

pages 166-8 in Rabello's article are garbled. Similarly, the computer should not have been allowed to decide page breaks and lay-out (Kraabel's piece particularly suffers).

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Giuseppe Veltri, *Magie und Halakha: Ansätze zu einem empirischen Wissenschaftsbegriff im spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Judentum* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum, 62), Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebek), 1997, xii + 293 pp.

This book is a careful study of the relationship between the disorderly realm of magic, which flourished in antiquity, and the orderly, almost compulsive world of Jewish law — halakha. The realm of Magic is an enormous, untracked country, which has for generations been, in Veltri's words the 'Stiefkind' (stepson) of scholarly investigation in Jewish as in non-Jewish research. The reason for this has undoubtedly been the fact that research is a mirror of its authors, and nineteenth — and early twentieth — century scholars in the humanities, who desired to distance themselves from the irrational and superstitious, in the hope of presenting themselves as scientists in the true sense of the word, found themselves portraying their predecessors, for example the rabbis, as philosophers, rational thinkers and believers in a pure religion, rather than as magicians or quacks.

Veltri's book is an indication that this trend has now been reversed. Scholars today doubt the existence of pure, rational, objective, unbiased thinking and endeavour to incorporate what in the past would have been considered as superstition into a world which is less clearly defined and compartmentalised. It is a well worked out book, which resists the temptation to discuss all expressions of Jewish magic, and concentrates instead on the question of how the rabbis of the mishnaic and talmudic period came to grips with the existence and practice of customs which could be broadly defined as magic.

The book is divided into 6 chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction in which the author discusses the state of research, the terminology (magic, science and halakha) and his approach to these topics. Veltri's discussion of previous research (as also his selected bibliography at the end and the very learned footnotes throughout) shows an impressive, in-depth familiarity with the material at hand. His choice of significant terms to discuss, particularly 'magic' and 'science', indicates that for this scholar the two are not contradictory fields of research, but certainly in antiquity, and to a certain extent even today, represent variations on a common theme, which is a wish to understand nature and employ it for the benefit of humankind.

Chapter 2 discusses the magician (מכשף). It is divided into a text analysis of the relevant traditions in rabbinic literature, the biblical (capital) punishment of the magician according to the Hebrew Bible and its development in rabbinic literature, the definition of magic, the female magician (or sorceress — מכשפה), the necromantic and finally the development of the concept of the magician and magic in the Jewish world of the middle ages. The main development which Veltri identifies in the definition of the magician is that the talmudic rabbis distinguished between one who creates illusions of wonder working (עושה עיניים), and one who actually does something (עושה מעשה). Only the latter, according to the rabbis' system, is guilty of a violation of the biblical law and accountable to a court of law, because he interferes with the element of creation, which is an attribute reserved for God alone. Notice of this rabbinic innovation is particularly

important for Veltri's thesis about the rabbis' approach to the question of magic, which is pragmatic. They do not doubt its efficacy. In fact, they engage in it themselves when confronted by mighty magicians. They only reject it when it goes directly against the theological groundwork of the Jewish religion. In his discussion of the female magician, Veltri notes the misogynistic element, found particularly in the Babylonian Talmud, which identifies most forbidden magical practices with women, and associates this approach with women's reproductive capacities, which are interpreted by the rabbis as another instance of interference with creation.

Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted to rabbinic texts which discuss the 'ways of the Amorites' — long lists of practices which have magical attributes, although they are not described as such by the rabbis. Instead the rabbis discuss the character of these practices and rule whether they are permitted or forbidden. Chapter 3 is a learned commentary on the entire corpus discussing these practices. It is rich with parallels from rabbinic literature as well as other literatures such as Greek, Roman and Christian. Chapter 4 presents an analysis and conclusions drawn from this learned discussion. Veltri discusses the form in which the traditions about the ways of the Amorites have come down to us. He believes that the texts, as they now stand, reveal the prior existence of a written source which listed many practices of great antiquity and widespread use among the common people. This list was then employed by the rabbis for halakhic, didactic purposes and they forbade or permitted the use of them, basing themselves on the 'empirical' principle mentioned in Mishnah Shabbat 6:10, that any practice that heals is permitted. Ones that do not are in consequence forbidden. The ways of the Amorites, says Veltri, should not be understood historically. The Amorites in this case represent foreign practices of great antiquity. He compares the development of this concept to the development of the term 'magoi' (magicians) in Greek and Latin literature, where magical practices are perceived as foreign and emanating from a Persian milieu. In this context Veltri points out the great similarities between magic practices described by Pliny and those listed in the texts about the ways of the Amorites. This, in his opinion, is a clear indication that magic of the ancient Greco-Roman world was cosmopolitan and knew no language, nation or boundary.

