



Women's Romantic Theatre and Drama: History, Agency, and Performativity

By Keir Elam

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As theatre and drama of the Romantic Period undergo a critical reassessment among scholars internationally, the contributions of women as playwrights, actresses, and managers are also being revalued. This volume, which brings together leading British, North American, and Italian critics, is a crucial step towards reclaiming the importance of women's dramatic and theatrical activities during the period. Writing for the theatre implied assuming a public role, a hazardous undertaking for women who, especially after the French Revolution, were assigned to the private, primarily domestic, sphere. As the contributors examine the covert strategies women used to become full participants in the public theatre, they shed light on the issue of women's agency, expressed both through the writing of highly politicized or ethicized drama, as in the case of Elizabeth Inchbald or Joanna Baillie, and through women's professional practice as theatre managers and stage producers, as in the case of Elizabeth Vestris and Jane Scott. Among the topics considered are women's history plays, domesticity, ethics and sexuality in women's closet drama, the politics of drama and performance, and the role of women as managers and producers. Specialists in performance studies, Romantic Period drama, and women's writing will find the essays both challenging and inspiring.

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Editorial Review

Review

'Women's Romantic Theatre and Drama assembles the best scholars from Italy, North America, and the United Kingdom into a single volume, and in many ways represents the culmination of three years of collective work led by Lilla Crisafulli and Keir Elam. Here is exhaustive coverage of romantic women writers' contribution to the period's theater and drama, from treatments of major writers like Elizabeth Inchbald and Joanna Baillie to essays on Scottish women's writing, translation, censorship, religion and science, and dramatic theory. Romantic theater is evidently alive and well - thanks to time well spent in Italy.' Michael Gamer, University of Pennsylvania, USA 'Women's Romantic Theatre and Drama is important not only because it directs the critical spotlight to stages and auditoriums bustling with activity, but also lifts the curtain on important 'backstage areas' such as the salon and literary closet, where women could explore new forms of agency, both individual and collective.' BARS Bulletin

About the Author

Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Keir Elam are both Professors of English Literature at the University of Bologna, Italy.

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