

BOOK REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

MARC MAUFORT

Transgressive Itineraries: Postcolonial Hybridizations of Dramatic Realism.

Bruxelles: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2003. 250 pp. Index.

ROBERT ORMSBY

Marc Maufort's *Transgressive Itineraries: Postcolonial Hybridizations of Dramatic Realism* is a significant contribution to the comparative study of English-language postcolonial literature. His stated aim "lies in illustrating aspects of the multi-faceted forms of postcolonial hybridizations of dramatic realism, taking as a departure point various samplings along the trans-Pacific axis of Australasia and Canada" (12).

Maufort develops in his Prologue the principal concepts that animate his readings of the postcolonial dramas in all subsequent chapters. He begins by discussing Eugene O'Neill's dramatic realism and finds especially significant O'Neill's concern to represent the "consciousness in crisis" (14) and "the protagonist's quest for identity" (15) through the use of interior monologues, in particular those of an epiphanic nature. Maufort argues that the playwrights he discusses have developed O'Neill's formal and thematic concerns, though he observes that the Australasian-Canadian dramatists are distinct from O'Neill insofar as they depict crises of identity by negotiating "the boundaries between 'Self' and 'Other'" that are "encoded in the (post)colonial experience" (18). He remarks that such negotiations have been complicated by national self-definitions that were slow to develop in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada due to these countries' perceived inferiority to England, the pressures of multiculturalism, and tensions between "First Nations Aborigines, various marginal ethnic groups and the mainstream" of theatre practitioners (19). Maufort devotes the balance of the Prologue to delineating the various types of realism he will explore in the book.

Chapter One is concerned with how "mainstream, i.e. Anglo-Celtic Australasian and Canadian" (27) authors dramatize the Other and thereby engage with and alter accepted forms of stage realism. Chapter Two examines how playwrights from minority cultures have developed dramatic realism by staging "the 'ethnic minority Other'" (85) within multicultural Australia, Canada, and

New Zealand. In chapter three, Maufort deals with the ways in which First Nations dramatists in these countries have subverted conventions of dramatic realism “in their efforts to convey the hybridity of their communities” (147).

Theatre Research in Canada readers will be particularly interested in Maufort’s take on Canadian playwrights, but all will benefit from considering the comparisons he draws between “mainstream” Canadian writers like Judith Thomson and George F. Walker and, say, Australasian authors Louis Mowra and Bruce Mason. Readers will also find it useful to compare his analyses of Guillermo Verdecchia and Djanet Sears with Australia’s Tess Lyssiotis or with the Samoan-New Zealand dramatists Oscar Kightley and Victor Rodger. Maufort is similarly helpful in delineating the quite different circumstances that lie behind the “hybridizations” of dramatic realism by Tomson Highway and Daniel David Moses, the Aboriginal author Jack Davis, and the Maori dramatist Hone Kouka.

In addition to covering such a diversity of plays, the principal virtues of *Transgressive Itineraries* are the organization, clarity, and consistency that characterize Maufort’s analysis. His chapter divisions imply demarcations between mainstream, minority, and Native theatres that are, perhaps, not entirely clear-cut, but they give the book a wholly logical structure that allows the reader to cope with so much material. Furthermore, his arguments are, for the most part, clearly spelled out and easy to follow, and the regularity of his approach to each play encourages the sorts of comparisons between the works that make his analysis valuable.

The book is not without its drawbacks, however. In particular, Maufort’s consistency becomes repetitiveness because he typically works chronologically through the plays, offering a scene-by-scene examination of action, dialogue, and theme. Such repetition, unfortunately, leads him to develop his arguments far less fully than he might have; rather than detailing how the plays he analyzes challenge established modes of stage realism in substantially different ways, he simply asserts that each play does challenge dramatic realism in ways similar to the others in his study.

Maufort is frequently on the verge of significant insights, but his analysis requires more contextualization. How, for instance, have the different official policies of multiculturalism in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand affected the theatre of minority cultures differently in those countries? What impact have the very different histories of European settlement in these countries had on the place of First Nations theatre relative to mainstream and

minority culture theatre? By what means, to return to Maufort's premise, have ideas about dramatic realism been disseminated differently in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and what, precisely, are these countries' relationships to modernist stage realism? Maufort occasionally broaches such topics but, regrettably, he only partially explores contexts that could have developed his analysis into fully contrastive readings.

These limitations aside, the breadth of material that Maufort covers is impressive, and if the author's methodology does not quite fulfill his aims, *Transgressive Itineraries* surely helps set the direction for future studies of its kind. ❁



ROBERT CUSHMAN

Fifty Seasons at Stratford.

Toronto: McClelland & Stewart/ Madison Press, 2002. 224 pp.
Illus. Hardcover.

MARTIN HUNTER

Romancing the Bard: Stratford at Fifty.

Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001. 304 pp. Illus. Hardcover.

RICHARD OUZOUNIAN

Stratford Gold: 50 years, 50 Stars, 50 Conversations.

Toronto: McArthur & Company, 2002. Hardcover.

PAULA SPERDAKOS

It is probably safe to say that no one who was involved in the founding and early days of the Stratford Festival of Canada could ever have imagined that not only would it survive to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary season in 2002, but also that it would develop into what some consider Canada's flagship cultural institution.

Fifty-five seasons after its founding, there can be no doubt that the story of the Stratford Festival is—resoundingly—a success story: the theatre's phenomenal growth will attest to that. Since 1953, some 22,000,000 tickets have been sold to over 20,000 performances. The budget for the 2007 Stratford Festival was \$53,923,000. During the six weeks of its first season in 1953 (it was originally meant to run for four weeks but had to be extended to accommodate the overwhelming demand for tickets), 68,000