

BOOK REVIEW

Evil Lords: Theories and Representations of Tyranny from Antiquity to the Renaissance. Edited by NIKOS PANOU AND HESTER SCHADEE. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xiv + 245. Hardback, \$74.00. ISBN 978-0-19-939485-2.

The subject of evil lords is an apt one for today's political environment in which authoritarian strongmen have reappeared on the world's stage. This collection of essays reflecting on considerations of tyranny from antiquity to the renaissance offers much to those who want a deeper understanding of authoritarian rule. As always with collections of essays, some chapters gleam brighter than others; that is true here too, but all of the contributions are informative and clearly written, producing a well-edited and solid volume that builds as it goes. Unfortunately, given space constraints, I will not be able to discuss each chapter in depth; a table of contents is included at the end of the review.

The Introduction provides an overview of the collection, as is customary, but even more Schadee and Panou situate the context of the volume within the "Western tradition," which "is defined not so much by a shared political destiny or cultural identity as by the dynamic exchange of ideas (4)." This is a welcome articulation of the 'Western tradition,' which has so often been distorted for ethnocentric purposes.

In the first chapter, Luraghi gives an effective overview of Greek ideas of tyranny. Luraghi provides the reader, and the collection, with an informative introduction of the origins of terms and the nature of the sources, which tend to focus on the personality of the tyrant rather than the practical aspects of their rule. My only critique with this chapter is that historical examples are not fleshed out enough; in a volume spanning two millennia, one cannot expect readers to readily identify allusions to unnamed tyrants, for example those whose bones were ritually expelled from the city (21).

Grillo's chapter on tyranny in the Hebrew Bible emphasizes the common trait of the tyrant as an enemy of his own people. One of the most striking observations here is the idea that Yahweh becomes enthroned as the king of Israel in part because there were so many bad kings; this failure of human kings resulted ironically in a later theory of kingship founded upon God as king (42). Yelena Baraz'

contribution on views of tyranny under the Roman Republic provides a clear overview of how 'king' or 'tyrant' became terms of political invective hurled against one's enemies. Baraz also notes the radical idea that under the Republic all kings were considered tyrants; this idea is taken up later in the collection, particularly in discussions on medieval political theory, which sought to distinguish between good kings and evil tyrants. Winterling's chapter on imperial Rome rounds out the discussion on classical antiquity. Winterling gives a convincing interpretation of the motivations behind the 'mad' emperors Caligula, Nero and Domitian, who were anything but clinically mad. Rather these emperors understood the nature of power under the Roman Principate and, unlike emperors such as Augustus and Vespasian, did not seek to hide it. My only objection to this line of argument, and it is a substantial objection, is Winterling's conclusion that Caligula, Nero and Domitian were acting in a manner reminiscent of the ideal, republican aristocrat who sought to be first among citizens (80). I do not question that republican aristocrats sought to excel, but such competition also championed the common good over individual gain; Livy and our other sources, as romanticized as they may be, are full of such exempla. The bad emperors, while certainly not mad, lacked the common good as a motivating principle.

A number of essays follow on early Byzantine and early medieval political thought (Chapters 5-7), which function largely as case studies. These all provide insightful discussions of the developing understanding of tyranny particularly in light of Christianity, which complicated the idea of a bad ruler since all kings ruled by God's mandate. Cary Nederman provides a standout chapter on tyranny in medieval political thought. This chapter, while including many original points, offers both a fine overview of the period discussed and an admirable integration of the ideas examined in earlier chapters. The only criticism on the chapters on medieval political thought is the absence of Marsilius of Padua from any discussion.

Following Rychterová's chapter on Wenceslas IV, which provides another case study focused on the use of the vernacular in medieval political discourse, Schadee offers an excellent overview of humanistic approaches to tyranny by focusing on the writings of Poggio and Pontano. These authors, particularly Poggio, demonstrate a profound break with medieval thought by incorporating many of the more radical ideas from classical antiquity found in Aristotle, Cicero and Seneca. Pedullà's concluding chapter skillfully ties together many of the concepts throughout the collection and puts them in conversation with Machiavelli, who presents his own dramatic turn from previous writers. In doing so, Pedullà

also provides a glimpse into the modern reception of the pre-modern writings on tyranny. Although this is a thought-provoking chapter, more context on Machiavelli's examples, such as Cesare Borgia and Oliverotto, and on his own writings would benefit the reader. Nonetheless, Pedullà offers a fitting conclusion to the collection of essays, leaving the reader desiring a companion volume on modern and contemporary discourse on tyranny.

This collection has many strengths, and only minor weaknesses. The text is well edited and largely error free (e.g. a few citations do not make it into the bibliography). The merits of the volume include the consistent quality of each chapter, the breadth of material covered and the bibliography of primary sources.

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