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978-0-521-03528-6 - Anglo-American Interplay in Recent Drama

Ruby Cohn

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The provocative notion of a contemporary cross-cultural exchange within the medium of theatre is here imposed upon a dozen contemporary Anglo-American dramatists: Alan Ayckbourn and Neil Simon, Edward Bond and Sam Shepard, David Mamet and Harold Pinter, Caryl Churchill and Maria Irene Fornes, David Hare and David Rabe, Christopher Hampton and Richard Nelson. In each pairing, Ruby Cohn unites a British with an American playwright, exploring similarities both apparent and embedded – similarities that serve as a springboard for the exposure of a more profound, culturally based difference.

Cohn brings a critical eye of unusual versatility and experience to the reading of these paired playwrights. In Pinter and Mamet, for example, she notes the shared sense of linguistic play. In the plays of Bond and Shepard, on the other hand, she explores the plight of the artist in society; in those of Simon and Ayckbourn, the comic exposition of middle-class mores. Without engaging in cultural reductivism or misleading stereotypes, Cohn demonstrates how such themes lend themselves to differing interpretations in Great Britain and in the United States. A certain transatlantic double focus thus illuminates both the composition and the interpretation of dramatic works in an increasingly globally minded age.

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Dr. Ruby Cohn.

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For American Bill, English Bill, and Susie

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