuals for exorcists, and polemics against magic and superstition. Such publications are the

subject of a detailed and inter-disciplinary analysis in the *Tratado de la superstición occidental* by Alberto Ortiz. Dr. Ortiz's book is a summary of those dissertations and theses written by scholars, who, as censurers and classifiers, were able to determine what constituted heterodox belief.

The fantastical world of Evil, comprised of the Devil, demons, witches, and other similar creatures, has been invoked in many human acts and used to explain much collective and historical victimization. Nonetheless, tackling this symbolic world without the appropriate intellectual tools is extremely difficult, especially as certain questions always arise. What exactly is an illusion? How is it that human fears can be transformed into complicated fantasies? And why is it that these fantasies are accepted socially and culturally with great fervour, and deemed worthy of the interest of intellectuals, historians and philosophers? There are clearly no simple answers, although learned studies of the subject do offer some guidance.

On the other hand, it is equally true that while notions of Evil, demons and the Devil are difficult to comprehend, they are by their nature very human. Just as discussions about these issues provoke questions and explanations, these discussions also demonstrate that areas such as magic and the fantastical continue to be relevant to us. Ideas about the world of magic cohabit with our everyday anxieties and are essential to an understanding of mankind's fears.

This book is an example of the attention that is at present being paid to the subject of superstition in many universities. Ortiz explores the ideological explanations both for witchcraft, by proposing various categories for an understanding of the figure of the witch, and the Devil, by setting out the many versions of the Devil's constantly changing identity. The basic premise for these explanations is the recognition that superstition is an essential part of both the past and the present of Western culture.

This understanding of superstition appears as the driving force of Ortiz's open, serious and rigorous study. He examines not only the history and continuing existence of superstition but also its role in constructing beliefs which for many years were scorned and vilified by the positivist tradition in History and Literature. He also sets out the main ideas which have been used in debates for and against magical beliefs and seeks to explain the importance and relevance of superstition to the development and history of Western thought.

The author does not simply summarize the facts relating to the subject;

rather, he investigates the meanings of both particular events and more wide-ranging ones with the aim of exploring the mental framework underlying superstitious ideas. He also examines the arguments and perspectives of those responsible for the censure and classification of the concept of superstition. In order to structure his approach, Ortiz makes use of the interpretative power of signs, symbols and myths, and he returns to the primary sources whenever necessary.

Overall this book proposes a re-reading of the events, arguments, opinions and legal cases relating to magic and superstition in the light of more recent analytical developments, although without ignoring the contributions made by historical interpreters of the subject. The work possesses a clear structure and unity; its essay format, however, also means that it is a pleasure to read. There is certainly much learning and knowledge to be gained from this study of superstition in Western renaissance culture.

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Erasmus and Voltaire: Why They Still Matter. By Ricardo J. Quinones. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. xvii + 222 pp. \$55.00 (cloth).

While scholars and writers from Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Giosue Carducci to Ernst Cassirer and, more recently, Peter Gay have noted the affiliation between Erasmus of Rotterdam and Voltaire, Ricardo J. Quinones offers the first book-length comparison and assessment. Both Quinones's topic and his approach to this topic grow out of his recent book *Dualisms* (Toronto, 2007), reviewed in *South Atlantic Review* (Vol. 74.2, Spring 2009), a variation on the theme of Cain and Abel explored in his important *Changes of Cain* (Princeton, 1996). In *Dualisms* he treats Erasmus in his complex relationship with Luther, and Voltaire in his relationship with Rousseau. (He also pairs Turgenev and Dostoevsky, and Camus and Sartre.) In arguing with and faulting their opponents, Erasmus and Voltaire define themselves. In turn, such dualistic *agons* help to define the age, and therefore offer deep historical and intellectual insight into their respective cultures, pointing to recurrent patterns of recognition and recurrence that give us insight into our own culture. In this, Quinones aspires to rescue the study of culture and cultural development from a postmodernist discourse that

reduces everything to the play of shifting contingencies. Thus *Erasmus and Voltaire* represents both an extended case study of dualisms and how these enrich the study of comparative literature. In painting these connections, he also argues that Erasmus and Voltaire still have much to offer the modern reader and thinker.

Deploying a magisterial command of the literary, historical, and philosophical scholarship, Quinones begins by noting and discussing the remarkable pattern of similarities. Both Erasmus and Voltaire were illegitimate sons with a complex relationship with their fathers. Corollary to that, each was driven by an urge for self-definition and self-creation. Both found a stay in England stimulating and intellectually liberating, helping to establish their reputations as cosmopolitan intellectuals and as political and cultural reformers. Each saw his domain of action in the realm of letters rather than direct action. In turn, working within the expectation and values of their literary cultures, each sought to ground his reputation in the *grands genres*; yet paradoxically, the enduring legacy of each rests in what they would have considered marginal or minor genres. Thus while Erasmus wanted to be the great theologian or Christian philosopher, what we still read and learn from are the *Adages*, *Colloquies*, and most notably *In Praise of Folly*. While Voltaire thought himself first and foremost as a poet and playwright, few beyond specialists read *La Henriade* or the plays. By contrast the *contes* and especially *Candide* remain an important part of the canon.

Within these similarities, Quinones also notices differences. For instance, confronted with the challenge of authority, Erasmus tended to retreat into equivocation. Voltaire, on the other hand, typically took a defiant stance, if from the position of anonymity. Each found the realm of satire his most potent instrument of action, but Erasmusian satire derived from the situation, contrasting the target against an accepted standard of values; thus the luxurious practices of some ecclesiastical authorities are juxtaposed to the theme of Christian piety and a priestly vow of poverty. By contrast Voltaire's satire derived from caricature, a process of decontextualization that foregrounded the absurdity of the target.

For Quinones, however, there are deeper patterns of recognition and recurrence that show important subterranean connections. Erasmus and the Northern humanists had aspired to purify Christianity from the accumulations and abstruse technicalities of scholastic theology in order to recover the simplicity of the gospels and early Church Fathers.