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Dramas of Culture is shaped by twelve carefully interwoven interdisciplinary essays on the role of performance as inscribed within contemporary cultural debate. Part One addresses the recent cultural turn in scholarship and public affairs and offers three provocative discussions of its genealogy, goals, and shortcomings. Underpinning these arguments are the key dramatic elements of language, performativity, and spectacle. Part Two stresses the constitutive roles of scene and setting, melodrama, and tragic conflict for literary theory, political thought, and dialectical philosophy, each with direct bearings on contemporary cultural studies. Parts Three and Four turn to the intellectual and cultural significance of specific plays in the Western repertoire. Part Three examines several major efforts to rethink the nature of tragedy as a dramatic genre, emphasizing its capacity to reveal the fragility and provisionality of culture, while Part Four focuses on prominent examples of the shifting relations among drama, history, and processes of cultural change.

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Dramas of Culture: Theory, History, Performance (TEXTURES: Philosophy / Literature / Culture) From Brand: Lexington Books Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #6420116 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Lexington Books
- Published on: 2008-10-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.09" h x .81" w x 6.07" l, .85 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 258 pages

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Editorial Review

Review
Twelve astute critics assess the cultural turn in literary and historical studies. Focusing on philosophers and theorists ranging from Edmund Burke to Martin Heidegger, and writers and artists from Sophocles and Shakespeare to Marcel Duchamp, these engaging essays rethink questions of history, performance, and dramatic theory in the perspective of recent debates in cultural politics. Together the contributors stage and articulate major themes, including the conflicting emancipatory and oppressive potentials of culture, the multiplicity of possible dramatizations of history, and the philosophy and practice of performance. Informed by current literary, philosophical, and rhetorical theory, the essays constitute a rich source for readers exploring the conjunction of culture, drama, and performance.. (Gary Shapiro, Tucker-Boatwright Professor in the Humanities-Philosophy, University of Richmond)

This splendid collection explores the configurations of contemporary culture from many points of view in terms of literature, philosophy, and history. The drama of culture and the culture of drama become a main intersection for this exploration. The editors have done a wonderful job bringing together distinguished authors to examine the roles of cultural poetics, dramatic theory, the history play, and performance from the Greeks through Shakespeare and Molière to Lorca. (Jonathan Hart, University of Alberta)

For readers interested in drama, performance, and culture, this is a major collection of essays that will be required reading for some time to come..... (Herman Rapaport, Wake Forest University)

Dramas of Culture employs a vocabulary associated with drama, as well as with narrative, to achieve insights into cultural history and theory. Drawing upon examples from Sophocles to the postmodern, and from art, literature and philosophy, these essays are notable at once for their theoretical depth and for the precision with which they treat individual works. (Herbert Lindenberger, Stanford University)

Twelve astute critics assess the cultural turn in literary and historical studies. Focusing on philosophers and theorists ranging from Edmund Burke to Martin Heidegger, and writers and artists from Sophocles and Shakespeare to Marcel Duchamp, these engaging essays rethink questions of history, performance, and dramatic theory in the perspective of recent debates in cultural politics. Together the contributors stage and articulate major themes, including the conflicting emancipatory and oppressivepotentials of culture, the multiplicity of possible dramatizations of history, and the philosophy and practice of performance. Informed by current literary, philosophical, and rhetorical theory, the essays constitute a rich source for readers exploring the conjunction of culture, drama, and performance. (Gary Shapiro, Tucker-Boatwright Professor in the Humanities-Philosophy, University of Richmond)

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