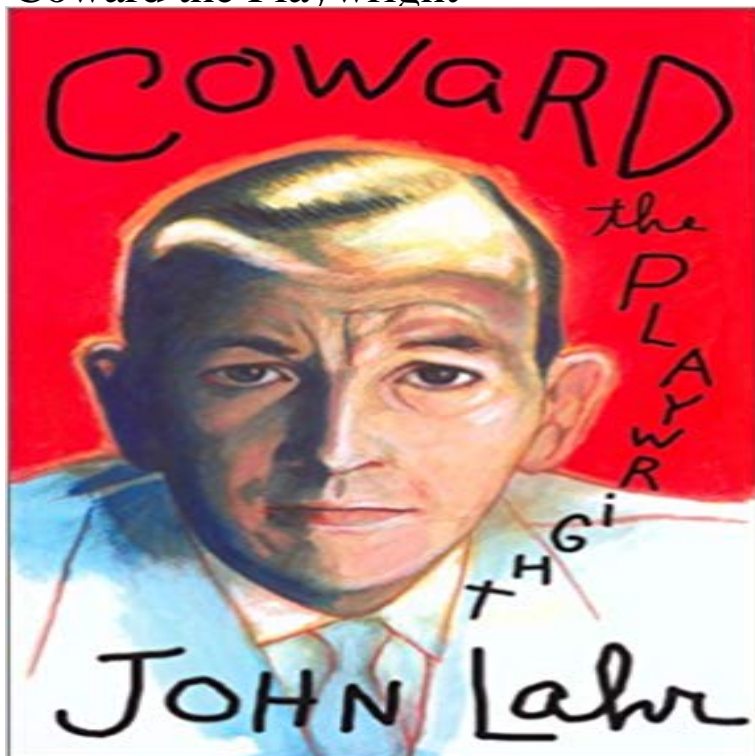


Coward the Playwright



In five dexterously argued chapters, John Lahr investigates all the major plays and many of Noel Coward's lesser-known pieces. *Hay Fever*, *Private Lives*, and *Design for Living*, for instance, make a fascinating group of Comedies of Bad Manners. *Blithe Spirit* and *Relative Values* raise the Ghost in the Fun Machine. And Lahr explores the politics of charm oozing through *The Vortex*, *Easy Virtue*, and *Present Laughter*. Further chapters consider the patriotic plays like *Cavalcade* and *This Happy Breed* and examples of Coward's later work, such as *Waiting in the Wings* and *A Song at Twilight*. In all Coward's stage work, Lahr detects a coherent philosophy in which charm is both the subject of Coward's comedies and the trap that makes his very public life a perpetual performance.

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