

Les figures de David à la Renaissance. Elise Boillet, Sonia Cavicchioli, and Paul-Alexis Mellet, eds.

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The volume at hand collects twenty essays about the biblical figure of David. They record the proceedings of two colloquia held in 2011 and 2012 at the Centre d'Etudes Supérieures de la Renaissance de Tours. The introduction to the volume remarks upon David's complex character as a combination of the sacred and the profane, the human and the divine, as well as his predominance in the culture of the Renaissance, which is here extended from Dante well into the seventeenth century. The introduction serves as a useful overview of the many-faceted David, but does not create links between or draw generalizations from the contributions that follow. And while the collection is multidisciplinary as a whole, most of the individual articles concentrate on specialized topics that remain within traditional boundaries.

The essays are organized according to different aspects of David. The first section considers the ways in which David served as a model for rulers. Each study investigates the situation in a different European country with a unique political scene. The authors draw on court materials such as poetry and manuscripts, on political writings, and on works of art to explore the ways in which David was seen primarily as an ideal ruler, but also sometimes as a flawed leader who was able to govern well despite his individual difficulties. Corinne Meyniel's discussion of the tragedy *David ou l'adultère* by Antoine de Montchrestien tracks the changes in the way David is represented, at least in French drama of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The second section looks at David as a hero in the chivalric tradition and as a tragic figure. Once again, a range of countries and art forms are explored by separate authors, each of whom singles out representations of David as a knight fighting evil within a particular geographic area. Jean Duron's contribution on the 1688 opera *David and Jonathas* by Marc-Antoine Charpentier stands out in its emphasis on the tragic relationship between the characters of its title.

The third and longest division of the volume includes articles that consider the religious authority accorded to David primarily through the poetry and music of the Psalms. Discussions include depictions of him in visual imagery and Renaissance poetry from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century. Elise Boillet's article on Aretino's interest in the story of David as a vehicle for forming his own identity provides a particularly fascinating example of the many possible interpretations of the penitent biblical ruler. The last and shortest part of the book concentrates on David as a sinner, specifically as an adulterer with Bathsheba and as the murderer of Uriah. While this troubling aspect of David's character is often mentioned in earlier sections of the book, it is usually brought up as a foil to his virtues or as a reason for his admirable penitence. Even in the portrayals brought up in these last essays, David is often seen as distanced from his mistress or as a victim of her temptations.

The range of examples that the book accumulates is impressive and makes clear the wide variety of uses the Renaissance employed for a central biblical figure. The quality of research and analysis on the part of each individual author is very high. Many specialists will undoubtedly turn to specific studies that speak to their needs. The volume would have been much enriched, however, by attempts to draw connections across the boundaries of the separate research projects, perhaps at the beginning of each section. One wishes in vain for a discussion of possible conclusions resulting from this cornucopia of information. The introduction eloquently describes the mixture of divinity and humanity, of sin, piety, and penitence that are illustrated by David, but it makes no references to the articles that follow. While the reader can certainly draw conclusions independently, some indication from the editors about how this particular collection enriches or even modifies the state of knowledge about David would have been a welcome addition.

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