



Cassian and Climacus, Evagrius fares less well. While Z.'s decision to limit his discussion to his dream diagnostics was perhaps motivated by the fact that, as he rightly notes, 'Evagrius' works present both linguistic and conceptual problems for modern readers' (p. 13), this reviewer would have liked to see it contextualised by reference to his wider use of medical imagery (cf. especially L. Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus* [2005], Chapter 4), the dream that precipitated his flight from Constantinople and led him to conclude that dream agency is real (having sworn an oath in the dream, he wondered upon waking whether it was binding and decided it was), and Melania's role as confessor-physician in diagnosing the mysterious illness that afflicted him in Jerusalem and identifying as its cure that he embrace the monastic life, which he duly did (Palladius, *Lausiaca History* 38.4–9). Not only do the two Palladian vignettes (attributed by Palladius to Evagrius) support the book's thesis, but the latter shows how the role of confessor-physician could subvert conventional hierarchies of both gender and age, Melania being some five years younger than Evagrius.

On the editorial side, several typographical errors slipped through the net. Most are insignificant, but it is vexing to read on p. 148, 'In the following quotation, underlined portions are shared verbatim with Aristotle' when none of the quotation in question (from Evagrius, *Praktikos* 89) is underlined, and it is surprising to learn on p. 261 that for Cassian 'the monk seeking purity of heart does wander peradventure' until the continuation of the sentence, 'instead following the path the elders have carved out', clarifies that 'does' is a gatecrasher. I resorted to Google to identify the well-placed quotation from Eliot's *Four Quartets* on p. 127.

In all other respects the book is produced to OUP's usual high standards. The many helpful figures and tables include Galen's taxonomy of arts, Galen's symptomology by function and by temporal reference, Evagrius' oneiric symptomology, Cassian's diagnostics of nocturnal emissions and several of Climacus' genealogies of passion. An index of select ancient authors with detailed topic references is supplemented by a subject index, an index of select modern authors, and indexes of Greek and Latin terms. The bibliography is wonderfully extensive in respect of both primary and secondary sources. The literary references dotted throughout the book are an enjoyable bonus.

This is a groundbreaking study that will be of interest to historians and practitioners of spiritual direction, monasticism, spirituality, medicine and psychology.

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IMAGES AND MAGIC

JOHNSTON (J.), GARDNER (I.) (edd.) *Drawing Spirit. The Role of Images and Design in the Magical Practice of Late Antiquity*. Pp. xvi + 269, b/w & colour ills, colour pls. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2023. Cased, £71, €77.95, US\$89.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-047728-3.

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This collection of six essays by four leading scholars arose out of a project funded by the Australian Research Council (2012–2016). It examines the much understudied topic of the

role that images and iconography play in the understanding of ancient magical papyri, with particular – but not exclusive – reference to Coptic texts. Within this limited purview, it nonetheless broaches an entirely new, burgeoning field of study.

Following a brief introduction, Johnston's "'Magical Images: an Esoteric Aesthetics of Engagement' proposes that 'interpretations of magical papyri had privileged the study of the written texts rather than undertaking sustained analysis of the abundant iconography' (p. 2). He engages readers in a wide-ranging discursive dialogue on 'Esoteric Aesthetics' and its relationship to understanding ancient images. Although not clearly defined until later (p. 18), Johnston initially writes that 'the term "esoteric" was selected to describe the holistic, ontological and relational aspects of aesthetic engagement presupposed by broader subtle ontological or correspondent relations' (p. 8). This somewhat obtuse conceptual approach, grounded in a specialised philosophy of aesthetics, is ultimately justified by the coherency of his striking final essay. Following comparisons of Mandaean and Coptic images to Cubism and Cubist, Johnston further writes more practically on Egyptian terms for 'image' (*twt*, 'resemblance'; *sšmw*, 'ritual image'; and *nfrw*, 'image as bodily presence'), a philological approach that is complemented more fully by K. Dosoo's essay.

