Sarah Carter. *Ovidian Myth and Sexual Deviance in Early Modern English Literature.*
New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. viii + 212 pp. $80. ISBN: 978–0–230–24423–8.

Sarah Carter's book will be useful to scholars and students interested in the recuperation of Ovidian mythic tales in early modern English texts. The focus is on myths relating to sexual deviance as it may have been understood in the period. After a brief introduction outlining the approach and defining the notion of deviancy, the book offers five chapters focusing on Philomela and Procne; Lucrece; Ganymede, Iphis, and "Myths of Same Sex Desire"; Hermaphroditus; and Pygmalion, Myrrha, and Adonis. In the preface Carter explains her methodology of using electronic databases to assemble information about the frequency and type of myths appearing in texts published between the 1540s and 1640s (vii). The myths are clustered according to the sexual behavior expressed in them and the early modern texts are analyzed in terms of how the myths are reshaped and what this reveals about early modern perceptions of the behavior represented (vii).

The main strength of the book, for this reader at least, is the way it brings together early modern English renditions of the Ovidian tales and delivers close analyses of them. These readings give special attention to the more creative or idiosyncratic retellings. Carter also connects her analyses to key theoretical discourses in early modern scholarship around notions of gender, sexuality, violence, and subjectivity. Pertinent early modern terms including *tribade*, *ganymede*, and *sodomy* are also explored.

In her account of the Philomela myth (14–52) Carter explains how early modern poets tend to focus on Philomela's transformation into a nightingale and

the "beautifully mournful music" associated with her, while the dramatists make use of the myth's sexual violence (16). She discusses the significance of the removal of Philomela's tongue, including the way the tongue is gendered and its relation to subjectivity (18–24), before moving to a detailed analysis of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* that foregrounds how problematic the gender biases of the period can be as they represent violent disempowerment (24–51).

The chapter on Lucrece (53–80) begins with the observation that her "position as chaste wife, martyr, and catalyst for political change ensures that her presence permeates an extremely extensive number of early modern texts" (53). Carter notes the relatively few retellings of the rape of Lucrece as compared to the frequency of allusions in which Lucrece becomes an "exemplar of chastity" (53). The following observation is a good example of the sort of thought-provoking data produced via Carter's method: "The suicide debate in English texts appears to intensify after 1620, whilst the texts that use Lucrece as an example of noble suicide are all pre-1604. While such concentrations require further investigation, and any potential explanation is tenuous at best, it is worth noting that this coincides with an increase in the number of texts that explicitly undermine the figure of Lucrece in the 1630s and 1640s" (60).

Three focal texts in this chapter are Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*, Thomas Middleton's response *The Ghost of Lucrece*, and Thomas Heywood's *Rape of Lucrece*, which is "anomalous in its variety and disrespect concerning Lucrece in both the relatively early date (1608) and its attempt to create comedy out of the legend" (66).

The chapter on "Ganymede, Iphis, and Myths of Same Sex Desire" (81–114) deals with a fascinating array of well-known texts including Marlowe's *Edward II*, *Hero and Leander*, and *Dido*; Thomas Lodge's *Rosalind* (1590) and Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1599); and John Lyly's *Gallathea* (1592). The chapter concludes with an interesting discussion of the scholarly notion of Diana and her band of nymphs as constituting a community expressive of female homoeroticism (110–14). Carter's discussion is thought-provoking yet cautious and does not find evidence of Diana "indulging in homoerotic sexual activity" (114).

The chapter on Hermaphroditus (115–35) benefits from close attention paid to the early modern sources because this highlights the significance of gendered pronouns and the questions of violence and individual identity as Salmacis and Hermaphroditus merge. The chapter focuses on a range of early modern texts including Thomas Peend's *Pleasant Fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* (1565) and Francis Beaumont's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (1602).

The final chapter on Pygmalion, Myrrha, and Adonis (136–61) commences with an account of the epyllion, before dealing with three texts in particular: John Marston's *Pygmalion* (1598), William Barksted's *Mirrha the Mother of Adonis* (1607), and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1592). The tales of Pygmalion and Myrrha are "retold to emphasize control over excessive female sexuality and demonstrate specifically masculine anxieties" (160). Ultimately all the myths in this chapter "are used to reinforce ideological norms" and appropriate sexual behavior and boundaries (160–61).

In her conclusion (162–65) Carter describes "the rich store of classical mythology" as "akin to a system of signification, a collection of metaphor and narrative expanding constantly through intertextual allusion and cultural understanding" (165). Her book successfully maps some fascinating terrain in this early modern textual landscape.

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