



Female Bodies on the American Stage: Enter Fat Actress

Jennifer-Scott Mobley

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Fat, especially the fat female body, is a unique construction within American culture that has been understood and "read" in a variety of ways in popular representation during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. With an interdisciplinary approach that draws from theatre, performance, and cultural studies, as well feminist methodologies and the emerging field of fat studies, Mobley interrogates common stereotypes and complex cultural beliefs associated with the fat female in performance, particularly in light of the so-called "obesity epidemic" in the United States. Analyzing a cross-section of post-WWII American plays, stage, and screen performances, as well as performers' bodies as cultural texts, she argues that the fat actress's body signals a myriad of (primarily negative and/or threatening) cultural assumptions and suggests new ways of reading the body in performance.

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