

political texture" (183). But he is also asking us to acknowledge that even where the cultural realities that made their presence felt within literary works were not always just literary in scope, they were heavily mediated by acts of writing that operated by means of a poetics uniquely their own.

Undoubtedly readers will respond, positively and negatively, to different aspects of Bruster's arguments. I found it a bit odd, for example, that Clifford Geertz's anthropological methodology is treated as more relevant to the current practice of historical-cultural criticism than Foucault's theories of productive power (quite amazingly, Foucault is not mentioned a single time). And I was rather confused by what amounts to the two different titles for the book: just how important is Shakespeare to the argument and in what way can his work stand in for all early modern literature? One would get a very different impression of the strengths and weaknesses of cultural criticism as currently practiced, I surmise, if scholarship on, say, Milton or the Renaissance lyric were the focus of discussion rather than scholarship on Shakespeare and the Renaissance stage.

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Paul Hammond. *Figuring Sex between Men from Shakespeare to Rochester*. Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press/Oxford, 2002. xii + 281 pp. index. bibl. \$65 (cl), \$19.95 (pbk). ISBN: 0-19-818692-4 (cl), 0-19-818693-2 (pbk).

Figuring Sex between Men from Shakespeare to Rochester is a thoughtful account of the ways in which homoerotic desire and sodomy were represented in English literature and political satire from the late sixteenth through the seventeenth centuries. The book begins by describing a historical paradox: circa 1600, even though sodomy was a capital crime punishable by death, a number of literary texts offered complex, teasing, even celebratory explorations of homoerotic desire; circa 1700, few positive literary depictions of male homoeroticism were penned, despite the fact that men interested in sex with men had begun to develop their own subculture around urban molly houses. Faced with this paradox and this historical change (first illuminated by the historian Alan Bray), Hammond eschews offering a causal explanation or even a chronological narrative, instead pursuing a rhetorical analysis that "foregrounds the very fragmentary and elusive character of seventeenth-century writing about sex between men, attending to the essential problems of figuring sex, and figuring out what the representations mean" (1).

For Hammond, figuring sex means, in part, figuring out how writers who were interested in the attractions of the male body negotiated the implicit censorship of early modern culture through strategies of indirection and allusiveness. Refusing erotic disclosure through such rhetorical tropes as *paradiastole* (redescription) and *ploce* (repetition), they created what Hammond calls, following D. W. Winnicott, a "potential space" for the male homoerotic imagination (7). Hammond's interest in indirection leads him to take special note of instances of sexual innuendo and double entendre (the study of which has been spurred recently by Gordon Williams's

three-volume *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* [1994]). When Hammond contextualizes his erotic interpretations (within texts and in reference to other texts), the range of bawdy meanings he adduces is persuasive; when he refers simply, and without contextualization, to definitions provided by Williams — e.g., “Tennis is a Renaissance metaphor for sex” (42) — the reader is likely to demur: well, sometimes, but sometimes not.

Having established the productive ambiguity of indirection, Hammond offers four “case studies” (of Shakespeare, of political figures, of Marvell, of Rochester) that variously consider how they figured sex and how their sexuality was figured by others. In addition to identifying a variety of homoerotic textures to their plays and poems (seeing in Rochester, for instance, a “grammatical caution” and “epigrammatic shape” [250] that bespeaks a distance from homoerotic subjectivity), Hammond analyzes their relations to homoerotic predecessors (Barnfield, Virgil) as well as the “afterlife” of their work, in which homoerotic meanings often were suppressed. Hammond’s most original treatment of a poet is his chapter on Marvell’s ambiguous, “amphibious” sexuality, accessed through contemporary views of the poet expressed in pamphlet attacks as well as through moments of erotic ambiguity “braided across ostensibly heterosexual poems” (255). Because literary analysis of male homoeroticism has proceeded primarily from within traditional periodizations, with the Renaissance cordoned off from the Restoration and little attention paid to the period in between, Hammond’s temporal reach contributes significantly to the critical discussion, especially since his interest in political commentary brings to light many fascinating archival materials.

