

Reseña de libros

Abraham Ibn Ezra, *The Book of Reasons*. A Parallel Hebrew-English Critical Edition of the Two Versions of the Text. Edited, Translated and Annotated by Shlomo SELA [*Études sur le Judaïsme Médiéval* 35].— Leiden-Boston: Brill 2007.— 398 pp.

Most of works of the Spanish polymath, exegete, and poet Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1167) were born under an un auspicious star. Admittedly, in certain periods –most notably during the 14th and 15th century– Abraham Ibn Ezra’s teachings were the object of vivid intellectual interest, but they were soon eclipsed by those of other writers and intellectual trends. Modern research has equally not done full justice to his historical role: Abraham Ibn Ezra’s contribution to Jewish *philosophy* has often been judged eclectic and *un-scientific*, whereas his *scientific works* proved to be *too* scientific to arouse interest in larger circles of scholars in Jewish studies. As a consequence, it was only during the past decade that Abraham Ibn Ezra’s contribution to the history of science and philosophy in the middle Ages finally gained the scholarly interest it undoubtedly deserves.

The scholar, who has contributed most to the renewed interest in Abraham Ibn Ezra’s scientific work, is Shlomo Sela, the author of the present first critical edition of the two extant versions of the astrological *Book of Reasons* (*Sefer ha-Te’amim*). After the publication of a ground-breaking study on Abraham

Ibn Ezra’s astrology¹ and a long series of articles on related subjects,² no person could be better qualified than Shlomo Sela to carry out this difficult and laborious task, and he did it with impressive accuracy and knowledge.

Sela’s edition of the two extant versions of the *Book of Reasons*, which is intended to be nothing but “the first product of a larger enterprise –a critical edition, English translation, and commentary on all twelve of Ibn Ezra’s astrological treatises” (p. 3) is opened by a con-

¹ Sh. SELA, *Astrology and Biblical Exegesis in the Thought of Abraham Ibn Ezra* (Hebrew; Ramat Gan 1999); an English book was published under the title *Abraham Ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science* (Leiden 2003).

² From among his many articles one could mention here: “Contactos científicos entre judíos y cristianos en el siglo XII: El caso del Libro de las Tablas astronómicas de Abraham Ibn Ezra,” *Miscelánea de Estudios Arabes y Hebraicos* 46 (1996), pp. 37-56; “Abraham Ibn Ezra’s Scientific Corpus – Basic Constituents and General Characterization,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 10 (2001), pp. 91-149; “La creación del mundo supralunar según Abraham Ibn Ezra: un estudio comparativo de sus comentarios a Génesis,” *Sef* 63 (2003), pp. 147-182; and (with Gad FREUDENTHAL) “Queries on Astrology sent from Southern France: Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text, Translation and Commentary,” *Aleph* 4 (2004), pp. 89-190; “Abraham Ibn Ezra’s Scholarly Writings: A Chronological Listing,” *Aleph* 6 (2006), pp. 13-55.

cise Introduction (pp. 1-26), followed by critical editions and synoptic English translations of the First Version and the Second Version of the *Book of Reasons*, each complemented by a commentary (pp. 27-336). The last, fifth part of the book comprises eight appendices, which provide the reader with additional textual materials and analyses relevant for the interpretation of the *Books of Reasons*. A concise bibliography, as well as a structured index, and a highly useful glossary of technical terms (pp. 377-390) complete the book.

In the introduction to his book, Sela first describes the place of the *Books of Reasons* in the context of Abraham Ibn Ezra's other astrological treatises, which he correctly calls "a single astrological encyclopedia" (p. 2). These treatises circulated in more than a hundred Hebrew manuscripts and medieval translations into Latin French and other European languages, and they can thus be seen as one of the most influential products of Jewish literature ever written.

