



Graham, Kenneth J. E. Disciplinary Measures from the Metrical Psalms to Milton

Daniel W. Doerksen

Volume 40, Number 4, Fall 2017

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1086088ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v40i4.29290>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Doerksen, D. (2017). Review of [Graham, Kenneth J. E. Disciplinary Measures from the Metrical Psalms to Milton]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 40(4), 217–220. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v40i4.29290>

et stratégique, les frères Le Preux résumant donc bien les effets de délocalisation entraînés par la reproduction mécanique des textes.

Dans la postface de son ouvrage, Jean-François Gilmont rappelle le rôle singulier joué par les bibliothécaires dans les mouvements de résistance au nazisme partout en Europe au XX^e siècle. Il ne cache pas son admiration pour leur travail discret et efficace. Plus largement, le chercheur espère que la banque de données GLN 15–16 donnera le goût à d'autres, plus jeunes, de s'aventurer dans la catalographie des imprimés anciens afin de redonner sens à ces « trésors de mémoire indispensables pour une meilleure connaissance de notre monde » (506). Les parcours individuels d'imprimeurs, évoqués dans notre recension du livre de Gilmont, présentent à tout coup des voies de recherche fascinantes et utiles pour notre époque. Le travail bibliographique suppose également une posture de résistance, une *quête* au sens fort, car la modernité qui émerge à l'aube de la Renaissance intimait déjà à chacun la nécessité vitale d'une relecture du passé et d'une mise en contexte des vérités acquises. À Lyon, Genève, Lausanne et Neuchâtel, le mot d'ordre des imprimeurs était bien d'opposer au pouvoir censorial unique la diversité foncière des savoirs, énoncée et légitimée par l'écriture. Cette lutte pour la liberté de pensée reste aux yeux de Jean-François Gilmont le legs imprévisible des ateliers d'imprimerie qui, dès le milieu du XV^e siècle, en commençant par les traités de démonologie de Ludwig Lavater (Genève, 1575) jusqu'aux récits d'exploration de Jean de Léry (Genève, 1594), proposaient le libre accès à un monde réfléchi et ouvert, régi par la multiplication mécanisée des textes et des idées.

FRANÇOIS PARÉ

University of Waterloo

Graham, Kenneth J. E.

Disciplinary Measures from the Metrical Psalms to Milton.

London: Routledge, 2016. Pp. xiii, 206. ISBN 978-1-4727-6345-16 (hardcover) US\$149.95.

Kenneth Graham sets out to study a previously neglected aspect of English Protestant poetics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: church discipline. He explores this feature in four sources: the metrical psalm versions, and the

poetry of Robert Crowley, George Herbert, and John Milton. Although the book title may not seem inviting, Graham demonstrates that “discipline” has significance in the poetry of Herbert and Milton, and can itself be better understood and appreciated in the light of the poetry studied here.

Church discipline, writes Graham, was generally understood as “the means by which doctrinal knowledge is applied” and “specifically as the government of conduct” (3).

Appropriately, Graham takes time to relate church discipline to both divine and personal discipline, and to make clear that it was valued for its potentially constructive contribution to life. Although physical discipline is symbolized by the rod, spiritual discipline most often works through words. (The book cover appropriately features a painting of the prophet Nathan rebuking King David for adultery and murder.)

Graham calls attention to the tremendous interest that sixteenth-century Protestants had in the psalms, as reflected in the great number of English verse translations made. He notes the two main kinds of psalms: the penitential, with their emphasis on the personal and inward, and the judicial, involving ethical judgments. Poetic parallelism in the latter intensifies the separation of the ungodly. But in the psalms, “the sweetness of mercy is never far from the antithetical bitterness of sin” (50).

Graham calls Robert Crowley a pioneer, whose “disciplinary poetry” featured exhortation, admonition, and reproof (71). Crowley brought together religion and economics, and for him “distribution mimics the action of grace” (74). The theology of the time used the language of the marketplace (81), and Crowley saw language as both a means and an object of discipline (85).

Although this book is about poetry, in both the Herbert and Milton chapters Graham pays appropriate attention to the prose writings of these poets. Graham takes *The Country Parson* as representative of Herbert’s time in picturing pastoral power, somewhat as envisioned in the social theorist Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*. But Graham (9–12) finds the later writings of Foucault (especially about *parrhesia*, courageous truth-telling) more helpful in understanding the personal, individual side of discipline.

