

“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.

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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 mythopoeic modes learned in school.) Why write them? That’s harder: while mid-twentieth-century criticism had

considered them primarily playful, the following decades found that the play was often very serious, and that insight is confirmed here. Following Enterline, James Ellis, and William Weaver, the essays demonstrate how the Elizabethan authors addressed intertwined anxieties about social status, authorial identity, and masculinity that otherwise had little expressive outlet in early modern society.

These concerns are teed up in Enterline's probing introduction, with its full reflection on the history of criticism. Those fifteen pages alone will give casual readers a good sense of what is in play. Following are a dozen essays, many written by younger or mid-career scholars, a fact that promises a strong future. Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* is reconfirmed as the best of the poems, while Shakespeare's twosome inevitably command the most attention. A brief review cannot do justice to all twelve essays, so it suffices to trace some important themes and the avenues opened for future study. Running through the volume are three issues: the role of rhetoric, the nature of sexuality and subjectivity for both character and author, and the subversive force of anti-epic.

Jenny Mann and Joseph Ortiz pick up on thematic resistances to the social agendas of Virgilian epic. In an intriguing set of essays on sexuality and masculinity, Jessica Winston, John Garrison, and Stephen Guy-Bray focus on the young adult male writers of the Inns and the (literally) off-balance sexuality of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, advancing, within the general thematic of premodern sexuality, our understanding of the developmental category of an adolescent male of indeterminate or multiple sexual orientations, and the anxieties of transition from schoolboy into socially mandated adult masculinity. In paired essays, Jane Raisch finds in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* an everyday urban texture, while Barbara Correll sees *Hero* and other epyllia as leisure goods created for a new urban conspicuous consumption.

The last words, though, deservedly belong to Catherine Nicholson and Rachel Eisendrath for their subtle essays on Shakespeare's *Lucrece*. Nicholson finds that Lucrece must subvert the rhetorically conditioned practices of reading taught in the schools in order to understand and respond to her rape. Eisendrath probes the limits of rhetorical training, finding at the verbal edges an emergent "non-instrumental understanding of art" that we normally associate with a post-Kantian world, a pre-poetics that appears as "a kind of shadow of rhetoric" (63). This implied poetics before formal poetics—comparable to what art historians know as art before the age of art—may be the crucial pathway for understanding the products of this astounding literary era.

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