



Retreats from Realism in Recent English Drama

Ruby Cohn

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Ruby Cohn assumes realism to be the dominant mode in English theatre since 1956, the year of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. She argues, however, that the most provocative plays of the last few decades have departed from realism and she traces certain patterns of departure which are familiar in the long tradition of English drama. The patterns, which form the chapters of the book, include the theme of England as dramatic metaphor, modernisations or adaptations of Shakespeare, stage verse, theatre within theatre, explorations of madness, dreams, ghosts and the reviewing of history through a contemporary lens. Among the playwrights who avail themselves of these devices are John Arden, Edward Bond, Howard Brenton, Caryl Churchill, David Edgar, Pam Gems, Christopher Hampton, David Hare, Peter Nichols, Tom Stoppard, David Storey, Heathcote Williams and Charles Wood.

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