

and *Cressida* to be listed are Dawson's Cambridge edition and (oddly, since it has nothing to say about the play's stage history) *The Norton Shakespeare*. Omitted are scholarly editions by Kenneth Palmer (1982), Kenneth Muir (1982), R. A. Foakes (1987) and David Bevington (1998). The omission of Bevington's edition is particularly unfortunate, since its introduction includes an excellent thirty-page section on productions of the play. If the reason for these omissions is that Cambridge does not want to advertise rival editions, it is a rather ungracious policy, and certainly raises questions about the scholarly authority of the volume.

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Marta Straznicky. *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550–1700*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp xii, 182.

Marta Straznicky's book—her first, surprisingly—is by one measure the culmination of her years of research into the cultural and literary conditions that produced women's sixteenth- and seventeenth-century closet drama. In *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama*, Straznicky examines the plays of five female dramatists within the women's educational and theatrical milieu, but only after she redefines two key concepts within that milieu.

The first concept Straznicky redefines is 'privacy'. Privacy in the early modern era, Straznicky reminds us, had less to do with solitude than with the exclusions of class. Hence, an early seventeenth-century private theatre like the Blackfriars was so-called not because it admitted few patrons, but because those it did admit were not subject to the 'Rables, Applewives and Chimney-boyes, / Whose shrill confused Ecchoes loud doe cry, / Enlarge your Commons, We hate Privacie' (9). The educated, well-behaved crowd at the Blackfriars comprised the same individuals one might find reading printed versions of the plays or participating in coterie readings in a domestic setting. A playwright might bolster his reputation (and 'his' is the appropriate pronoun, despite the focus of Straznicky's work) by having his work performed before a large crowd at a private theatre, secure in the knowledge that this audience shared his erudition, his moral sensitivity, and his disdain of commerce.

Similarly, playwrights disgusted by the poor reception their work received at the public theatres could publish their plays in a format designed to appeal to the very audience they could not reach from the stage. Straznicky uses the example of John Webster's *White Devil*, published with an address 'To the Reader' that contrasts the 'ignorant asses' at the Red Bull (where the play failed) with the discerning readers of the play, who are schooled in 'the "critical lawes" of "sententious Tragedy"' (11). Webster's recognition that the individual, private reader is a member of a larger albeit still exclusive audience for drama—an audience who may doubt the moral efficacy of any *playgoing*, public or private—leads Straznicky to redefine the activity of *playreading*. For Straznicky, playreading should no more be thought of as a solitary action than privacy should be thought of as a solitary condition. Early modern playreading, especially when it occurred aloud among a coterie or within a family (and again, Straznicky is assuming an elite readership) participated in performance and political action. Here, Straznicky uses the obvious example of the Sidney circle of playwrights, whose works were never meant for public performance but occasionally incurred monarchical wrath; the 'private' act of reading within this circle became a very 'public' display of political solidarity.

These redefinitions of privacy and reading are further refined and expanded in Straznicky's chapters devoted to specific female playwrights, whom she argues were the equals of their male peers in expanding their reading audience by manipulating genre. These women were also expert at manipulating gender roles, as Straznicky demonstrates in the chapter on Lady Jane Lumley's translation of Euripides' *Iphigenia* (c. 1553). Straznicky shows that Lumley was able to use the circumscription typical of women's lives to her artistic benefit, thanks to her humanist and largely masculine education (Lumley enjoyed schooling in Greek, freedom from tutorial oversight, and unrestricted access to classical texts), which influenced her translation as a more traditionally feminine education would not have done. Her translation, a free and inventive one that emphasizes the play's 'dramatic movement' by restricting its action largely to its domestic relations (40), suggests she may have intended it to be performed or read aloud at home. Rather than producing an academic translation on a devotional subject, such as was fit for publication by a female translator, Lumley, by keeping her manuscript translation out of circulation, was able to produce a dramatic work fit for private performance.

