

Andrews, S. (2010). *Review of Performance and the City*. *Theatre Research International* 35(3), 312-313.

*Book reviewed: Hopkins, D. J., Orr, S., & Solga, K. (2009). Performance and the City*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Pp. 269. Book Review

This collection argues that, for too long, urban experience has been interpreted as literary text, rather than as lived encounter. The editors have sought to redress this by assembling essays that demonstrate the ways in which performance connects to and develops theories of the city both in and beyond theatre and performance. The publication thus opens up a relevant perspective for theatre and performance studies as well as allied fields. It emerges at a time when the city, and performance in the city, offer particularly charged experiences. The collection was edited in the long shadow of 9/11 and amid the unease of the recent global financial crisis. There is a perceptible thread of individual experience of unease in cities, particularly in New York. This is evident as much in Marla Carlson's account of walks in post-9/11 New York City, as in Marlis Schweitzer's examination of publicity stunts from the early 1900s in which 'fears about urban life were mapped onto, and expressed through, the bodies of female performers' (p. 141).

The contributors reveal how fears and crises have shaped individual experiences of cities, whether past, present or imagined. Michael McKinnie reveals particular unease in global cities, which he identifies as 'anxious places', in which the individual must adapt, led by cultural policy and practice (p. 124). For D. J. Hopkins and Shelley Orr, 'pedestrians can step into the paths walked by others' and can 'access overlapping urban traumas' in quite different ways to more conventional archives (p. 47). Similarly, the authors here step into established theoretical paths, finding 'different ways', again making the book particularly relevant as a bridging text to related disciplines. Joanne Tomkins interprets Patricia Yaeger's 'metropoetics' – introduced as 'a strategy for understanding the history and phenomenology of cities through acts of cultural and literary making' (p. 187–8) – through theatre. Jen Harvie proposes 'a materialist performative analysis' to 'articulate the ambivalent complexity of the social experience of both Tate Modern . . . and the contemporary city' (p. 205). For McKinnie, culture and performance offer opportunities to imagine new subjectivities.

These essays, then, are theories informed by the theorist *in* the city; they address the complexity of the individual lived encounter that, in unsettling times, carries particular responsibility. The accent on individual authorship means that the editors have selected essays on the cities with which they are most familiar, primarily in 'the Anglophone West' (p. 7). While future volumes are planned, these could have been more clearly marked at this point, particularly given the apparent all-encompassing arc of the book's title. The 'Anglophone West' might bear particular scrutiny, as might the individual in the global city, which is an underlying theme in the book. Similarly, this is a largely conventionally written text, with less sense of the interplay of forms in contemporary performance. A broader approach to form might have continued the challenge to the literary city that is a valid, compelling aim of this book.