

Ovidian. James precisely foregrounds how “political critique takes place in forms of speech that reveal and partly conceal their audacity through . . . encryption” (204) in *Poetaster* by unpacking Jonson’s wealth of allusions to the Roman poet, using marginal and interlineal notes in his copy of Martial’s epigrams [1619, ed. Peter Schrijver]—placing him on the side of Joseph Justus Scaliger’s defense of Ovid in *Confutatio Fabulae Burdonum* (1608). The strategic use of quotation marks for gnomic sentences in *Poetaster*’s successive editions (Quarto 2, 1602 and Folio 1, 1616) contextualizes the use of Marlowe’s prohibited translation of Ovid’s *Amores* 1.15, pointing to it as “a maxim that reflects on the fate of Ovid, Marlowe and their censored words” (216). These sentences “shuttle between the past and present in a conscientious effort to arrive at truth” (218), suggesting how Jonson uses Ovid’s denunciation of imperial trespass on the Roman private space for more contemporary condemnations.

In an epilogue, “Ovid in the Hands of Women,” James explores Milton’s bolder speaker on the liberties, Eve in *Paradise Lost* (1667–1672), and, arrestingly, Anne Wharton’s Julia in the unpublished *Love’s Martyr; or Witt above Crowns*. Wharton stages Ovid’s banishment from Julia’s viewpoint, dramatizing the lovers’ impossible love; Ovid’s numerous asides unveil how he only acts as a libertine to shield his love from the jealousies at court. Ultimately, before suicide, Julia claims “my soul . . . will reign in Ovids breast”; such echo to Ovid’s closing formula in *Metamorphoses* about his “better part” being remembered by readers shows that Wharton fulfills what mattered to Ovid: the ability for readers to look to the past for “the energy of its liberating, unchained forms” (4), despite repeated moments of self-silencing. I strongly recommend James’s deeply literary contribution to reading Ovid’s classical parrhesiastic games.

Agnès Lafont 

Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3

[agnes.lafont@univ-montp3.fr](mailto:agnes.lafont@univ-montp3.fr)

WARREN JOHNSTON. *National Thanksgivings and Ideas of Britain, 1689–1816*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020. Pp. 413. \$130.00 (cloth).  
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.75

Warren Johnston’s *National Thanksgivings and Ideas of Britain, 1689–1816* is a case study of the negotiations of faith and national identity in eighteenth-century Britain through thanksgiving sermons. Johnston also provides an assessment of the interaction between personal belief and communal religious identity by way of sermons. Britishness, he argues, was tailored, crafted, and publicized by these thanksgiving sermons, for Anglicanism was strongly tied to the British identity that was promoted in these sermons. Through these sermons, Anglican preachers justified a belief that Britain was a nation chosen by God. The political nature of these sermons also is a testimony to the church’s relationship with the political establishment in eighteenth-century Britain.

As Johnston argues, “Thanksgiving days were meant to tie the country together as a community in celebration and gratitude” (116). In order to emphasize national unity, preachers used the argument of religious unity, which testifies to the entanglement of political, religious, and social identities in eighteenth-century Britain. The sermons were also sometimes used as vehicles for expressing discontent with political authority—critiques of the monarchy, for example (not necessarily directed against the person of the monarch but against government ministers). However, disunity was also seen as a dangerous thing. Preachers were acutely aware of the political battle lines in the eighteenth century, and this awareness came across in the sermons as a critique of political division, especially that of Whig and Tory.

As an integral part of creating and disseminating a united British identity, thanksgiving sermons drew upon wars, victories, and heroes. The human cost of war was also sometimes

mentioned in the sermons, though less frequently, which also suggests that preachers used sermons as a means of social critique during difficult times, sometimes expressing discontent with war, sometimes expressing discontent with peace.

One popular subject was British trade. Preaching about the strength of British commerce in times of peace and war was also tied to identity formation, as Johnston posits: “There was a common feeling about the widespread gains coming to British society from lively and expansive commercial pursuits” (210).

Religious unity was the overarching theme in the sermons, as Johnston suggests, so dissent from the Anglican ranks was frowned upon. Johnston also notes examples of anti-Catholic sentiment in thanksgiving sermons in the eighteenth century: “Prominent themes included the religious and political characteristics of ‘popery’, the association between Roman Catholicism and fears of persecution for non-Catholics, the doctrinal criticisms of Catholic beliefs and worship, and a clear connection—in British minds—between Catholic motives and the French” (250).

In the chapter titled “Britishness and the Empire,” Johnston illustrates that thanksgiving sermons provided a critique of colonial rule, even questioning the merits of it. The most hauntingly interesting chapter is the last one, “Others and Britons” where Johnston talks about the concept of the Other in the thanksgiving sermons, with various examples ranging from the French to Native Americans and Africans. This is a valuable contribution, for British religious and national identities were also crafted vis-à-vis Others, from both within and without.

Johnston’s assessment of thanksgiving sermons is a valuable contribution to a fuller understanding of the early modern British agenda. It highlights the importance of religious ceremonies as indicators of British psyche. Thanksgiving sermons were not just about thanksgiving: they were indicators of a multifaceted political and cultural agenda of the church in the ancien régime.

*Derya Gurses Tarbuck*

Bahcesehir University

[derya.tarbuck@ou.bau.edu.tr](mailto:derya.tarbuck@ou.bau.edu.tr)

STEFAN JURASINSKI and LISI OLIVER, eds. *The Laws of Alfred: The “Domboc” and the Making of Anglo-Saxon Law*. Studies in Legal History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. 472. \$99.99 (cloth).  
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.83

With *The Laws of Alfred: The “Domboc” and the Making of Anglo-Saxon Law*, Stefan Jurasinski and Lisi Oliver present a much-needed edition and translation of the *domboc* of King Alfred (r. 871–899). Their edition has two parts, each a contribution to early English legal studies. The first part, a monograph-length discussion of the backgrounds to Alfred’s laws, is organized into five chapters that thoroughly situate Alfred’s laws in the longer history of English law: “The Emergence of Written Law in Early England,” “Legal Erudition in Seventh- and Ninth-Century Wessex,” “Oaths, Ordeals, and the ‘Innovations’ of the *Domboc*,” “The Transmission of the *Domboc*,” “Reception, Editorial History, and Interpretative Legacies.” Across these chapters, Jurasinski and Oliver summarize decades of scholarship and synthesize the major arguments concerning sources and the place of Alfred’s laws in West Saxon and the larger English society.

As Jurasinski and Oliver observe in their preface, it was by no means inevitable that the kingdom of Wessex would have produced the foundation of medieval English law, and the rhetorical and political work that the *domboc* performed for both Alfred and his successors was manifold and accretive. Counter to prior editions of Alfred’s laws that treat them as emerging either from a deep Germanic past or as a revolutionary invention that changed the face of English law that followed, Jurasinski and Oliver establish their context with careful attention