

Stephen Burns & HyeRan Kim-Cragg, editors. *Conversations about Divine Mystery: Essays in Honor of Gail Ramshaw*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023. 202 pages. \$49.00.

Words matter! This is the inspired thread woven throughout the tapestry of essays written by fifteen liturgical scholars across countries and cultures who have been impacted by Gail Ramshaw's work. While the authors found different inroads into this book's celebratory conversation unified around the scholar herself, Ramshaw's commitment to beautiful wordsmithing and her insight into the imaginative capacity of words was an ever-present theme amid its pages. Each chapter uniquely highlights her contribution to scholarship and the church, as both have been enriched by her working belief that carefully curated words have symbolic potential to create points of holy connection and transformation.

This collective work offers insights from authors representing liturgical traditions ranging from Episcopal to Pentecostal, illustrating the depth and breadth of Ramshaw's thought. The essays also vary in how they take inspiration from the scholar and her work. Some essays launch from a point of personal engagement. Jette Bendixen Rønkilde uses her essay to answer a decade-old question Ramshaw asked her about the communicative interaction of body and language in Eucharistic prayer after worshipping with her in an Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark. Kimberly Bracken Long remembers seeing Ramshaw wear a tree of life pendant, representing the profundity of the symbol for Ramshaw personally, and connects its metaphor into liturgical ecotheology to propose praying with creation rather than for it.

Other authors respond to themes they see in Ramshaw's work and utilize them as frameworks for discussion. Donyelle McCray engages Ramshaw's claim that liturgy has the power to shape identity by exploring the formative implications illustrated in Zora Neale Hurston's curse-prayer and the similar resonances of imprecatory psalms powerfully used within worship. In each of their essays, both Rhodora Beaton and Benjamin Stewart launch from Ramshaw's insight into the dynamic functions of metaphors. Beaton bridges Ramshaw's work in both metaphor and Trinitarian language to show how liturgy can generate disruptive open spaces for interconnected inspiration. Stewart illustrates how the tree of life metaphor can shape conversations about death to build ecological inroads for thought and practices regarding conservation burial. Gerald Liu utilizes the theme of storied identification present in Ramshaw's work in conjunction with cultural changes to point out the increasing gap between traditional liturgical symbols and the worshipers that use them, calling for new imaginings and contemporary words.

Two essays seek to build on Ramshaw's scholarship more directly. Lis Valle-Ruiz looks to expand the feminist commitment in Ramshaw's *Liturgical Language: Keeping it Metaphoric* by including a decolonial emphasis. She illustrates this move by examining how different groups who exist at the margins or push at traditional boundaries translate or adopt the pattern of words Jesus taught his disciples to pray. Similarly, Bryan Cones responds to Ramshaw's defense of the traditional invocation of the Trinitarian formulation used in baptism by suggesting a third expansive way between the two foundational commitments he sees in her work. While quite different, the patterns of these essays find a rhythm together and bring the reader through Ramshaw's work with varied insights and expressions.

For those newly interested in Gail Ramshaw, this book gives a snapshot of her impact on both scholars and scholarship. The editors' introductory essay does an excellent job outlining her leadership and contributions in important conversations that have impacted liturgical scholarship and the church's worship life. The chapters converse about Ramshaw's work in ways which

loosely place it into the ongoing theological and practical trajectory of the liturgical renewal movement while helpfully pointing the reader in directions to dive deeper. Still, this book also seems to acknowledge that a full representation of her thought cannot be captured in a simple compendium. Instead, the authors do something more with these carefully chosen words. For those who are familiar with Ramshaw and have felt the influence of her work in their own scholarship, this book represents an appropriate love letter to the scholar, one that will warm your heart and remind you of the faithful service she has offered to enrich us all. Melinda Quivik appropriately finishes the last page with gratitude: “Thank you Gail Ramshaw, for finding your path, led by your holy curiosity, and giving the rest of us language for worship that teaches, delights, and feeds us” (182).

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