However, a major interpretative problem lies in the fact that Abraham Ibn Ezra re-wrote many of the components of his "astrological encyclopedia" at least once, to the effect that many of his astrological treatises are extant in more than one version, not all of them preserved. This has, as Sela clearly shows, immediate consequences for the study of the *Books of Reasons*, too: Whereas there can be no doubt that the so-called first version of the *Book of Reasons* is organized as a kind of "commentary" on the "raw astrological concepts formulated in the introduction to astrology" (p. 3) known as *Reshit Hohkmah* (*Beginning of Wisdom*),³ the case is much less clear for the second version. Based on earlier

³ This is the only part of Abraham Ibn Ezra's "astrological encyclopedia," which was ever published in a critical edition by Raphael LEVY & Francisco CANTERA, *The Beginning of Wisdom. An Astrological Treatise by Abraham Ibn Ezra* (Baltimore 1939).

studies,⁴ Sela provides conclusive arguments that the second version of the *Book of Reasons* cannot be a commentary on one of the extant text of Abraham Ibn Ezra's, the *Mishpete ha-Mazzalot* (as was argued by scholars in the past). Consequently, it must refer to a second version of *Reshit Hohkmah*, although virtually nothing is known about whereabouts. As to the dates and places of composition of the two texts, Sela reaffirms the common dating of the first version of the "astrological encyclopedia" in Béziers in 1148 CE, whereas geographical data in Abraham Ibn Ezra's astrological calculations in the second version of the *Book of Reasons* lead him to argue for a composition of this version in Rouen around the year 1154 CE (pp. 10-11).

In the following sections of the introduction, Sela tackles problems related to Abraham Ibn Ezra's motivation for writing *Books of Reason*, and his contribution to the history of astrology. Here, Sela first draws the reader's attention to Abraham Ibn Ezra's activities as a biblical exegete, which may have prompted the transfer of certain interpretive strategies to the field of astrology (p. 14). The composition of a *Book of Reasons*, which was "no autonomous genre in ancient or medieval writing" (p. 14), thus appears as the astrological shadow of biblical exegesis. At the same time, Sela seems to limit Abraham Ibn Ezra's historical significance to that of an innovator in the field of Hebrew scientific terminology. In spite of a few new approaches in minor astrological issues, Sela clearly believes that "Ibn Ezra's astrological, on the whole, has a didactic character and makes no serious pretense of innovating" (p. 16).

This statement, however, is surely not the last word on that issue, since the two versions of the *Book of Reasons* clearly show that Abraham

⁴ Cf. Renate SMITHUIS, *Abraham Ibn Ezra the Astrologer and the Transmission of Arabic Science to the Christian West* (PhD Diss., University of Manchester, 2004).

Ibn Ezra's motivation for composing these books was more fundamental. In both texts he does not only provide "explanations" for obscure teachings, but clearly aspires to transform astrology, which was seen and presented as a science based upon tradition and empirical knowledge, into one that is founded upon—or at least in conformity with—rational concepts deduced from generally accepted principles in natural philosophy.⁵ Therefore, the *Books of Reasons* are probably not only the most original component of Abraham Ibn Ezra's "astrological encyclopedia." They also uncover Abraham Ibn Ezra's scientific approach to astrology, which allowed him to criticize predecessors and to take decisions in face of a puzzling multiplicity of divergent and contradictory traditions. In other words, what is at stake in the *Books of Reasons* is the status of astrology as a science. The scientific method applied by Abraham Ibn Ezra in these works will have to be a main focus of any future comprehensive interpretation of his astrological works in general.

