

FOR RELEASE: December 21, 1993

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PLAYWRIGHT, AUTHOR WINS NATIONAL DRAMA CRITICISM AWARD

ITHACA, N.Y. — Playwright and author David Cole has been named the winner of the George Jean Nathan Award for the best dramatic criticism in America for 1993, Cornell University has announced.

The Nathan Award, one of the most distinguished and lucrative in American theater, carries with it a \$10,000 cash prize. The trust establishing the award was left to Cornell's Department of English by the late author and critic George Jean Nathan, who graduated from Cornell in 1904.

Cole, who holds a doctorate from Harvard University, was honored for *Acting as Reading: The Place of the Reading Process in the Actor's Work* (University of Michigan Press, 1992). He is also author of *The Theatrical Event* (Wesleyan University Press, 1975) and several plays, including *The Moments of the Wandering Jew*, which was performed in 1979 at the Theatre of the Open Eye in New York.

In announcing the winner, the Nathan Committee praised Cole's most recent work: "Drawing on his own impressive readings in literature, cultural history, psychoanalysis, linguistics and other disciplines, as well as drama itself, Cole articulates clearly and persuasively his claim that 'reading,' in its many and sometimes buried senses, both informs and charges every action of every actor. An interdisciplinary work that resists conventional categories, *Acting as Reading* will intrigue and challenge readers and writers of plays, scholars and audiences, as well as performers in the theater."

The committee considers, on the basis of its own survey and submitted nominations, criticism that is published in books, journals and the news media. Members of the committee are Reeve Parker, professor and chair of the English Department at Cornell; H. Scott McMillin, professor of English at Cornell; David Marshall, professor and chair of the English Department at Yale University; Murray Biggs, professor of English at Yale; Lee Mitchell, professor and chair of the English Department at Princeton; and Michael Goldman, professor of English at Princeton.

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The Nathan Award has been given annually by Cornell since 1958; however, no winner was named in 1975. Past recipients include Walter Kerr (1963) and Mel Gussow (1978) of *The New York Times*, Elliot Norton (1964) of *The Boston Herald*, Kevin Kelly (1992) of *The Boston Globe* and Robert Brustein (1962, 1987), founder of the American Repertory Theater Co. and drama critic for *The New Republic*.

1992-1993 WINNER

DAVID COLE, author of *Acting as Reading: The Place of the Reading Process in the Actor's Work*, received the 1992-1993 George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism. The selection committee praised this book as an original and provocative account of the actor's reading. "Drawing on his own impressive readings in literature, cultural history, psychoanalysis, linguistics, and other disciplines, as well as drama itself, Cole articulates clearly and persuasively his claim that 'reading,' in its many and sometimes buried senses, both informs and charges every action of every actor. In a series of nuanced analyses, Cole also demonstrates the importance of scenes of reading in a striking variety of plays. An interdisciplinary work that resists conventional categories, *Acting as Reading* will intrigue and challenge readers and writers of plays, scholars, and audiences as well as performers in the theater."

Mr. Cole, who also works as a playwright, received his bachelor's and doctoral degrees from Harvard and has taught there and at Yale. His earlier book, *The Theatrical Event*, a major contribution to performance theory focusing on what actually happens in theatrical presentation, appeared in 1975.

PREVIOUS WINNERS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>
1991-1992	KEVIN KELLY
1990-1991	JONATHAN KALB
1989-1990	STEVEN MIKULAN
1988-1989	EILEEN BLUMENTHAL
1987-1988	SCOTT ROSENBERG
1986-1987	ROBERT BRUSTEIN
1985-1986	GORDON ROGOFF

(Continued on back)

PREVIOUS WINNERS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>
1984-1985	JAN KOTT
1983-1984	BONNIE MARRANCA
1982-1983	HERBERT BLAU
1981-1982	JULIUS NOVICK
1980-1981	CAROLYN CLAY and SYLVIANE GOLD
1979-1980	SEAN MITCHELL
1978-1979	JACK KROLL
1977-1978	MEL GUSSOW
1976-1977	BERNARD KNOX
1975-1976	MICHAEL GOLDMAN
1974-1975	NO AWARD MADE
1973-1974	ALBERT BERMEL
1972-1973	STANLEY KAUFFMANN
1971-1972	JAY CARR
1970-1971	RICHARD GILMAN
1969-1970	JOHN SIMON
1968-1969	JOHN LAHR
1967-1968	MARTIN GOTTFRIED
1966-1967	ELIZABETH HARDWICK
1965-1966	ERIC RUSSELL BENTLEY
1964-1965	GERALD WEALES
1963-1964	ELLIOT NORTON
1962-1963	WALTER KERR
1961-1962	ROBERT BRUSTEIN
1960-1961	JERRY TALLMER
1959-1960	PROF. C.L. BARBER
1958-1959	HAROLD CLURMAN