Chapter 5 discusses healing. The move from the ways of the Amorites to healing capacities of various practices is smoothed by the association of the former with the latter in Mishnah Shabbat. The two collections of healing recipes found in the Babylonian Talmud, which Veltri discusses in detail in this chapter (the teachings of Em [אם] to Abbaye; and bGitt 68b-70b), appear phenomenologically related to the ways of the Amorites. Next Veltri discusses the medical profession — the doctor. Here Veltri finds it necessary to engage in the theological discussion of whether God alone sends sickness, and therefore He alone is healer, or whether His endowment of plants, minerals, amulets and incantations with properties allows the person who is acquainted with these to heal as well. This discussion is important in light of the fact that a positive answer to the second part of this question would make doctors into healers rather than magicians. Veltri concludes that as a move away from biblical theology, the rabbis, who were part of the Hellenistic-Roman world, accepted the beneficial properties of medicine, but at the same time he shows the rabbis' ambivalence toward the doctor. He also shows how few doctors are mentioned in rabbinic literature and in the Jewish sources in general. All this leads him to conclude that more than a threat to Jewish theology, the rabbis viewed the doctors as a threat to their own authority. Veltri ends this chapter once again with the emphasis on the empirical

nature of the rabbis' medical approach — they do not forbid the use of any means that prove successful in the healing process.

Chapter 6 is a conclusion in which Veltri emphasises the main themes he has followed throughout his study. Once again we are led to understand the close connection between magic, science, medicine and rabbinic authority, as well as the important fact that the rabbis did not discard magic as superstition but rather viewed it as a force that worked and that could form a threat to their authority.

Veltri's book is a fine piece of scholarship. I have gained much from it. As a feminist scholar, however, I find something missing in his treatment of women. Veltri does much to dispel the common view that magicians in the ancient world were people who belonged to some evil religion bent on harming those they came in contact with. In rabbinic literature women are often accused of participating in acts of witchcraft, and a statistical survey of the sort Veltri proposes for doctors in rabbinic sources would have revealed an interesting collection of female sorceresses in Jewish sources. Although Veltri does not neglect to mention the category of the sorceress, and although he returns to the issue of women and magic at the end of his study, he fails in my opinion to accord women the prominence that they enjoyed in the realm of meta-magical occupations such as healing (and soothsaying, i.e. prophecy). This results from his outlook that the accusation of women of sorcery is part of male bias and mistrust of female power and of their reproductive capacities, and should be considered as mere slander.

This, however, is clearly only one side of the story. If what was occasionally perceived as the practice of magic was in fact a certain competence in folk-medicine, a certain involvement in "scientific" experiments and a certain knowledge of nature, the association of women with these practices should not necessarily be perceived as groundless slander. Some (perhaps even many) women could have been involved in this field, which at some points Veltri views as standing in competition with the authority of the rabbis. Unlike the rabbinic world, which was obviously closed to women, the realm of magic was not. Evidence for women's involvement in this field is not lacking, as becomes clear even when reading Veltri's text. Thus, for example, on p. 68 Veltri mentions the fact that persons' names in amulets and incantations are always cited with the mother's name attached. Veltri explains this off-handedly with the well known expression '*mater semper certa est*' or in other words, this is done so as to ensure that the demons for or against whom the spell is intended will make no mistake about the identity of the person involved. This truism, however, is not confirmed by the sources, and other explanations, such as the prominence of women among the writers of amulets and incantations, as well as among the seekers of their power, could perhaps also explain this.

Another incidental mention of women in the relevant sources is also ignored by Veltri. Several of the verses describing the ways of the Amorites are formulated in female language. Veltri ignores this even though his translation of the text brings out this fact (e.g. on pages 104, 128-9, 131, 133). Yet it is significant that some of the ways of the Amorites are ascribed in the sources to women. This could suggest that, since the practices described in male language probably apply to men and women equally, the fact that some are formulated in female language indicates that women in general were more prone to follow the ways of the Amorites than men. In his discussion of these sources, Veltri mentions parallels in the writings of Pliny and Columella. It would be interesting, for example, to compare the gender of the practitioner in the parallel sources, but Veltri ignores this aspect altogether (and see again on p. 212).

