

salvation despite his despicable behavior. Through the ministrations of Helen of Corinth, Wood believes a completed revision would have shown Amphialus recovered both physically and morally; in Amphialus, Sidney “creates a corrigible character with the power to inspire cooperation [in his own salvation and] in his readers” (86).

A particularly interesting point Wood makes is the suggestion that the character of Amphialus may be seen as Sidney’s avatar. Does Sidney continue to participate in his own poem after the disappearance of Philisides? Wood suggests that Sidney “acknowledges, rather than suppresses, the fallen aspect of his character, hoping,” in Philippist terms, that he will “be judged with moderation” (106). Despite his fall, “Amphialus retains those characteristics which connect him to Sidney’s [other] putative heroes” (111). Because Sidney is writing romance and not tragedy, Amphialus’s rehabilitation is necessary, and while in the incomplete revision Amphialus falls, he will “rise again and re-enact man’s salvation” (116). Put another way, Sidney’s text teaches that “moral reformation is an ongoing process” (116).

Later chapters argue that Pyrocles and Musidorus’s martial exploits stand in juxtaposition to the reality of Sidney’s own life and career and represent Sidney’s “scepticism toward . . . courtly values” (127); that, rather than acting as representatives of passive Christian stoicism, the Arcadian princesses instead exhibit a “more actively engaged outlook than . . . conventionally passive virtue” (179), seen especially in Philoclea’s influence over Amphialus; and that we may read the revised *Arcadia* in the context of the more factional 1590s and beyond, especially in terms of the career of Sidney’s heir, Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, whom Wood would, like Amphialus, rehabilitate. Wood also suggests that Mary Sidney Herbert’s embrace of Phillippe du Plessis-Mornay’s more pragmatic, Stoic, less Philippist position is “key to understanding the anti-factionalist agenda of the *New Arcadia*” (145).

Readers of Sidney’s work will find the book deeply researched and clearly presented. It makes a strong contribution to scholarly understanding of the contemporary philosophical, ethical, and political pressures upon the revision of the *Arcadia* as well as contextualizing it within its subsequent publication history and the history of the romance’s later revisionists.

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Humoral Wombs on the Shakespearean Stage. Amy Kenny.

Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. xii + 202 pp. €59.49.

In a field where representations of pregnant and potentially pregnant bodies in early modern drama are pervasive but understudied, Amy Kenny’s debut book,

Humoral Wombs on the Shakespearean Stage, is a revelation. Kenny's intervention into scholarly conversations about pregnancy, humoral theory, and performance studies is "the paradoxical, intriguing depiction of the womb" (13). Through close readings of contemporary medical texts, Kenny argues that wombs in the early modern imagination were "cast as a type of diseased condition to endure," othering the female body through excess (17). Not in Shakespeare's plays, however. For Kenny, Shakespeare often celebrates the womb as a way to lend agency to female characters—pushing back against medical knowledge of his time. To make this argument, Kenny offers scholars eight different kinds of wombs in Shakespeare's canon: the early modern, the green, the thick, the fertile, the monstrous, the tomb, the male, and the exonerated womb, an order she argues that reflects "the expected stages of the womb chronologically" (17).

By organizing her chapters around these different types of wombs in Shakespeare's plays, Kenny is able to draw connections across his canon and contemporary dramatists. In the chapter "The Tomb Womb," Kenny reads Shakespeare's theatricalized "lack of bloody [female] bodies" onstage, arguing that Shakespeare's bloodless female corpses invert the "denigrated" leaky body (143). The chapter features readings of Desdemona, Ophelia, and even Juliet in order to trace Shakespeare's resistance to grotesque or "leaky" bodies, a phenomenon described in Gail Kern Paster's *The Body Embarrassed*. Kenny ultimately argues that Shakespeare offers his female characters "postmortem agency" (161); smothering, drowning, poisoning, and strangling allow for a dignity not often offered to women. This chapter is a good example of the connections Kenny makes in *Humoral Wombs* between Shakespeare's plays, medical texts, contemporary plays, and ephemeral documents from the period.

Perhaps most important is how *Humoral Wombs* expands on Elizabeth Sacks's *Shakespeare's Images of Pregnancy* (1980) in chapters 4 and 5. Sacks's text was poorly reviewed in its time but is one of the few monographs written entirely on pregnancy in Shakespeare's plays. While Sacks relies heavily on metaphor, Kenny includes an impressive collection of interdisciplinary documents—from the Wellcome Collection in London, for example, and her research at Huntington Library—to bolster her reparative reading of pregnancy as a "nebulous, secret experience" in early modern medicine and Shakespearean drama (91). In conversation with Kenny's investment in performance studies, her archival research allows her to consider the prosthetic womb and artificial bellies mobilized by theater companies to transform the young boys playing pregnant characters, offering readings of these characters grounded in physicality, props, and other prosthetics. Kenny's focus on the performance of pregnancy complements existing scholarship on the relationship between boy actors and blurred gendered binaries in the period. In other words, *Humoral Wombs* offers multiple points of entry for those of us interested in pregnancy, the medical humanities, and early modern staging of female bodies.

The archival research that frames each of Kenny's chapters not only bolsters her argument that humoral wombs are central to reading Shakespeare's powerful female

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.
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\$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