The Nathan Will

The Prize

Selection of Award Winner

Previous Winners

ENTRY FORM

Entry Deadline: September 30, 1994

George Jean Nathan AWARD FOR DRAMATIC CRITICISM

• The Nathan Will

With his preamble "It is my object and desire to encourage and assist in developing the art of drama criticism and the stimulation of intelligent playgoing," the late George Jean Nathan provided in his will for a prize known as the George Jean Nathan Award For Dramatic Criticism. The prize consists of the annual net income of half of Mr. Nathan's estate, which "shall be paid to the American who has written the best piece of drama criticism during the theatrical year (July 1 to June 30), whether it is an article, an essay, treatise or book."

• The Prize

The trust is of such size that the prize is the richest and one of the most distinguished in the American theater. The annual award now amounts to \$5,000. In addition, the winner receives a silver medallion symbolic of, and attesting to, the award.

• Selection of The Award Winner

Mr. Nathan further directed in his will that the prize is "to be awarded annually by a majority vote of the then heads of the English departments of Cornell, Princeton and Yale Universities." This committee of three has functioned since the award was established. Currently, the chairman of the English department of Cornell University heads the selection committee.

As indicated by Mr. Nathan's stipulation above, those eligible for the award are authors, critics or reviewers who are United States citizens and whose works are published in the United States, in newspapers, magazines and other periodicals, as individual publications, or broadcast on television or radio programs originating in the United States. In view of Mr. Nathan's interest in the current theater, the selection committee will regard with special interest writings in dramatic criticism dealing with current or recent productions of the legitimate theater, but the award may also be given for an outstanding work of criticism dealing with drama of the past. It is the aim of the selection committee to foster the spirit of the award by selecting that piece of criticism which demonstrates the highest level of critical and perceptive thinking about the theater.

• Submission of Entries

The selection committee will make every effort to review all publications in which eligible work may appear.* Any author or publisher may submit eligible entries to be considered for the award to the appropriate members of the selection committee whose names and addresses are listed below up to and including September 30, 1994.

Newspapers, TV, Radio Reviews to: Professor Winthrop Wetherbee, Chairman, Department of English
Goldwin Smith Hall, Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853
(Chairman of the selection committee)

Books to: Professor James Richardson, Chairman, Department of English
22 McCosh Hall, Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08544

Periodicals to: Professor Linda Peterson, Chairman, Department of English
Box 3545, Yale University
New Haven, CT 06520

*Although individual submissions are not in any way required, an entry form is attached for your convenience.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

ITHACA, NY 14853-3201
607-255-6800

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

GOLDWIN SMITH HALL

December 6, 1993

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Mark Eyerley
Cornell University News Service
Village Green
840 Hanshaw Road
Ithaca, NY 14850-1548
FAX 257-6397

Dear Mr. Eyerley:

This letter follows our phone conversation this morning. As Chair of the English Department it is my role to convene committee that selects annually the winner of the George Jean Nathan Award for Drama Criticism. The award goes to the "American who has written the best piece of drama criticism during the theatrical year (July 1-June 30), whether it is an article, an essay, treatise or book." The Committee's choice this year is David Cole, author of Acting as Reading: The Place of the Reading Process in the Actor's Work, published in 1992 in Ann Arbor by the University of Michigan Press. Cole is the 34th winner of the Nathan prize, which carries with it a monetary award of \$10,000. He is a free-lance writer in New Haven, CT.

The Nathan Committee announces the prize with this citation:

David Cole's new book, Acting as Reading, offers an original and provocative account of the place of reading in the work of the actor. The book is far more than a description of the perusal of playscripts or of research on a role. Drawing on his own impressive readings in literature, cultural history, psychoanalysis, linguistics, and other disciplines, as well as drama itself, Cole articulates clearly and persuasively his claim that "reading," in its many and sometimes buried senses, both informs and charges every action of every actor. In a series of nuanced analyses, Cole also demonstrates the importance of scenes of reading in a striking variety of plays. An interdisciplinary work that resists conventional categories, Acting as Reading will intrigue and challenge readers and writers of plays, scholars, and audiences, as well as performers in the theater.

