

characters, but also offers scholars invested in the medical humanities hard-earned resources to evidence their own work. Those of us interested in early modern race and reproduction in the period, for example, know of the early modern image—best known for its appearance on the frontispiece of *Aristotle's Secrets of Generation*—that features a “small dark figure, hairy woman, and an upright creature,” to use Kenny’s description (128 [fig. 5.1]). The addition of a monstrous “upright” figure to this otherwise common image of the other two figures, figures marked by the myth of the monstrous female imagination, is thrilling. And Kenny conjures *King John* alongside these “monstrous births”—an unexpected and exciting combination, to be sure—to argue the play “runs counter to the early modern medical notions of the monstrous, pregnant womb” (130).

I am always wary of arguments that lift Shakespeare up as somehow apart from, or ahead of, his time, but Kenny’s readings are persuasive. Although scholars like Kenny working on pregnancy, reproduction, and motherhood in Shakespeare’s plays would do well to consider the legacy of how central queer and/or people of color in the period were to knowledge about pregnancy and reproduction, the ambitious nature of Kenny’s text is good news. *Humoral Wombs* is a labor of love for those of us invested in critical theory and cultural studies because Kenny has offered us a more detailed point of entry into the historical documents available to us. In this way, *Humoral Wombs* reminds me of Valerie Traub’s *The Renaissance of Lesbianism* (2002), Kim Hall’s *Things of Darkness* (1995), and Mario DiGangi’s body of work in that all of these authors, like Kenny, use archival research to open up new possibilities for interpreting Shakespeare’s work. Those of us interested in pregnancy would do well to read and cite *Humoral Wombs*, as well as thank Kenny for putting in the labor required of archival work so that we may build on her findings.

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Shakespeare's Ovid and the Spectre of the Medieval. Lindsay Ann Reid.
Studies in Renaissance Literature 36. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018. xiv + 268 pp.
\$99.

Lindsay Ann Reid’s second monograph emphasizes early modern continuities with medieval traditions, flouting the periods’ boundaries while furthering her questioning of Ovidian reception. To do so, she selects a few “Shakespearean moments,” classified in contemporary scholarship as being “Ovidian,” and traces where “Ovidianism [is] intersecting with Chaucerianism and Gowerism in constellation” (4).

Meticulously well-documented, Reid’s approach is twofold: in order to look for “spectral presence” of a “pervasive medievalism” in Shakespeare, she first assesses

what counts as Ovidian, which sets her book immediately in conversation with a vast range of up-to-date literary criticism (as there is a host of scholarship on the postclassical reception of Publius Ovidius Naso in Shakespeare). Reid draws from these studies to establish her corpus of references. Second, as she is concerned with “trans-historical, polyvocal and multilingual conglomerate of intertexts that coalesce to form an Ovidian allusion in Shakespeare” (4), Reid adds a web of postclassical, vernacular versions of classical Ovid that cannot be separated from Shakespeare’s classical knowledge and that color it.

The specter metaphor structures such Ovidian, Chaucerian, and Gowerian “constellations,” delving into what A. E. B. Coldiron calls “the mediated medieval” (*Medieval Shakespeare* [2013]). Reid toys with the Derridean notion of specter (*Spectres of Marx* [1993]) to examine how literary tradition and genesis fail to comply to chronology and offer instead “temporal disjointure,” a “non-present present” (36). In so doing, she deftly shows that she is not merely expanding the literary overlaps between Chaucer and Shakespeare, which has been partly studied by critics (mainly in relation to *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*), but reconfiguring the content of this legacy to include Gower’s intertextual presence—hardly ever explored, except in relation to *Pericles*. If Reid refers to the “intermediary medieval vernacular precedents” (i.e., Chaucer and Gower) as “phantom texts” of Ovid (38), she effectively documents their presence as fatherly precursors, piecing out medieval elements through a cumulative effect of contextual and internal evidence.

