

JOHN WEBSTER'S "DISMAL TRAGEDY" THE DUCHESS OF MALFI RECONSIDERED

Sophie Chiari & Sophie Lemerrier-Goddard (dir.)

- ✓ *La Duchesse de Malfi* : une œuvre de John Webster **au programme de l'agrégation d'anglais 2019-2020**
- ✓ Une nouvelle lecture, abordant **les thèmes du politique, du genre, de l'écocritique, de l'édition et de la mise en scène.**
- ✓ Un volume rédigé en anglais **par des spécialistes du théâtre jacobéen.**

BOOK PRESENTATION

Secrets and lies, incest and madness, mental torture and brutal murders, apparitions and lycanthropy: there is little that *The Duchess of Malfi*, first performed in 1613-1614, shies away from, inflicting on its spectators a whirlwind of conflicting passions and emotions. John Webster's drama has been labelled as baroque, grotesque, mannerist, gothic or feminist. Against Bosola, the figure of the malcontent who also embodies the typical early modern overreacher, the Duchess stands as a symbol of female transgression before she is eventually crushed by evil and male power. Bloody sensationalism should however not eclipse what some critics have seen as a drama of knowledge.

In Delio's concluding speech, Webster's irony is at its peak when he encourages his audience to "make noble use / Of this great ruin" and seems to present the play as a vehicle for moral instruction, defining in a final twist an ethics based on the "integrity of life". A masterpiece of Jacobean theatre, *The Duchess of Malfi* **reinvents the genre of the revenge tragedy** and, beyond its multiple borrowings from other writers, it explores the **construction of gender**, the **class structure of a changing society** and the **complex interlacing of desire, violence and cruel laughter.**

THE CO-EDITORS

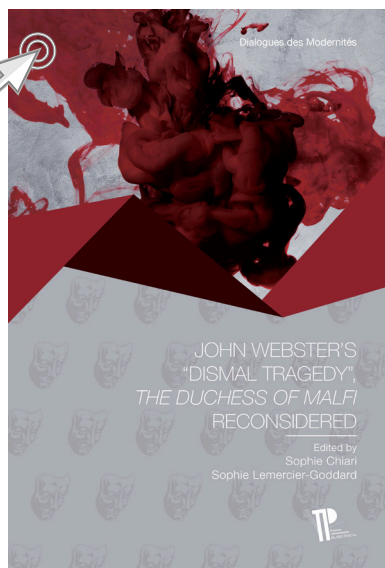
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Collection « Dialogues des Modernités »

Langue(s) : anglais, français

16 x 24 cm, 356 pages

ISBN (LIVRE) : 978-2-84516-855-8

ISBN (EPUB) : 978-2-84516-857-2

Prix TTC : **18 € (LIVRE), 12 € (EPUB)**

THÈMES-CLÉS

John Webster • Duchess of Malfi • drama
sensationalism • transgression • gender
passion • violence • female body

PARUTION | 23 MAI 2019

RELATIONS PRESSE

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SITE INTERNET

pubp.univ-bpclermont.fr

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CID@msh-paris.fr

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