David Cole is also author of The Theatrical Event: A Mythos, a Vocabulary, a Perspective, published in 1975 by Wesleyan University Press.

The six-member selection committee consisted of Professor Reeve Parker, Chair of the English Department at Cornell; Professor H. Scott McMillin, English Department, Cornell; Professor David Marshall, Chair of the English

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Department at Yale; Professor Murray Biggs, also of the Department of English at Yale; Professor Lee Mitchell, Chair of the English Department at Princeton; and Professor Michael Goldman, also of the Department of English at Princeton.

I enclose a copy of last year's press release along with a copy of the announcement of this year's competition, which lists previous winners. I assume that in your files you have the information about how it was circulated. If I may make one particular request, would you send the press release to the University of Michigan Press, publisher of Cole's book, and to Julie Haydon Nathan (widow of George Jean Nathan), c/o Patricia Angelin, Literary Executrix, 139 West 28th Street, Suite 3E, New York, NY 10011-6131.

Sincerely yours,



Reeve Parker
Acting Chair

Phone 313-764-4388

137 Cottage St.
New Haven, CT 06511
June 23, 1994

LeAnn Fields
Executive Editor
University of Michigan Press
839 Greene Street
P.O. Box 1104
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-1104

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Dear LeAnn:

Two (related) questions:

(1) When I called you last winter with the news that Acting as Reading had won the Nathan Prize, you informed me that the Press was already inclining, on the basis of good early sales, to bring the book out in paperback and that its winning the Nathan would likely tip the balance. I have not heard from you since about this. While perhaps ordinarily there is no special hurry about getting a book out in paper, don't you think, in this instance, we would do well to strike while the iron is hot--i. e., to make available (or at least to advertise the forthcoming trade-discount paperback publication of) a book named "best dramatic criticism in America" for this year while it is still this year? The next Nathan Prize will be awarded some 5 months from now, and this particular window of opportunity will have closed.

(2) Would it not be advantageous both for the book and for the Press to place some ads of the type:

The University of Michigan Press Congratulates
David Cole
on winning the
George Jean Nathan Award
for the Best Dramatic Criticism in America
for his book
Acting as Reading: The Place of the Reading Process
in the Actor's Work
Now Available in Paperback

(Attached find a couple of examples of this sort of ad.)

(cont.)

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Obviously, such ads would be helpful for the book. But further: does not the Press itself have, if I may speak frankly, some inducement to publicize its own good editorial judgment in "picking a winner"?

Ads of this type, especially if coordinated with the appearance of the paperback edition, would, I think, be particularly effective in general-interest, literary-cultural periodicals--e. g., TLS, The New Republic, New York Review of Books, Village Voice--to whose readers they would say: "If you are going to read only one book on drama this year, here is the book that the Yale, Princeton and Cornell English departments recommend that you read." (As you know, it has always been my concern to reach--and my belief that, far more than most "theatre Books", Acting as Reading ~~could~~ reach--this market of general, literature-oriented readers.)

Please let me know your reactions in both these areas.

Best regards,

David Cole

David Cole
137 Cottage St.
New Haven, CT 06511

phone: in NEW HAVEN: 203-624-3982
in NEW YORK: 212-989-1648

Received Sat, July 29, 1994



THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS

839 Greene Street • P.O. Box 1104 • Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-1104 • (313) 764-4300

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July 25, 1994

David Cole
137 Cottage Street
New Haven, CT 06511

Dear David,

Yes, I have been hoping that the award of the George Jean Nathan Prize for ACTING AS READING would help diminish our inventory of the hardcover edition so we could consider a paperback. We're not at that level yet, but will continue to keep a close eye on hardcover sales. If a paperback is issued, you can bet we will make prominent use of the George Jean Nathan Prize in a second marketing campaign.

I've passed a copy of your letter on to our marketing department, so that they might consider your suggestions.

I hope you are having a pleasant and productive summer. I'm about to head out to Chicago for the ATHE meetings, where we will be displaying ACTING AS READING, among other Theater: Theory/Text/Performance titles.

