

REVIEWS

A Scholarly Edition of the Gamaliel (Valencia: Juan Jofre, 1525).

Laura Delbrugge.

The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World 73. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
x + 238 pp. €99.

Laura Delbrugge's recent edition of the *Gamaliel* brings to scholarly attention an obscure yet fascinating work that imaginatively combines the Passion of Jesus with the Fall of Jerusalem. The narrative material derives largely from the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which circulated in French versions during the Middle Ages and entered the Iberian Peninsula via Catalan editions at the end of the fifteenth century. Delbrugge has edited the first extant Spanish version, translated by Juan de Molina and printed in 1525 at the Valencian printing house of Juan Jofre. The work's title derives from its emphasis on Simon ben Gamaliel, a Pharisee of the Sanhedrin who is best known in Christian contexts for his sympathy to Jesus (Acts 5:34). Expanding on this rather brief biblical mention, the *Gamaliel* presents its titular character as the "good Jew" who by narrative contrast villainizes and inculpates the other Jews of the story. And yet such popular imaginative retelling of the New Testament also aroused the suspicions of the Spanish Inquisition, which in 1558 publicly burned copies and the following year added it to its Index.

But if the *Gamaliel's* Passion narrative comprising part 1 provoked the greatest offense among readers, Jewish and Inquisitorial alike, the second part also deserves our attention for its highly fictional account of the Roman sack of Jerusalem. Here the Emperor Vespasian is riddled with leprosy yet eventually cured by the Veil of Veronica brought to him by his Christian seneschal Gay. In thanks, Vespasian converts to Christianity—anachronistically beating Constantine to the punch by three centuries—and vows to attack Jerusalem as an act of vengeance against Pontius Pilate, who is still governor of Judea, also anachronistically.

Delbrugge's scholarly edition includes not only these two parts but a third, comprising several shorter texts, which recount such themes as Jesus's miracles, histories of sacred relics, and a sermon by Saint Jerome. As a compendium of these linked yet diverse narratives, Delbrugge's edition presents a compelling text well suited for comparative study alongside other works of Spanish literature. Like the *Gamaliel*, the late sixteenth-century Lead Books of Sacromonte, Granada present their own reimagining of the Acts of the Apostles in which Saint James travels to a first-century Iberia anachronistically populated by pre-Muslim Arabs. Though likely forged by *moriscos* (converted Muslims) to legitimize via biblical narrative their status as Christian converts, the Lead Books also met religious hostility, including by the Inquisition.

The *Gamaliel*'s transformation of the Roman sack of Jerusalem into a Christian crusade likewise resembles various chivalric romances, in particular Spanish versions of *Flores and Blancaflor*. Roughly coinciding with Spanish *Gamaliel*, the first printed Spanish *Flores* of 1512 offers its own blend of conversion fantasy and Roman anachronism. Echoing *Vespasian of the Gamaliel*, the Moorish prince Flores converts to Christianity and then ascends to the Roman emperorship. Offering yet another parallel of imperial fiction is Antonio de Guevara's fictionalized autobiography of Marcus Aurelius, the *Relox de príncipes / Dial of Princes* (1529). Like the interactions between *Vespasian* and his seneschal, as well as book 3's concluding letter by the consul Publius Lentulus to the Roman senate describing Jesus, Guevara's *Relox* is replete with its own made-up missives between various Roman politicians.

Despite such parallels within Spanish Renaissance literature, Delbrugge's introduction offers a largely medieval picture. Building on the work of David Hook, Delbrugge's discussion of textual provenance emphasizes its source material in medieval France and Catalonia. She likewise offers an extensive consideration of the influence of medieval devotional practices, and the latter's debt to medieval Aristotelian conceptualizations of the imagination (51–57). Yet as Delbrugge also outlines, the *Gamaliel* enjoyed various reprintings over the course of the sixteenth century in both Catalan and Castilian. It would thus perhaps be more accurate—as well as intellectually stimulating—to consider the *Gamaliel* not solely as a product of the Middle Ages but as a narrative that bridges the medieval and the Renaissance, even as a document of this transition. But whether we situate the *Gamaliel* within the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, whether we examine its social context or its narrative content, such questions of method and scholarship have been vastly facilitated by Laura Delbrugge's tremendous work.

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Comoedia Leucasia. Girolamo Morlini.

Ed. and trans. Giorgia Zollino. Teatro Umanistico 17. Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2020. lxxxviii + 86 pp. €39.

This slim, elegant volume represents the best that philology and close reading can offer. The editor and translator, Giorgia Zollino, introduces twenty-first-century readers to a rare Neo-Latin one-act play, written by the law graduate Girolamo Morlini in Naples and originally printed in 1520. Why is this text worthy of our attention? Zollino offers several important reasons in her three-part volume. To begin with, one should not ignore Naples when discussing Neo-Latin and vernacular Italian performances in Italy during the early modern period. Zollino's rich pages contextualizing *Comoedia*