

John Nassichuk, ed. *Vérité et fiction dans les entrées solennelles à la Renaissance et à l'Âge classique*.

Les collections de la République des Lettres. Quebec: Les Presses de L'Université Laval, 2009. xvii + 307 pp. illus. \$44.95. ISBN: 978-2-7637-8687-2.

This volume includes a selection of articles from a 2006 conference on the topic of truth and fiction in ceremonial entries during the Renaissance and classical period. In his introduction to the volume, John Nassichuk argues that the entry album's evolution during the period parallels that of historiography: in both cases the criteria of truth (*vérité*) and verisimilitude (*vraisemblance*) become central. The renewed interest in the Aristotelian theory of verisimilitude also contributed to this concern. Thus the evolution of entry albums as a genre runs parallel to an important cultural movement; as it attempts to bring together the issues surrounding on the one hand spectacle and representation and on the other the documentation and memory of the past, the entry album is a privileged locus for the confrontation between verisimilitude and truth. Readers of entry albums must remain ever vigilant and attentive to the complex relationship between the spectacle of verisimilitude and the concern for truth.

The majority of the articles in the volume focus on French ceremonial entries from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, but several go beyond the geographical boundaries of France, introducing entries from Italy, the Netherlands, Paraguay, and Quebec to the discussion. Some articles address the question of truth and fiction more explicitly than others, but taken together they bring to light, whether implicitly or explicitly, the range of questions relative to truth and fiction posed by ceremonial entries.

Several contributors treat entry albums as historical documents that reveal information about the cultural and political dynamics of the period, such as the matrimonial politics of the Guise-Lorraine family and the workings of poetic patronage (Richard Cooper), the reception of Ronsard's *Franciade* just after its publication (Nassichuk), or the evolving cultural ideals of given groups (Louise Frappier, Alain Salamagne). In several instances, the comparison of two or more accounts of a given entry allows us to assess how objective and complete a picture we get from a particular account or type of account (William Kemp, Sandra Provini). However it is not only factual truths but also abstract truths that are at stake in entry ceremonies, as Luisa Capodiecì and Daniel Russell demonstrate in their articles: the entries' iconographical programs present a coded message often meant to point to a universal or higher truth.

Thus we can see entry albums as having a variety of claims to truth, but they invariably also have a political agenda which can taint their objectivity. Often the goal is to present a positive image of the dignitary being received and of the host city; but they can also denigrate, as Marie-France Wagner demonstrates in her presentation of a corpus of *entrées-mazarinades*, which, through accounts of entries by various figures, present a consistently negative view of Cardinal Mazarin. As Marie-Claude Canova-Green shows, such propagandistic use of the entry album genre could go as

far as to invent an entry that never occurred as was the case for the Duc de Rohan's purported entry into Castres in 1626.

In addition to political agendas, a number of other factors could distort the events that entry albums claim to describe. The differing conventions and modes of expression of the artistic media and literary genres used in entries themselves and the narratives that described them could produce significantly contrasting impressions (Jean-Claude Arnould, Provini, Julie-Andrée Rostan, Kemp). Depending on the inclinations of a given author, a wide range of other genres, rituals, technical discourses, and classical texts, could also come to influence and shape the description of an entry (Claire Latraverse, Yves Pauwels, Russell, Daniel Vaillancourt).

The articles in this volume address an important dimension of ceremonial entries. In doing so, many also provide detailed critical introductions to a number of lesser known texts. Together, these two facets make for a volume which scholars of early modern court culture will find both thought-provoking and informative.

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