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Book Review

Moncrief, Kathryn M. and Kathryn R. McPherson, eds.. *Performing Pedagogy in Early Modern England: Gender, Instruction, and Performance*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011. 248 pp. $99.95.

From the beginning, the editors of *Performing Pedagogy in Early Modern England* attempt to take on the burden of teaching the audience about the ways in which traditional models of education engaged the stage, and how the stage impacted those models as well. Performance is a major watchword for this ambitious project. The result is a collection of fifteen essays that interrogate the idea of performance in many forms—from theater to the ministry to the sport of hurling. It is a good foundation for a fascinating cross-section of early modern English society. This breadth of discussion illustrates the book's big weakness as well, in that it could not cover the entire range of pedagogical practices for all sectors of society. It is the nature of such compilations to suffer from such shortcomings, and yet, the lack of emphasis on class distinctions is conspicuous in its absence. Overall, though, the book is an interesting look at the practice of pedagogy in England.

The book is divided into four sections, "Humanism and its Discontents," "Manifestations of Manhood," "Decoding Domesticity," and "Pedagogy Performed." These divisions appear to illustrate the distinctions in gender spheres (especially with regard to the middle sections). These distinctions do tend to shift the focus from the various practices of pedagogy to an emphasis on the respective roles of men and women. This, in turn, turns our attention away from the editors' stated effort to address ideas of how the stage impacted the educational effort itself (1). Still, the individual essays are quite engaging. Jerome de Groot's "'Euery one teacheth after thyr owne fantasie': French Language Instruction," for example, discusses the role of dialogue in translation—such as in Barbara Slingsby's French exercise book. The analysis by de Groot addresses the contrived nature of the exercises, noting the "insight they give into the domestic world of elite education, and what they suggest about how girls were expected to engage with and conceptualize their society and themselves" (43). As an analysis

of a Reformation text, the author suggests that the grammar allows for a sense of "flexible subjectivity" in language training (48). It touches, briefly, on the sense of class/gender division, though, in that Slingsby compares humanist learning to the more "prosaic language instruction she is receiving" (46). The nature of that humanist learning or who, at this time, has access to it, is never discussed.

Deborah Uman's piece on Jane Lumley similarly questions the traditional assumptions of gendered educational models, as "the content of [her] education was comparable to the best education provided for men, though we can know little about the methods used to provide her training" (57). From this comes a dramatically retranslated version of *The Tragedie of Iphigeneia*, one that recasts the titular role from victim to martyr. Later, in Part 3, Kathryn McPherson's entry, "The Absence of Eve in Elizabeth Herbert's Catechism," there is discussion of the performative nature of a catechism—but this is overshadowed by a discussion of the subversion of gender roles. In this case, Herbert's catechism is insistent on making Adam ultimately responsible for his own sins, as opposed to the passive victim of Eve's. While William Herbert presents that more tolerant view, McPherson also discusses its rejection by writers like Amelia Lanyer (187). This sets up an interesting contrast (and conflict) over the idea of agency as manifested in guilt, as well as the idea of distributive guilt also.

"The Manifestations of Manhood" section is similarly ambitious. Jim Casey attempts to talk about violence and pain in sport. Casey looks at a range of sources addressing military prowess as a point of pride for the public, to the point that "England demands masculine bodily sacrifice in order to survive; manhood and Englishness become interchangeable" (95). To demonstrate this, Casey proffers evidence of the favorable view of the longbow, which requires strength and focus (90), and the unfavorable view of the rapier, which is better suited for private duels "which are unsanctioned and detrimental to the good of the culture as a whole" (92). The idea Casey attempts to convey is that there was a golden mean of aggression for the greater good—and that childhood games trained boys about the limits of acceptable aggression. He discusses hurling, as observed in Cornwall by Richard Carew (96). This rugby-like game and others, Casey explicitly states, "were designed to harden the boys' bodies and prepare them for the shocks of war" (96). Carew, for his part, seems to think the sport of hurling borders on reckless, though it is pointed out that it never becomes a matter for lawyers (96). Casey's emphasis on sport as preparation for an actual war (he traces England's anxieties on this score engagingly) seems overstated. Carew's own reluctance echoes present discussions about the age-appropriateness of sports like football and soccer along with the growing awareness of traumatic brain injuries. It is an interesting essay, but ultimately, the distinction between sports as violent fun and sports as military preparation is not made fully clear. Its efforts to connect to specific plays (in this case, *Macbeth*) tend to detract from what is an intriguing take on performance on its own terms. Further, it deemphasizes the differences in military training that would occur for children of different classes. This is an important issue to explore, as it is a distinction that has consequence: "men

who are not proficient warriors die" (95). Ultimately, sports may be the beginning of the military mindset, but they would not be enough.

Other essays, including one by Kathryn Moncrief and one by Elizabeth Hodgson, return explicitly to the idea of theatrical performance as pedagogical and do so well. In all, this book is a worthwhile experiment in historicism. The apparent shortcomings exist, as in most compilations of this type, mainly in terms of how far the contributions stray from the editors' theme. Taken on their own, however, each of the fifteen essays pursues interesting avenues of exploration. While the collection does minimize the comparative positions of social class, it does open a lot of ground for further critical analysis. Ultimately, this collection should prove to be a valuable resource for scholars interested in the life and times of early modern England.

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