

ABSTRACT

The dissertation undertakes a reading of selected plays written by Daniel Boukman during the 60's and 70's. I argue that while Boukman makes explicit attributions to European Marxist playwrights and to Marxist theory, and while many have signalled the influence of these on his work, he maintains a constant concern with a Caribbean aesthetic in his theatre. Centring my analysis on the works *Les négriers*; *Ventres Pleins, Ventres Creux*; and *Chants pour hâter la mort du temps des Orphées*, I seek to show that the devices and practices that the dramatist uses advance a Caribbean worldview and a Caribbean programme of combating colonialism in all its manifestations and of "writing back" to Europe, the self-proclaimed "Centre", through parody, inversion and reversal.

The examination of plays of such versatile dramatic form as Boukman's has understandably warranted an eclectic theoretical base. My objective is to show how Boukman negotiates between different "poles" or theoretical centres in order to find his own unique theoretical bearing.

The study concludes that in negotiating a Caribbean space, Boukman corroborates the Glissantian notion of "detour" (rearticulated by Benítez-Rojo), a term used to describe the phenomenon of taking foreign off-roads, of exploring and travelling indirect routes that lead the playwright, paradoxically, back to the centre of his Caribbeanness. Boukman's engagement with *detour* produces subversive theatrical representation achieved through taking roundabout ways or courses, through deviation from "direct" – i.e. conventional - or favoured modes of representation, for the purposes of resistance, obscuring or artifice - practices that sabotage the so-called "Centre".

Keywords: Daniel Boukman; Caribbean theatre; French West Indian theatre; Caribbean Poetics; Detour.

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