Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme

Ha, Polly. English Presbyterianism, 1590–1640

Benjamin Woodford

Citer ce compte rendu

Woodford, B. (2012). Compte rendu de [Ha, Polly. English Presbyterianism, 1590–1640]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme, 35*(1), 196–199. https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v35i1.19085

a generally positive account of entrepreneurial adaptation in the face of economic downturns, minimizing the impact of the city's increasingly unwieldy public debt, and passing lightly over the progressive immiseration of wage labourers, who comprised the vast majority of Florentines. Goldthwaite often describes the economy of Renaissance Florence as "capitalist," citing the role of commerce in dissolving rural feudalism and the absence of social constraints on trade, but one of the most striking conclusions of this study is that on balance Florentine entrepreneurs exhibited few traits of the individualistic, profit-maximizing "homo economicus" beloved of modern economists: they lacked the competitive instinct that informs economies of scale, investment in plant, and innovations in the production process; there is little evidence for the underselling of market competitors, or even — however sophisticated their bookkeeping techniques — consolidated accounts that would allow for an assessment of a firm's global performance. Instead, Goldthwaite argues, Florentine merchants and bankers continued to be constrained by essentially medieval forms — the commune, the guild, and the Mercanzia — to such a degree that Florence is a prime example of a "failed transition" to capitalism, in which, as Karl Polanyi argued, money, land, and labour are fully commodified and subject to market imperatives.

It is difficult in a brief review to do justice to the wealth of detail and provocative theses of a study as ambitious as this one; suffice it to say that *The Economy of Renaissance Florence* will remain an indispensable point of reference and departure for research in the field for decades to come.

LAWRIN ARMSTRONG, *University of Toronto*

Ha, Polly.
English Presbyterianism, 1590–1640.
Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011. Pp. xiv, 300. ISBN 978-0-8047-5987-8 (hardcover) $65.

Polly Ha's *English Presbyterianism, 1590–1640* provides a detailed account of both the nature of English Presbyterianism and its role in the major religious debates and issues of the early seventeenth century. Analyzing previously

unused sources, specifically Walter Travers's papers, Ha explores a religious group that most historians assume was repressed during the reign of Elizabeth I and only reappeared in the Civil War. Dispelling this perception, Ha's work reveals that not only was English Presbyterianism alive and well during the early decades of the seventeenth century, but it also played a crucial role in English ecclesiastical history.

Ha's book is divided into three parts: "English Presbyterians and the Church of England," "The Evolution of English Ecclesiology," and "From Theory to Practice." In the first, Ha discusses the English Presbyterian attitude toward two pillars of Anglicanism: royal supremacy and episcopacy. The Presbyterians were not entirely against the concept of royal supremacy, and were willing to accept that the prince might have some authority in the church. However, they attacked episcopacy from the beginning, blaming bishops for a lack of morality and demanding a greater role for civil authorities in moral reform. In taking a stance against the authority of bishops, Presbyterian ministers allied themselves with both jurists and provincial magistrates. Their criticisms of episcopal jurisdiction appealed to the interests of lawyers and lay authorities in counties, towns, and parishes, enabling Presbyterians to gather organizational and intellectual support.

The second part of the book examines the role of English Presbyterianism in the religious debates of the early seventeenth century. Presbyterians and Congregationalists debated the concept of the visible church, the use of history, and the election and role of ministers. Ha describes Presbyterians and Congregationalists as developing alongside each other and influencing each other's ideas. Her analysis of these debates demonstrates that Congregationalism developed not only in response to episcopacy, but also in response to Presbyterianism.

The final part of the book explores the practice of Presbyterianism. In practice, Presbyterian clerics were not detached from each other; rather, they belonged to networks that included merchants and magistrates, and that looked beyond local communities for economic, administrative, and theological support. With such a range of connections, Presbyterian "inflections" often appeared in English nonconformity. English Presbyterianism also had a popular dimension to it, as the lower class members participated in ecclesiological debates, challenged consistory proceedings, provided testimony for new members, reported the immoral behaviour of members, and acted as mediators

in disputes. Ha's analysis reveals that in the Presbyterian church, it was the lower classes, rather than the elites, who played the decisive role in enforcing church discipline.

