

needed support from their adult children. Brockman changed the role of mother from one of enforcer of Christian values to one of guide to ethical choices, emphasising that mothers should let their children go as they mature and reduce interference in the lives of their offspring to a minimum in order to hold on their affections in adulthood. Her strategy was to produce an independent adult with natural parental ties. Like her predecessors, Brockman was concerned with providing her children with lessons for a good life, but these lessons are also providing her with a retirement plan—a place in her adult child's household.

Brockman also moved away from the focus on motherhood to seek to improve the lives of aged mothers, advising women to take any available opportunity to obtain knowledge of physic and surgery as this would enable them to be useful and charitable individuals, earning them esteem from their neighbours by helping out in times of illness. Brockman's aim was to make old age a time filled with activity and people for women. She pointed out that advice was seldom given to the aged, who were either venerated or thought ridiculous, expressing her fear that the aged did not want to admit their faults, a lapse that might create difficulties with the younger generation.

Marsha Urban has done a great service to literary scholars and historians by bringing to light and discussing in such detail a much neglected text. As well as getting a real sense of the author and her motives, Urban links *Age Rectified* to important recent scholarship on motherhood and old age in early modern England. Scholars interested in either of these topics must read this book.

Sophie Tomlinson. *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. xiv + 294 pp. + 12 illus. \$85.00. Review by AYANNA THOMPSON, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY.

As anyone who works on Restoration texts knows, scholars of the earlier seventeenth century and the later eighteenth century often either ignore Restoration drama or treat it like some bizarre anomaly that occurred *ex nihilo*. Sophie Tomlinson's new book *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama*, however, offers an important intervention by demonstrating "the literary and theatrical continuities" between early seventeenth-century court productions and later

seventeenth-century public ones (1). By focusing on the continuities between female power, female performances, and female authorship, Tomlinson deconstructs the popular assumption that “the appearance of the professional actress [was] a decisive change from the past” (1). Ultimately, Tomlinson argues, “As the introduction of actresses opened up a new range of conventions and attitudes, so the metamorphosis of the female wit into the woman playwright brought an enlarging of dramatic perspectives” (17). This is a large claim, and *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama* provides a thought-provoking, but not fully convincing, narrative about the shifting cultural norms that led to the opening of the stage to both female actresses and playwrights.

Although it appears as if the chapters are organized thematically, they are also arranged temporally, moving the reader from the Jacobean court of the early seventeenth century to the Restoration plays by Katherine Philips. Chapter One focuses on several court masques by Ben Jonson and Samuel Daniel. Aligning her argumentation with those by critics like Leeds Barroll and Stephen Orgel, Tomlinson links the power of the Anna of Denmark’s cultural and political influence with her ability to direct the construction of the court masques (costuming, plotting, casting, etc.). Tomlinson, however, is less interested in the cultural work of the masques than in their “representation of women’s persuasive agency, figured through a dynamic language of action and motion” (19). By attending to the persuasive elements of motion, Tomlinson provides a compelling alternative to the assumption that agency comes through the voice. “The poetics of female performance,” Tomlinson argues, reveals that physical embodiment can be transgressive in its own right (3): actions without words are persuasive and powerful. She ends this chapter by arguing that the court masques organized by and for Anna of Denmark and Henrietta Maria “opened up” the idea that a rich power was endowed when there is collaboration between the sexes (that is, between the queen and the king, or the queen and the male masque writer). This chapter represents the best of Tomlinson’s book. Her theorization of the persuasiveness of bodily performance provides an important addition to the study of seventeenth-century masques.

Chapter Two, which focuses on pastoral drama, adds voice back into the analysis by attending to female singing and “burgeoning vocal and articulate power” (78). This chapter provides readings of texts by Aurelian Townshend, Walter Montagu, and John Milton that present ways for women to express their love chastely. Tomlinson closely examines the ways these performance

pieces depict women who are moved and who move others, and I appreciate the way she connects the previous chapter's interest in physical movement with this chapter's attention to emotional movement: there is (and was) a connection between these two states. Tomlinson argues that these texts demonstrate "an encroaching sexual realism" through "forensic attention to female discourse and display" (78). Thus, the plays not only demonstrate their engagement in the debates of the time, but also "represent new forms of feminine self-consciousness" (78).