In some cases where women are specifically associated with magical practices, Veltri mentions this fact with no further comment. For example, on p. 126 he cites the Babylonian Talmud (bPes. 111a) in which a wife pours water before her husband, and this is considered life threatening, because of magical connotations. The gender of the practitioner is ignored. On page 147 Veltri again discusses bPes 111a, this time with relation to pairs between which a man should not pass because of their magical threat — dogs, trees and women. Some also mention pigs and snakes. Veltri's discussion confines itself to the animals mentioned here. The women are ignored.

Of special importance for my critique is Veltri's treatment of women when he addresses the issue of medicine. In this chapter, as in the preceding two, women are almost invisible, although from an ethical point of view, their absence in this case is of greater significance. If indeed magic is another aspect of the medical profession, but while the former is, by definition, negative and the latter, by the same coin, positive, women's absence here, after their presence has been specifically noted in the chapter on magicians, suggests that the smoke screen which the rabbis have pulled over the issue has also clouded Veltri's vision. Thus, in the chapter on medicine, Veltri devotes 9 pages to the medical recipes of Abbaye's mother (p. 230-8). Yet he devotes only one sentence to her gender: 'Die Dikta der Mutter des Abbaye ... sind auch so fern in Belang, als hier nicht ein Rabbi als Autorität zu Wort kommt, sondern eine Frau.' For Veltri's theory it is important to show that the source of medical knowledge is not from rabbinic circles, but the gender of the authority figure is only marginally important to his study.

It is for this reason also that Abbaye's mother is not mentioned in the list of Doctors he produces on pp. 271-5. Even though he does not know what formal medical education Abbaye's mother may have received, and even though he discusses the probability that the profession was passed from father to son (p. 270), thus making it possible (even assuming that women were confined to their home) that a woman might also learn the trade within the family (and pass it to her sons, for example Abbaye), the mother of Abbaye, as well as other women who may be candidates for this list, is missing. Strangely enough, Jacob of Kfar Sakhnaya, clearly a Christian and not a Jew, who is also not designated 'doctor' (רופא) does appear in the list.

The best example of a woman missing from this list is one by the name of bat Timatyanis, mentioned twice in the Yerushalmi (yAZ 2,2 40d; yShab 14,4 14d), whom Veltri mentions in another context on pp. 279-80. That she is a doctor and heals is obvious from the story that is told of her, and the reason why Veltri chose not to list her among the doctors is the words at the end of her story 'and some say she converted to Judaism.' If these words are taken at face value, this suggests that bat Timatyanis was not Jewish. Perhaps Veltri's list of doctors is intended to include only Jews. However, from a redactional point of view it is important to note that the words 'she converted' are an alternative ending to the story, indicating that in the original version there was no suggestion that the woman was anything but Jewish. Secondly, although the text is found also in tractate Avodah Zarah, and thus the context requires that she be a gentile, the contents of the story itself indicate that its original setting was in tractate Shabbat, because it deals with healing on the Sabbath, and therefore requires no gentile identity for the woman. Veltri recalls this story in order to show how the rabbis felt threatened by the competence of the doctors, but not because of the gender of the doctor.

However, the association of women with healing in rabbinic literature is much more extensive. A good example is again found in a source Veltri mentions — bPes 111a. In

this source the rabbis warn against walking on a road between two women sitting at both sides. Such an action should be avoided, but when this is not possible, the passer-by should utter an incantation. The incantation contains several *nomina barbara* - Igrath, Izlath, Asya, Belusia — which Rashi describes as the demons with which these women are involved. It is, however, of more than casual interest to note that one of these 'demons' is designated 'Asya (אסיא)' which is Aramaic for 'doctor', and also that all the names are feminine in form.

Another example also derives from a source cited by Veltri (pp. 162-4). One of the rulings associated with the ways of the Amorites states: 'One passes (articles) over the eye on Shabbat, and one whispers over the eye and over a serpent and over a scorpion on Shabbat' (tShab 7, 23). This ruling clearly associates whispering with medicine and therefore approaches it positively. However, following this ruling another one, in the name of two rabbis (Rabban Shimeon ben Gamaliel and Rabbi Yose), qualify this positive attitude. Veltri demonstrates further that in other sources, whispering is forbidden altogether. In tSan 12, 10, where it is forbidden, it is associated with spitting. Veltri then brings a wide array of sources (e.g. Plautus, Theophrastus, Seneca, Juvenal, Petronius, Pliny, Virgil, Tacitus and the Gospels) which prove that spittle was considered a substance with medicinal properties in antiquity. One rabbinic source, however, he fails to mention. In this source Rabbi Meir pretends to have a sore eye and asks those present in the synagogue, 'is there a woman here who knows how to whisper on an eye?' (ySot 1, 4 16d). The story then goes on to say that spitting in the eye is part of this treatment. Two things are assumed in this story. The first is that eyes are cured by whispering on them (and spitting in them) and the second is that women are competent to be healers in this field.