⁵ The opposition of an experimental vs. a rationalistic approach to astrology finds its expression in Ibn Ezra's thought already at the beginning of the introduction to the *Beginning of Wisdom* (ed. LEVY & CANTERA, p. v): והנה אחל לפרש חקות שמים בדרך המשפטים כאשר נסו הקדמונים דור אחר דור, ואחר שאשלים זה הספר אחבר ספר בפירוש הטעמים—"And here I start to explain the laws of the heaven in the way of judgments, how the ancients have tested them through experience generation after generation. After having completed this book, I will compose a book on the explanation of the reasons." This idea is taken up again in the first paragraph of the second version of the *Book of Reasons* (ed. SELA, p. 182): ואולם, חכמי לב חפשו דור אחר דור בטולם חכמת המדות עלתה נפש אל השמים, גם נסו פעמים רבות ועלה בידם—"However, the wise searched generation after generation, and their souls ascended to heaven by the ladder of geometry; they also tested it often by experience and achieved their purpose." Sela indeed mentions that Ibn Ezra's repeatedly uses the concept of "experience," but without drawing any interpretive conclusions; cf., e.g., the commentaries on the First Version §1.4:1; §2.2:17; §2.2:1-20; Second Version §1.1:4; §1.3:1-2.

The second part of the introduction is devoted to the principles applied in the scientific edition of the Hebrew text. It is obvious that an editor of Abraham Ibn Ezra's "astrological encyclopedia," which has been transmitted in more than a hundred manuscripts—32 of them containing the first version of the *Book of Reasons*, and 25 manuscripts testifying to the second one—has to take decisions as to the number of textual witnesses he wishes to collate. Sela has chosen to base his edition on seven manuscripts for each text, which he sums up to "fourteen manuscripts" altogether (p. 20). This, however, is not the exact number of textual witnesses actually used, because some of the manuscripts served him for the edition of both versions. On the other hand, it has to be noted that in his manuscript descriptions (pp. 20-24) Sela at times employs identical *sigla* for one manuscript used in both editions,⁶ while in other cases identical *sigla* denote different manuscripts.⁷ This is slightly confusing. At any rate, the total number of consulted manuscripts amounts to eleven, all but one copied during the 14th-16th centuries.

It is the most deplorable aspect of the present book that Sela does not provide any explicit reasons for his choice of manuscripts for the editions of the *Books of Reasons*. Only for two manuscripts the choice is immediately evident: The inclusion of the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS héb. 1058, is justified in spite of numerous peculiarities of this anthology written in 1257, because "it is substantially earlier than the date of any other manuscript of any scientific treatise by Ibn Ezra or Bar Ḥiyya" and that it thus "incor-

⁶ ל for Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS héb. 1058; ט for Vatican, Biblioteca Vaticana Apostolica, ebr. 47; מ for Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, cod. Hebr. 202.

⁷ פ for Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS héb. 1055, and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS héb. 1058; נ for Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS héb. 1056, and Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ebr. 477.

porates the earliest available copies of all its components” (p. 20). The comparatively late manuscript Jerusalem, Jewish National and University Library, 4^o 43, was included because it was used by Naphtali Ben Menachem for his (uncritical) edition of the second version of the *Book of Reasons*.⁸

Given the fact that a limitation of textual witnesses was inescapable for keeping the project manageable, the “correct” choice of manuscripts becomes, of course, crucial for the reliability of the final product. Therefore, it would have been important to inform the reader, whether the manuscripts chosen for the edition indeed stand for the “best” or “oldest” strata of the textual transmission, or alternatively can be seen as representatives of specific manuscript families. However, since it seems to be that a comprehensive study of the manuscript transmission of Abraham Ibn Ezra’s “astrological encyclopedia” and the establishment of preliminary manuscript families is still a desideratum,⁹ the manuscript basis of the present edition leaves room for serious doubts whether differently chosen manuscripts could or would not have yielded different results. It can be argued, of course, that with the “notable exception” of the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS héb. 1058, the texts edited here “were transmitted down the centuries in a single textual tradition” and that they

⁸ Naphtali ben Menachem (ed.), *Sefer ha-Te’amim* (Jerusalem 1941).

