Renaissance and Reformation
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Ovid. Ovid in English, 1480–1625. Part 1. Metamorphoses. Ed. Sarah Annes Brown and Andrew Taylor

Alison Keith

Citer ce compte rendu

Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, which "foregrounds various anxieties—barbarity and cultural degeneracy, tyranny and lameness—that plagued figures such as Ascham, Spenser, and Harvey in their efforts to rehabilitate English quantitative measure" (129). English verse is revivified by "its disregard from the decorums of more civilized tongues," its lack of quantitative feet a sign of abundance (130–32). In this context, Nicholson examines Puttenham's pattern-poems, Marlowe's play, and the notion that, for sixteenth-century England, "eloquence offers a bloodless path to imperial might" (146). Focused on Samuel Daniel's *Defense of Ryme* (1603), Nicholson re-reads the history of eloquence, its civilising influences, in order to make space for the "barbarian": tracing the career of the "strutting Scythian" and his literary and political conquests offers "a more expansive and elastic version" of literary history; "it is thanks to Tamburlaine that the Renaissance happened at all" (158–59).

Nicholson is an attentive, robust writer, but she has a persistent stylistic tic. Phrases like "appealing to and resisting"—there are dozens of examples—cheapen otherwise careful, supple thinking, as Nicholson sometimes presses contemporary affection for paradox into extended service. Oddly, too, even though she examines work that "redefines eloquence […] in terms of elocution" (47–48), and treats some of Gabriel Harvey's work, Nicholson nowhere mentions Petrus Ramus, the Ramist controversies at Cambridge, or his influence in denuding rhetorical inquiry. These are cavils: *Uncommon Tongues* is an exceptionally strong contribution to studies of the vernacular in early modern Europe.

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Ovid.
***Ovid in English, 1480–1625. Part 1. Metamorphoses.* Ed. Sarah Annes Brown and Andrew Taylor.**
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The aim of the MHRA's series of Tudor & Stuart Translations is to republish key early modern translations into English of works in other European languages

in order to make available, to scholars and teachers, translations that had a significant impact on early modern English literary and artistic culture at the time of their publication. The volume under review presents selections from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (and volume 4.2 from his erotic and exilic poetry) alongside selections from George Chapman's Homeric epics (vols. 20 and 21), Gavin Douglas's *Aeneid* (vol. 7.1–2), William Barker's *Cyropaedia* of Xenophon (vol. 13), Thomas May's Lucan (*Pharsalia*, vol. 18), a variety of early modern English translations of Plutarch's *Moralia* (vol. 2.1) and *Parallel Lives* (vol. 2.2), and three Senecan tragedies (vol. 8). These are, not surprisingly, the most significant works of classical literature for Renaissance England. The editors of the first volume of the Ovidian diptych (their second, vol. 4.2, is due out in spring 2016) have selected passages from translators of the *Metamorphoses* both well known (William Caxton, Arthur Golding, George Sandys) and little known (Thomas Peend and Dunstan Gale) in early modern England, with an eye to (1) showcasing the variety of approaches to Ovidian translation, (2) offering different versions of the same mythical tale, and (3) bringing back into literary circulation now forgotten, but inherently interesting, proponents of English Ovidianism. Of particular note is the editors' inclusion of complete, but lesser known, works such as T. H.'s 1560 *Fable of Ovid Treating of Narcissus*, the earliest Elizabethan translation of part of the *Metamorphoses* to which is appended (in the same verse form) a moralizing analysis of the myth; Thomas Peend's 1565 *Pleasant Fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis*, which also consists of a poetic translation of the Ovidian myth followed by a versified moralization; and William Barksted's 1607 *Myrrha, the Mother of Adonis*, which includes several aetiological digressions in the course of treating Myrrha's travails and is preceded by the commendatory verses with which it was originally published.