Graham does good readings of Herbert’s “The Windows” and “Constancie” as illustrating the “disciplinary power of virtuous example” (98–102). He also interestingly explores interpretations of John 13:17 and 7:17, the latter potentially challenging Protestant views that faith comes before works (103–06).

Herbert's poem titled "Discipline," Graham suggests, combines "the penitential subjectivity and the judicial objectivity of the Psalms, as well as the freely distributed grace and reciprocal justice of Crowley's poems" (106). "Discipline" is about the relationship between God and man; it was "both a cry for mercy and a call to virtue." Graham sees this poem as also a "gentle but firm" contribution to the debate about church discipline in the Laudian context (123).

The chapter on Milton first deals with his prose tracts, one of which overtly specifies discipline in its title. Graham takes issue with views of Milton that oppose discipline to liberty. For Milton, true discipline was never authoritarian; it "suppressed sin for the good of all, but it did so by spiritual means" (126). Graham argues that Milton's disciplinary thinking shifted in the light of changing circumstances "from governing conduct to accommodating heterodox or even heretical views" (127). Milton is here presented as active in a public or disciplinary sphere, in which everyone could be a brother's keeper. He goes beyond Geneva, but with "no lessening of calls for exhortation, admonition, and reproof" (145). Church censures should proceed by "free and lawful debate, not outward force" (147). A new function for discipline that comes for Milton with *Areopagitica* is to assist with "winnowing and sifting truth" (142)

Graham considers *Paradise Lost* in the light of disciplinary thinking, noting that about half the poem is "composed of conversations intended to lead to virtuous behavior" (148). In the middle third of the poem, Raphael "resembles nothing so much as a pastor paying a visit to a young married couple" (149). Graham carefully evaluates self-discipline in contrast to communal processes in the debate between Adam and Eve (157–59), and presents a good account of the couple's reconciliation. Discipline also offers a way of understanding the treatment of Satan as a limb that must be cut off (163–65).

Graham has written a fine book, with an unprecedented approach through church discipline to two major poets of the seventeenth century. In doing so he shows awareness of the English church context, including the Calvinist consensus (113), paying careful attention to writings of the time such as those of Robert Crowley, Ann Lock, and Robert Dyer. He also consults historical and literary-critical writers, critiquing the Weber thesis and usefully bringing in ideas from Foucault. He offers judicious evaluations, sometimes giving corrections, as of Stachniewski and Shuger (35–37), but also recognizing debatable points, such as the degree to which Herbert's "Discipline" can be seen as a protest against Laudian harshness. The book clearly proves that church

discipline was a “vital concern” (38) for Herbert and Milton, and valuable for understanding their poetry.

DANIEL W. DOERKSEN

University of New Brunswick

James, Anne.

Poets, Players, and Preachers: Remembering the Gunpowder Plot in Seventeenth-Century England.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. Pp. 412 + 8 ill. ISBN 978-1-4426-4937-8 (hardcover) \$85.

The University of Toronto Press has in its wisdom published over four hundred densely-printed pages (250 of prose, 100 of notes, and 50 of bibliography) about something that never happened: the explosion of the English Houses of Parliament, plotted for November 5, 1605, a date memorialized in Britain as Guy Fawkes Day. Most non-events do not leave much of a paper trail, but this one, as Anne James catalogues, yielded a remarkable harvest of pamphlets, liturgies, sermons, plays, histories, polemics, romances, epigrams, satires, cartoons, and epics, both in its immediate aftermath and generations after. The author demonstrates that the meaning of the anchoring event in these texts altered with the desires and needs of their authors and audiences, as with political and religious tides, such that “conflicting narratives quickly became weapons in confessional warfare” (5), among other battles. The nebulous quality of the evidence for the event itself only allowed more leeway to those appropriating the Gunpowder Plot to their interests. By working with a selection of otherwise dispersed and often neglected texts in her deeply and widely informed work—one oriented at the nexus of reception studies and New Historicism—James persuasively and thoroughly shows the intricate interplay between literature and public events of this kind.

King James, for instance, promptly instituted memorial liturgies and sermons—the latter delivered at court each Tuesday—in order to ensure that the plot was remembered as part of a larger Protestant providentialist history, one that endorsed his family’s succession to the Tudor throne and his unpopular unification of Scotland and England (chapter 2). While the king was