

*Mahomet and His Heaven* reserves its explanations for a 58-page appendix. Advanced graduate students and academics will be rewarded each time they turn to Dimmock's meticulous explanatory notes but even the most patient reader will long for on-page glosses when repeatedly confronted with lines such as, 'Must thou be equiperating? / what? thy grossum caput, unto my Actum? Ha'. Similarly, the decision to follow an admittedly problematic copy-text and 'keep editorial interference to a minimum' results in a text where two major characters are left out of the list of characters (without being inserted in square brackets), and confusing line breaks ('al: / so') are retained even for prose sections. Of course, Dimmock's commitment to producing a faithful modern text means that this edition will be valuable both for scholars interested in early Orientalism and for bibliographers who will appreciate the lengthy list of substantive variants and the alternate version of act 4, scene 1 appended to the text.

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**Alison Findlay. *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp x, 260.**

Alison Findlay's *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama* is a valuable contribution to the study of the relationship between early modern theatrical productions and the space in which they were written, performed, and set: an important relationship that gets relatively little attention. Findlay very carefully considers how specific historic, geographic, and architectural elements inform and are revised in plays written, performed, and sponsored by women from the late fourteenth to the early eighteenth centuries. Many of Findlay's critical readings of the plays and the space in which they were or may have been produced are instructive. This book is less helpful, however, when it comes to its assessment of the varying contribution of women to the dramatic arts, as it treats all contributions — composition, performance, and patronage — similarly without sufficient critical exploration of the input of others: male playwrights and set designers, for example. In its enthusiasm to identify how early modern women manipulated, reconfigured, and played with space

in drama, it fails to consider fully how these actions may have been affected by the women's relationship to drama itself.

This book certainly covers a lot of territory, taking a broad definition of drama to include not only plays and household or court entertainments but also speeches intended for performance but never given. In her acknowledgements, Findlay admits that *Playing Spaces* 'turned into a much bigger project than [she] originally intended' (ix). The plays and entertainments examined span almost 350 years from the liturgical dramas produced when Katherine of Sutton was Abbess at Barking Abbey from 1363 to 1376 through to late Restoration comedies written for the London stage, such as Susanna Centlivre's *The Basset-Table* and *The Gamester*. While this range is one of this book's attractions there are times when the quantity of material seems overwhelming and the analysis limited.

Findlay provides strong theoretical grounding for her examination of space in early women's drama, using the work of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. She draws on Lefebvre's model of space as temporally and topographically determined: a 'liminal zone between past and future' that possesses both 'restriction and possibility' (3). Findlay notes that 'drama constitutes a more immediate expression of spatial practice than any other form of literature' (3) and claims that women working in the genre recognized its 'restriction and possibility'. She concludes that drama therefore 'provided the best expression of their ideas about woman's place, both physically and culturally' (3). Findlay also delineates the complex relationship between space and place, describing de Certeau's concept of space '*as a practiced place*' (italics Findlay's) resulting from 'active operations that intersect within a place to actualise it or mobilise it in a range of different ways' (4). She goes on to argue that early women's drama 're-converts set place into active space' and thereby 'transgresses boundaries' (5), although this statement suggests an over-generalization. Findlay concludes this theoretical grounding by noting how both script and performance engage in spatial practice, leading to a layered and intricate relationship between play, place, and space.

Actual examination of playing spaces in early women's drama is by venue, with chapters titled Homes, Gardens, Courts, Sororities, and Cities. In each chapter, Findlay offers a separate theoretical framework within which to consider the relationship between dramatic production and space. While some of these theoretical underpinnings aid in understanding this relationship, for example the reference to Donatella Mazzoleni and his 'culture of cities' (183), others appear less helpful. Moreover, while the division of plays according

to the type of space in which they are created, performed, or set works very well as an organizing principle, it obscures some important connections and juxtaposes other works that appear only distantly related. For example, Findlay discusses plays by Margaret Cavendish in four of the five chapters but gives no indication that the use and revisioning of space in these plays may be connected through their author's political purpose. Equally, the chapter on Gardens brings together such diverse genres as translation of Greek tragedy, greetings penned for Elizabeth I, and household entertainments. While several of the works in question are related through their treatment of the pastoral and important links are made between them, the gulfs between them appear at times too great to bridge successfully.

