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Yet through comparison of publications and titles of course offerings under the Third Reich with those appearing during the years of the Weimar Republic, Hanisch shows that the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* had little discernable effect on the scholarship of most German Orientalists (see especially pp. 166–73). Relatively few were active Nazis like Wolfram von Soden (see his *Der Aufstieg des Assyrerreiches als geschichtliches Problem* [Leipzig, 1973], 26, where he attributes the military prowess of the Assyrians in the Middle Assyrian period and later to the presence of a "gewissen arischen und damit nordrassigen Einschlag"; cf. the obituary by D. O. Edzard, *ZA* 87 [1997]: 163–64) or Walther Hinz, a bureaucrat in the *Kultusministerium* before he was called to Göttingen in 1937, documented here chastising a colleague who had tried to aid a Jewish scholar (p. 148 n. 525). Both lost their professorships in 1945 but were rehabilitated in 1950.

On the other hand, the post-war period brought no critical engagement with the history of the field during the *Nazizeit*, later writers preferring to pass over these years in silence (p. 174). Only a few obituaries written by émigrés brought up embarrassing activities on the part of former colleagues. This collective amnesia in Near Eastern studies, it must be said, was paralleled in other branches of German scholarship (see, for example, S. P. Remy, *The Heidelberg Myth* [Cambridge, Mass., 2002], esp. ch. 6).

Hanish presents all this in a readable, if rather dry, style. This book is essential reading for anyone concerned with the development of Assyriology and its allied disciplines.

Very useful is the appendix containing capsule biographies of more than four hundred Orientalists. The author makes no claim of completeness (p. 177), but the cuneiformist will nonetheless note the absence of H. Th. Bossert, C. G. von Brandenstein, P. Haupt, H. Hilprecht, R. Koldewey, and G. Meier. And of course Ernst Weidner was not an "Ägyptologe" (so p. 210)!

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*Beholders of Divine Secrets: Mysticism and Myth in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature*. By VITA DAPHNA ARBEL. Albany: STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS, 2003. Pp. xii + 250. $71.50 (cloth); $23.95 (paper).

*Beholders of Divine Secrets* is a brave and adventurous book. Most previous studies of Hekhalot literature have attempted to situate this enigmatic collection of Jewish liturgical, ritual, and ascent texts from Late Antiquity in its immediate historical, cultural, or literary contexts. The Hebrew Bible and New Testament; early Jewish and Christian apocalyptic works (both canonical and non-canonical); the vast corpus of rabbinic exegetical, legal, and narrative writings; early Christian and patristic sources (especially those materials classed as "Gnostic"); late antique Jewish and Christian liturgy; Neoplatonic theurgy and mysticism; Greco-Roman magical literatures and practices: all of these have served as comparative material for assessing the religious world-view of Hekhalot literature and the socio-cultural location of its authors. Vita Daphna Arbel has instead taken up the more uncertain course of locating in Hekhalot texts "mythological themes and patterns" from ancient Mesopotamia and analyzing how they have acquired "new mystical meanings" (pp. 56, 65, and passim) in their new literary and religious context. Beyond its potential contribution to our understanding of early Jewish mysticism as a discrete historical phenomenon, this study also holds out the alluring promise of tracing the enduring impact of ancient Near Eastern religion and literature on the formation of post-biblical Judaism—and with it the great religious traditions of the western world.

The obstacles that face such a project are naturally quite daunting. The Judaism of Late Antiquity, of which Hekhalot literature forms an important, if puzzling, part, is separated from the ancient Near Eastern texts Arbel uses by vast expanses of time and by significant linguistic, cultural, and technological barriers. Arbel argues, however, that it is not productive to confine analysis to precise mechanisms of literary transmission and reception. "Difficulties in establishing, with full certainty, linear

transmission of the Mesopotamian contents as well as modes of contact between literary traditions also hinder an examination which goes beyond listing similarities and differences" (p. 56). Instead, Arbel proposes what she terms a "phenomenological" approach to her materials. Of course, the phenomenology of religion as a mode of analysis has a century-long history that is marked by profound shifts and ruptures (S. Twiss and W. Conser, eds., *Experience of the Sacred* [Brown Univ. Press, 1992], 1–74). It is, therefore, unfortunate that Arbel nowhere makes explicit the analytical rules of her method or situates herself within this enormously diverse philosophical and academic tradition. As far as I can determine from her actual scholarly practice, Arbel's phenomenology seeks to discover by means of (largely literary) comparison common thematic, conceptual, or formal structures across culturally or historically distinct domains.

