aspects of the central Utraquist position that were seen as a radical departure from Roman practice endured long enough to constitute a sort of theological template for much later developments in liberal ecclesiology.

This is a very admirable work—clear, fluid, and highly informative. It would perhaps be too optimistic to hope that David will revive an interest in Czech church history now that he has whetted our appetites. More work needs to be done in almost every sphere: ecclesiology, theology, popular history—to name only the most pressing. For those with a mind to follow his lead, David’s copious footnotes, which account for a third of the book’s length, offer the best, and perhaps only, place to begin. It is sure to be worth the effort.

SEYMOUR BAKER HOUSE, Mount Angel Seminary


Madhavi Menon’s Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama contributes to the debate on the history of sexuality by expanding Foucault’s persistent “medico-juridical” account to include an analysis of how language plays a part in the construction of that history. For Menon, “sexuality” is always “bound not to historical specificity but rather to rhetorical dexterity” (p. 6), something recent queer theory has best accounted for, but which is already at the root of rhetorical discourse in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and by extension in popular theatrical representations of language and rhetoric. Menon shows both sound scholarship and theoretical acuity in the range of texts she uses from a variety of traditions, and presents her readers with a version of textual history that rests on, rather than merely incorporates, rhetoric.

Menon initially draws the relationship between the stage and metaphor by reading defences and attacks on the theatre in conjunction with rhetorical treatises’ descriptions of metaphor, a trope whose use is emphatically hedged about with rules on propriety: metaphor promises to purify description by clothing it in more decorous terms. But, as Menon argues, metaphor is always duplicitous: while it appears to impose decorum, it also “bring[s] the body into focus” (p. 23), so that the body becomes the “projection of ornament, rather than the other way around.” That body can in turn be corrupted by ornament, provocatively sexualized or rendered effeminate. Playing with language thus reveals the desire inherent in language itself; what is especially dangerous about theatre, Menon observes, is that it attempts to represent this desire publicly. With this basis for her study of individual plays carefully laid, Menon makes it her purpose to “look at the way in which a specific rhetorical trope brings into focus a mode of sexual desire with which it shares its outstanding features” (p. 31), emphasizing “the continual imbrication of ways of reading texts with ways of reading bodily and sexual desire” (p. 32).
For Shakespeare’s *Richard II* and Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl*, metonymy is the dominant trope at work. The problem with metonymy for classical and early modern rhetoricians is that it too easily loses its boundaries and merges with or is misunderstood for other tropes. As a result, it can serve to elicit “the shadowy nature of Renaissance (homo) sexuality” (p. 39)—with a little slippage, a little confusion, one partner substitutes for another almost arbitrarily. Although sex, in particular the full story of Richard’s sexuality, is missing from Shakespeare’s version of the history, the fact that his sexuality is somehow suspect emerges from moments like the garden scene in Act III. The problem Menon finds with previous criticism of the scene is that a merely metaphoric reading of it can’t fully explain its resonances; it is instead the “textual crime” of metonymy (p. 51) that conveys Richard’s improper favouritism toward his various “caterpillar” followers. A critical over-commitment to metaphoric reading, then, “ensures a compulsorily heterosexual reading of both the scene and the play” (p. 53). In related fashion, critical treatments that fasten on Moll and try to rehabilitate her overlook the play’s more complex suggestion that clothing for Moll is “metonymic in [its] interpretive freedom.” In the end, though, both *Richard II* and *The Roaring Girl* disavow metonymy: Bolingbroke restores the order and sexual propriety of metaphor, *The Roaring Girl* ends by insisting that “while Moll may dress like a man, she is none; that while two men might seem to be kissing, one of them will turn out to be a woman; and that while language can be transmuted into nonsense, meaning will always be salvaged” (p. 63).

Although Menon’s readings of both these plays rely heavily on familiar and standard interpretations (anyone who has ever taught the garden scene, for example, will recognize her series of questions meant to put pressure on its terms), they do ultimately raise new questions about the presence and efficacy of tropological dimensions in each.