Indeed, the most compelling chapter of *Figuring Sex between Men* concerns satirical representations of political figures — Edward II, James I, Titus Oakes, William III — as depicted in manuscripts, broadsides, and printed pamphlets. Hammond astutely demonstrates just how pliable and susceptible to political pressure the representation of male-male sex could be. At his best in locating these scurrilous and surprisingly graphic depictions in their contemporary milieu, Hammond nonetheless is, as he admits, uninterested in deriving from them a historical narrative. Adamant that there exists no “readily legible relationship between literary fictions and social practices” (1), he positions his “case studies” as isolated from one another and at a distance from historiographic problems. Although he charts the nervousness that led to the excision of representations of male-male desire during James I’s reign, for instance, he refrains from considering the possibility that it was the public nature of James’s attachments to male favorites that helped usher in the heterosexual public culture after the Civil War (even though he later stresses the problematic public nature of William III’s attachments to his favorites). Likewise, he could have used his observation that it is characteristic of Renaissance literature to exploit multiple linguistic meanings whereas Restoration literature “shies away from” multiplicity (13) to connect genre differences (lyric versus satire) to the historical paradox outlined on the book’s first page. Such larger issues are approached only obliquely; the most pointed assertion occurs when Hammond tentatively suggests that “Restoration adaptations [of Shakespeare] were motivated partly by a

concern to protect male friendship from the suspicion of homosexual desire and, by removing the productive ambiguities of Shakespeare's language, to preserve the clarity and stability of the definition of masculinity in the face of a new world of homosexual self-definition" (116). Some readers may appreciate Hammond's restraint, but it is testament to the acuity of his interpretation (as well as to the import of being one of the first to work across the seventeenth century) that others will wish he had connected more of the dots. Motivated partly by defensiveness — "It is in the detail, rather than any grand theory, that we see the kinds of associations and dissociations through which seventeenth-century writers figured sex between men" (255) — Hammond seems to leave aside the possibility of analytical work between "detail" and "grand theory."

Hammond's reluctance to engage with larger paradigms is echoed in his disengagement with the interpretations of others. After two decades of gay/queer scholarship, it is odd that the only critics with whom Hammond engages (rather than merely cites) are those who *fail* to perceive homoerotic meanings. Especially since Hammond's critical temperament has much in common with Bruce Smith's *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England* (1991), it would be gratifying to hear how he sees his emphasis on figuration aligning with or altering Smith's account of, say, Shakespeare's sonnets. Rather than being drawn into an ongoing conversation, the reader experiences Hammond's analysis of male homoeroticism as singular and solitary. Nonetheless, *Figuring Sex between Men* will prove useful to readers new to the topic as well as to those who have been thinking about these matters for a long time.

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Jennifer A. Low. *Manhood and the Duel: Masculinity in Early Modern Drama and Culture*.

New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave/St. Martin's Press, 2003. xviii + 238 pp. index. illus. bibl. \$59.95. ISBN: 1-4039-6130-1.

Jennifer A. Low's study of the duel of honor, which arose in the 1580s and was outlawed by James I in 1613 but still practiced, begins with the premises that "different social ranks manifest different kinds of masculinity" and that "we may recognize these varied ideas of masculinity in the dramatic depictions of different aspects of the duel" (4). The book is, however, primarily a study of different constructions of aristocratic masculinity: although middling sort social climbers did engage in fencing and dueling, the practices were primarily associated with the aristocracy, and Low focuses on showing the various ways the duel's meaning helped to define aristocratic identity within the period of 1580–1620. The middling sort enter this study as playwrights and commentators, critiquing the duel of honor in stage-plays and anti-dueling tracts, and by means of critiquing a valued aristocratic practice, contributing their own constructions of masculinity to the social dialogue.