

Scenes from Bourgeois Life

A volume in the Theater: Theory/Text/Performance series

Scenes from Bourgeois Life proposes that theatre spectatorship has made a significant contribution to the historical development of a distinctive bourgeois sensibility, characterized by the cultivation of distance. In Nicholas Ridout's formulation, this distance is produced and maintained at two different scales. First is the distance of the colonial relation, not just in miles between Jamaica and London, but also the social, economic, and psychological distances involved in that relation. The second is the distance of spectatorship, not only of the modern theatregoer as consumer, but the larger and pervasive disposition to observe, comment, and sit in judgment, which becomes characteristic of the bourgeois relation to the rest of the world. This engagingly written study of history, class, and spectatorship offers compelling proof of "why theater matters," and demonstrates the importance of examining the question historically.

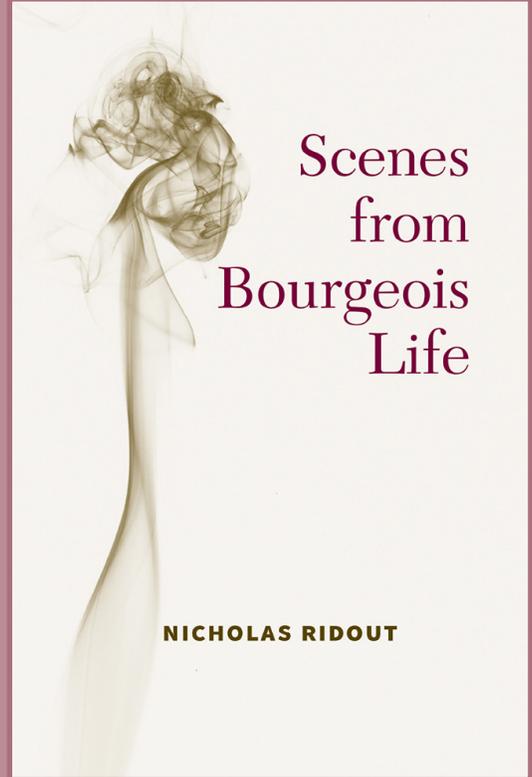
Nicholas Ridout is Professor of Theatre at Queen Mary University of London. His many previous books include *Passionate Amateurs: Theatre, Communism, and Love*

"Ridout's prose is a pleasure to read; his glosses on theory are illuminating; his excavations of primary texts are surprising; his argument is timely, and substantial enough to influence the course of scholarship in the field."

—Julia Jarcho, Brown University

"*Scenes from Bourgeois Life* is a stunning piece of scholarship, and one of the most enjoyable texts to be published on the politics of spectatorship in recent years. In challenging the privileged position of a disinterested observer, what it offers is a prompt and a methodology for appreciating and potentially acting upon the contingent circumstances of our own historical moment, in which the 'distance' of suffering from bourgeois subjecthood risks serving as an alibi for silence."

—*Theatre Research International*



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