

Natalia Agapiou. *Endymion au carrefour: La fortune littéraire et artistique du mythe d'Endymion à l'aube de l'ère moderne.*

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To love the moon may be mere folly, to be loved by the moon is far more dangerous. From the outset of this Greek myth, we already know Endymion will never wake. If death is the long sleep and sleep is the little death, this myth poses the psychological conundrum of being the ultimate male fantasy, but only at first when the moon turns her attention to the stricken Endymion, who has already bathed in her light. However outwardly Arcadian, the simple shepherd is no match for the goddess whose chastity is external only. When will mortals learn the price of loving immortals? Antedating Cicero's *The Dream of Scipio*, later interpreted by Macrobius and alluded to by Boethius, where past and present predict the future, this tragic myth evolves ironically beyond Aesculapian dream traditions of healing prophetic oneiroscopy, instead creating a dream prison disguised as a dream palace.

Cicero called this myth a fairytale where the sleeping shepherd has yet to wake. In which directions has the Endymion myth rippled outward from its

classical inception until the Renaissance — and, one might also ask, later via Romantic hermeneutics — through literary and artistic watersheds? Although the thesis of this book rightfully does not enfold Romantic versions with more modern psychologies, the myth's varied treatments have been carefully followed from the classical world to Renaissance retellings in Natalia Agapiou's book. This is an insightful new study by a gifted linguist and sensitive literary imagist sleuthing through a large corpus of texts and visualizations to present a poetically complex myth *explicatio*, spiraling outward from benign *phantasia* to disturbing *psychomachia*. Agapiou's fluency in classical as well as French and English texts suits her well for examining this myth, made palpably accessible in the anglophone world by the Renaissance playwright John Lyly, whose play diagnoses a full-blown case of lunacy. In English literature, Endymion became famous in the Romantic vision of John Keats's epic poem (*Endymion*, 1818), especially its first line, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," although we cannot yet suspect Keats's outcome from his more erotic, less pathologic treatment of Endymion. George Frederick Watts's somewhat anachronistic Symbolist painting *Endymion* (ca. 1870) shares more common ground with Renaissance allegories by the painter Cima da Conegliano (*Endymion*, ca. 1510) and Lyly than with Keats's silvery text and sylvan imagery. Juxtaposed somewhere between, Girodet's 1793 painting *Endymion Asleep* is haunting for an image evoking both Neoclassicism and Romanticism.

Organizationally, the chapters follow a logical schema from myth diffusion in classical to late antiquity, especially the many Roman sarcophagi — see *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* 3:1–2, 554–59 (1986) — the psychomachia for a man of the Renaissance; the developing lunar imagery of later myth, including appropriations by Diane de Poitiers and Diane Salviati; Renaissance allegories from philosophy (Giordano Bruno) to science (Francis Bacon) and literature (Lyly, Drayton, Marino, Delminio, and so on). Integrating religio-politics (Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and Marie de Medicis) and other spheres (including *melancholia*); finally, the myth legacy arrives at the nascent age of science in the early Seicento when some begin to hope that astrology will finally bow to astronomy and myth to history.

Agapiou cites and analyzes excerpts from a wide range of authors including Ovid — whose *Metamorphoses* are silent about Endymion, although he references Endymion in other poems — and Lucian to the much later Cariteo, Lyly, Drayton, Marino, and Gombauld, examining traces and metamorphoses of the myth and possible unfoldings that still connect back to Greco-Roman sources. In addition to later medieval allegories about Diana, Agapiou also adduces iconographic renderings of Endymion in Cima de Conegliano — his *Endimione dormiente* tondo is both cover image and a color plate — A. Carracci, Poussin, Guercino, among others, right through the seventeenth century. Agapiou's understanding of literary nuances from late antiquity to the Seicento is often profound. The useful index and twenty-page bibliography of major texts are virtually unimpeachable. My favorite passage is Agapiou's engaging pericope (233ff.) about Galileo as *Novello Endimion* (from Giambattista Marino) in turning his new

telescope to draw his beloved moon closer. This text will not only be a useful resource to any mythopoeic study of Endymion before 1600 but also an equally applicable foreground to the psychology of Romantic dreamers.

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