Throughout all her analysis, Ha does not geographically limit herself to England. She includes the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam, as an important case study, as well as debates involving New England Protestants. This approach further illustrates Ha's point about the widespread impact of English Presbyterianism.

In her conclusion, Ha notes how the new prominence of English Presbyterianism changes the historical understanding of seventeenth-century Britain. The anti-episcopal arguments that are often considered to be a product of the Civil War had in fact existed among Presbyterian communities decades earlier. Her account limits the importance of Laud's reforms and moves "toward a more extended 'war' over religion" (179). Ha's findings connect English Presbyterianism to the development of Congregational thinking, and provide a context for the Scottish alliance in the mid-seventeenth century. Through such contributions, Ha requires historians to re-think many issues of the first half of the seventeenth century.

In addition to her re-shaping of religious history, Ha has explained with great clarity the nature of English Presbyterianism. Presbyterianism's relationship with the Church of England, the concept of the visible church, uses of history, the role of ministers, networks, and the involvement of the lower classes are all articulated. When studying Presbyterianism, Ha argues, one must not ignore its broader objectives and alliances with factions that did not always have the highest standard of discipline. In Ha's words, "Presbyterianism was as much a shared commitment to a means of coming to a resolution as it was an organized movement for further ecclesiastical and moral reformation" (183).

Polly Ha has done the historical community a great service by bringing the previously marginalized English Presbyterians back to the forefront of the early seventeenth century. Her book is required reading for those with specific interest in the religious debates of the early seventeenth century, and for any who want to understand the development of religious history more broadly. Presbyterian alliances with lawyers, magistrates, and the lower classes connect the story to political and social history, while their exchanges with Amsterdam and New England provide an international context. The focus of the book is Presbyterianism, but Ha's findings re-shape our understanding of early

seventeenth-century history, both in England and abroad. This wide impact renders the book essential.

small caps: BENJAMIN WOODFORD, *Queen's University*

Heyworth, Gregory.
Desiring Bodies: Ovidian Romance and the Cult of Form.
Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009. Pp. 357. ISBN 978-0-268-03106-0 (paperback) $38.

The premise of Gregory Heyworth's book is simple. He takes his title and his subject from the first line of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, "My mind is bent to tell of forms changed into new bodies," and tells us in his "Polemical Premise" what his book does not do: it does not contribute to "studies of classical influence in the traditional sense"; it does "not survey sources and analogues" or concern itself with "literary allusion"; instead, it investigates romance literature as a derivation of Ovidian metamorphosis in the sense of the struggle between "the love of the body as a material thing and as a synecdoche of the larger body of society" (p. ix). It is, therefore, not really about literature or about particular texts but about how a particular literary genre is generated by both the unifying illusion of desire and the ultimate dissociation of the self from the other. If the impetus of romance is to narrate separate entities into unions, such a desire inevitably ends (as in the *Roman de la Rose*) at the very moment of union itself — much like Calvino's Mr. Palomar, who died at the moment of supreme apprehension of the totality of lived experience. This is not to ignore Heyworth's profound engagement with the larger ideas that Ovid's statement at the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* acknowledges; the mutability of poetry as analogous to the mutability of society. But such a desire for "culture" or "civilization" subsequently distorts and mutates individuality and collectivity. We are left only with the desire, which we experience as bodies and express, however perfectly or imperfectly, in our literary forms. The idea seems to be that literary form mirrors civilization — its contents and discontents.

Heyworth is transfixed by the paradoxical: bodies and forms, time and timelessness, mutations wrought in rhyme — from lais to tales to sonnets