

ers, even those who are fluent in French, will have little tolerance for Méchoulan's verbosity. While the book might hold a great appeal for those Francophone readers who were born and raised in the tradition of "*grands philosophes français*," its long, convoluted sentences and interminable digressions are likely to annoy the English-speaker in search of straightforward and pragmatic answers. Case in point:

Si l'une des originalités fortes du propos cartésien, selon une vulgate rapidement constituée, consiste à unir position d'énonciation (l'*ego* tacite d'un *cogito*) et fondement métaphysique, parcours des réflexions d'un sujet et constitution d'une épistémologie, l'élaboration même de la scène d'énonciation et de ses modes de publication implique une construction de la posture publique de cette manière de dire le vrai qui doit faire l'objet d'une réflexion attentive, non seulement pour ses usages historiques, mais aussi parce qu'elle compose un des enjeux propres de ce que nous pouvons appeler « métaphysique », ainsi que Platon l'avait fort bien senti. L'idée ne consiste pas à invoquer la nécessité d'une contextualisation pour mieux entendre la métaphysique cartésienne; elle fait de la question de la transmission, donc de la scène contextuelle d'énonciation, une des formes d'appropriation du temps propre de la métaphysique. Loin des seuls effets de substance, la métaphysique porte sur les relations et les nœuds ponctuels qu'elles forment, autrement dit sur les phénomènes de transmission dont l'« intermédialité » doit rendre compte. (76)

The reader's response to this brief but typical passage (admiration, inspiration, confusion, exasperation, indifference...) should be a clear indication of whether s/he should bother purchasing this book.

ALBERT-REINER GLAAP (with assistance from Michael Heinze and Neil Johnstone)

Jewish Facets of Contemporary Canadian Drama.

Reflections: Literatures in English outside Britain and the USA.

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AMANDA LOCKITCH

"It is an encouraging development that today 105,000 Jews live in Germany again. [...] Jewish life has again become an integral part of our culture, and most people do not merely accept but greatly appreciate this" (1).

In *Jewish Facets of Contemporary Canadian Drama* Albert-Reiner Glaap, emeritus professor of English at Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf, Germany, expands his academic oeuvre on the subject of Canadian drama and continues to advocate for Canadian plays on German stages. Yet, rather than an anthology of drama or a book of critical essays, *Jewish Facets of Contemporary Canadian Drama* is largely composed of overviews of a number of Canadian plays. The book is intended as an introduction of Canadian playwrights whose works are selected for their depictions of Jewish characters or themes, such as those that (even indirectly) invoke the Holocaust or anti-Semitism. It puts the spotlight on a specific sector of English-language Canadian drama: plays written by (primarily) Jewish authors that deal explicitly or obliquely with Judaism. Glaap has said in the past that a childhood event (witnessing the 1938 Night of Broken Glass) galvanized a life-long curiosity about Jewish culture. While this book may be similar in structure to his *Voices from Canada* (2003), it occupies a more personal position because it permits Glaap to home in on his particular appreciation of Jewish life and his celebration of its struggle, diversity and growth in both Canada and Germany. Through this book he identifies facets of Jewish thought that may be found within the “polyphony of contemporary Canadian drama” (8).

Through artist statements drawn from a questionnaire sent to over twenty playwrights, and information obtained through personal interviews (previously unpublished) conducted by Professor Glaap in Canada with at least half of that number, each playwright, in his or her own words, “help[s the reader] to gain an insight into Jewish facets of Canadian playwriting” (9). The questionnaire asks the authors to position themselves as Canadians, and in relation to Jewish culture and religion in Canada. Dr. Glaap does not assess the plays mentioned, but filters his analysis of the works through the playwrights’ personal negotiations with identity.