In arguing for the singular dramatic place occupied by Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedie of Mariam* (1613), Straznicky spends considerable time situating the play within the elite readership of the Sidney circle and in showing how the

layout and typography of *Mariam* appealed to its exclusive audience as readers and as spectators; thus, *Mariam* 'is 'private' in a unique sense: its format resembles the most classical of the closet dramas, but its accommodation of stage business links it equally with some of the elite dramatic publications emanating from the 'private' theatre' (59). Straznicky goes on to unravel the tangled publication history of *Mariam*, including the identification of its author only as 'E.C.': a step which has been interpreted largely as an effort to shield Cary from public view. As Straznicky demonstrates, publishing strategies such as this—and strategy it was, since few of the play's intended readers would have failed to know E.C.'s identity—'were used in the publication of ... plays by male writers where the 'look' of literary drama could maneuver an author into a cultural position that was distinctly superior to that of commercial theatre' (66).

Straznicky next takes up the plays of Margaret Cavendish (1623–1673) arguing that reading them solely with reference to their storied (un)stageability misses the point. Cavendish, who unlike Cary wrote to be published for a wide readership, composed her plays primarily in the 1650s, when the English theatres were closed by Parliamentary act and she and her husband were exiled abroad (80). At the same time as Cavendish was eager for public esteem, she shared the seventeenth-century privileged woman's fear of public exposure, belief in the superiority of seclusion, and disdain for commercial endeavor. But as Straznicky reminds us, '[s]eclusion ... is not necessarily anti-social, and this is where the usefulness of closet drama becomes evident' (83). Cavendish's discursive stage directions, the 'protracted dissertations' uttered by her heroines (87), and the distinctive typography of her texts—qualities which serve to bridge the worlds of silent reading and theatrical performance—enable both Cavendish and her reader 'to participate in public discourse without literally appearing in public' (88).

Straznicky concludes her book wondering why closet drama continued to be published at all after the theatres were reopened in 1660 and women were not only increasingly published as playwrights, but also worked as professional actors. She answers that it suited the purposes of authors such as the intensely anti-theatrical Anne Finch, whose closet dramas of the 1680s were intensely theatrical. It was the very exposure of women in the writing professions to ridicule and taint that fueled Finch's reticence—the kind of reticence characteristic of all the well-born women Straznicky profiles. Despite Finch's personal and class bias against performance, her work demonstrates that 'a play on the page is in no *intrinsic* way identifiable as a closet drama' (95).

*Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama* seems not only a culmination of Straznicky's work to this point, but also a part of a much larger work she has not yet written. It would be difficult to disagree with any part of Straznicky's impressively erudite argument when each well-researched paragraph is mortared into the whole structure like a granite block. Despite this, however, the book feels unfinished. It is only in the concluding chapter, for example, that Straznicky confronts the subject of gender and discusses the literal closets that constituted the private living spaces of early modern women, where among other activities they would have read and entertained intimates. Although the authorial subjects of her investigation are all members of an educated elite, the texture of their lives defined by 'social, economic, and political exclusion' (5), there are several points throughout the book where Straznicky's refusal 'to focus consistently on the issue of class' (5) deprives the reader of valuable context.

Despite its coherence and up-to-the-minute rhetoric, *Privacy, Playwriting, and Women's Closet Drama* hints at the sweep of an old-fashioned, multiply-authored literary history. It's unfortunate that Straznicky's extensive knowledge and catholic interests are shoehorned into this slim book, whose organization does not always serve its material well. Straznicky never justifies her exclusion of a chapter devoted to Mary Sidney Herbert, and her discussion of Katherine Philips' work, which deserves a chapter of its own, is squeezed into the chapter on Anne Finch. More curiously, despite the title's insistence on women's closet drama, far more male than female dramatists are discussed at considerable length. I look forward to Straznicky's next book for all the history, ideas, and speculation that did not fit into this one.

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Garret A. Sullivan, Jr. *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp vii, 184.

Scholarship on memory in the Renaissance, particularly the art of memory, is plentiful. Frances Yates's magisterial work is a prime example; work by Lina Bolzoni, Stephen Greenblatt, and William Engel also comes to mind. In many