

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10693-1 - 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, modernizations or adaptations of Shakespeare, stage verse, theatre within theatre, explorations of madness, dreams, ghosts, and the re-viewing 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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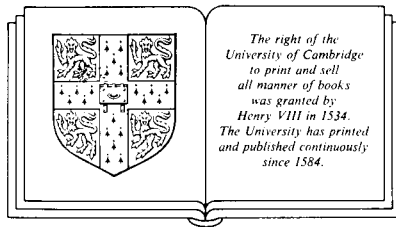
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# *Retreats from realism in recent English drama*

RUBY COHN

*Professor of Comparative Drama,  
University of California at Davis*



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This book grew from my great debts to:

London theatres, especially the Royal Court and the Young Vic.

The British Theatre Association's invaluable library, with its indefatigable staff, especially Enid Foster.

My theatre companions through the decades, especially Renata and Martin Esslin, Adele and Ted Shank, Enoch Brater, Dolora Cunningham, Jim Vinson, Hersh Zeifman, especially in dissension.

The lively seminar members of summer, 1978, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, hosted by the Royal National Theatre in London.

Editors who have become friends – Sarah Mahaffy and Sarah Stanton.

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Earlier versions of Chapters 3 and 5 appeared in *Theatre Journal* and *Modern Drama* respectively, by whose permission I reprint my own material.

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