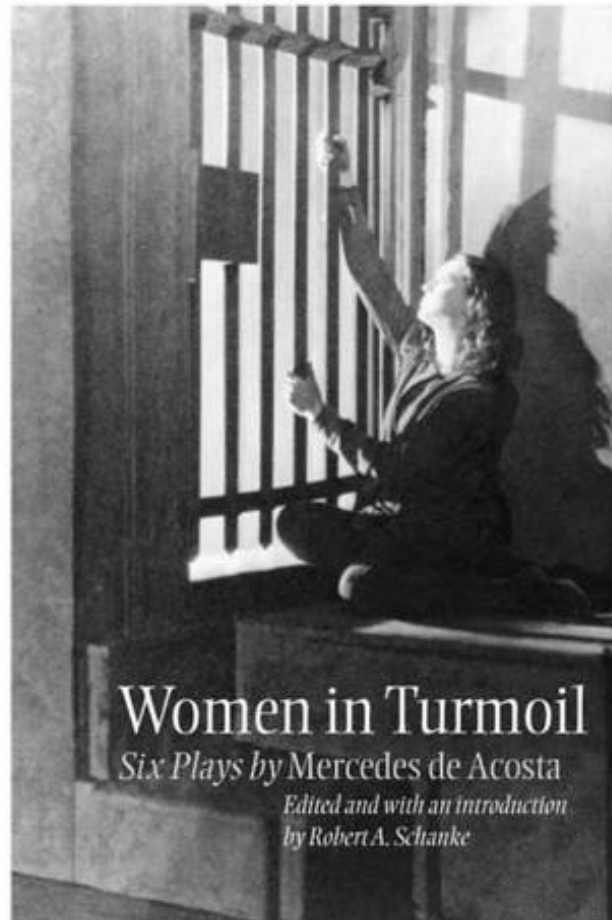


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From Brand: Southern Illinois University Press : Women in Turmoil: Six Plays by Mercedes de Acosta (Theater in the Americas) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Women in Turmoil: Six Plays by Mercedes de Acosta (Theater in the Americas):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I Look Forward to reading One Play Per Night. Wish there Were More!!By Marie E. RomanThe plays are cleanly presented with understandable emotion and story lines. These stories of people's lives in time of trial are fascinating and amazing in their solutions. I love Mercedes as a person and a writer. She tells things like they are, is true to her beliefs and pays very close attention to factual detail, such as in the story of Joan of Arc. I highly recommend these plays and thanks to the University of Southern Illinois for publishing

Schanke's resurrection of them to the light of our day.

In this first publication of six plays by the flamboyantly uninhibited author, poet, and playwright Mercedes de Acosta (1893-1968), theater historian Robert A. Schanke rescues these lost theatrical writings from the dusty margins of obscurity. Often autobiographical, always rife with gender struggle, and still decidedly stageworthy, *Women in Turmoil: Six Plays by Mercedes de Acosta* constitutes a significant find for the canon of gay and lesbian drama. In her 1960 autobiography *Here Lies the Heart*, de Acosta notes that as she was contemplating marriage to a man in 1920, she was "in a strange turmoil about world affairs, my own writing, suffrage, sex, and my inner spiritual development." The voice in these plays is that of a lesbian in turmoil, marginalized and ignored. Her same-sex desires and struggles for acceptance fueled her writings, and nowhere is that more evident than in the plays contained herein. The women characters struggle with unfulfilling marriages, divorce, unrequited sexual desire, suppressed identity, and a longing for recognition. Of the six plays, only the first two were ever produced. *Jehanne d'Arc* (1922) premiered in Paris with de Acosta's lover at the time, Eva Le Gallienne, starring and Norman Bel Geddes designing the set and lights. In 1934, de Acosta adapted it into a screenplay for Greta Garbo, then her lover, but it was never filmed. Portraying rampant anti-Semitism in a small New England town, *Jacob Slovak* (1923) was performed both on Broadway and in London, with the London production starring John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson. *The Mother of Christ* (1924) is a long one-act play written for the internationally known actress Eleonora Duse. After Duse's death, several other actresses including Eva Bartok, Jeanne Eagels, and Lillian Gish explored productions of the play. Igor Stravinsky wrote a score, Norman Bel Geddes designed a set, and Gladys Calthrop designed costumes. However, the play was never produced. Her most autobiographical play, *World Without End* (1925), and her most sensational play, *The Dark Light* (1926), both unfold through plots of sibling rivalry, incest, and suicide. With overtones of Ibsen, *Illusion* (1928) continues the themes of de Acosta's previous plays with her rough and seedy cast of characters, but here the playwright's drama grows to incorporate a yearning for belonging as well as strong elements of class conflict. What notoriety remains associated with de Acosta has less to do with her writing than with her infamous romances with the likes of Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Isadora Duncan, Alla Nazimova, Eva Le Gallienne, Tamara Karsavina, Pola Negri, and Ona Munson. Through this collection of six powerfully poignant dramas, editor Robert A. Schanke strives to correct myths about Mercedes de Acosta and to restore both her name and her literary achievements to their proper place in history. Robert A. Schanke has authored the original biography, *That Furious Lesbian: The Story of Mercedes de Acosta*, also available from Southern Illinois University Press.