The “phantomatic recomposition” (38) in Shakespeare of the discontinuous literary imagination about Ovid and mediating postclassical authors in “constellation” is explored through case studies of *The Taming of the Shrew* (chapter 2), *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (chapter 3), *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Romeo and Juliet* (chapter 4), and *Twelfth Night* (chapter 5), as well as the anonymous *Chaucer’s Ghost* (chapter 1) and an Aldine edition of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (1502), once believed to be Shakespeare’s own Latin copy of Ovid (afterword).

A few examples stand out to illustrate Reid’s argument. Although *The Taming of the Shrew* is read by many as bearing the traces of Shakespeare’s humanist training, she suggests a structural reading of the play by considering the induction as a form of medieval dream vision. Though the play does not explicitly refer to Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*, she extends an argument made for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, asserting that *Taming* resorts to the same type of internal *dispositio*, blurring fantasy and reality. Chapter 3 unpacks the multilayered expression “to passion like Ariadne” (*Two Gentlemen of Verona* 4.4.158–61) to trace how Shakespeare’s widely acknowledged reference to Ovid’s *Heroides* 10 is tinged by the medieval reception of Theseus as a perjurer in Chaucer’s *Anelida and Arcite*, “The Knight’s Tale,” and *Legenda Adriane de Athenes*, as well as in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* (book 5). Reid insists on the importance of the “sister-swap” (101), showing how the medieval Phaedra, sister and rival to Ariadne, offers a structural motif that weaves its way into the play and reveals an

“Ovidian lineage . . . quite un-Ovidian” (110), thus supplementing Goran Stanivukovic’s “Ovid and the Styles of Adaptation in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*” (*Ovid and Adaptation* [2020]).

As Reid unravels the dynamics of literary resurrection in the riddle of *Chaucer’s Ghost* (chapter 1), she exposes the sham of the title (spoiler alert!): the ghost that emerges is Gower’s in *Confessio Amantis* (22n32; annex 1). Through precise historicizing, Reid sustains a convincing reappraisal of Gower’s early modern reception. By mixing well-established references with less trodden grounds—such as *Ovide Moralisé*, William Caxton, and medieval romances—Reid expands the picture of a mediated Ovid that haunts Shakespeare’s poetic imagination as much as his classical readings.

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Elizabethan Narrative Poems: The State of Play. Lynn Enterline, ed.
The Arden Shakespeare State of Play 5. London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2019.
x + 262 pp. £75.

Narrative poems are central to early modern vernacular literatures, though they are less studied than the full-length epics or brief lyrics that flank them. Defining a “state of play” in their scholarship is therefore a tricky business, since attention is fitful, as in a game where nothing seems to be happening, and then a blur of action alters the field. Blessedly we have had a burst of new interest over the past decade, the themes and arguments of which are brought together in this volume, under the proper guidance of Lynn Enterline, whose own work has reaffirmed this poetry’s importance and its critical role in Renaissance literature generally.

Certain basic questions persist: What should we call them? Enterline and her fellow authors wisely use “epyllia,” “minor epic,” “Ovidian erotic narrative,” and “Elizabethan narrative poetry” interchangeably. What poems are included? Ovidian poems for sure; Roman historical poems such as Shakespeare’s *Lucrece* probably, since it’s Shakespeare; Neo-Latin poems, why not; English historical poems, as I once suggested, not here. These inquiries don’t produce a settled sense of genre. Instead, they delineate the poems as conversations within a coterie of writers with shared interests in a restricted setting over a few years, mainly the early 1590s. Hence, they do not make up a species or category, a body of literature, or even a limb, so much as a set of poetic gestures. They are not the dancer, but the dance.

Other questions are put to rest, at least for now. Who wrote them? (Young authors on the make.) Where were they written? (Mostly in London, especially at the Inns of Court.) How to write them? (In the rhetorical and mythopoetic modes learned in school.) Why write them? That’s harder: while mid-twentieth-century criticism had