than my own. At a time when writing about performance seldom contacts actual performance, Holland's book is a welcome and necessary corrective.

The homoerotics of early modern drama. By MARIO DIGANGI. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. xii + 216. $54.95 cloth, $18.95 paper.

Reviewed by IAN MACINNES

Although Mario DiGangi's *The homoerotics of early modern drama* is only the latest in a long line of highly esteemed studies of early modern homoerotic desire,[1] the author nevertheless proceeds from a premise that many readers of *Shakespeare Quarterly* may find both fresh and emancipating, a premise that DiGangi explains as "the pervasiveness of nonsodomitical or nonsubversive homoerotic relations in early modern England" (9). The fact that DiGangi is forced to use so ungainly a word as "nonsodomitical" is a symptom both of the extraordinary force that works such as Jonathan Goldberg's *Sodometries* have exerted on Renaissance studies and of the extent of DiGangi's claim to occupy a new space. It is not that DiGangi avoids discussing sodomy but rather that he perceives the early modern connection between sodomy and homoerotic desire as contextual rather than actual. For DiGangi sodomy is mainly a marker of the disorderliness of particular homoerotic desires rather than a way that early modern culture defined all homoerotic desire. Thus when he argues that a specific play represents an individual or action as "sodomitical," he does so not as a way of showing that homoeroticism is present but as a way of showing that it is being represented as disorderly rather than orderly. According to DiGangi, previous studies of homoeroticism have tended to focus only on sodomy and only in familiar canonical texts. These problems, combined with a lack of materialist methodology, have made such studies incomplete or unsuccessful. DiGangi wants to be more thorough, opening up new areas for investigation and ultimately locating homoeroticism "more directly within other economies of difference" (160). In this relatively short book such large claims are difficult to pursue, but DiGangi's finely detailed criticism of individual plays gives readers a glimpse of what his premises mean for Renaissance literary studies.

It may well be that this beautifully written work will be remembered and cited more for its sensitive interpretations of less frequently read plays than for its ultimate conclusions about early modern culture. Without question, DiGangi's greatest strength lies in his marvelously close readings. This emphasis on individual works also accords with his stated aim of renewing "interest in non-Shakespearean plays that are infrequently read–and rarely read queerly" (28). As might be expected in a work on homoeroticism in Renaissance drama, DiGangi has something to say about plays such as *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* as well as Marlowe's practically obligatory *Edward II*. But he uses these well-trodden homoerotic texts in tandem with other, less frequently considered material.

The second chapter, "The homoerotics of marriage in Ovidian comedy," is a good example both of DiGangi's strengths in close reading and of his occasional unwillingness to push for wider conclusions. In this chapter DiGangi interprets *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* in the context of various literary and extraliterary treatments of Orpheus

[1] Among these are works such as Alan Bray's *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982), Jonathan Goldberg's *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1992), and Jonathan Dollimore's *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

and Ganymede as well as the masque of Cupid from Book III of *The Faerie Queene*. His close reading of both literary and extraliterary texts is sensitive and compelling, as is his use of the distinction between orderly and disorderly desire, which he deploys to show the role homoerotic desire played in representations of the family. As a result, he makes a convincing case that Spenser's masque of Cupid is at least in part an allegory of marital crisis initiated by male homoerotic desire (although in doing so he downplays the crisis that Spenser also seems to be attributing to heteroerotic desire). His interpretations of the two Shakespeare plays are equally convincing, but perhaps because these plays are so canonical for queer studies, his conclusions are disappointingly unambitious. His modest hope is that his analyses will either "open the space for a critique of the 'naturalness' of the marital (hetero)sexuality that appears to coalesce at the end of Shakespeare's romantic comedy," or that they will make plays such as *As You Like It* "offer another kind of pleasure to certain readers" (62). In fact, DiGangi's efforts at "Queering the family," as he puts it in a chapter subheading, open a space for potentially profound conclusions about early modern homoeroticism. Because homoerotic and heteroerotic desires are most clearly in conflict in the texts DiGangi cites for this chapter, these texts come close to separating such desires into sexualities in the modern sense, a fact that might challenge even the critical commonplace that sexual preference was not a defining aspect of early modern sexuality.

