For centuries English and French theatrical conventions have had an uneasy relationship with one another: mutual admiration, mutual envy, mutual distrust. Just as the fascination of difference lies in the potential for sameness, so these opposed traditions have observed each other at close quarters and invited each other back home. In an unusually detailed and carefully illustrated book, John Stokes explores the reception of the French actress by English audiences from the early nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth – a period when the relationship between England and France was transformed and redefined. Mlle Mars, Sarah Bernhardt and Edwige Feuillère are among the many actresses invoked; prominent English spectators include William Hazlitt, Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde. The result is a vivid coming together of theatre history and cultural studies that will appeal to scholars of English and French literature as well as to students of acting.

John Stokes teaches at King’s College London where he specialises in the history of drama. He is a regular contributor to the Times Literary Supplement and other journals. His previous books include Oscar Wilde: Myths, Miracles and Imitations (1996), and, with Michael Booth and Susan Bassnett, Bernhardt, Terry, Duse: The Actress in Her Time (1988) and Three Tragic Actresses: Siddons, Rachel, Ristori (1996), all published by Cambridge University Press.
THE FRENCH ACTRESS
AND HER ENGLISH AUDIENCE

JOHN STOKES
For Peter and Valerie Mendes

Oh, les beaux jours
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