Veltri returns to the gender issue for a last time in his concluding chapter. When dealing with the rabbis' critique of magic, Veltri notes: 'Die Erschaffung von Lebewesen mittels Gottesmacht verstößt nicht nur gegen den allgemeinen göttlichen Anspruch, sondern vor allem gegen das rabbinische Wissensmonopol' (p. 288). To the category of those possessing such powers he assigns, together with the magician, also women and doctors. This he explains as follows: 'Der Prozeß der Dämonisierung der Frau ... ist darauf zurückzuführen, daß die Frau *de facto* alle lebenswichtigen Sektoren beherrschte'. This statement assumes that, as opposed to some men, who learnt the medical profession, or the art of magic, and thus formed groups who opposed the rabbis' monopoly of knowledge, 'women' in general 'knew' intuitively about 'birth', 'death' and other important aspects of life. Women by their very nature formed an opposition to the rabbis. The latter were almost right in designating them sorceresses.

It is true that Veltri immediately corrects this statement: 'Das bedeutet allerdings nicht daß die Frauen je mehr sie dämonisiert wurden, desto mehr Macht besaßen. Dieser Prozeß ist nicht quantifizierbar, sondern deutet nur auf ein Machtverhältnis hin'. This corrective, however, does nothing to undo Veltri's previous assessment of the very nature of women.

In opposition to this picture, which views women as a category comparable to magicians or doctors, I suggest they should be viewed as a category comparable to men. Some men studied and became doctors; so did some women. Other men studied and became magicians; so did some women. Some men learnt and became rabbis. This category, however, was inaccessible to women. Viewing the two other groups as dominated by

women gave the rabbis a sense of superiority. This attitude, however, should not cloud our vision on this issue or induce us to adopt a similar stance.

It is important to emphasise that the criticism voiced here should not be viewed as a petty devaluation of an important study. It is not petty precisely because this study deals with magic. If it had dealt with rabbinic academies, from which women were barred, the claim that they are absent from a scholarly work dealing with them would have been petty indeed. However, to belittle the role played by women in magic and medicine seems reminiscent of study of historical phenomena in the last century and a half, which not only claimed that the history of mankind is the history of humankind, but also usurped the limited areas where women had a say for the benefit of men.

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M. Kiley (ed.), *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine, A critical anthology*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, xx + 332 pp., ISBN 0-415-13234-7.

This critical anthology comprises a diverse selection of prayers chosen by nearly fifty historians, covering a span of some 650 years (from 325 BCE to 325 CE). The samples, of Jewish, Greco-Roman and Christian provenance, include individual essays by the scholars in their respective areas. A historical-theological approach to the phenomenon of prayer is shared by the different critical introductions and notes that accompany the corpus. At first sight, a collection of prayers covering such a length of time, from different cultures and places, appears to be a monumental work which could not be encompassed in one volume, still more so if one takes into consideration the vast material available to us. The definition of prayer given by the editor, Mark Kiley, 'an address to or celebration of a deity', is also a very comprehensive criterion that lets prayers of all stripes into the corpus. All this however does not represent a disadvantage; on the contrary, this diversity is precisely what gives purpose to the anthology. This is to enable the reader to gain a comparative insight into the formal and thematic similarities of prayer in the Greco-Roman period. The collection is intended for the general reader and the undergraduate student but the critical notes on the different texts and the bibliography suggested can also be very helpful for the specialist.

The individual essays in the volume cannot be discussed at length in this review. Therefore I shall refer to the three main sections in general: Judaica, Greeks and Romans, and Christian tradition.

The first section, Judaica, is divided into two subsections: the Qumran writings, which give us an insight into the unique role of Jewish liturgical prayer as a 'substitute for sacrifice' within the life of a religious community, and the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, where prayer appears embedded in a literary context. The introduction to this part by Esther G. Chazon and Moshe J. Bernstein consists in a descriptive summary and a formal classification of Qumranic prayers as a liturgical equivalent to the Temple worship, a phenomenon observable later in rabbinic Judaism after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. Randall D. Chesnutt and Judith Newman in their introductory comment to apocrypha and pseudepigrapha emphasize the function of prayer as embellishment of the various overlapping literary genres in which it appears. They point out as