

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Bonnet, Charlotte, Anne Boutet, Christine de Buzon, and Élise Gauthier, eds. *Didon se sacrifiant d'Étienne Jodelle*

Anne G. Graham

Volume 39, numéro 2, printemps 2016

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1086555ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v39i2.26865>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Graham, A. (2016). Compte rendu de [Bonnet, Charlotte, Anne Boutet, Christine de Buzon, and Élise Gauthier, eds. *Didon se sacrifiant d'Étienne Jodelle*]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 39(2), 185–187. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v39i2.26865>

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2016

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

é
rudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

Bonnet, Charlotte, Anne Boutet, Christine de Buzon, and Élise Gauthier, eds.

Didon se sacrifiant d'Étienne Jodelle.

Collection «Perspectives littéraires». Tours: Presses universitaires François-Rabelais, 2015. Pp. 201. ISBN 978-2-86906-367-9 (paperback) €14.

The five articles gathered in this volume stem from a conference that took place at the Université François-Rabelais, Tours (19 October 2013). *Didon se sacrifiant* was chosen to be part of the French *agrégation* exam in 2014, which explains much of the recent surge in interest in Jodelle's play. A very useful "supplement" to the bibliography prepared by Jean-Claude Ternaux for the *agrégation* can be found at the end of a succinct and eloquent introduction by the four editors and it gives ample evidence of the proliferation of scholarly activity dedicated to the play, even since 2013.

In the first article in the volume, Emmanuel Buron presents Jodelle's tragic re-writing of Virgil as a "correction, both aesthetically and ideologically, of the source material." Buron contends that the stakes in the French poet's play are more political and metaphysical than sentimental in nature. Jealous of Dido, the gods use Aeneas as a means to prevent Dido from realizing the empire that should be within her grasp. In the context of a conflict between mortals and gods, therefore, Dido's suicide can be seen as a sort of sacrifice, one that allows her to achieve fame in spite of the gods' efforts. If Dido is the sacrificial lamb, then Aeneas must be the butcher, contrary to the common conception of him as a symbol of piety and obedience. The motifs of sacrifice and obedience lead Buron to make some very interesting connections between Jodelle's tragedy and Théodore de Bèze's *Abraham sacrifiant* (1550). If Abraham is celebrated as a model of obedience it is only because his willingness to take on the role of butcher made the sacrifice unnecessary. Since no gods intervene to prevent Dido's sacrifice, Aeneas becomes the "scandalous counterpart" to Abraham.

In the longest study in the volume, John Nassichuk undertakes a detailed analysis of Jodelle's reinterpretation of book 4 of the *Aeneid* for the French stage. Nassichuk argues that Jodelle develops a theme of interiority that is largely absent from Virgil's poem and that is, for our French poet, intrinsically connected to the parallel motif of *feinte* (dissimulation or pretence). While both Dido and Aeneas speak a language inflected by the interior, the connotations of the inner world are different for each of them. The motif of the interior is further

developed in Jodelle's play by the "constellation" of divinities who are tangled up in the story but who, due to the dramatic form chosen, are not able to speak in their own names the way they do in the original poem. Rather, they exist only through the words of mortals. As a result of their dramatic dependence on the main characters of the play, these divine forces also become embedded in the interior world of human motivations. The importance of the theme of dissimulation in the play is supported by Nassichuk's demonstration of the French author's preoccupation, in his non-dramatic writings, with the ethical imperatives of discretion, constancy, and authentic expression in the arena of love. Given the vehemence of the poet's position on the "ethical" responsibilities of the lover, both with respect to his beloved (protecting her identity, staying true, etc.) and with respect to the expression of his love, it is no surprise that this will colour his interpretation of the story of a lover abandoned. Indeed, as Nassichuk shows, Jodelle's use of Petrarchan rhetoric in the tragedy "serves to reinforce the moral ambiguity that exists in the multiple connections between the universe of the mortals and the laws that govern divine interests."

Gilles Polizzi investigates the role of envy in *Didon se sacrifiant*, using the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein's work as a starting point. Like the other essays in this volume, Polizzi's analysis investigates the similarities and differences between Jodelle's tragedy and the recounting of the story in Virgil's poem. For Polizzi, Jodelle has inflected the hero of his play with the qualities of the ungrateful child, which also means that Dido has been transformed in his imagination into both lover and "bad" mother. Above all, Dido is characterized by all of the characters of the play as a mad woman (*effrennée*), whose suicide is deemed inevitable, before the queen ever makes mention of it herself. It is Dido's sister, Anne, who is most obviously and radically modulated by envy. Polizzi contends that the dramaturge speaks through Anne in the second half of the play, using this character, and her envy, to guide the reader in making the transition between Virgil and Seneca, between epic poem and horrific tragedy.

Jodelle's understanding and use of the chorus, in both *Cléopâtre captive* and *Didon se sacrifiant* are the focus of Sylvain Garnier's article. The function of the chorus was not clearly understood during the Renaissance and there was particular confusion regarding its *dramatic* function, as is evidenced by the different functions of the chorus in *Cléopâtre captive*. Through a close analysis of the two plays, Garnier shows the evolution in Jodelle's understanding of the

chorus, arguing that the second tragedy is the work of a more mature and original playwright.

Mathilde Lamy-Houdry sketches out the conflict between epic poetry and tragedy in Jodelle's play through the lens of heroism. Aeneas is an epic hero who has found himself bewildered in the world of tragedy, Dido's universe. While Aeneas is confronted with a tragic dilemma—abandon the woman he loves or fulfil his epic mission—he does not hesitate the way the tragic hero would. He knows the choice he has to make: between his fear of Dido's suicide and his fear of divine vengeance, the latter operates more powerfully and determines his ultimate course of action. While as a tragic hero Dido is dominated by her passions and succumbs to them, Aeneas is able to move beyond the realm of emotions to base his decision on reason alone. This is a fine and varied collection of essays that anyone interested in Jodelle's second tragedy will no doubt find highly useful.

ANNE G. GRAHAM

Memorial University

Brownlee, Victoria and Laura Gallagher, eds.

Biblical Women in Early Modern Literary Culture 1550–1700.

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015. Pp. xii, 252. ISBN 978-0-7190-9155-1 (hardcover) £70.

This ambitious and scholarly collection of essays addresses the complex, often contradictory, and sometimes strikingly counterintuitive ways that biblical women characters were analyzed, interpreted, and appropriated in early modern discourses. The volume includes multiple framing and contextual chapters. In addition to an "Introduction" outlining the significant roles biblical women characters played in early modern culture, Victoria Brownlee and Laura Gallagher also contribute two "Overview" chapters introducing the parts of the volume dealing with Old Testament and New Testament figures respectively. These overviews will be useful for readers who do not have much knowledge of the Bible or of early modern religious writing. The "Afterword" by Dympna Callaghan sums up some of the patterns in the collection as a whole,