Best wishes,

LeAnn Fields
Executive Editor

LF/emt.6

the village

VOICE

September 27, 1994 • Vol. XXXIX No. 39 • The Weekly Newspaper of New York • \$1.00

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TEASERS AND TORMENTORS

BY PORTER ANDERSON

THE NATHAN THAT GOT AWAY

PLAYWRIGHT-AUTHOR **David Cole's** 1992-93 George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism did come with \$10,000. But before a critic applies for the 1993-94 prize, she or he should know that Cole didn't get the silver medallion promised in this year's brochure nor a whit of hoopla for his winning book, *Acting as Reading*. "I went from feeling honored to feeling something else," says Cole, the former director of undergraduate drama at Yale and author of *The Theatrical Event*. The Nathan Award has been conferred, per Nathan's will, by heads of the English departments of Cornell, Princeton, and Yale each year but one since it first went to Harold Clurman in 1959. Applications for the 1993-94 award are due September 30. But the traditional award party? Forget it. Cole was called by Cornell's **Reeve Parker** early in the year to talk about how many guests might come, what dates would be best, the works. "Then I never heard from them again. In fact, to this day, I have not received written confirmation addressed to me saying that I received the award. I do have a check stub." Cornell's Parker takes responsibility for the organizational fall-through. He says that doing a reception at the Cornell Club in New York proved too expensive to manage—when Manufacturer's Hanover Trust (now Chemical Bank) oversaw things years ago, Parker adds, corporate capability made the big party fly. But what's just as rude is the fact that a lot of us in the theater and critical communities dropped the ball, too. Are we so discouraged that we don't care who gets the Nathan or about Cole's University of Michigan Press book in which he theorizes that acting "is the recovery of a 'lost' physical dimension in all reading" from the page? "The promise of the script," he writes, "is of a 'lost' life waiting to be restored." Well, the moment to celebrate Cole's Nathan is lost for good. "I guess there's a limit," he says, "to how mad you can be with people who tell you you've written the best book in your field and give you the money to prove it. But nonetheless, I feel pretty mad about it." So new entrants beware: Not only does this year's brochure say the 1993-94 Nathan will be worth \$5000, not \$10,000, but we may all be getting cheaper in recognizing our own, too.

ACTING AS READING

David Cole

Acting as Reading is a study of the acting process considered as a physicalization of the act of reading--as a "recovery" of the lost physical element in reading itself. Since "reading" is here understood in the light of contemporary poststructuralist and psychoanalytic accounts of the reading process, Acting as Reading is as much a work of literary theory as a study of acting; it is, one might say, a literary theory of acting.

I begin with a discussion of how "acting" and "theatre" tropes in contemporary criticism (Harold Bloom, Stanley Fish, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, etc.) can be turned back upon actual theatre practice. I then identify a "lost" physical dimension of reading, and go on to show how acting, in each of its various aspects--internalization of text, gesture, characterization and rehearsal work--can be understood as an attempt to recover this "lost" physical of reading.

The book proceeds largely by analysis of scenes of reading as images of the actor's--and theatregoer's--transaction with the script. The "scenes of reading" are drawn from poems and novels (Dante, Cervantes, Goethe, Proust, Flaubert, Mann, etc.); as well as from dramatic texts of every period from the Greeks through Beckett and Handke.

In the final two chapters, I analyze the relation between playwright, actor and theatre audience as a "writer"/"reader" relationship, and propose a definition of the playwright as one who writes the dissemination of reading.

Reading and acting are commonly regarded as dissimilar, if not mutually exclusive, occupations: the one, private, intellectual, passive--and something that we all do; the other, public, physical, active--and something that only a few highly trained "specialists" do.

Against this assumption, and in hopes of narrowing the cultural rift which it reflects, Acting as Reading argues that reading is an essentially bodily activity which, however, has lost touch with its origins in the body; and that acting, in each of its various aspects--internalization of text, gesture, characterization and rehearsal work--can best be understood as an attempt to recover this "lost" physical dimension of reading.

The book begins with a discussion of how "acting" and "theatre" tropes in contemporary criticism (Harold Bloom, Stanley Fish, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, etc.) can be turned back upon the actual experience of theatre, and proceeds largely by analysis of scenes of reading as images of the actor's--and theatregoer's--transaction with the script. These scenes of reading are drawn from poems and novels (Dante, Cervantes, Goethe, Flaubert, Proust, Mann, etc.), as well as **from dramatic texts of every** period from the ancient Greeks through Beckett and Handke.

The final two chapters analyze the relation between playwright, actor and audience as a "writer"/"reader" relationship, and then go on to propose a definition of the playwright as one who writes the dissemination of reading.

Ultimately more a work of literary and cultural criticism than a study of the acting process per se, Acting as Reading seeks above all to "ground" theatre in the bodily experiences we all share, the reading we all do, the readers we all are.