Jewish Facets of Contemporary Canadian Drama contains information on 28 contemporary playwrights, including three of non-Jewish descent. Short essays on Jewish and Yiddish theatre in Canada by Judith Rudakoff and Dr. Glaap, respectively, establish a history and contextual background. Glaap also makes special note of Jewish playwrights in the 1970s and 1980s before turning to the 25 contemporary Jewish writers, among them Diana Flacks, David Gow, Mark Leiren-Young, Adam Pettle, Jason Sherman, Theresa Tova, and Irene N.Watts. Each playwright is introduced alphabetically with a brief biography followed by the

playwrights' answers to the questionnaire (where applicable). These responses highlight the diversity of religious, social, and political thought found within this group of authors despite their being selected based on a specific theme. An overview of the playwrights' selected works then offers detailed descriptions of their plays that deal with Jewish themes or characters. This overview synthesizes the artists' answers to questions of Jewish identity with the themes found in their creative works. Finally, a list of plays by each author concludes their individual sections. An insert of Dr. Glaap's questionnaire accompanies the book.

While the primary aim of this book may be to introduce Canadian plays dealing with Jewish themes to interested audiences and theatre companies outside of Canada, as a Canadian (with an interest in Jewish themes) I found this book deepened my own understanding of playwrights with whom I am familiar such as John Lazarus, Hannah Moscovitch, and Emil Sher by employing a format in which the author has "the first word in the chapter dealing with his or her plays" (8). Further, it broadened my awareness (and reading list) of additional plays by familiar authors, such as Anton Piatigorsky and Alex Poch-Goldin and presented to me Canadian playwrights with whom I was unfamiliar. *Jewish Facets of Contemporary Canadian Drama* is a useful tool to expose Canadian playwrights of Jewish descent, or those who have written about Jewish themes, such as Ken Gass, to international, primarily European audiences. Number ten of ten on the questionnaire reads: Which of your plays would you suggest for introducing a European audience to your work as a dramatist? Yet, this volume will be of interest to anyone who is attracted to a playwright's critical engagement with themes of "Canadian-ness," in this case "Jewishness," which take shape, or are reflected, in creative dramatic works.

Not surprisingly, when asked which play would be the most effective introduction to a European audience, many answered similarly to Hanna Moscovitch and Aviva Ravel, respectively: The "most recent example" (88) of their work is the one to promote because one "always like[s the] latest one best" (112). This draws our attention to the reality of playwriting in Canada and the constant quest to get work read and produced. It also alludes to the idea that this format, with altered questions, could be effectively applied to playwrights from a myriad of cultural backgrounds. Out of the many voices in Canadian drama today, Dr. Glaap has turned his attention specifically to Jewish facets of Canadian drama for this study, without reducing their work to

these facets. He also acknowledges that the list of authors included in this book is not complete; Vern Thiessen as an example of a non-Jewish playwright writing about Jewish history or culture strikes me as a particular omission.

Dr. Glaap's position as a non-Canadian interested in Canadian drama, and his personal interest in the subject of Jewish culture, elevates this inquiry into Jewish facets of Canadian drama into a reflection of life in a Germany that is still coming to terms with the legacy of the Second World War and with increasing multiculturalism. One reason for his writing of this volume is that while the plays "were written in a particular (i.e. Canadian) context [...] their issues can be considered metaphors for what is happening in other parts of the world, especially in European countries" (174). Looking at Canadian drama dealing with questions of self-identity ultimately provides Glaap the chance to reveal something about his Germany.

My only two points of criticism are minor: The first is that a number of the interesting plays mentioned in this book are not published, and if that has proved frustrating for me in trying to gain access to these plays, I wonder if it will be prohibitive for the European theatre companies who may think of producing them. Might this encourage Professor Glaap to edit a new anthology of Jewish Canadian Plays? My second critique relates to format. Since we read the author's responses to the questionnaire followed by Dr. Glaap's overview of the author and his or her work, often-times the information is repetitive as he synthesises material we have just read, albeit through the lens of their selected plays. In the end, this book is a pleasing calling card for Canadian playwrights and does the country proud.

Reviews of the Critical Perspectives on Canadian Theatre in English series

ERIN HURLEY, Book Review Editor

Dear readers,

In these pages and in those of the next two issues of *TRiC/RtaC*, you will be able to read reviews of all 21 volumes in the *Critical Perspectives on Canadian Theatre in English* series, published between 2005 and 2011 by Playwrights Canada Press. In his General Editor's Preface to volume 9 (*Space and the Geographies of Theatres*, edited by Michael McKinnie), Ric Knowles describes the goal of the series as follows: