



Women on Stage in Stuart Drama

Sophie Tomlinson

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Women on Stage in Stuart Drama provides a 'prehistory' of the actress, filling an important gap in established accounts of how women came to perform in the Restoration theatre. Sophie Tomlinson uncovers and analyzes a revolution in theatrical discourse in response to the cultural innovations of two Stuart queens consort, Anna of Denmark and the French Henrietta Maria. Their appearances on stage in masques and pastoral drama engendered a new poetics of female performance, which registered acting as a powerful means of self-determination for women. The pressure of cultural change is inscribed in a plethora of dramatic texts that explore the imaginative possibilities inspired by female acting. These include plays by the key royalist women writers Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, and Katherine Philips. The material explored by Tomlinson illustrates a fresh vision of theatrical femininity and encompasses an unusually sympathetic interest in questions of female liberty and selfhood.

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