

this is because Creole has fewer words for abstract ideas, because thus far its speakers have been constrained from using Creole in learned discourse. Like all languages, when its speakers find it necessary to use abstractions, the vocabulary of Creole will expand, whether by means of its well-established word-formation processes or by borrowing and adapting words from other languages.

Of course, this is too large a subject for a book review. But such essentializing representations of language — more “perceptual” than “descriptive” linguistics — do weaken the authority of essays in which they are found, communicating impressionism, ideology and cultural chauvinism rather than defensible, reasoned positions.

Despite such occasional lapses, Kevin Grant’s anthology is a fine introduction to the work of an important diasporic writer whose work is too little known outside of England, where his poetry and fiction have been published.

ERVIN BECK

Helen Gilbert. *Sightlines: Race, Gender, and Nation in Contemporary Australian Theatre*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1998. Pp. x, 274. \$49.50 hardcover, \$21.95 pb.; Helen Gilbert, ed. (*Post)Colonial Stages: Critical & Creative Views on Drama, Theatre & Performance*. Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire: Dangaroo Press, 1999. Pp. 279. £14.95 pb.

These two volumes of theatre and performance analysis clearly establish Helen Gilbert as one of the most insightful critics in postcolonial studies. *Sightlines*, with its sharp and perceptive Australian focus, complements the enormously useful *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* that Gilbert co-authored with Joanne Tompkins (Routledge, 1996). (*Post)Colonial Stages* opens up the debate of these earlier books through a rich and productive collection of writing by some of the other well-known scholars in this field. Moreover, (*Post)Colonial Stages* brings critical writing into provocative juxtaposition with creative and related work.

Sightlines takes as its subject the last 20 years of Australian drama and explores, as Gilbert describes it, “the ways in which diverse playwrights have articulated responses to imperialism as the major historical force still shaping Australian society” (2). She sees her work, and rightly so, as a much-needed, extended study of the many different types of plays that constitute contemporary Australian theatrical production. Her methodology is grounded firmly in the practices and inquiries of postcolonial studies, with Gilbert reminding us that “postcolonialism is both a textual effect and a reading strategy. Its theoretical practice often operates on two levels, attempting at once to elucidate the postcoloniality that inheres in certain texts, and to unveil and deconstruct any remnant colonialist power” (7). She does

a fine job of bringing the theoretical investigations of key postcolonial scholars into dialogue with a whole range of recent Australian dramas. Since many of these plays are little known to readers outside of Australia, Gilbert is careful to provide lively and informative accounts of the plays as she works through her own critical argument. In the latter case, she organizes her work into categories of "aboriginal," "settler/invader," "feminist" and "neoimperialist" theatre.

Given the dimensions of Gilbert's project, then, it comes as no surprise that her first chapter turns to Shakespeare and the role of his plays, particularly *The Tempest*, in the contemporary Australian scene. Her account centers on a detailed reading of David Malouf's *Blood Relations* (a play that opened at the Sydney Opera House in 1987), which Gilbert champions for its attempt "to articulate a series of Australian selves from a conceptual space fractured by colonial ideologies and a sense of alienation from the constitutive structures of history and canon" (46). Her critique of the play's representation of the Aboriginal voice is justly made and the next chapter addresses specifically an aboriginal theatre which has posed "the Australian stage's most trenchant challenge to the hegemony of imperialism" (51).

This chapter provides a compelling narrative which ranges from Jack Davis's better-known dramas to Wesley Enoch and Deborah Mailman's *Seven Stages of Grieving*. Gilbert deals directly with representations of the Aboriginal body and with the tenets of orality. It is a highly complex analysis which not only offers the non-Australian reader a far more comprehensive account of the diversity of Aboriginal performance than has hitherto been available, but which raises all kinds of questions and issues that could be productively examined in the context, in Canada, of First Nations theatres and performances.

Perhaps because it is the area that most interests me — or perhaps because I know the plays discussed here better than those discussed in other chapters — I found chapter four, on "Feminist Postcolonial Drama," somewhat underdeveloped. In truth, Gilbert was at pains to point to her omissions in this chapter; she writes:

While the representation paradigms used to (re)construct images of Aboriginal women may seem the natural focus for a feminist postcolonial study of Australian theatre, that area of analysis is not my chief concern here. For a number of interrelated reasons, much of this chapter concentrates on the figure of the female settler as presented in plays written by white women, so that race is discussed primarily as a marker of Otherness against which colonial definitions of Anglo-European femininity are drawn and/or critiqued. (146-47)

The problem Gilbert faced was no doubt one of organization, but the too-distinct divisions of Aboriginal in one chapter and white women in another short-circuited, I felt, some important engagements in feminist representation across the fraught terrain of "race." Similarly,

her conclusion that “[t]he few plays mentioned in this chapter represent only a small part of a repertoire of recent Australian drama that uses the richly suggestive possibilities of metatheatre to increase women’s visibility as narrative subjects” suggests Gilbert’s own awareness of how much she has had to leave out. Of course, contemporary Australian drama by women is such a vital field that its “postcoloniality” might require a book all of its own.

