

in 'intimate' performances, as one encounters (and maps) the site 'one to one'. There is much good stuff to chew on in this collection, then, but there is also a slightly frustrating sense of the whole being less than the sum of its parts. What makes this a *book*, an edited collection, I kept wondering (as opposed to a themed journal edition or a set of conference proceedings)?

There is a valuable, literature overview in Joanne Tompkins's introduction to the volume, but the multiple 'p' words of the book's title are never brought into sufficient focus to provide an over-arching logic. The editors have also not done enough, in several cases, to encourage writers to expand their frames beyond the close-up specifics of their case studies to crystallize the broader critical issues arising.

Indeed, the positioning of essays by Michael McKinnie and Sophie Nield as bookends to the collection seems almost to relieve other contributors of such duties. These two pieces are distinctive in their provocative attempts to question aspects of the established discourse on site-specific work, which derive (Nield contends) from 'theatre's myth-making about itself'. Yet these important discussions are done no favours by being both privileged and isolated within the book's structure.

Each is awarded a 'section' of its own, on 'Economics' and 'Politics' respectively – the eleven essays between them being grouped into three sections, on 'Narratives of History', 'Slippage of Place', and 'Theatrical Intimacy'. Meanwhile co-editor Anna Birch, in her own essay in mid-volume, perpetuates some of the myths around the progressive virtues of the site-specific that McKinnie and Nield query. In short, there is a lack of coherence and cohesion in the book's conceptualization which left me ultimately dissatisfied.

STEVE BOTTOMS

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Aleks Sierz

Modern British Playwriting: the 1990s – Voices, Documents, New Interpretations

London: Methuen Drama, 2012. 277 p. £16.99.

ISBN: 978-1-4081-2926-5.

Aleks Sierz gamely takes on the task of rewriting the playwriting of a decade which his influential *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Theatre Today* had already partially mapped. The present book is, then, in part a rejoinder to Sierz's earlier work: an attempt to draw a more complex picture of the playwriting traditions, developments, and voices. This book will therefore make a useful text for students of British playwriting, giving, as it does, a broad view of the theatre climate of the 1990s and detailed and careful analysis of some of the key writers of the period.

The opening chapter sets the scene of the 1990s, bombarding the reader with statistics and details about the social, political, artistic, and global contexts of the time. There's such an emphasis on the quantity of information that this chapter is slightly difficult to navigate; though Sierz occasionally points to the significance of events, or to the relationships between context and culture, the aim here is to inform rather than to analyze. Nevertheless, this section provides multiple jumping-off points for considering the relationships between theatre, culture, and society.

The second chapter maps the theatrical landscape. Positioning the 'in-yer-face' sensibility as just one facet of a much broader, less homogenous theatre scene, Sierz name-checks a huge range of theatre-makers, practices, genres, and venues, and makes the most of his own experience of the decade as a theatregoer and reviewer. Again, there isn't space for detailed analysis; instead, Sierz gives a flavour of the decade's theatre that captures and emphasizes its diversity and energy.

The 'New Interpretations' chapters each tackle a major playwright by focusing on three plays, allowing greater depth and consideration. Catherine Rees's chapter on Sarah Kane and Graham Saunders's on Mark Ravenhill provide – particularly in the case of Ravenhill – some new perspectives, though this is already fairly well-trodden ground. Sierz's chapter on Philip Ridley and Trish Reid's on Anthony Neilson are welcome additions, and will be valuable to students of the playwriting and culture of the 1990s.

'Documents' collects a range of source material: an early Ridley monologue, the edited transcript of Kane's much-quoted interview with Dan Rebellato, a compilation of material by Neilson on Neilson, extracts from Ravenhill's 'A Tear in the Fabric' lecture. This compilation will, again, prove useful to students, though it's Ridley's *Vesper* – which is otherwise unpublished, and whose inclusion provides some insight into the development of Ridley's early work and distinctive theatrical language – that makes this section of the book distinctive.

RACHEL CLEMENTS

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Susan Broadhurst and Josephine Machon, ed.

Identity, Performance, and Technology: Practices of Empowerment, Embodiment, and Technicity

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 256 p. £50.

ISBN: 978-0-230-29888-0.

This collection of writings is the first in a series of volumes that are centred on global and embodied approaches to performance and technology. In focusing on digital performance practices, the

series seeks to offer 'fresh artistic and theoretical perspectives on this exciting and growing area of contemporary performance practice'.

