



Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition

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Any review of 20th-century American theatre invariably leads to the term realism. Yet despite the strong tradition of theatrical realism on the American stage, the term is frequently misidentified, and the practices to which it refers are often attacked as monolithically tyrannical, restricting the potential of the American national theatre.

This book reconsiders realism on the American stage by addressing the great variety and richness of the plays that form the American theatre canon. By reconsidering the form and revisiting many of the plays that contributed to the realist tradition, the authors provide the opportunity to appraise strengths often overlooked by previous critics. The volume traces the development of American dramatic realism from James A. Herne, the "American Ibsen," to currently active contemporaries such as Sam Shepard, David Mamet, and Marsha Norman. This frank assessment, in sixteen original essays, reopens a critical dialog too long closed.

Essays include:

- American Dramatic Realisms, Viable Frames of Thought
- The Struggle for the Real--Interpretive Conflict, Dramatic Method, and the Paradox of Realism
- The Legacy of James A. Herne: American Realities and Realisms
- Whose Realism? Rachel Crothers's Power Struggle in the American Theatre
- The Provincetown Players' Experiments with Realism
- Servant of Three Masters: Realism, Idealism, and "Hokum" in American High Comedy

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