Finally, it is important to recognize that *Sightlines* is a University of Michigan Press publication. It is all too rare for a prominent American publisher to market a monograph with a focus on a country other than the United States of America, especially in the field of theatre studies. I suspect that publishing *Sightlines* has been rather a leap in faith, but the book is a fine addition to one of the best theatre/performance studies lists on this continent. North American readers can learn a great deal here, not only about Australian theatre, but also about the very languages with which we try to talk about the postcolonial moment in performance.

That diversity of languages is apparent, too, in *(Post)Colonial Stages*. Gilbert has in this volume brought together writing by scholars (not, in fact, just the recognized scholars in the field — Sudipto Chatterjee, Loren Kruger, Christopher Balme and Alan Filewod, for example — but many far less well-known names) and playwrights representing at least nine different countries. Some of these authors epitomize the postcolonial experience, having lived and worked in many countries beyond the one of birth. Her audience for this volume will, I suspect, be far narrower than for *Sightlines*; by virtue of its Dangaroo Press publication, *(Post)Colonial Stages* may find itself addressing an audience of postcolonial studies scholars rather than the mainstream of theatre and performance academia. The global range of this volume, however, makes it a “must read.”

In many ways, the kind of postcolonial “conversation” that Gilbert tries to stage here is one that is urgently needed and seriously overdue. Gilbert’s responsible and energetic endeavors ensure that these crucial dialogues take place, if only between the richly illustrated covers of her book. Again, she presents a multifaceted approach to postcoloniality, focusing “on material that has both a historical *and* a discursive relationship to western imperialism, whether that phenomenon is treated critically, ambivalently, or even collusively” (1).

The scope of the collection is dazzling: Gilbert has chosen essays not just about plays, but also about dance, pageants and other ceremonial events. In her introduction, she draws attention to the contributions of Howard McNaughton, Loren Kruger, and Sheila Rabillard (writing on New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada respectively) as illustrations of how “theatrical forms frequently offer fascinating insights into local and/or national politics, not to mention specific

dramaturgical traditions" (2). Moreover, the "style" of the contributions is just as varied; interview, creative work (William S. Yellow Robe, Jr.; Sistren; Chin Woon Ping), self-reflexive "lecture" intermix with the more traditional critical essay. As might be expected, some of the pieces are more successful than others; some hold more interest for an individual reader according to her/his own interests, knowledges, and location.

(*Post*)*Colonial Stages* has all the faults and all the joys of such eclecticism. The unevenness of the contributions can make it, at times, a laborious read; at other times, the connections that arise out of such a rich range of commissions are no less than exciting. There is probably no way of getting an ambitious volume such as this one "right" — everyone, I suspect, will think of a key postcolonial stage that is missing from these pages. With that inevitability in mind, this book represents an important opening-outwards from Gilbert's discussions in *Sightlines*. In short, she makes the responsibilities so carefully outlined in the monograph the work of a worldwide network of theatre and performance scholars.

Taken together, Gilbert's two volumes represent a leap forward in both what we know of the postcolonial theatre, as well as how we know or might come to know it.

SUSAN BENNETT

Ian Baucom. *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999. Pp. x, 249. \$18.95 pb.

Original, ambitious, meticulous and elegant, *Out of Place* is unquestionably one of the more important books to emerge in English postcolonial studies in recent years. The question of how colonialism "messes" with the identity not only of the colonized but also of the colonists, of how Englishness — the national and cultural identity or self-imagining of the imperial "center" — itself came to be shaped, contested and transformed by the experience of empire, is one that several scholars (e.g. Linda Colley, Simon Gikandi, Michael Gorra, Robert Young) have crucially begun to explore. Baucom's book extends and recasts this endeavour by locating identity in multiple "places" — literal and figurative — as sites of national (de)formation and (re)formation, and by charting the shifting contours of this "localist conception of English identity" (20) over the last two centuries. One main strand of Baucom's argument is that instead of being a stable entity as often nostalgically or conservatively imagined, Englishness, increasingly under crisis, was constantly reformulated both "here" and "there," both within and beyond the boundaries of the British Isles, and that empire became the place where England "lost command" of its own self-definitions. But another strand charts the continuing discourse of identity as produced by place — and not *race*