

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.

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doi:10.1017/S0266464X13000791

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.

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doi:10.1017/S0266464X13000808

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