In her first chapter, Homes, Findlay connects the *chora* as described by Elizabeth Grosz to dramatic space that has the potential to 'revivify the household by returning it to a fuller maternal, corporeal presence' (21). Her examination of the texts themselves, however, obscures this theoretical underpinning. Findlay begins by examining Mary Sidney Herbert's *The Tragedie of Antonie* and Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*, claiming that closet drama which represents the household in its fictional space or presents a different setting within the household 'allows the plays to comment self-consciously on woman's contradictory position' in the domestic environment (22). Connecting Sidney Herbert's translation to her home at Wilton and imagining it being read while her women did their needlework, Findlay argues that even as this space confines the women '[m]ale values ... are overborne by a hive of female activities: sewing, reading, writing' (27). She then connects *Antonie* and Cary's *Mariam* insofar as both enact 'the breakup of the household at the end of the sixteenth century, in which the husband is forced abroad and the wife becomes mistress in his absence' (25). *Mariam*, she suggests, moves on to prompt 'spectators to re-evaluate their perceptions of the household, to recognise the interdependence of family and State, and the significance of woman's position in both' (35).

While Findlay makes an important point when she notes the connection between household and commonwealth in Cary's play, her reference to spectators evokes an audience despite scanty evidence that the play was staged. This sleight of hand occurs more than once as Findlay speculates on how space may have informed a performance when there is nothing to corroborate such an event. She provides a thorough analysis of internal evidence and offers imaginative conjectures on how the plays may have been conceived for

performance; however, she does not always sufficiently distinguish between speculation and supporting documentation.

In contrast to the leap she makes from reading or hearing to seeing Cary's play, Findlay details the evidence that Rachel Fane at least envisioned a performance of her household entertainments as witnessed by her detailed staged directions. Findlay notes that Fane makes visible the often-invisible household duties undertaken by women, reversing 'the usual process in which female identity is erased by tasks, and puts toil itself under erasure' (43). Fane's work is connected to Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish's *The Concealed Fancies*, as that play also challenges the idea of appropriate 'housewifely conduct with a subversive celebration of female creativity, pleasure and consumption' (48). In contrast to these re-imaginings of female authority in the home, Findlay ends with a discussion of Margaret Cavendish's plays in which home is constructed as both a prison and sanctuary. Findlay concludes that these domestic dramas reveal a preoccupation with the household as a 'discarded, devalued territory' (65) even as they investigate the restricted spaces granted to women and the invisibility of their work. In doing so, she notes, these works 'create temporary but viable places' for women to inhabit (65).

In her second chapter, Findlay considers the garden as a playing space, successfully framing her discussion in terms of the association of woman and Nature with the notion of the garden as a Foucauldian heterotopia: a public-private space of surveillance and self-restraint as well as freedom and pleasure. Findlay begins the chapter with Jane Lumley's translation of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, noting the resemblance between the setting of the play and the outer garden of Nonsuch Palace and suggesting that Lumley may have been influenced by Elizabeth's visit to Nonsuch in 1559. She then considers speeches written by Elizabeth Russell and Mary Sidney Herbert as greetings to Elizabeth when she visited their estates, though she admits that the latter's piece was likely never performed as the visit was cancelled. Like Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*, which is considered in the same chapter, these speeches focus on the pastoral. However, while Findlay sees the works of Lumley, Russell, and Herbert as situating women in the public arena through their connections with the land she considers Wroth's pastoral 'a drama of retirement' (89), firmly positioned within the Sidney family and its estates. Findlay concludes the chapter by returning to the household entertainments of Rachel Fane and examining Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish's *Pastorall* masque in relation to the fountain garden at Bolsover Castle. She argues that Fane, like Wroth, 'superimposes a topography of the mind and a rewriting of the feudal estate' (109).

In contrast, she notes that Brackley and Cavendish, writing during the civil war, retreat to the conservative view of the garden as an enclosed private area while simultaneously revising it as an all-female space.

Findlay's third chapter connects the worlds of court and theatre through Jean Baudrillard's simulacrum and examines court entertainments from the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots through to that of Charles I. This chapter covers the widest variety of theatrical entertainments, beginning with the baptismal ceremonies for James VI in which Mary 'presided as an Arthurian host' (113), symbolically usurping Elizabeth's role. It moves on to the translation of *Hercules Oetaeus* attributed to Elizabeth and the entertainments composed for her visits to Elvetham and Cowdray in 1591. Findlay then examines masques composed by Samuel Daniel and Ben Jonson for Anna of Denmark, including *The Masque of Beauty*, and the plays produced by Henrietta Maria, including Walter Montague's *The Shepherd's Paradise*. Findlay links this range of dramatic forms by noting that they all reveal 'attempts to cross boundaries' (143): from the indoor staging of rural scenes for Elizabeth which connect court and country, to the Stuart court entertainments which not only introduced continental theatrical traditions to England but also 'negotiate[d] relationships between the centre of power (the State) and the Queen's court' (143). Findlay argues that while the status of royal women 'often makes their performances appear introverted ... court entertainments were still attempts to annihilate barriers between the ideal of female autonomy and the realities of physical spaces and cultural traditions' (144).

