

Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme



Knecht, Ross. The Grammar Rules of Affection: Passion and Pedagogy in Sidney, Shakespeare, and Jonson

Goran Stanivukovic

Volume 44, Number 3, Summer 2021

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1085855ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i3.38029>

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Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Stanivukovic, G. (2021). Review of [Knecht, Ross. The Grammar Rules of Affection: Passion and Pedagogy in Sidney, Shakespeare, and Jonson]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 44(3), 299–301. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i3.38029>

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book therefore suggests the extent of the psychological work that remains to be done in succeeding decades (and centuries) to arrive at more viable forms of personal assertiveness within Christian (and post-Christian) cultures.

IAN MCADAM

University of Lethbridge

<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i3.38028>

Knecht, Ross.

The Grammar Rules of Affection: Passion and Pedagogy in Sidney, Shakespeare, and Jonson.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021. Pp. vii, 180. ISBN 978-1-4875-0847-0 (hardcover) \$50.

This well-researched book illuminates an excellent topic from the history of early modern philology and the relationship of literature and grammar-school education: how classroom teaching and the learning of grammar in the age of Shakespeare frequently connected language to emotions, and how this connection was manifested in different forms of conduct presented in drama and poetry by writers who absorbed the grammar curriculum in school. The book advances new arguments and original readings of lyric poetry, tragedy, and comedy. “Emotion” and “affect,” terms that are sometimes used interchangeably in both historical and theoretical analyses but that disclose nuanced and different relations to human subjects in a social milieu, are concisely and persuasively explored using the conceptual tools of philosophy of language, historical debates about the nature and practices of school teaching, moral philosophy, affect theory, and cultural and historical writing about emotions and, broadly, psychology. The result of pulling together these intersecting conceptual threads is to grasp “the nature of emotion itself” (5)—a challenging historical and theoretical task—in drama and lyric poetry.

The book contains substantial chapters on Philip Sidney’s sonnets from *Astrophel and Stella*, Shakespeare’s comedy (*Love’s Labour’s Lost*) and tragedy (*Hamlet*), and Ben Jonson’s city comedy (*Every Man in His Humour* and *Every Man out of His Humour*). Ludwig Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language, especially of language games, is the theoretical foundation of all chapters.

It is employed effectively and with the right balance of historical, close, and philosophical analyses. In addition to Wittgenstein, classical philosophes and humanist writers on education and language are discussed.

The introduction presents a complex theoretical and conceptual framework. It delineates how language—both as a tool of and for thinking and as a cultural and material human practice—shaped ideas about an individual’s emotional life, body, and psychology; it shows how these ideas would have been understood by people in the early modern period, and what early modern readers would have been encouraged to find in the literature that engaged with these concerns. To this effect, Wittgenstein, Pierre Bourdieu, and Theodore Schatzki are discussed. At the heart of the introduction, however, lies a careful examination of grammatical theory, from its classical origins to its neoclassical commentaries. In the next chapter, in which the subject is grammar and pedagogy specifically, the main currents of the classical, medieval, and early Continental humanist theories (Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus) are examined within a historical overview. This chapter ends with a focused analysis of the main ideas about literature and pedagogy developed by two of early modern England’s main pedagogues: Roger Ascham and Richard Mulcaster. The book resists formalist analysis even if often, unavoidably, the author interprets literary texts by engaging deeply with the question of how form and content, sound and sense, shape dramatic meaning. This is most apparent in the engaging chapter on *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, a chapter that also makes excellent use of A. L. Austin’s theory of speech acts. There is further evidence that shows that this book has much to offer to the burgeoning turn to new formalist criticism. The preceding chapter begins by addressing the language of grammar school teaching in Sidney’s sonnets, and it develops into an astute analysis of the active and the potential verbal modality as producers of the poems’ “sensual world” (60). As demonstrated in other chapters, the author moves seamlessly between briefly analyzing the teaching of grammar, responding to key criticism about Sidney’s poetry, connecting with language philosophy and pedagogical theory, and providing an extensive close reading of a selection of the sonnets. The chapter on *Hamlet* balances the complex task of theorizing Hamlet’s (and the play’s) preoccupation with language and a dramatization of melancholy—an exploration of affect that is layered with philosophy, humoral theory, memory, and history, and that is hard to interpret in all of its varied manifestations. Knecht navigates with critical sharpness the play’s dense presentation of actions

and emotions, or what he calls “[t]he passion-action antinomy” (101), in relation to grammar as a structural vehicle for conveying and communicating this antinomy. The final chapter, which is devoted to an analysis of Jonson’s comedies, examines the effect of a Jonsonian application of theories of humour on behaviours, actions, and “embodied practices” (112). The book ends with a short and crisply written conclusion on Michel de Montaigne’s ideas of pedagogy and affect—his philosophical and aesthetic experiment that went beyond any one of his contemporaries’.

Among the many virtues of this book, the structure of endnotes deserves attention; their long narrative form reveals the care with which they have been prepared to complement and expand the main argument. Not only are the long, descriptive notes immensely helpful in getting a new and insightful perspective, or valuable because they reveal another incisive close reading; but as the example of 136n5 shows, they also treat the reader with an expansive and crucial elaboration of how the main topic—grammar—is approached in this book: conceptually, contextually, historically, and via criticism.

GORAN STANIVUKOVIC

Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i3.38029>

Lagioia, Vincenzo, Maria Pia Paoli, and Rossella Rinaldi, eds.

La fama delle donne. Pratiche femminili e società tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna.

I libri di Viella 378. Rome: Viella, 2020. Pp. 352. ISBN 978-8-8331-3492-5 (paperback) €32.

This volume on the reputation of women brings together some of the papers from a conference held in Bologna in 2019. The women under examination are not those who followed the precepts and rules imposed by their society, family, or religion, but those who did not align themselves—for a variety of reasons—with contemporary expectations and so had to be controlled, regulated, and potentially punished for their divergence from the norms.

For the most part, the women in this volume are prostitutes, witches, adulteresses, and unwed mothers. They are the representatives of that segment