

of trauma. It is not a text for beginners, but for scholars and specialists it provides an interesting (and useful) way of thinking about the implicitly political nature of Beckett's writing.

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*Vicky Angelaki*

**Contemporary British Theatre:  
Breaking New Ground**

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Any work that successfully articulates the theoretical underpinnings of contemporary drama is to be welcomed by those of us who teach the subject but struggle to find unity in the diverse offerings of modern writing and theatre-making. We may even have come to accept that the attempt is dated and doomed. Angelaki's edited collection of essays does not offer a misleadingly unifying thesis; instead it creates a space for dialogue between the plethora of current forms. Liz Tomlin's Foreword offers a diachronic analysis that counterbalances Hans-Thies Lehmann's attempted displacement of the elements of the dramatic theatre, and so offers an explicit revalidation of the act of playwriting. Contemporary drama, she cogently argues, exists in multiple modes. The performative and theatrical do not replace the performed and dramatic: they co-exist and their interactions produce new and exciting syntheses.

This leads to a 'realignment of the text-driven and the postdramatic', exemplified by the writers discussed by this book's authors. Whether Kane, Churchill, Crimp, or Crouch, and whether their

mode is experimental or more recognizably traditional and political, contemporary theatre is enriched by the variety of its methods as well as its subjects.

The European contributors – Angelaki herself, Dan Rebellato, Chris Megson, Elizabeth Angel-Perez, Mireia Aragay and Enric Monforte, Helen Freshwater, Elizabeth Sakellariou, Marissia Fragkou, and Lynette Goddard – draw upon the philosophical writings of Rancière, Debord, Bhabha, Bourdieu, and many others to elucidate their critiques, but do so relatively lightly and with due regard for their readers' presumed unfamiliarity with much of the theoretical territory. The scholars give us an appropriate critical apparatus at the same time as absorbing the critique: examining how different works on the politics of racial violence affect and engage their audiences in terms of Rancière's notions of the 'emancipated spectator' and 'the (re)distribution of the sensible', for example. One prays that this kind of pan-European scholarly investigation of British theatre will not retrench as our academies adjust to the realities of Brexit.

Invidious, of course, to select among the many closely reasoned essays, but I found especially stimulating – and directly useful in terms of future class discussions – Rebellato's examination of (resurrected) authorship; Megson's explorations of the metaphysical and spiritual foci visible in so much contemporary drama; and Angel-Perez's analysis of literary constraints as the lipographic driving force behind works by Churchill and Crimp. Angelaki's book positions contemporary British drama in creative, self-renewing flux, and offers new audiences new ways to receive and to co-create the dramas of our time.

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