Menon describes metalepsis (the missing link between two other tropes) in *Romeo and Juliet* and *All’s Well* in terms of the missing sex scenes in both plays, which “[create] a textual scar by [their] metaleptic absence” (p. 78). According to Menon, when Romeo and Juliet argue over the lark and the nightingale, their speech both represents the consummation of their marriage, and renders a violence to it—it is a version of what would otherwise (in a world that accepted their marriage) be a First Night display of bloodied bedclothes. But it is the failure to link terms (the lark is never the nightingale, the night never meets or is linked to the morning) that creates tragedy. In changing meaning, metalepsis becomes the figure that fails to “fix meaning and therefore, to fix life” (p. 82). In the world of the play, all goes on as if no marriage has happened, no link is forged and the lovers must die. Helena’s bed trick, in contrast, solves riddles and makes marriages, even if at the cost of some violence to audience expectations. In both cases, “[m]etalepsis can only guarantee the efficacy of sex by withholding its signification” (p. 93).

Race and sexuality are linked in Menon’s readings of *Othello* and *King John* by catachresis, the technique of naming a thing inexact by a related term when
that thing is as yet unidentified in language. Catachresis “brings into being” (p. 103) the unnamed, and its impropriety is thus felicitous. Menon challenges readings of Othello that make it a play about race and racism, arguing that instead it mobilizes terms of race to speak about something else—“a discourse on ‘race’ provides a substitutive idiom for something that cannot properly be registered in language” (p. 111)—and predictably, given this monograph’s focus, the main thing being registered is sexuality. “Race” in King John turns out to be the lineage of monarchy, with the illegitimacy always somehow at its root. Again, sexuality lies at the heart of the instability represented by the Bastard’s name and identity in this play. Menon’s reading of Othello is a bit too satisfied with merely effecting a clever turnabout, and does not take us that much further than Karen Newman’s work on race and gender. On the other hand, her discussion of King John, a far less critically overdetermined play, invites us to understand a concept like race in more flexible and historically useful ways.

Taking on the important figure of allegory in her final chapter, Menon offers a fairly limited reading of Volpone that finds an absence of meaning at the core of how allegory works. She then goes on to locate allegory in Shakespeare’s Caliban, who “figures the allegorical imperative to repeatedly reconfigure texts” (p. 148), which puts him in contest with Prospero, the other master of the form. In The Tempest, allegory is the means by which sexuality can be isolated and so contained (hence Prospero’s manipulations of Miranda and Ferdinand which displace Caliban’s competitive desire for Miranda). But if sex is the dark heart of Volpone, it is the frozen heart of The Tempest, and in both cases allegory fails to resolve either.

Menon’s writing is a pleasure to read for its playfulness and the sense of flair it displays in its own use of tropes. And the summaries of the qualities of the terms she discusses are useful to the reader, allowing her to wander fruitfully far into the details of the history of rhetoric or to take side trips into writing by poets and dramatists other than those on whom she is focused. At the same time, Menon’s prose suffers from a kind of deconstructive overload, registered in the proliferation of scare quotations (nothing means what it seems to mean) and italics (everything must mean more than mere language alone ever can). My main problem with her work, however, is already implicit in the quotation I included in my opening paragraph, which suggests a certain ironic dehistoricizing of sexuality in the process of creating a history of sexuality. While rhetorical dexterity is everywhere in this book, both in its content and in its form, there is little new or surprising in the readings it generates of individual plays—as I hope is evident from my summaries above—nor does it reach out at any point to provide connections to the social, cultural, political or other contexts in which early modern theatre functioned. If giving us a newly inflected history of sexuality does not appreciably advance or change our understanding of texts, times, places and people, then the reader will be left to wonder what purpose it serves.

KAREN RABER, University of Mississippi