⁹ The first attempt to give a comprehensive list of all available manuscripts of Abraham Ibn Ezra’s astrological works can be found in by Renate SMITHUIS, “Abraham Ibn Ezra’s Astrological Works in Hebrew and Latin – New Discoveries and Exhaustive Listing,” *Aleph* 6 (2006), pp. 239-338. It should be noted, however, that this list, as useful it may be for further research, is not always based on a direct study of the manuscripts. Therefore, it is not totally reliable as to the identification of texts and the versions contained therein. Moreover, a philological classification of the textual transmission was beyond the author’s scope.

were “differentiated only by the variant readings that are to be expected from repeated copying” (p. 18). But even if this is the case for all the other manuscripts, it would have been preferable to base a critical edition, which intends to be the definite product in this field, upon a systematic analysis of the manuscript tradition rather than a random selection.¹⁰

The editorial principles adopted by Sela can be called “moderately eclectic.” For both texts, he has chosen one manuscript as the copy text. He then accepted readings, when “all manuscripts concurred and the reading did not conflict with explicit statements by Ibn Ezra elsewhere in his astrological work or with other astrological sources” (p. 25). In cases of disagreement in the manuscripts, Sela has chosen those readings, which he “deemed to be more consistent with other parts of Ibn Ezra’s work or that supported by a majority of manuscripts” (ibid.). Only in a few cases he relied on pure conjectures. All these cases are, of course, noted in the critical apparatus, which “is intended to record, in an abbreviated manner, all the readings in the Hebrew manuscripts consulted that differ from the text printed here” (ibid.).

It is well known that there exist as many editorial philosophies as there are editors and

¹⁰ It should be added here that Sela justly points out that there is little hope that we will ever be able to reconstruct the Urtext of Abraham Ibn Ezra’s works, because “there are several indications that in the interval of more than one hundred years between the composition of Ibn Ezra’s astrological treatises and the date of the earliest available manuscripts his students and admirers were actively modifying and adding to his astrological work” (pp. 18-19). In view of this fact, one should consider to include the Old French and Latin translations of Abraham Ibn Ezra’s works, which are older than the oldest Hebrew manuscripts, in the critical edition. On the difficulties of the textual transmission of Abraham Ibn Ezra’s astrological works cf. also Reimund LEICHT, “Toward a History of Astrological Literature: A Bibliographical Survey,” in Gad FREUDENTHAL (ed.), *Science in Medieval Jewish Culture* (Leiden 2008, forthcoming), c. 3.

editions, and therefore it would be futile to discuss the question, whether the method applied here served the aims better than a diplomatic presentation of one manuscript with text-critical comments in the apparatus and commentary would have done. What ultimately counts is that in all instances where I have checked the copy text and the variant readings, the edition proved to be reliable and complete.

It is one of the merits of the new edition of the *Books of Reasons* that the editor did not shun the difficulties of translating his texts into English, which does not only render Abraham Ibn Ezra's astrological works finally accessible to a wider scholarly audience, but also "represents a commentary on the Hebrew text" (p. 25). In the same vein, the "notes" on the two versions of the *Book of Reasons*, which in fact form a comprehensive commentary, are based upon English rather than Hebrew *lemmata*.

Sela's commentaries discuss the text mainly from three different perspectives: 1. Whenever necessary and possible, Sela explains Abraham Ibn Ezra's terminological innovations. 2. He provides internal references to the other version of the *Book of Reasons* and to the whole corpus of Abraham Ibn Ezra's astrological treatises. 3. He compares Ibn Ezra's teachings with external sources for ancient and medieval astrology. In this respect, it proves to be very helpful that Sela quotes many of these sources literally (often, though not always, accompanied by English translations), because this frees the reader from the need to constantly consult a whole library of medieval authors. It was an equally wise decision of the commentator to expect his readers to approach the book with a solid knowledge of astrology. Accordingly, he did not include thematic explanations on basic astrological tenets, which would have inflated a commentary, which is in its present form both concise and highly informative.

