



Transcultural Aesthetics in the Plays of Gao Xingjian

Todd J. Coulter

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Gao Xingjian has been lauded in many countries for his inventive use of Chinese culture in his paintings, plays, and cinema. In spite of this attempt to locate the aesthetics of his work within a Chinese frame, Gao denies that his current work participates in any notion of Chinese. However, Gao's work consciously draws on many aesthetic forms from both Chinese and French theatrical traditions. Absurdism and *jingju* (commonly known as Beijing Opera in American English) are the two immediate forms apparent in Gao's dramaturgy. This book traces the development of these forms and how they relate and interact in the French language plays of the Nobel Laureate. Gao Xingjian, through the unique blending and borrowing of these forms, creates an aesthetic of transcultural identity. Coulter approaches Gao's work from a cultural studies point of view, offering a new perspective on the work of this significant artist and his insistence that identity is a personal apolitical conception born in movement and flight.

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