J. Kindt's 'Evoking the Supernatural: Text and Image in Graeco-Egyptian Magical Papyri' engagingly offers two case studies (*PGM* II and *PGM* XXXVI), exploring drawn images in the Greek magical papyri as forms of visual communication. She keenly observes that '[i]n these documents the boundary between text and image thus remained fluid, pointing to the fact that they operated not only as instructions through the medium of language but also on the visual level' (p. 33). Kindt builds upon the acute realisation that the so-called magical *charaktères* – 'graphic signs that may resemble traditional letters of the alphabet without, however, being identical to them' (p. 32) – stood above the system of esoteric *voces magicae* (often incomprehensible mystical formulas), just as magical words stood above meaningful text; she thus identifies in magical images a kind of secret language of their own. She notes that magic images are not just handbook illustrations, but 'point to the material dimension of ancient magic' (p. 34), so that 'both text *and* image are equally carriers of religious meaning' (p. 34). Without saying as much, images thus stand at the apex of an imbedded hierarchical tradition within magico-mystical texts:

Text → *Voces Magicae* → 'Characters' → Graphic Images

Each of these betrays an increasingly higher esoteric expression of communication. In the end, Kindt's lasting contribution is her observation that magical images often play a role in the enactment of the spell involved (p. 40). What is missing is any mention of the widespread iconography of magic gems, a category of documents that more than any other medium combines all of the ingredients of the hierarchical schema described, the most significant of which would be the poignantly graphic itself.

Gardner's two essays that follow, 'The Heidelberg Magical Archive: a Discussion of its Origins, Context and Purpose' and 'An Archive of Coptic Handbooks and Exemplars for the Making of Amulets and the Enacting of Ritual Power from the Tenth Century (P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 680–683 and 685–686)', comprise nearly 90 pages of high-levelled and detailed analysis of Coptic archival material. In the first essay he establishes links among the group of MSS P. Heid. Inv. 678 to 686, all purchased in 1930, and positions their ritual contents within the context of the wider body of Coptic magical texts, with many lists, diagrams, tables and relevant images. Gardner's second essay explores in detail five of the Heidelberg manuscripts. Both of these studies stand at the heart of the volume in that

they deal with the specific iconography (with excellent photos) as well as details of the manuscripts' contents. Beyond the fact that the documents are all Coptic, the focus on codicological matters proves relevant to both ancient Greek and Latin book production and comparative magic overall. Coptic magical texts are particularly rich in iconography, and they play an invaluable role in the study of supernatural images as found within the heritage of written amulets and spells. Therefore, the texts offer a pertinent corollary to the study of the kindred iconography of Graeco-Egyptian magical spells, although their images are considerably different – indeed *sui generis* – from those of the Greek language tradition, as Johnston's final chapter makes clear.

Dosoo, in 'Two Body Problems: Binding Effigies in Christian Egypt and Elsewhere', writes at considerable length and erudition on the ancient practice of 'voodoo dolls' – a sociological misnomer he rightly dismisses as stereotyping 'voodoo kitsch'. He covers not only the modern sociological phenomenon but surveys also all the terminology from Greek *kolossoi* to Sanskrit *valagá-* and *kṛty* â, from Akkadian *šalmu* to Coptic Egyptian *touōt*. He finishes with three 'case studies' of the use of magic effigies in late Christian sources. To the many references to Greek terminology one can add the use of the rare *to zōgraphēma* (R. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets* [1994], 48.11), found on a silver phylactery in reference to 'the picture of the god' (a reference to a surrounding *Ouroboros* or to an image now lost).

Johnston, in 'Image Play: On Angels and Insects', offers a veritable *tour de force* on how to interpret, in a variable way, the unusual image of *P. Heid. Inv. Kopt.* 686, fol. 4r, final page. Usually understood as a depiction of Michael, based on the Coptic words at the foot of the archangel reading, MICHAËL, GABRIËL, RAPHAËL, SOURIËL, Johnston proffers rather convincingly that the figure is a depiction of a winged moth at its various stages of chrysalis and larval development from a caterpillar. With a rich discussion of the positive valence that insects carry in ancient Egyptian lore, Johnston adopts what he calls 'epistemological pluralism' (p. 186) in examining this and other images on the papyrus sheet (twin spiders and a grub). His interpretation turns on its head how one is to view and interpret the very aesthetics of iconographic imagery. In this sense, Johnston returns to the more philosophical discourse of the 'Esoteric Aesthetics' of his first essay.

This book is really something. At first, it is easy to get lost in the jargon and tedium of detail. But in the end the six chapters form a cohesive whole that affords a groundbreaking introduction to a field of study deserving much closer scrutiny. The arrangement of essays forms a kind of 'ring-composition' – especially with Johnston's first and last essays – inviting readers to go back and reread the chapters from the start. As in the case of the film *Arrival* (2016, dir. Denis Villeneuve), one does not know at first viewing what is past and what is future. As one's presuppositions are turned upside down, readers, like the screener of the film, begin to explore in their minds what exactly has been portrayed. The book thus resembles the magic *Ouroboros* that devours its own tail; one can see it is both beginning and end in itself, and readers can engage with the individual essays at any time by jumping in the middle, front or end, just like a magic palindrome.

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