Chapters Three and Four deal with Caroline comedy and tragedy, respectively. Despite the fact that the plays analyzed in these two chapters are all written by male playwrights for boy actors playing female roles (plays by Ben Jonson, James Shirley, William Cartwright, and John Ford), Tomlinson wants to track how the representation of female characters changes after the reigns of the powerful Stuart queens consorts. Because she is mounting an historical reading of female performance and agency back from 1660 to 1603, Tomlinson must address the public theatre of the Caroline period. Yet, these chapters are the least convincing. In the chapter on comedy, for example, Tomlinson argues that these plays "raise questions about women's legal and political status in early modern England ... in particular highlighting women's loss of liberty upon marriage" (81). I am sure there are many Shakespeareans out there—to name just one group—who would argue that this occurs well before the plays of the Caroline period. While the chapter on tragedy examines the "interlinked themes" of theatrical expressions of female sexual passion, madness, and ceremonies of death, Tomlinson never spells out if she reads these playwrights as being influenced by the private court performances she describes in the first two chapters, or if these dramatic developments were a phenomena occurring independently (121).

The book picks up again with an "Interchapter" on Davenant's interregnum operas and two final chapters on plays by Margaret Cavendish and Katherine Philips. The "Interchapter" clearly demonstrates that theatre did not stop during the interregnum even if the public playhouses were closed. There was lots of playing and Davenant's operas showcased female performers in new ways. The chapter on Cavendish's plays tracks her exile from England to Europe during the interregnum and her exposure to female performances while abroad. Tomlinson provides a beautiful reading of Cavendish's responses to these performances by arguing that the attraction

was not only that the actresses challenged the assumption of the naturalness of femininity, but also that they exhibited the power of “litheness, aptitude, art and aspiration” (165). Thus, for Cavendish “performance means crossing the boundary between inside and outside, animating the self in front of the gaze of others” (176). Tomlinson’s chapter on Katherine Philips provides a bridge between the elite culture of the Caroline court and the public theatres of the Restoration. She reads Philips’s translations of Pierre Corneille’s plays as offering a careful revision of the image of the public woman as the Amazon: Philips re-creates the *femme forte* as one who has a “careful self-scrutiny and concern for decorum” (202). This, Tomlinson argues, sets the stage for the female characters we are more familiar with in Restoration comedies.

While I find Tomlinson’s overall thesis compelling—that Restoration actresses, female characters, and female playwrights did not spring out of Jove’s head fully formed—the execution of the book is not. As I have indicated, it is unclear exactly if/how Tomlinson sees a relationship between the performance of male-authored female characters by boy actors, the performance of male-authored female characters by female actresses, and the performance of female-authored female characters by female actresses. Is it a causal relationship (i.e., does one have to occur before the others)? Is it a semi-causal relationship (i.e., one must occur first, but then the others occur simultaneously)? While it is clear that Tomlinson is attempting to create an historical arc, the dots along the arc are not fully connected. Likewise, there are several moments in the book that reveal a reliance on speculation. For example, Tomlinson reveals in a footnote that she “assumes” the witches in *The Masque of Queens* were performed by professional male actors (218). Why? What is the evidence? Also, when discussing *Tempe Restored*, Tomlinson speculates not only that Madame Coniack was the singer employed in the court *and* the masque, but also that “It is conceivable that this line-up represented four distinct vocal registers and tone colors: a boy treble for Cupid, a bass for Jupiter, [etc.] . . .” (57). While it may be “conceivable,” it would only be convincing if there were evidence. I read this reliance on speculation (“It is possible that women performed in the dialogue songs . . .” [154]) as part of the problem with Tomlinson’s attempt to create a neat and clean historicized reading of female performance and agency. The book is most exciting when it theorizes performance (as it does in the first two chapters), but this ultimately does not appear to be Tomlinson’s aim, alas.