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George Aichele (ed.). *Culture, Entertainment and the Bible*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 309. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000. Pp. 229. \$73.00 (Cloth).

[1] Simply listing the dozen articles (along with their authors) that make up this collection is enough to excite the keen interest of many a pop culturalist: "Lost Prophecies! Scholars Amazed! *Weekly World News* and the Bible" (Fiona C. Black); "Recent Fictional Portrayals of God, or: Disney, Shirley McLaine, and Hamlet" (Richard G. Walsh); "Disney's Pocahontas and Joshua's Rahab in Postcolonial Perspective" (Lori L. Rowlett); "Some Day my Prince Will Come: Images of Salvation in the Gospel According to St. Walt" (Susan Lochrie Graham); "They're not just Bad, they're Stupid and Ugly too: The Depiction of Baal Worshipers in Nest Entertainment's *Animated Stories from the Bible*" (R. Christopher Heard); "The Cut that Confuses, or: In the Penile Colony" (Tina Pippin and George Aichele); "Apocalypse, Art and Abjection: Images of the Great Whore" (Caroline Vander Stichele); "Portrayals of Power in the Stories of Delilah and Bathsheba: Seduction in Song" (Helen Leneman); "Rahab: From Peshat to Pedagogy, or: The Many Faces of a Heroine," (Phyllis Silverman Kramer); "Tamar's Veil: Ideology at the Entrance to Enaim" (Jan William Tarlin); "Hysterical Phalli: Numbers 16, Two Contemporary Parallels, and the Logic of Colonization" (Erin Runions). With a table of contents like this, what could go wrong? From this reviewer's perspective the answer is, sadly, almost everything. Alas, my high hopes were quickly dashed when I moved from the table of contents to the contents themselves.

[2] The rhetorical device known as merismus often yields a figure of speech in which the sum is greater than the combination of its parts. By unfortunate contrast, the yield for this volume is the exact opposite: its parts, as interesting and entertaining as they may each be, do not really add up to much of cohesive value. Unfortunately, this disappointing yield is symptomatic of all too many "collections."

[3] The volume lacks an introduction: it is difficult to know what to make of a volume when its editor, in this case the well-regarded scholar George Aichele, provides absolutely no guidance. While there is a forward, by Athalya Brenner, this consists primarily of a series of

questions addressed to the volume's contributors. The purpose of these queries is not clear since they are afforded no opportunity to respond.

[4] Because all the chapters relate to the Bible, Brenner notes that they could have been organized in accordance with that text. Instead, they are divided, somewhat haphazardly I might add, into three groupings: "Popular Entertainment" (also termed "low-brow"); "Art, Literature, Music" (or "highbrow" culture); and "On Ideology." But it is difficult to fathom how an article on Rahab's portrayal in Jewish day schools qualifies as "highbrow" or, for that matter, whether Jack Miles (with his *God: A Biography*), James Morrow (who "produced a fantastic trilogy featuring God"), and Franco Ferrucci (author of *The Life of God [As Told by Himself]*) really belong with "low-brow" representatives such as tabloids and cartoons. And, since all the articles reflect the impact of one or another ideology, it is not clear to me why the editor(s) selected only two of these contributions for inclusion in this serious-sounding category.

[5] Does it matter how the articles are arranged? I think it does because it reveals and reflects a general lack of cohesion or organizational vision for the entire volume. This is also evident in the very different audiences envisioned by the individual chapters, some of which are loaded with jargon that would appeal only to specialists, while others are (or should be) attractive to a broad constituency. Perhaps this is just typical of such collections, but with a hefty price of \$73.00 for the cloth edition (no paperback is available), I think that potential readers have a right to expect greater cohesion, not to mention more sophisticated reproduction of illustrations from tabloids, paintings, and other sources.

[6] Even with the above limitations, I would be prepared to welcome this volume if it constituted a dialogue or discussion of the issues raised. It does not; instead, it is simply a series of monologues. So, for example, the baleful effects of Disneyfication are mentioned in several articles, but without any opportunity for the various authors to interact with each other. There are two separate articles on Rahab, the heroine of Jericho in the book of Joshua, but you would not know this unless you checked the table of contents. And so it goes. Without a subject index (this lacuna is hardly made up for by indices of ancient sources, primarily biblical, and of authors) or even a rudimentary system of cross-referencing, it is difficult for most potential users of this collection to make these connections.

[7] About half of these papers have their origin in a session at the 1998 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. I can easily imagine that in such an environment they elicited lively responses and engendered considerable creative energy, but editors and presses need to develop mechanisms to translate this excitement into printed form. That is, simply put, not the case here. Although comprehensive libraries may be able to stretch their budgets to purchase this volume, individuals are better advised to read tabloids or watch Disney movies on their own.

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