style might be found refreshing. Certainly, its clear view of the urgency and considerable stakes of the study and discourse of Islamic performance provides an example to be followed.

— Kenneth Molloy

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The Off-Screen: An Investigation of the Cinematic Frame. By Eyal Peretz. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017; 272 pp. $65.00 cloth, e-book available.

The frame generates an inside and an outside. Eyal Peretz’s *The Off-Screen* delves not into what is inside a frame, but what evades it in the crepuscular, fictional, and unspecified realm of the “off” that becomes paramount from the Renaissance onward in a range of artistic media. Following a dreamlike trajectory, *The Off-Screen* does not have a beginning, but a threshold like that of a frame, which performatively realizes its content through form as it investigates the frame that unframes, or in the case of theatre, the stage that unstages. The book traverses the thresholds and borderlines of frames to expose a logic that leads to the uncharted territory of the “off” beyond margins. Put differently, Peretz speaks of the resistance of the frame that, in a manner evincing Herman Melville’s Bartleby, prefers not to be circumscribed (3). The driving force behind the book resides in the “dimension of nonbelonging” — the “off” — that is made accessible through the openness of the frame’s borders in the modern work of art. That said, *The Off-Screen* perforce starts with a point of intersection, a location where the inside meets the outside as the realm of the “off” seeks to deterritorialize, that is, to decenter and interrupt the framing mechanism by opening up a realm of new possibilities beyond the edges of the frame. Playing this indispensable role of deterritorialization throughout the chapters, the mysterious “off” is investigated in theatre, painting, and cinema, where the outmoded logic of the locked frame is debunked.

The book consists of three major parts — each broken into various subsections — and commences with a threshold. The first part moves from the examination of the “off” in Shakespeare to the analysis of Pieter Bruegel’s painting of Icarus and Andrei Tarkovsky’s 1972 film *Solaris*. The comprehensiveness of the first part, however, gives way to a narrow focus on the origin of film and genre theory in the remaining chapters.
To elucidate the logic of the “off,” which runs consistently through every section, Peretz brings Rembrandt’s seemingly religious painting, *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (1635), into focus to argue that “painting the interruption of sacrifice does not mean for Rembrandt simply depicting a significant biblical episode but recognizing a potential for escape within it that it is the task of the painter to actualize” (6). Peretz therefore defines the modern artist as a “ghostly and non-divine” figure whose task, like the angel who betrays the territorializing principle of the divine by disrupting the act of sacrifice and whose wings extend beyond the frame of Rembrandt’s painting, is to undermine the central, paternal, and framing power “as a non-divine [...] interrupter of [Abrahamic] sacrifice” (9). According to Peretz, the book is dedicated to a new conceptualization of the “off”: “a new thinking that the modern work of art activates by creating frames that unframe, thereby letting the dimension of the pure call resonate and become present in our life” (13). The aforementioned call is the element that, as Peretz maintains, deterritorializes us all. It is an experience we all share that prompts the “emptying of identity.” The emptying here diverges from the complete loss of identity that Abraham experiences after the Lord’s call, which is unexpectedly delivered from the outside—the call to a new land divesting Abraham of his prior identity. In that biblical context, one necessarily feels the need for protection against utter deprivation, thus resorting to the divine territorial logic to eliminate the excess of the “all-consuming indeterminacy” of the outside. The open frame, nevertheless, contains and delimits the “off” to offer a place to what lacks a place. By devising an unlocked frame, Rembrandt’s painting, as a modern work of art, gives rise to “a space that is simultaneously determinate (*tbus* painting) and indeterminate (in the sense that what this painting makes appear is an ‘off’)” (12). This manner of framing guides Peretz to the “pleasurable accessibility of excess” and the conclusion that the “off” enables us to have something in common without turning to the territorial logic of sacred communities (13).

