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Southern Women Playwrights: New Essays in Literary History and Criticism

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Coeditors Robert McDonald and Linda Rohrer Paige attribute the neglect of southern women playwrights in scholarly criticism to "deep historical prejudices" against drama itself and against women artists in general, especially in the South. Their call for critical awareness is answered by the 15 essays they include in Southern Women Playwrights, considerations of the creative work of universally acclaimed playwrights such as Beth Henley, Marsha Norman, and Lillian Hellman (the so-called "Trinity") in addition to that of less-studied playwrights, including Zora Neale Hurston, Carson McCullers, Alice Childress, Naomi Wallace, Amparo Garcia, Paula Vogel, and Regina Porter. This collection springs from a series of associated questions regarding the literary and theatrical heritage of the southern woman playwright, the unique ways in which southern women have approached the conventional modes of comedy and tragedy, and the ways in which the South, its types and stereotypes, its peculiarities, its traditions - both literary and cultural - figure in these women's plays. Especially relevant to these questions are essays on Lillian Hellman, who resisted the label "southern writer," and Carson McCullers, who never attempted to ignore her southernness. This book begins by recovering little-known or unknown episodes in the history of southern drama and by examining the ways plays assumed importance in the lives of southern women in the early 20th century. It concludes with a look at one of the most vibrant, diverse theatre scenes outside New York today - Atlanta.

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