



Marianne Schultz. *Performing Indigenous Culture on Stage and Screen: A Harmony of Frenzy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016. 242 pp. \$95.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-137-59599-7.

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In *Performing Indigenous Culture on Stage and Screen: A Harmony of Frenzy*, Marianne Schultz argues that performance is central to understanding the history of New Zealand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Beyond representation, performance helped *create* ideas of the island nation. Performance, she states, “offers an epistemology of being” that shapes both performer and audience understandings of race, ethnicity, and nationality (p. 3)..

Schultz’s analysis pushes back against post-colonial analyses of New Zealand performance practices that frame Māori and Pākehā (non-indigenous New Zealander) cultural exchange as one of simple appropriation. Building upon the theories of Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and others, Schultz argues for examining New Zealander performances as examples of cultural hybridity and transcultural exchange that offered opportunities for Māori agency. Schultz treads carefully here. To avoid charges of colonial apologetics, she consistently acknowledges the imperial context and unbalanced power relations between Māori and Pākehā. One of the strengths of this book is that Schultz largely succeeds in supporting her claims about cultural hybridity, modeling how to engage postcolonial critiques while pushing the conversation forward.

Schultz’s book proceeds chronologically from 1862 to 1929 and covers a variety of genres: melodrama in chapter 2, music in chapter 3, touristic displays in chapter 4, staged spectacles in chapter 5, and film in chapter 6. Schultz’s investigation of musical hybridity in the work of composer Alfred Hill and singer Evaline Skerrett, aka Princess Iwa, is particularly interesting. What other scholars might see as a straightforward case of appropriation—Hill borrowed vague, probably inaccurate ideas of Māori music from a Wellington journalist to infuse into his German style of composition—Schultz defends, for Hill “managed to imbue the work with a feeling of Māori culture while expressing an urgency and vitality that stirred audiences” (p. 59). She investigates how Hill was invested in the trope of the “dying Māori.” Curiously, though, she does not bring up Renato Rosaldo’s influential term “imperialist nostalgia,” which describes how colonizers mourn the loss of that which they themselves have destroyed.[1] This oversight is an instance of how Schultz’s reluctance to emphasize the harm colonialism wrought on the indigenous Māori population could be seen as a weakness of the text. On the other hand, she makes an important point that Hill’s musical creations could appropriately be termed “new forms of authentic music” (p. 55), which makes sense when one considers Hill’s music to authentically

represent New Zealand as it was in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Tourism is another arena rife with potential for exploitation. When New Zealand gained dominion status in 1907, it relied on cultural expressions, particularly performance, to shape its new identity and share that identity with the world. Schultz analyzes the tableaux vivants of Reverend Frederick Augustus Bennett and how the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts (DTHR) developed Rotorua, a tourist destination that featured a fake Māori village, Whakarewarewa, populated with real Māori performing Māoriness. While indeed Māori were required to adhere to “a paradigm of the acceptable display of assimilated Māori” (p. 79), and perform their lives “within European frameworks” (p. 80) so as to be intelligible to European tourists, Schultz nonetheless argues that such performances “blurred the boundary between the races” and were “nascent culturally hybrid theatrical representations of New Zealand” that “expanded” the idea of the new nation (p. 79). It would be easy to say that these touristic performances destroyed traditional culture. Schultz reminds us, however, that these new forms of performance centralized Māoriness in conceptions of New Zealand and required visitors “to actively engage with present-day Māori” (p. 101).

Schultz may be overstating the value of such engagement; did visitors actually have dialogue with Māori performers, or did they merely observe, with their preconceived ideas about race and civilizational hierarchy intact? She claims that live performance creates an “exchange of energy” between performer and spectator that “results in new perceptions and emotional responses” (p. 3). While scholarship on the phenomenology of performance is robust, influential thinkers like Augusto Boal claim that spectatorship is too passive a position to have any meaningful effect. [2]

Sometimes Schultz does not take into account the histories of different mediums of expression, an understandable oversight in a book with so many different genres of performance to analyze. The issue with media becomes clearest in chapter 6, “‘Māoriland’ on Film.” Film studies has its own literature, particularly on the idea of “the gaze,” and Schultz does not really engage with it. Nonetheless, she successfully reiterates the point made in other chapters: that despite the “hegemony of the nonindigenous” in the creation of these films, “the central story and settings emphasized the importance of Māori culture in the formation of a New Zealand identity” (p. 127). And like in the tourist village at Rotorua, the artificiality of the films’ Europeanized version of Māori life still relied on “skills needed to build the sets and act ‘Māori’ for the camera,” which “called for a phenomenological experience of *being* Māori in the present” (p. 136). In essence, far from being simply “culturally insensitive and in some cases downright offensive” films, Schultz argues that “the action in front of the camera sprung from a genuine, embodied experience from the Māori actors” (p. 139). Māori performers tried out the identity of “being” Māori and infused their performances with their real selves.

That cultural appropriation and colonialist power dynamics shaped the presentation and representation of Māori culture is a given; Schultz asks us to consider what the performances did beyond that, namely, centralize Māoriness in the construction of New Zealand’s identity. Cultural forms, like *haka* dance, transformed and accrued new meanings. While one may mourn the loss of previous meanings, such loss does not negate the authenticity of meaning in the new context. New Zealand culture is undeniably hybrid. She occasionally glosses over criticisms that could be made about the harm of colonialism, and her choice to examine performance across a wide range of genres means that her depth of knowledge about the debates in those various subfields (film studies, dance studies, performance studies,

et cetera) can sometimes be lacking. But overall, the book pushes the conversation about cultural performance forward and succeeds in making her point that understanding New Zealand's history requires an examination of Māori and Pākehā performance. Her approach will be particularly helpful to scholars interested in researching how embodied cultural practices shaped conceptions of race and nation in both colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Notes

[1]. Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations* 26 (1989): 107-22.

[2]. Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985).

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