The volume opens with William Caxton's 1480 prose version of "Echo and Narcissus," based not on Ovid's Latin but on a medieval French prose redaction of the *Ovide moralisé*, which the editors pair with T. H.'s free-standing translation of Ovid's Latin treatment of the same myth from nearly a century later. In the juxtaposition, it is fascinating to see the importance of moralizing allegory in the reception of Ovidian myth continuing from the Middle Ages to well into the heyday of Tudor literary activity. The following selection, Thomas Hedley's *The Judgement of Midas* (ca. 1552), stands alone in the volume in several key respects: the only translation of Ovid from the reign of Edward VI; the only version of the myth of Midas; and the only politically motivated adaptation of

a passage of the *Metamorphoses*. This brief work (not even fifty lines in total) marks a decisive break with medieval allegorizing interpretation of Ovid and reveals not only a deft poetic touch but also a strikingly lively attention to the political uses of myth. Two versions of the myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus follow, the first by Arthur Golding from his translation of books 1–4 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (published two years before his landmark complete translation of the poem in 1567) and the second the free-standing version of the myth by Thomas Peend, both published in 1565—though the former likely preceded the latter. The choice of myth recalls the similar subject of Echo and Narcissus, treated by Caxton and T. H., and bears witness to the popular appeal of Ovid's sensual, erotic myths in the period, though Peend justifies his attention to the salacious details on display in his verse translation in a lengthy moralizing prose commentary. The editors next include three versions of the myth of Myrrha, by William Barksted (*Myrrha, the Mother of Adonis*, 1607), the mysterious H. A. (*The Scourge of Venus*, 1613), and the equally shadowy James Gresham (*The Picture of Incest*, 1626), all three again freestanding treatments of the back-story to Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1592–1593). The poems testify to the impact on Renaissance English literary culture not only of Ovid but also of Ovid's most famous Tudor/Stuart populariser, *viz.* Shakespeare. To these translations of the myth of Myrrha the editors conjoin an adaptation of Pyramus and Thisbe (another tale famously treated by Shakespeare) in the epyllion of Dunstan Gale (perhaps contemporary with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). The volume concludes with two versions of the myth of Jupiter and Callisto, the first from Thomas Heywood's *Troia Britanica* (1609) and the second from George Sandys's translation of the first five books of the *Metamorphoses* (published five years before his complete translation of 1626).

An excellent introduction to the volume as a whole precedes the textual offerings, and a shorter preface introduces the author and publication history of each individual selection; in addition, the editors include bibliographical entries for the editions of the texts they reproduce and current literary scholarship on them. The translations follow modern conventions for spelling and punctuation, and the editors provide unobtrusive but helpful assistance throughout by glossing the obscurities of diction, syntax, and context in their footnotes. By printing a succession of lesser known authors alongside the giants of early modern Ovidianism (Golding and Sandys themselves excerpted from early, less often cited editions of their canonical translations), Brown and Taylor provide a

real service to the student not only of the reception of the *Metamorphoses* in the English Renaissance but also of the pervasive Ovidianism in Tudor and Stuart literary culture. This attractively produced volume should spur new interest in the Ovidian vogue in early modern England.

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Pierno, Franco, ed.
The Church and the Languages of Italy before the Council of Trent.
Studies and Texts 192 / Toronto Studies in Romance Philology 3. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015. Pp. ix, 319. ISBN 978-0-88844-192-8 (hardcover) CDN$ 90.

In this new volume of the series Toronto Studies in Romance Philology, Franco Pierno edited and introduced the papers presented at the workshop "*Verba Domini*: The Church and Vernacular Italian before the Council of Trent" (held in Toronto in March 2011) and also other essays on the same topic written for the occasion by the most important scholars in the field. The result, based primarily on contributions in Italian, is a historical-linguistic view of the religious texts from the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century in Italy.

The index is thematically divided into four sections. Part 1 ("Between Orality and Writing") includes essays by Francesco Bruni, Vittorio Coletti, and Giuseppe Polimeni. The first two dwell on the role played by preaching orders (Franciscans and Dominicans) and how their messages turned into a written version thanks to *reportatores*. In particular, the comparison between the most charismatic figures of the two orders in play, Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444) and Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98), highlights their different ways of preaching: the former adhering to a bombastic and often theatrical style, the latter depending on an academic attitude that didn't lower itself to the audience's level. Polimeni focuses, instead, on the *Sermon* by Pietro from Barsegapè, the most ancient text (second half of the thirteenth century) in Milanese vernacular on the Creation, Christ, and the Last Judgment. The contributor shows the strategies adopted by the author to help the audience identify with the poem's contents, and how they possibly belong to other devotional texts.