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### Sanders, Julie. The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620–1650

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**Sanders, Julie.**

***The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620–1650.***

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xii, 242 + 10 illustrations. ISBN 978-1-10700-334-7 (hardback) \$90.

Julie Sanders's *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620–1650* seeks to develop an innovative geographical framework through which to reveal the significance of place and space to the drama of, mostly, Caroline England. The book's value lies primarily in its attention to a wide variety of theatrical events from Nottingham, the north Midlands, and the North, as well as to lesser-known plays from London. Canadian readers will be pleased to find interpretation of *The Humorous Magistrate*, the play contained in the University of Calgary's Osborne Manuscript. However, Sanders's book will likely prove frustrating for many readers. It has not stabilized its central argument, and, as a consequence, its various claims often seem randomly distributed through chapters that are difficult to grasp as sustained demonstrations of a core thesis.

The introductory chapter foreshadows the argumentative dispersal that characterizes the book. It is unexpectedly difficult to find a passage that captures a central argument. One important concept that begins to take shape is that of the relationship between metropolis and region, a relationship characterized through words like "link," "flow," and "crossover." Cultural geography is here presented as an exploration of the kinds of practices and subjectivities developed in and corresponding to places understood in geographic relation to other places, rather than in isolation. To this vision Sanders returns in her concluding and somewhat clarifying Coda, in which she explains that her study has resisted "simple binaries...between metropolis and province, London and the regions, city and court, public and private, home and abroad" and has investigated texts and practices that can be seen to "collapse the spatial difference between 'here' and 'there' in unsettling ways" (pp. 234–35). This is a persuasive claim, but as a core argument it is insufficiently prominent in the introduction and consequently difficult to identify in subsequent chapters or as a link between chapters. The argument actually becomes less clear as the author acknowledges her debt to the work of Lefebvre, de Certeau, and Bourdieu and states that the concept of "process" — a concept not clearly defined by Sanders — will allow her to describe the historical interactions between

“people and the spatial structures and concepts” (p. 9) that are reflected in and generated or sustained by drama. Beyond this, there is little account of the methods of cultural geography or of how those methods should be applied to text. The “aims” of the book are particularized in a variety of ways throughout the introduction, usually in some relation to the idea of generative interactions across space, but this accumulation of briefly-sketched goals tends to fragment rather than consolidate what seems to be the central argument.

The first full chapter investigates the human geographies and theatrical practices of rivers (the Thames, Severn, and Trent), London docklands, fenlands, and coastal areas, and seeks evidence of the performative practices of these places in such dramatic texts as Brome’s *The Sparagus Garden*, Jonson’s *The Sad Shepherd*, Dekker’s *London’s Tempe*, and Brome’s *The Demoiselle*, among others. An argument about the tendency of aquatically-oriented texts to blend the practical and quotidian with the symbolic and mythical slowly takes shape, but it is challenging to recognize this argument developing over the course of the chapter’s ten subsections, many of which are only a few pages long. The second chapter more convincingly demonstrates that texts about forest communities reveal ways in which “spatial practices” facilitate both conflict and liberation. The chapter devotes itself primarily to Milton’s *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle* and Jonson’s *The Sad Shepherd*. Grand household theatricals including Jonson’s *Love’s Welcome at Bolsover* and William Sampson’s *The Vow Breaker* and *The Humorous Magistrate*, as well as other site-specific performances, are investigated in the next chapter in order to demonstrate the cultural significance of regional and national aristocratic networks and ways in which those networks interacted with local space in order to condition social and theatrical performances. The chapter makes the point that provincial domestic drama was as likely to influence the London stage as to be influenced by it.

The fourth chapter examines the drama of mobility, taking as contexts perambulation along roads, royal progresses, and the cultures of inns, taverns, and parks. Analysis of such texts as Brome’s *A Jovial Crew*, Massinger’s *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, and Jonson’s *The New Inn* demonstrates that early modern mobility and the encounters mobility promotes transform social spaces and perceptions of embodiment, though not without anxiety. The final two chapters return to London, and seek to demonstrate that the city was not a monolithic presence for its inhabitants, whose practices were deeply conditioned by their often highly localized sense of neighbourhood and network. The fifth chapter

offers an analysis of perceptions of community and conflict in parishes and medicalized neighbourhoods, while the sixth analyzes Shirley's *The Lady of Pleasure*, Brome's *Covent Garden Weeded*, and Nabbe's *Covent Garden*, as well as the so-called "running masques" of The Strand's grand households, in order to indicate the agency of theatre in creating perceptions of London's emergent West End.

The variety of texts investigated and the multiplicity of perspectives brought to bear on those texts sustain a sense of critical vitality throughout the book. But one of the costs of the proliferation of subsections is that there is little pressure to analyze literary passages in detail. Moreover, some of the book's key concepts, such as "spatial practice," tend to remain hazy. While parts of *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama* will be edifying for professional literary scholars, its argumentative structure is unnecessarily diffuse, and it offers neither a model of sustained investigative focus nor sufficient account of what might be intended as decentring critical practice.

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**Secchi Tarugi, Luisa (éd.).**

***Oriente e Occidente nel Rinascimento. Atti del XIX Convegno Internazionale (Chianciano-Pienza, 16–19 luglio 2007).***

Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 2009. 929 p. ISBN 978-88-7667-374-0 (broché) 125 €

Le XXIV<sup>e</sup> colloque de Chianciano-Pienza a eu lieu cette année. Il portait sur les rapports entre la Rome païenne et la Rome chrétienne à l'époque de la Renaissance. Comme d'habitude, il formera un beau volume qui sortira des presses précisément dans deux ans. Il faut saluer la régularité, la persévérance et la qualité du travail de Madame Luisa Secchi Tarugi, présidente de *Istituto di Studi Umanistici Francesco Petrarca*. Malgré les difficultés qui ne cessent d'augmenter au fil des années, cette institution fêtera bientôt son quart de siècle. C'est, pour tous ceux qui s'intéressent à la Renaissance, le dernier lieu annuel de réunion transdisciplinaire, un véritable colloque où, pendant trois jours (il a fallu malheureusement supprimer désormais une journée sur les quatre qui