In sum, the new edition of Abraham Ibn Ezra's *Books of Reason* is a major step in the study of Abraham Ibn Ezra's work, of medi-

eval Jewish philosophy and the history of science. Therefore, its author should feel encouraged to continue his ambitious project to edit the whole "astrological encyclopedia" in commented critical editions.—Reimund LEICHT.

Miguel PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ, *Textos fuente y contextuales de la narrativa evangélica. Metodología aplicada a una selección del Evangelio de Marcos* [Biblioteca Midrásica, 30].—Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2008.—552 págs.

Me agrada ver cómo la idea del trasfondo judío del NT pasa a ser fundamental para el análisis de su significado. Tránsito que trasciende la mera anécdota sobre tal o cual costumbre en tiempos de Jesús para convertirse en pieza clave en el interés por comprender tanto la posición de Jesús dentro del judaísmo como la novedad que ofrece el NT. Aunque la Ley que ligaba al pueblo con Dios sufre una transformación con la enseñanza evangélica, Miguel Pérez demuestra cómo no hay ruptura en los términos empleados, ni en la retórica de la escena, que tiene lugar dentro del judaísmo tradicional.

El autor propone una metodología que aplica sistemáticamente a casi todos los pasajes del capítulo primero de Marcos y a otros dos pasajes seleccionados: la multiplicación de los panes y los peces (Mc 6:30-46) y la higuera que no dio fruto (Mc 11:2-14), pasajes que el autor escoge como muestra. El proceso metodológico está orientado a documentar cada una de las escenas narrativas evangélicas y a enmarcarlas en el «macrotexto marcano», que consiste en volver al punto inicial y reconsiderarlo a la luz de los textos aportados. En un primer paso, el autor hace la presentación escénica a través de un análisis literario de la representación, y en un segundo paso expone los textos-fuente, todos bíblicos aunque no todos «fuente», que dan soporte documental a la escena; seguidamente revisa de nuevo el texto evangélico, haciendo exégesis con los datos que han aportado esas fuentes. El apartado siguen-

te, dedicado a las fuentes judías extrabíblicas, es especialmente interesante. Dependiendo de los pasajes, se citan y comentan los textos de Josefo, Filón, los documentos de Qumrán y el amplio corpus de la literatura rabínica, que el autor maneja con pericia, y concluye dando la interpretación cristiana del pasaje sin desligarla de su trasfondo judaico. Se intercalan excursus o explicaciones concretas sobre temas relacionados con los pasajes; por ejemplo: en Mc 1:16-20, que refiere la vocación de algunos discípulos, hay dos excursus, uno sobre «el acceso a la comunidad de Qumrán» y otro sobre el «discipulado y seguimiento en el mundo helenístico». Dentro de cada apartado, se distribuyen los textos por temas, extraídos del propio evangelio; por citar un caso, los dos versículos de Marcos (1:12-13) que enuncian escuetamente las tentaciones de Jesús, narradas por Mateo (4:1-11) y Lucas (4:1-13), dan lugar a seis temas en relación con el judaísmo extrabíblico: el espíritu, el desierto, la prueba y la tentación, la convivencia con las fieras, los ángeles servidores y los ángeles rebeldes, y el nuevo Adán (págs. 193-202); los textos de Qumrán y rabínicos aportados iluminan la exégesis neotestamentaria que se recoge al final del capítulo.

La enorme riqueza de documentación que ofrece la obra de M. Pérez Fernández está condicionada por el análisis exegético, cuya estructura en anillo, en la que el punto de partida y el de llegada es el texto neotestamentario, expresa con claridad su objetivo.

Aunque a lo largo del proceso metodológico de esta obra se sigue una pauta fijada, cada texto exige pequeñas diferencias en su desarrollo. El lector percibe la complejidad de unificar tradiciones que han evolucionado de forma diferente, pero que tienen elementos comunes, nacidos del mismo tronco. Esos elementos comunes, van apareciendo entre la diversidad de los textos aportados, distantes entre sí en el tiempo y en el ambiente en el que se han producido, y M. Pérez los hace confluír en función de la exégesis del pasaje evangélico.

