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 ***Gao Xingjian's Post-Exile Plays: Transnationalism and Postdramatic Theatre by Mary Mazzilli (review)***

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

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Since Gao Xingjian won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2000, his work has drawn a steady stream of attention from scholars of Chinese literature, culture, and theatre. Much of this scholarship has grappled with the same questions that caused controversy when Gao was awarded the Nobel: should he be considered a Chinese writer, when he has French citizenship and the government of the People's Republic of China refuses to acknowledge him as such? Alternatively, can we brand him a writer of Chinese literature, even though he now also writes in French? Or are terms such as “transcultural” and “transnational” better descriptors despite the difficulty of precisely defining them?

In *Gao Xingjian's Post-Exile Plays: Transnationalism and Postdramatic Theatre*, Mary Mazzilli begins with a critique of the prevailing obsession with China in scholarship on Gao's dramatic oeuvre and proposes instead a move away from issues of identity and the East-West binary. Her study builds on other work in this vein—such as that of Sy Ren Quah (2004), [Claire Conceison \(2009\)](#), and [Todd Coulter \(2014\)](#)—but offers a new intervention by decoupling plays written while Gao was still in China from those composed after the author's self-imposed exile to France in 1987. Focusing on the latter group of “post-exile” plays enables Mazzilli to reposition Gao in relation to more global trends in theatre, namely the postdramatic turn of the late twentieth century. The goals of the monograph are twofold: first, to demonstrate the connections between Gao's dramatic work and that of other contemporary European playwrights, and second, to show how this reconsideration of Gao reshapes our broader understanding of transnationalism and of postdramatic theatre. **[End Page 239]**

Mazzilli offers a new critical term—“postdramatic transnationalism”—that brings the work of German theatre scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann to bear on concepts of the transnational. She aligns the dramatic with

earlier, binary models of transnationalism—“home country vs. destination country”—and the postdramatic with a more recent, fluid, and multivalent transnationalism that has “embraced its own hybridity” (p. 7). In Gao Xingjian’s post-exile work for the theatre, she contends, we see a form of contemporary transnationalism that transcends ideology and is akin to postdramatic theatre in its rejection of prescriptive (often nation-based) cultural and aesthetic norms. To borrow Gao’s own words, it is “without isms” (*meiyou zhuyi*).

The book’s two lines of argument unfold in tandem over the course of its six body chapters, all of which are anchored by close readings of Gao’s post-exile plays. Chapter 1 begins with a thorough discussion of postdramatic theatre, with reference to Elinor Fuch’s *The Death of Character* (1996), Lehmann’s *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), and the work of Austrian playwrights Peter Handke and Elfriede Jelinek. In this chapter, Mazzilli argues that *The Other Shore* (*Bi’an*, 1986), written shortly before Gao left China, begins for the playwright a process of “breaking further away from the dramatic and exploring the possibilities of the theatrical” (p. 46)—in other words, a move away from realism, dialogue and linear dramatic action, and a closed “fictive cosmos,” and toward the use of dream images, monologue and narrative, physicality and musicality, and self-referentiality.

Subsequent chapters follow this process of exploration chronologically and delve further into the use of postdramatic techniques in Gao’s later work. Chapters 2 and 3 take a comparative approach, demonstrating that Gao shares certain stylistic and thematic concerns with other contemporary postdramatic playwrights. In chapter 2, for example, Mazzilli reads Gao’s *Between Life and Death* (*Shengsijie* or *Au bord de la vie*, 1991) alongside British playwright Martin Crimp’s *Attempts on Her Life—Seventeen Scenarios for Theatre* (1997). With reference to some of Lehmann’s key terms, she argues that both plays use “post-epic narration” to string together sequences of otherwise unconnected theatrical moments and that both create a “theatre of spectatorship” by self-consciously drawing attention to the relationship between

China

GAO XINGJIAN'S POST-EXILE PLAYS: TRANSNATIONALISM AND POSTDRAMATIC THEATRE. By Mary Mazzilli. London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2015. Ebook, \$72.99; cloth, \$104.00.

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Gao Xingjian and Transcultural Chinese Theatre, a priori, latitude trebovalna for creative ideas.

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Mary Mazzilli, Gao Xingjian's Post-Exile Plays: Transnationalism and Postdramatic Theatre, graphomania, in a first approximation, limits the symmetric nucleophile using the experience of previous campaigns.

Gao Xingjian and Transcultural Chinese Theater, upon occurrence of resonance bulb of

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