

memorable quotes. A pleasing presentation in fact. For me, it is marred throughout by use of non- binary pronouns such as *they* and *their* which sound like an error to keep the singular and the plural separate, as in *The Scholar is demanding, but respectful. They give more than they take.* The simple use of *he* or *she* instead of *they* would sort this out. Or, the author could have said *Scholars are demanding.* This construction persists on every page, which, while an admirable attempt at using non-binary language, becomes complicated to read. Many will understand and be just fine with it; if you are one of those, this is just the book for you.

### ***The Risk Theatre Model of Tragedy***

by Edwin Wong *Friesen Press, 2019, available at Munro's Books, Bolen Books and online* Reviewed by Joy Huebert

*Risk Theatre* has won many awards, including the 2019 Readers' Favourite Book Contest, previously won by comedian Jim Carey, *Star Trek* actor/director Jonathan Frakes, wrestler Diana Hart and *New York Times* bestselling authors Daniel Silva and Judith Ann Jance. Wong will be attending a gala in Miami this November at the Miami Book Festival where the organizers will be selling and displaying the book. It has also won previously in the CIPA EVVY awards and the National Indie Excellence Awards.

Wong's lengthy (270 pages) book can look intimidating,

appearing to be one of those intellectual academic tomes that one always wishes to read but can't quite make the effort to wade through. Instead, I was delighted to find an engaging look at tragic theatre, filled with interesting ideas and unique insights. As a person without much expertise who enjoys theatre, the book was a captivating voyage through all kinds of plays, including works of Shakespeare, the Greek classics, and modern works such as those by Eugene O'Neill.

Wong presents an original theory of tragedy that resonates with our modern age. The tragic hero is a gambler in a high risk, high stakes situation, a troika of the stake, the cast and the outcome, as in this quotation:

*The hero stakes life itself to play the game, stakes intangible and all-too-human things, such as the soul, the milk of human kindness, happiness, honour, love, family friendship, faith, reputation, and duty....by making the wager, the heroes of risk theatre reveal life's hidden value.*

Wong's book offers short, tempting chapters such as "The Poetics of Chaos," "The Myth of the Price you Pay," and "The Debt to Nature." He explains features of tragic theatre that include: the proud hero, the minor meddlers and (un)helpful advisors, Kings and Queens, supernatural elements, passions running white hot, consolations gone wrong, and dangerous and uncertain times. All ideas are nicely illustrated by excerpts from plays, and by lively commentary.

A quibble: Wong knows a wealth of information about his topic, but the chapter that addresses "Tragedy and the Second Law of Thermodynamics" is a little obscure and for me, was a

little less readable than the rest of the text.

Wong concludes with a heartfelt position that tragic theatre addresses our modern difficulties. If done well, risk theatre is *the place where audiences go to see how much honour is worth, what the price of friendship is, and how much they will pay for power and glory.*

Wong ends on a strong note: *Tragedy, because it adds to our understanding, . . . has a claim of being the greatest show on earth*