La obra se completa con unos índices excelentes: Índice analítico de la obra, con todas

las secuencias de los comentarios a cada pasaje (págs. 473-483); Índice de citas bíblicas: Antiguo Testamento (págs. 485-498) y Nuevo Testamento (págs. 499-510); Índice de textos de Qumrán; de Misnah, Tosefta y Talmud; de Midrasim y textos litúrgicos; de textos targúmicos; y de Apócrifos del AT (págs. 511-526); de Filón de Alejandría y Flavio Josefo; y de autores greco-romanos y de la Antigüedad cristiana (págs. 527-530); y un Índice de autores citados (págs. 531-534). Se añade una Bibliografía amplia sobre diversos temas relacionados con el enfoque de esta obra (págs. 535-550).

Es un trabajo para el que se requiere un amplio conocimiento de la literatura bíblica y de la exégesis rabínica. Conectarlas es fundamental para entender el desarrollo de muchos textos que han crecido a la luz de ambas. La serie de confluencias que se establecen en este libro ofrece además materia de reflexión sobre la evolución metodológica necesaria para establecer relaciones firmes entre las distintas exégesis de los textos bíblicos.— M.^a Victoria SPOTTORNO.

Barbara Böck, *Das Handbuch Muššu'u "Einreibung". Eine Serie sumerischer und akkadischer Beschwörungen aus dem I. Jt. v. Chr.* [= Bibliotheca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo (BPOA) 3].— Madrid: CSIC, 2007.—346 + XLVIII págs.

Some important works on the interconnection between Babylonian medicine and magic have been published recently: Geller's 2005 *Renal and Rectal Disease Texts*; ¹ the cross-cultural collection of papers *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine*; ² Schwemer's 2007 *Rituale und*

¹ M. GELLER, *Renal and Rectal Disease Texts. Babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen* (Berlin & New York 2005)

² H. F. J. HORSTMANSHOFF & M. STOL (eds.), *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern*

Beschwörungen gegen Schadenzauber; ³ the long-awaited *Disease in Babylonia*; ⁴ and last but not least the *Journal des médecines cunéiformes*, whose steady appearance adds so much to the field. To this welcome tide of publications joins Barbara Böck's *Das Handbuch Muššu'u "Einreibung". Eine Serie sumerischer und akkadischer Beschwörungen aus dem 1. Jt. v. Chr.*, reviewed here.

The series Muššu'u prescribes different treatments used against various ailments, dysfunctions, or paralyzes, mainly of the external parts of the body: the head, arms, and legs. The prescribed treatments are often based on rubbing, that is on inunction, as well as on the preparation of specific amulets, all accompanied by incantations (see detailed scheme on pp. 79-82). Tablets belonging to Muššu'u were found in various sites: Assur, Nineveh, Nimrud, Sultantepe, Babylon, Borsippa, Sippar, Kiš, Nippur and Uruk (p. 31). The series contains nine tablets (including a ritual tablet) entailing 47 Sumerian, Sumero-Akkadian, or just Akkadian incantations (pp. 15-20). Of these incantations, 12 are known from older sources, from the middle or the end of the second millennium (pp. 25-27). A clear-cut case of such a continuation of early magical traditions into the first millennium medical lore can be found in Muššu'u IV, where the first millennium series makes use of the OB incantations CT 42, 32 and LB 1000 (cf. p. 176).

But more examples of dependence of Muššu'u on OB magical tradition can be suggested. I believe that the theme of the disease originating in the mountains (Muššu'u III/a: 5-6 = pp. 134-135), can be traced back to the OB

and *Graeco-Roman Medicine* [Studies in Ancient Medicine, 27] (Leiden 2004).

