

THE EDWARDIAN THEATRE: ESSAYS ON PERFORMANCE AND THE STAGE. Edited by Michael R. Booth and Joel H. Kaplan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp. xii + 243 + illus. £30/\$49.95.

This excellent volume of eleven essays, plus an editorial introduction, is based mainly, although not exclusively, on papers given at 'The Edwardian Stage' Conference held in 1992 at Vancouver Island, Canada. The collection advances research in the field of Edwardian theatre and performance studies, and successfully combines scholarship with an accessible style, making the essays both highly informative and readable.

Contributions aim to document neglected areas of Edwardian theatre, especially forms of popular performance. Joseph Donohue's opening essay, 'What is the Edwardian theatre?' (useful for seminar discussions), details not only the characteristics of new realism, idealism and Puritanism associated with canonical drama, but also draws our attention to the popular theatre of fantasy, pantomime, spectacle, and musical comedy. Peter Bailey's essay looks specifically at the neglected genre of musical comedy in his study of its girl-heroine, while Dave Russell examines Edwardian variety in the halls, and Jim Davis elects to focus on the theatrical life of London's East End, rather than the fashionable playhouses of the West End.

Moreover, Bailey's examination of ways in which male power controlled musical comedy highlights gender issues which inform a number of the essays in the volume. J.S. Bratton continues her groundbreaking explorations of gender play and impersonation in Edwardian music hall, highlighting the misogyny of the halls and the marked aggression towards women as they infiltrated areas of performance traditionally assigned to men. In a painstakingly researched essay on the financial organization of theatres, Tracy C. Davis demon-

strates how women were disadvantaged in theatre management, and Sheila Stowell looks in detail at suffrage theatre critics.

Theatre criticism and feminism also unite in John Stokes's essay, 'Rebecca West at the Theatre', in which he argues persuasively for the theatricality of Edwardian politics and West's view of herself as author and subject of her own woman-centred drama. The subject of criticism surfaces again in Victor Emeljanow's essay on the Edwardian critic which touches on contemporary attitudes towards the theatregoer. The position of the spectator is given further detailed treatment in Dennis Kennedy's essay on 'the new audience' for 'the New Drama'.

The final essay in the volume is David Mayer's meticulous study of play and film versions of *The Whip*. Although noting that cinema would replace theatre as a dominant form of entertainment in the twentieth century, Mayer concentrates on the co-existence of stage and film in the Edwardian period. This typifies the central concern of the volume: the re-viewing of definitions, histories and (gender) boundaries of Edwardian culture, theatre and performance. Those researching Edwardian theatre history will, therefore, find not only the contents but also the research methodologies of the essays invaluable. The volume is also likely to appeal to those working in related fields—most significantly in cultural and women's studies. In brief, the editors are to be congratulated on realizing a volume of such high scholarship.

ELAINE ASTON  
*Loughborough University*

MODERN DRAMA BY WOMEN, 1880S-1930S: AN INTERNATIONAL ANTHOLOGY. Edited by Katherine E. Kelly. London: Routledge, 1996. Pp. 320 + illus. £45; 14.99.

In this exciting new anthology Katherine Kelly brings together an

international caucus of women writers: twelve playwrights, working in the theatres of Europe, the Americas and Asia in the decades from 1880 to 1930; and fifteen contemporary scholars, mostly working within the USA, but with an enviable spread of historical, geographic and cultural expertise. With this unprecedented group of contributors Kelly recovers and celebrates the women playwrights of an era of huge social and economic upheaval, and immense cultural influence.

Kelly introduces the anthology with a comprehensively sourced historiographical essay in which she discusses the marginalization of women within histories of theatre and drama. She is angered by the exclusion of women writers within the canon and contends that critics, historians and practitioners have 'erased the contribution of women playwrights from the history of English dramatic modernism' (4), have 'turned a blind eye to the thousands of plays, some of them distinguished and commercially successful, written by women' (4), and that 'The merest fraction of plays by women were blessed with professional production' (5). Her purpose is to reset something of this prejudice by recovering an international selection of significant plays by women. With the reliable assurance of such a strong thesis, Kelly oversees an anthology of considerable depth and diversity with the selection of texts ranging from short symbolist experiments through daring political allegories to full-length human tragedies. Above all Kelly insists on the contemporary ubiquity of her selections: 'In addition to the obvious requirement that the play should, on the basis of its language and implied action, be of sufficient literary and theatrical quality to merit reading and/or production by contemporary actors, the plays selected for inclusion had to be authored by women; had to contribute to geographical and stylistic diversity; and, finally, had to address issues of sex and gender