

Bathsabe, With the Tragedie of Absalom (1594), love and victimization intermingle, as the title suggests. David's epithelium to his bride, "Now comes my lover tripping like a Roe" (cited 196), depicts both a lovely and a threatening pastoral, with Bathsheba regarded as a stolen sheep. Here again, the dramas depicted by Goodblatt enact the subtleties of the Hebrew text, a portrayal of a good and bad king. As Meir Steinberg notes in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (1984), the biblical story describes David "staying in Jerusalem" even though his troops "go forth to battle" (2 Samuel 11:1).

In this fluid and engaging text, the play's the thing to catch our consciences. Accordingly, Goodblatt quotes the modern director of *The Love of King David*, who recalls "fantastic fights" (175). Appearing everywhere, from puppet shows to modern student performances, "Jewish and Christian voices" resound throughout the text.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.474

The Biblical Covenant in Shakespeare. Mary Jo Kietzman.
London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. xii + 254 pp. \$99.99.

The notion of covenant was a crucial theological and political one in early modern England, one that gained traction as a result of the Reformation in England and eventually wended its way into early modern literature. Mary Jo Kietzman's new work charting William Shakespeare's use and understanding of covenant in his works is an intriguing survey of the religious and political implications of covenant. Kietzman's task is to track and demonstrate Shakespeare's interest in covenant as a "theopolitical idea," one that stresses the necessity of societal and political bonds in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. She argues that reading covenant in Shakespeare vis-à-vis social and political bonds will lead to the unpacking of "new forms of relation between 'Lords'—God, King, husband—and their subjects" in early seventeenth-century England (21). To achieve her objective, she examines the meaning of covenant in the Old Testament and traces how Shakespeare applies the biblical imports of covenant on the theater stage through biblical allusions, primarily through Old Testament narrative accounts.

Kietzman first considers the account of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac, the Akedah, teasing out the striking parallels in Shakespeare's works—namely, *Titus Andronicus*, *Richard II*, and *King John*. The influence of Calvin's interpretation of the Akedah upon Shakespeare, she avers, is visible in the idea of covenant being a struggle with God. As Abraham struggled with the promise of covenant and the imminent sacrifice of his own son, so Shakespeare portrayed the early modern covenant as a wrestling with "ethical dilemmas so as to create new corporate bodies" (66). The narrative of

Jacob's wrestling with the angel and reception of his new covenant name in Genesis 32 also provided inspiration for Shakespeare, particularly in the character of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock's character, both the good and ill, highlights the necessity of covenant relationships with others in order to thrive in one's community. Furthermore, the biblical book of Judges, specifically the dark narratives of Jephthah, Jael, and Samson, elevates the need for a political covenant in a context of "broken and rotten societies" (130). With this backdrop, Kietzman offers a compelling reading of *Hamlet* in which Shakespeare incorporates dramatic characterization and gripping soliloquies to highlight the tragedy when a covenantal framework is absent in society.

In her fascinating overview of the political theology within the lines of *Macbeth*, Kietzman effectively draws out Shakespeare's both subtle and not-so-subtle attempts to challenge King James I's view of absolute monarchy and divine-right rule. The tragic demise of the biblical King Saul provides a framework through which Shakespeare investigates the abuse of political power, equating sacral monarchy with witchcraft. Shakespeare's view of covenant in *Macbeth*, Kietzman reasons, directly counters divine-right rule by suggesting that noble political leaders form covenants by "applying religious ideas and values to build a society without spiritual idols," including divine-right kings (205). Covenant, for Shakespeare, liberates subjects from a king's propensity to self-idolatry. The biblical model and antidote for abusive monarchy, therefore, is the figure of David, whom Kietzman argues is reimagined in the character of Malcolm. As the pre-king David exemplified both the tension of passive nonresistance and political resistance, so Malcolm expressed for audiences the precarious balance in reacting to a mad king.

Occasionally, Kietzman submits some questionable, unconventional interpretations of biblical passages with inadequate textual support. This is particularly true with her theological readings of Judges and the Saul narrative. That criticism aside, her methodology and ability to plunge deeply into both biblical and Shakespearean texts is masterful. This reviewer found her frequent integration of and interaction with the Geneva Bible, particularly the marginal notes, especially effective and insightful. Her inclusion of the historical context by raising important early modern social issues in England gives her work a sturdy, interdisciplinary feel, which is essential in interpreting Shakespeare.

Kietzman's work is an important contribution to Shakespearean scholarship. The interrelationship of theology, politics, and literature in early modern England is highly complex and cannot be overestimated. Yet she persuasively brings these tortuous streams together in Shakespeare's works in a robust, interdisciplinary fashion. This work is not only integral in Shakespearean interpretation, but it is also highly recommended for those interested in the intricate connections between theology, politics, and dramatic literature in the early modern period.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.475