³ D. SCHWEMER, *Rituale und Beschwörungen gegen Schadenzauber* [WVDOG 117] (Wiesbaden 2007).

⁴ I. L. FINKEL & M. J. GELLER (eds.), *Disease in Babylonia* [Cuneiform Monographs, 36] (Leiden 2007).

incantation that tells of a magic plant which has bewitched all its surroundings: ⁴Šamaš (dUTU) ša-am-ma-am iš-tu š[adīm] (H[UR.SAG]) ù-še₂₀-bi-ra-am libbi (ŠĀ) ⁴Šamaš (dUTU) mu-še₂₀-bi-ri-šu iš-ba-at (YOS 11, 11: 1-4). The notion that human diseases originate, or are connected to bovines (Muššu'u III/a: 8-12 = pp. 134-135) is also found in OB incantations (e.g. YOS 11, 7: 1-6, or YOS 11 14:4, and more). And, most interestingly, Muššu'u compiler's remark, specifying the exact name of a certain disease ("Šuhu is its name; Maškadum is its nick-name," and "Not Maškadum is its nick-name; šuhu is its name" –Muššu'u VIII: 153 and 167) has an exact parallel in an OB incantation [m]a-aš-ka-du-[um ma-aš-k]a-du-um ú-ul ma-aš-ka-du-um šu-hu-ú-um (YOS 11, 14: 1).

The wide distribution of tablets belonging to Muššu'u –both geographical and chronological– vouch for the acceptance and the full integration of the series into the technical-literary Mesopotamian canon. The dependence of the series on previous sources demonstrates its compilative nature. Indeed, Muššu'u contains incantations that are known to be part of other medico-magical series, such as sag.gig and udug.hul. The author, therefore, has rightly devoted a discussion to the process of serialization and canonization which the Muššu'u has undergone (cf. pp. 68, 87).

The author pays attention to the lists of diseases found in different sections of Muššu'u (e.g. V: 8-11, 32-36 and more), offering a short excursus to this problem (pp. 237-238). For the inner arrangement and the possible combinatorial rules guiding such lists of diseases, also found in OB incantations, see now N. Wasserman, "Between Magic and Medicine –A Propos of an Old Babylonian Therapeutic Text Against Kurārum Disease."⁵

The texts, accurately presented, are thoroughly commented on, showing the author's high philological competence and deep ac-

⁵ In FINKEL & GELLER (eds.), *Disease in Babylonia*, pp. 40-61.

quaintance with magico-medical material. Böck discusses not only the medical aspects of the text at hand but tackles also wider issues, such as the relation between the “practitioner”-physician (the *asû*) vs. the “scientific”-physician (the *āšīpu*) (pp. 88-89), and the interesting appellation of demons as “son/daughter of DN” (pp. 108-109).⁶ Worth noticing also is the list of similes which the series uses in order to describe the way through which the demon, or the disease, is ordered to go out of the patient’s body (p. 219). The fact that most, if not all, of these similes are specifically corporal show clearly that these are not merely artistic comparisons, but describe the exact manners

⁶ For which see also my “Leeches and Worms in Old Babylonian Medical Incantations” (forthcoming), where I arrive at somewhat different conclusions.

the patient is expected to be relieved from his pain. Simply, these are not merely literary devices, but medical prognoses. Barbara Böck is to be warmly thanked for her well-thought-of discussions and commentaries and especially for the carefully presented edition of this important series⁷.—Nathan WASSERMAN.

⁷ Another study relevant for the early history of the Muššu’u series has been published recently: M. J. GELLER and F. A. M. WIGGERMANN, “Duplicating Akkadian Magic,” in R. J. VAN DER SPEK (ed.), *Studies in Ancient Near Eastern World View and Society Presented to Marten Stol on the occasion of his 65th birthday, 10 November 2005, and his retirement from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* (Bethesda, Md 2008), pp. 149-160.