



Petra SchÄÄ¶ner. *Judenbilder im Deutschen Einblattdruck der Renaissance: Ein Beitrag zur Imagologie.* Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 2002. xiv + 438 pp. EUR 120.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-87320-442-3.

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Workmanlike German Dissertation Provides Good Catalogue of Sources

Petra SchÄÄ¶ner's 1999 D.Phil. thesis in *Germanistik* at the University of Bamberg appeared in 2002 as a book. Claiming in the subtitle that the book is a contribution to a vaguely defined, text-heavy field called "imagology," SchÄÄ¶ner has compiled a stock of information sufficient to fill over four hundred pages and to provide the reader/viewer with considerable exposure to images of Jews in single-sheet prints (*Einblattdrucke*) at the end of the Middle Ages. Her goal was not merely to examine images but to explain them with reference to a large number of surrounding texts, to ask how the images came to be, how they relate to other sources and to determine how various groups formed "images" of each other, at "that" time and "from their perspective" (p. xiii). Examining works from all cultural and social levels or strata of society is laudable, and until recently not very common in either *Germanistik* or art history. The author can claim some success in realizing these functional goals, though the romantic idea that we can somehow perceive sources as they were perceived in their own time is merely asserted, never defended.

The book's greatest strength is also its weakness: it is a treasure-trove, still ordered as a classical German dissertation, each numbered section divided into numbered sub-sections. This facilitates organization and composition (for the author) and the finding of specific topics (for the reader), but it gets in the way of interpretive development or the articulation of a thesis. This is a good dissertation in the empiricist tradition invented in Germany and still flourishing there with some modifications, but

it does not make a good monograph. The best one can say about such work is that it is cautiously workmanlike, hews to its sources, and avoids interpretive quagmires and confusion by adopting a modest method and making no larger-order claims. The worst would be that the author and her advisors were working in a rather traditional disciplinary model, in isolation from most of the major intellectual and disciplinary debates in the study of late-medieval and early modern culture.

The first fifty-one pages are taken up by a lively but uneven (and unnecessary) account of the development of Christian ideas about Jews from late antiquity through the Middle Ages. The author manages to cite much of the older standard literature as well as some exciting new work, and makes a number of interesting general points, but misses too much of the specialized literature. For example, there is no mention of the truly profound treatment of the topic in Johannes Heil's too-modestly titled book *Juden in den Pauluskommentaren des 9. Jahrhunderts* (1998). When the author turns to the Middle Ages, she cites R. Po-Chia Hsia's work on the Simon of Trent case (though she mistakes Po-Chia as part of his family name), but misses the seminal work of Yisrael Yuval on ritual murder and the blood libel, topics that take up a good deal of space in the book and that have occasioned a much broader set of debates of which the author is unaware. Miri Rubin's conceptually rich work gets no mention, nor does that of Robert Scribner on popular pamphlets. Robert Chazan's 1980 book *Church, State and Jew in the Middle Ages* is cited, though it does not rep-

resent anything like his last word on these topics. My own 1995 book *The Red Jews. Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age, 1200-1600* is nowhere to be found, though it might have been useful to the author as some of the central sources were vernacular texts, early woodblock books and printed books from the later Middle Ages. Unfortunately, the superb and extensive work of the research project on fifteenth-century single-sheet prints at the University of Münster, under the supervision of Volker Honemann, was not yet available to the author at the time of printing.

The actual matter of the book, depictions of Jews in single-sheet prints of the fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, occupies some 250 pages. The topics treated are the depiction of biblical figures in single-sheet prints, supersession, ritual murder, host desecration, the *Judensau*, Jewish usury, Jews as spoilers of Christendom, and the peculiar place of Hebrew in Christian-Jewish relations. These seem to represent the main categories in the printed images studied, and the coverage seems very good. I think the author reaches her stated goals: she does surround each image with a rich context of traditional, literary, scriptural, and contemporary information—very little of which will be new or surprising to established scholars in the field. The merit of the work lies in the assembly of these materials rather than in their interpretation or in analysis.

Art-historical literature and theory receive no attention at all in the book. The author's dissertation supervisor seems not to have been up to the job of guiding a student through so ambitious a project in so heavily mined (in both senses) a field, and the absence of a re-

sponsible supervisory committee in the German context (until the final exams) means that no other perspectives had to be accommodated by the author. One gets the impression of a hard-working young scholar who cares about her primary sources and about "facts," but who is very shy about interpretations, either her own or those of others. Indeed, the author rarely offers an interpretation, and there is no overarching argument, as she herself admits, suggesting that one should not draw general conclusions based on a series of individual examples (p. 299). True enough—if one makes no attempt to analyze one's sources within broader debates about visual culture, the semiotics of images or the like (the recent work of Thomas Lentz springs to mind). An eleven-page summary (the traditional end to a German dissertation) does not attempt any larger-order interpretation other than the rather anemic suggestion that ideas about the "singular demonization" of Jews in late-medieval images require correction.

Yet the catalogue of images, with transcriptions of the texts, is useful, as are many of the contextualizations offered, making this book a good reference tool. The publishing house may have served the author well by printing what appears to be an unrevised dissertation, because it is both normal and required in Germany, and thus not the author's fault, but it has not served the scholarly public well: this is the sort of book one orders by inter-library loan rather than buying. Perhaps it is time that German universities allow nominal publication for easy dissemination, as the University Microforms International method allows, instead of rushing every dissertation into premature and costly print.

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