In presenting such a wide and varied collection of chapters by both practitioners and key academics in this field, the volume addresses ideas that range from the global to highly personal experiences of making and viewing performance. While there is an inclusion of some familiar practitioners who employ digital technologies in their work such as Stelarc, the volume is dominated by a refreshing blend of new and largely previously unheralded work and thinking that opens up new dialogues in relation to embodied performance practice and technology.

The book is organised into four sections, with a helpful foreword by Thecla Schiphorst that frames the key ideas of the volume and foregrounds the importance of developing our ability to 'discern, experience, create, and transform our digital world'. A selection from the range of contributions provides a flavour of the diversity of rich content. Boddington presents a manifesto for hyper-existence through the potential of telematic performance and networks that allow full-bodied interactions and interfaces that offer 'fully connected multi-nodal merges of real and virtual space'. Popat and Preece also offer us new ways of thinking about our bodies in mixed-media environments and, like Boddington, suggest that this new connectivity offers us new possibilities for both artistic expression and wider socio-political purposes.

Broadhurst presents a compelling analysis of the dreamscapes of Pina Bausch's work and identifies the legacy of Brecht and Artaudian techniques as a way of understanding the language of this seminal practitioner's performances. Machon explores the experiential identities in the work of Marisa Carnesky through the relationships between her live(d) body and its relation to site, speech, and both digital and mechanical technologies across several of her performances. The final section, 'Blurring the Boundaries: the Delimited Self', offers examples of how technology is used to engender intimacy and direct audience-performer engagement, and explores the permeability of our digital-virtual and physical-organic worlds.

There are a number of minor but irritating typographical inconsistencies, and the indexing appears incomplete and is frequently unhelpful. However, this is an important addition to the material on performance and technology and its impact on embodied performance practices. In its ambition and scope this volume will be of interest to those concerned with somatic practice and the range of emergent thinking and multiple impacts of digital technologies deployed in contemporary performance.

SCOTT PALMER

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José-Luis García Barrientos

**Análisis de la dramaturgia cubana actual
(Analysis of Contemporary Cuban Dramaturgy)**

Havana: Editorial Alarcos, 2011. 444 p. £20.

ISBN: 978-959-305-014-2.

Comparing the current state of the drama written in Spanish in various countries using a clearly bounded method is the goal that gave birth to the project *Análisis de la dramaturgia actual en español (Analysis of Contemporary Dramaturgy in Spanish)*, directed by José-Luis García Barrientos, from the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Higher Council for Scientific Research) of Spain. This book is the first tangible result of the project, to be followed by others on the dramaturgy of Mexico, Argentina, and Spain.

The 'dramatological' analysis method that structures this book has been established and developed by José-Luis García Barrientos in multiple studies. Introduced in 2001 in *Cómo se comenta una obra de teatro (How to Comment on a Theatre Play)*, it has been valued by Jean-Marie Schaeffer in the *Nouveau dictionnaire encyclopedique des sciences du langage* as 'the deepest analysis of dramatic structure' to this day. The aim of *dramatology* (and therefore of the present book) is to study drama – that is, the performative mode (as in Aristotle) of representing fictions. *Dramatology* proposes to establish the meaning of each of the main categories that constitute drama (space, time, character, and the audience's perspective), and its text structure.

In this book, three researchers from Cuba (Ulises Rodríguez Febles, Abel González Melo, and Laura Ruiz) collaborate with three from beyond (Uruguayan Federico López Terra, Swiss Christophe Herzog, and García Barrientos himself). They 'face' the work of Amado del Pino, Ulises Rodríguez Febles, Nara Mansur, Lilian Susel Zaldivar de los Reyes, Norge Espinosa, and Abel González Melo. Each of the researchers presents two chapters, the first of which examines in depth a representative play of the author in question, while the second highlights the characteristics of his/her playwrighting in total.

The similarity of structure allows for ease of comparison. The dual objective – interpretation of the work of an author and definition of clear patterns for comparison – is accomplished in all the essays, but it is particularly satisfying in the chapter dedicated by Christophe Herzog to the play *Ignacio y Mary* by Nara Mansur. Certain trends become clear in the drama of this Caribbean country, the recurrent approach to the family as a main topic and the frequent absence of dramatic action, accompanied by stage directions that are unrepresentable in many cases. Every scholar of the Spanish-language theatre should be