

for each dialogue, and, most importantly, insured that Platonists avoided the heresy of mistaking intellectual cleverness for divine wisdom. The goal of Iamblichus's curriculum was not to develop learned scholars but to lead souls into noetic states capable of receiving the gods in theurgy. These ritual receptions were outlined in the *Oracles*, which Iamblichus transformed into the sacred book of the Hellenic world (p. 186). For Iamblichean Platonists, philosophy and theurgy were fully integrated, and their supposed opposition—often assumed by scholars—reflects a misunderstanding of the Iamblichean project (pp. 188–89).

According to Damascius, philosopher and theurgist were fully integrated in the “bacchant,” the enlightened hierophant exemplified in his beloved teacher Isidore (pp. 189 and 207). Two hundred years after Iamblichus and living in a Christian empire that imposed its orthodoxy with persecution and violence, Damascius sought to preserve the golden chain and the legacy of Iamblichus, whom he considered “le parfait exégète des choses divines” (p. 215). Athanassiadi is particularly brilliant in revealing Damascius's inner life. He was a supreme dialectician, skilled enough to see through all intellectual solutions and to recognize that it was this very skill that kept him divided, cut off from divinity. Damascius's torment exemplifies the brilliance of the Greek mind not seduced by its conceptual power, and the heresy against which he struggled was the temptation of mistaking lucid intellectual formulations—the kind that Proclus produced so prolifically—for the ineffable presence anterior to thought. It was through his anguished recognition of the limits of human understanding that Damascius forged the last link in the Platonic golden chain. In Damascius perhaps more than in all other Platonists, it becomes clear that the orthodoxy of Platonism was remarkably different from that of Christianity.

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ANTHONY BALE, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms, 1350–1500*. (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 60.) Cambridge, Eng., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. xiv, 266; 7 black-and-white plates and tables. \$85.

*The Jew in the Medieval Book* is an outstanding contribution to a now-substantial body of scholarship on medieval English representations of Jews and Judaism. Anthony Bale has mastered control of his materials and presents his readings clearly and elegantly. The readings are intensely engaged with the physical manuscripts discussed and bring to life the historical contexts in which they were created. Bale approaches his subject through four topics: history, miracle, cult and Passion, and four “narratives”: the Jew of Tewkesbury, the miracle of the boy singer, the cult of Little Robert of Bury, and *Arma Christi* manuscripts. An excellent introduction deftly situates his project in relation to various debates in the field such as the definition and usage of the term “antisemitism” and its appropriateness for medieval contexts. Bale operates from the assumption that he is not merely dealing with a marginal or “minority” history. Rather, he is attempting to illuminate how categories such as minority and majority and Jew and Christian “derive meaning from each other” (p. 5). And indeed by the book's end, Bale has managed to explore not only those categories but also how they interrelate with questions of individual and institutional religiosity, power and control, and sexuality and gender. Through illuminating the manuscript context of the images he treats, Bale shows how this context inflects the ambiguous and multivalent image of the Jew.

Chapter 2 focuses on the story of the Jew of Tewkesbury, who falls into a latrine on the Jewish Sabbath and refuses rescue by Christians. A Christian lord then denies rescue on the Christian Sabbath, resulting in the Jew's death. Bale focuses on an event, the massacre of Jews at the coronation of Richard I in 1189 and its varied recounting across a variety

of sources, including Higdon's *Polychronicon* and Trevisa's translation of it, to show how placement of the Jew of Tewkesbury narrative can be used to "question and destabilise" political power (p. 25). Contrary to simply being an Other that unites Christians, the Jew here functions in a much more complex way, depending on whether and where the story of the Jew of Tewkesbury figures in the narrative recounted.

Chapter 3 focuses on the miracle of the boy singer, best known through Chaucer's *Prioresse's Tale*. Bale once again stresses how the figure of the Jew can be invested with diverse and flexible meanings depending on the historical and manuscript contexts. Here Bale has compiled an impressive study of the myriad versions of this tale, including Norse and Spanish ones, showing how the tale could relate to events as diverse as the Albigensian Crusade and the Inquisition in Spain. Comparing different versions and considering how they treat key elements of the tale, such as the tale's setting, the content of the boy's song, and how the Jews are punished, Bale demonstrates how "antisemitism's narrative forms and functions permit an exploration rather than consolidation of doctrine and ritual" (p. 59). The literature on Chaucer's version is extensive, but Bale's reading provides new insights, particularly by showing how fifteenth-century versions retained the tale's troubling views of Jews without the critical complications of the *Canterbury* frame.

The next chapter, on the cult of Little Robert of Bury, asks the important question of "how the Jewish image remained ubiquitous in Christian culture and devotion in a particular place long after the expulsion of the Jews" (p. 107). Bale's reading stresses the important element of domesticity in the cults of boy martyrs and also begins to address, in a way that I found new and compelling, the question of gender in these cults: why do these narratives focus on little boys? Arguing that "[v]irginity and childhood are central, not incidental, to these cults" (p. 131), he shows how depictions of "violence against the boysaints' genitals did not threaten masculinity, but rather it allowed Christian men to 'vacate', or escape, the normative masculine paradigm: a fantasy of overcoming/restraining the body and its forbidden, un-Christian urges, of accessing a whole and performative pious virginity" (p. 132).

In his final chapter Bale turns to a form that has been relatively underexamined in studies of medieval antisemitism, the *Arma Christi* (transcripts of verses are usefully provided in appendix 4). As in his discussion of Robert of Bury, Bale shows how these texts, with their strong representations of violence against Christ, such as the figure of the spitting Jew, require an active participation by the reader that creates "a link between the personal and the institutional" (p. 156). Bale's interpretations here show how individualized reading contexts function to create an antisemitism that is both "familiar and aesthetic" in "everyday media."

Bale is fluent in the latest theoretical innovations and very much engaged with confronting the ugly role that antisemitism continues to play on the world stage. What is so impressive about this volume is the way that Bale manages to weave this theoretical sophistication together with his smart and learned understandings of these medieval objects, thereby creating readings that attempt to explore them on their own terms while never forgetting their contemporary legacy. This volume is essential reading for anyone interested in medieval representations of Jews, but its deep engagement with history and with manuscript culture should make this book important to many other scholars as well. For both its readings and the methodologies they illustrate, I strongly recommend it to anyone with interests in medieval spirituality, manuscript studies, and questions of gender and sexuality.

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