Later chapters display the same strengths without as frustrating a lack of larger conclusions. In particular, the third and fourth chapters, where in turn DiGangi takes on the dynamics of mastery ("The homoerotics of mastery in satiric comedy") and of favoritism ("The homoerotics of favoritism in tragedy"), are the imaginative center of the entire work. Here DiGangi's acute readings of passages in the plays merge with a more ambitious goal of redefining the social and political dimensions of eroticism in the period. Because DiGangi approaches such plays as Jonson's *Volpone* and Chapman's *The Gentleman Usher* looking for homoeroticism rather than sodomy, he is able to explain relations between masters and servants in terms of a spectrum ranging from orderly to disorderly behavior. This technique becomes even more powerful in the chapter on favoritism in tragedy. It allows DiGangi to overturn the traditional connection between sodomy and homoerotic favoritism, a connection generated by the volume of critical work devoted to Marlowe's *Edward II* and to a lesser extent Jonson's *Sejanus* and Shakespeare's *Richard II*. By looking at Chapman's French tragedies–*Bussy D'Ambois*, *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, *The Conspiracy of Charles Duke of Byron*, and *The Tragedy of Byron*–DiGangi is able to reveal "that it is the exploitation and abuse of homoerotic intimacy between male favorite and prince, not homoerotic favoritism itself, that generates sodomitical disorder" (133). Readers will also be grateful for DiGangi's allusions to less frequently discussed plays such as *No Wit. No help like a Woman's*, *Michaelmas Term*, and *The Massacre at Paris*. Although his interpretations of these plays are not central to his argument, DiGangi's work is highly suggestive, creating valuable critical space for further work.

DiGangi's tendency toward suggestion rather than exhaustion of the topic is actually one of the attractive features of his comparatively short work. And DiGangi always alerts the reader to the kinds of work yet to be done. One area still to be covered is female homoeroticism, for with few exceptions the phenomenon he discusses is exclusively male. One short, albeit suggestive, passage at the end of the third chapter does identify some female homoeroticism. But this same passage argues that female homoeroticism is not as powerful a figure in the period as its male counterpart. The ending of Middleton's *No Wit, No help like a Woman's*, DiGangi argues, shows that "the potential threat female homoeroticism posed to the early modern social order could be relatively easily dispelled" (99). Elsewhere DiGangi underscores the cultural reasons behind the fact that "male homoerotic relations are more frequently depicted than female homoerotic relations in early modern literary texts"(26). At the same time,

however, he still hopes that lesbian sexuality will begin turning up "as other neglected texts are read or reread through a lesbian/gay critical practice" (27).

DiGangi's work is most sophisticated in the use it makes of queer theory. Like many works on the topic, the book begins from the potentially contradictory assumption that although modern concepts of homosexuality may not be directly applicable to English Renaissance texts, the modern phenomenon queer theory is uniquely qualified both to uncover and to explain such texts' representations of same-sex desire. In discussing the epilogue of *As You Like It*, for instance, DiGangi says, "queer theory . . . allows us to recognize the epilogue's conceptual division between gender identity . . . and erotic desire" (60–61). At least for *As You Like It* this division has become increasingly obvious even to critics working outside queer theory. Yet DiGangi's statement is important because it reminds readers of the theoretical origins of assumptions that are becoming widely held. Statements like the one above are actually rare and always deployed not as a way of claiming that certain interpretations are available only to queer theory or gay critical practice but as a way of reminding the reader that some assumptions would not be possible without queer theory. It is a tribute to DiGangi's sophistication and eloquence that the separation of gender and eroticism can come to seem obvious.

The Politics of Courtly Dancing in Early Modern Europe. By SKILES HOWARD. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1998. Pp. xii + 222. Illus. $37.50 cloth.

Reviewed by ANN ROSALIND JONES

In this richly detailed history of dance and English drama in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Skiles Howard undertakes to demonstrate that opposing views and practices of dance coexisted in English culture. Her goal is to call into question the assumption that the dance of the time was consistently courtly, ordered, and hierarchy-sustaining, a corporeal and kinetic assertion of divine and patriarchal orders. To do this, she narrates a trans-European evolution of dance forms, beginning with medieval rounds, done in an improvisatory way in public by groups holding hands and circling around a shared center, in contrast to couples moving through precisely named steps in interior spaces and to the unified tracing of formal patterns by court masquers. She analyzes dance manuals and published polemics about dancing, and she looks closely at certain dramatic texts (by Shakespeare, Cary, and Middleton) to show how dance and the language of dance question or loosen up social relations in them.

The book is fascinating simply on the level of the concrete information it offers about the kinds of dance taught and performed in the international circuit that brought Continental dancing masters and dance steps to England. Using manuscripts and prints, printed descriptions and directions from dancing masters, Howard offers specific definitions of a *carole* and a *basse danse*, for example, and of how differently men and women dancers were told to hold their bodies. Her main point is that formal, courtly dancing was a trained behavior intended to instill particular attitudes in its practitioners–isolated uprightness, masculine vigor, feminine malleability–and she shows that texts praising dance by court-identified writers such as Thomas Elyot and John Davies promoted this training as support for proper gender roles and loyalty to a cosmically ordained political realm. Where, then, do opposing energies come in? Howard locates them in the persistence of folk dance and the festivity associated with it, and in the mocking scrutiny of elite dance by playwrights exploiting the comic potential of unruly, transgressively sexed bodies.