Chapter four focuses on plays produced and set in all-female communities such as convents and academies. Findlay identifies these communities as Bakhtinian chronotopes, sites 'where time and place meet' (146): an ironic theoretical grounding given that this chapter covers both the longest chronological span (three hundred years from the late fourteenth century onwards) and the widest geographic area (exploring both English and continental productions). Findlay moves from the Barking *Depositio*, *Elevatio*, and *Visitatio Sepulchri*, which she carefully examines in relation to what is known about the structure of Barking Abbey, to the late fifteenth-century *Play of Saint Domitilla* and *Play of Saint Guglielma* by Florentine's Antonia Pulci, to *Cupid's Banishment* (performed by students at Ladies Hall for Anna of Denmark) and on to the court entertainments of Henrietta Maria, closing with a discussion of Margaret Cavendish's *The Female Academy* and *The Convent of Pleasure*. Findlay notes that female communities 'challenged the social order' (147) as they permitted bonds between adult women that replaced the normal

bonds of marriage. As a result, these communities remained attractive to and idealized by women long after the dissolution of the monasteries. Findlay adds that while the fourteenth-century liturgical drama ‘worked within the boundaries set by traditional spaces’, later works such as those by Margaret Cavendish ‘evade even the divine paternal authority under which they were founded’ (179); however, all emphasize the benefits of sisterhood and posit a female identity independent of attachment to a ‘worldly family’ (179). Findlay concludes that the isolation of these communities from social norms meant that they ‘represented possibility rather than restriction’ and were ‘automatic playing spaces for the exploration of utopian alternatives’ (179).

Findlay’s final chapter, *Cities*, examines post-Restoration drama by female playwrights, situating the discussion within Donnatella Mazzoleni’s ‘culture of cities’ (183) and the contrast between the uniformly structured masculine urban space, the *polis*, and the ‘mysterious city, full of secret passageways and unexpected openings . . . , like the female grotesque body’ (182). In this chapter, Findlay examines Elizabeth Polwhele’s tragedy *The Faithful Virgins* and *Marcellia* by Frances Boothby before moving on to discuss the comedies of Margaret Cavendish, Susanna Centlivre, and Aphra Behn. Findlay connects the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire of 1666 to the plays that similarly redefine urban space. She remarks on the shifting relationship between the city and the court after the Restoration, arguing that plays written in this period tend ‘to observe the Court from a perspective of difference rather than sameness’ (187) and evaluate the actions of royalty from a gendered perspective that particularly condemns Charles’ philandering. In one of the strongest discussions in the book, Findlay considers how perspective scenery and the framing of the proscenium arch commodified women’s bodies on stage and how later playwrights like Behn and Centlivre manipulated the stage space to challenge such commodification.

In her brief conclusion on the relationship between space and early women’s drama, Findlay makes clear that while there may be connections between some of the plays and conditions in different periods, she is not sketching out a progressive history of women’s drama and space. She rather concludes that each type of space — home, garden, court, sorority, and city — came with its own ‘possibilities and restrictions’; each allowed women who wrote, performed, and sponsored plays and entertainments the opportunity to re-imagine women’s positions in society.

Findlay’s *Playing Spaces* is an innovative analysis of the relationship between early modern women’s drama and spatial practices. It will certainly be a valu-

able resource — and an engaging read — for students and scholars of early modern women's drama. It covers a wealth of material and provides intriguing and informed discussions of the interconnections between dramatic entertainments and the space they inhabit. Nonetheless, the very attraction of this book is also its weakness. It simply covers too much, too fast. In doing so, it fails adequately to distinguish between the various dramatic genres and the individual factors that influence their relationship to space. It also uses a broad definition of women's drama without distinguishing between the types of contributions made by women, treating a male-authored play performed for a queen in the same way as it considers a female-authored household entertainment.

REINA GREEN

**Christina M. Fitzgerald. *The Drama of Masculinity and Medieval English Guild Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Pp 228.**

Christina Fitzgerald's engaged study is a provocative, sometimes polemical assertion of a new optic for considering the origins, motives, and meanings of English craft plays. Though the title announces a wider reach, the author wisely concentrates on the cycles from York and Chester. These two (especially Chester) create their own problems for the author thanks to the lateness of their records and manuscripts, but Fitzgerald's decision to limit her argument to them helps her achieve more traction in demonstrating their pervasive concern with questions of masculinity.

Even given its limited objects of study, this book is a hugely ambitious effort. It breaks new ground in its discussions of male homosocial communities and of the public character of masculinity's performance. A lingering question troubles: is masculinity, or work, the primary concern of the cycles? Which subject, more importantly, conditions the plays' decisions about characterization, their selection of episodes and of extra-biblical figures, their language and imagery? In Fitzgerald's determination to demonstrate the *maleness* of guild structures, life, and drama, it sometimes becomes unclear *which* men she is speaking about: ordinary artisans or the civic authorities, members themselves of wealthy merchant guilds? In the end, one can't always know