Who’s there? This is a spectral question that opens *Hamlet* and appropriately initiates the first part of *The Off-Screen*. After crossing the threshold, the “off” is meticulously interrogated in Shakespeare, Bruegel, and Tarkovsky, where the theatrical stage, the painterly medium, and the modern cinematic image are discussed. Here, Peretz traces the failure of the paternal and framing principle—the father frames by granting the name and identity that is then withdrawn when the ambiguous call is uttered from the outside—in the ghostly disturbance that deprives us of a fixed identity. As Peretz argues, “to be put into question by an unrecognizable address or call means that we no longer know who we are, that is, we no longer know what, and thus to what, we are called” (18). Pivotal to this argument is Peretz’s premise regarding the spatio-temporal position of the stage as a decontextualized place, where the loss of identity and disorientation operates. The off-stage consequently brings out the paradoxical nature of the stage: “by being an actuality that can belong to anytime and anywhere, it enables the nonexistent or not actually present dimension that is the offstage to be actual *qua* nonactual—to show itself as what is unseen or invisible, that is, as what is not anything specific” (22). Before moving on to his investigation of the “off” in the modern image, Peretz explicitly highlights the core logic of modern theatre—the onstage/offstage relationship—as the matrix of modern art. In the sections that follow, he offers an impressive analysis of Bruegel’s most famous painting, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, and Tarkovsky’s 1972 science fiction film, *Solaris*. As Peretz himself points out, the father/son relation and the loss of the father is the common thread that binds these two works; he locates the modern work of art in its relationship with the “off.”

By bringing D.W. Griffith’s masterpiece of the silent era, *Intolerance* (1916), and the origin of film into focus, the book’s middle section addresses the medium of film as an art form. Here, the logic of the “off” and its lack of any assigned meaning—its groundlessness—are brought to the fore. In the final chapter, a section on Howard Hawks and his idea of genre paves the way for the concluding discussion on “filming the Shoah” and Quentin Tarantino’s *Inglourious Basterds* (2009). By giving centrality to the “constitutive relation between cinema and the off-screen” (200), Peretz asks the following questions that methodologically guide his analysis of
Tarantino: Does the cinematic image have the ability to represent historical events? What is the relation between the Shoah, as a historical event, and its representation?

The Off-Screen, within the context of the invisible dimension of the “off,” provides its readers with an insightful and incisive background of US cinema from Griffith to Tarantino. Apart from the obvious contribution to film studies, scholars in performance and visual studies will find themselves enthralled by Peretz’s investigation of the frame. After all, for Peretz, the frame frustrates limits and boundaries, as is the case with performance art which aims to break and defy the norm and convention of the frame (Taylor 2016:71).

— Mohammad Mehdi Kimiagari

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Performing Unification: History and Nation in German Theater after 1989. By Matt Cornish. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017; 264 pp.; illustrations. $75.00 cloth, e-book available.

The title of Matt Cornish’s study already signals an important position with its terminology. It is common practice to consider the great historical merging of the Federal Republic with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1990 as the “reunification,” following the original unification of Germany in 1871. The author, however, rightly insists that the more popular usage overlooks the fact that the unified Germany that emerged at the end of the 20th century differed greatly from the territories that came together 119 years earlier.

The interest in history, and more particularly historiography, runs through almost all of the study. Cornish opens with some methodological comments and signals his debt to Hayden White’s Metahistory (1973) as a source for understanding the different dramaturgical strategies he assays in his chapters. Comedy, tragedy, and satire feature prominently in the analysis. According to White, comedy suggests a reconciliation of historical tensions, tragedy their unresolved persistence, while satire, in Cornish’s interpretation, is reserved for framing postdramatic productions. It is the latter category that seems the most difficult to apply because satire suggests a surveyable world in which folly can be exposed. Yet Cornish manages to square this circle by understanding White’s term as one with a “resistance to closure” (53). Cornish also makes an important contribution to our understanding of how history is still refracted through productions that appear to dismiss the category, such as Frank Castorf’s Die Räuber. That is, he argues against the popular contention that Castorf’s work is little more than a chaotic mélange of fragments. Instead he proposes that the treatment of performed material reflects a notion of crisis fundamental to Castorf’s understanding of historical processes.