But before she gets down to the concrete work of reading the various relevant sources from the ancient Near East and comparing them with Hekhalot texts (chapters 3–5), Arbel defends at great length the central analytical categories on which her study depends, namely, mysticism and myth. In chapters one and two, she sets out a composite portrait of the "mystical" traditions recorded in the Hekhalot corpus. Arbel acknowledges that Hekhalot literature is a thematically and formally heterogeneous collection of sources that has undergone an enormously complex and protracted process of literary and ideological formation (pp. 8–9). Ultimately, however, she backs away from the radical implications of this textual approach, which has questioned the possibility not merely of recovering "authentic mystical experience" from these texts (p. 13), but even of studying Hekhalot literature as a single, unified religious phenomenon. In this way, her discussion of "Hekhalot and Merkavah mysticism" harmonizes the divergent and in many cases contradictory strands that make up Hekhalot literature.

A single, but vitally important example will suffice. The process of heavenly ascent is represented in the vast majority of Hekhalot texts in highly tangible, sensual, and corporeal terms. A small number of texts, however, seem to imply that the journey involves a spiritual form of ascent in which the visionary leaves his physical body on earth. Yet, even those texts that belong to the latter perspective nowhere treat heavenly ascent as a subjective, mental process, a view that is arguably first articulated in Jewish sources in the eleventh century by the Babylonian rabbinic authority Hai Gaon. In her textual analyses in chapter four, Arbel repeatedly notes that a concrete conception of space governs the logic of ascent in many Hekhalot compositions (e.g., pp. 67, 77–84, and 92). The concreteness of the otherworldly realms in both ancient Near Eastern and late ancient Jewish cosmological systems provides one of her most compelling cases for conceptual continuity. Yet, in her synthetic characterization of Hekhalot mysticism that frames both the book as a whole (esp. pp. 12–50 and 139–42) and the substantive chapters (esp. pp. 67–68, 103, 105–6, and 137–38), Arbel downplays the dominant perspective in the actual ascent narratives in favor of a spiritualizing psychological interpretation of the "mystical" journey. For her, Hekhalot literature reflects a form of "mysticism" that is grounded in a fundamentally private, interior, and contemplative-meditative experience. Thus, despite her reassuring citations of S. T. Katz (pp. 13–14), who has taught us not only that mysticism is a culturally and historically contingent phenomenon, but also that the category of mysticism itself is historically constructed, Arbel's account of "Hekhalot and Merkavah mysticism" largely reproduces what should by now be the highly suspect truisms of western scholarship about mysticism as a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon.

Chapter three sets forth the grounds for comparing ancient Near Eastern myth with early Jewish mysticism. Here, too, Arbel's analytic framework must confront significant problems. What is meant by myth? What are the boundaries of the ancient Near East? And, perhaps most importantly, what is the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near Eastern texts? In Arbel's words, "myths reveal spiritual truths, ethical concepts, collective dreams, and the traditional beliefs of a specific group or community. They are often distinguished by particular modes of expression which include prose narrative style, dramatic action, pictorial imagery, and the use of figurative language" (p. 53). Such a definition naturally casts the net rather wide. And, indeed, Arbel makes use of the full gamut of available Mesopotamian and biblical genres, from epic (e.g., *Gilgamesh*) to dedicatory hymn (e.g., to Marduk, Ninurta, or YHWH) to dream vision (e.g., the Gudea cylinders)—in fact, any text at all that relates to gods or heroes is fair game. Yet, while Arbel stresses that narrative is a constituent feature

of myth, the profoundly non-narrative Hekhalot texts yield no echoes of specific mythic cycles. The parallels she finds are almost exclusively isolated themes or patterns.

This disjuncture would pose no difficulty for a purely comparativist study, which had no interest in making claims about concrete lines of historical or cultural continuity. Despite her appeals to "phenomenological" methodologies, Arbel does not couch her study in strictly comparative or structural terms. Thus, for example, she does not explain why ancient Near Eastern texts might offer better *comparanda* than, say, Shamanic traditions from Siberia (which offer compelling material for comparison, as James R. Davila has shown in his 2002 study *Descenders to the Chariot* [Brill]). On the other hand, Arbel cannot seem to resist reviewing most of the available studies on possible continuities between Mesopotamian and late antique legal institutions, exegetical methods, and ritual practices (whether Jewish, Christian, or "pagan"). Arbel may be right that these suggestive studies indicate that we cannot simply rule out the possibility of continuity between ancient Near Eastern myth and early Jewish mysticism, though one might have wished for an explicit discussion of the implications that the absence of concrete lines of literary or linguistic affiliation has for the question of continuity.

These methodological flaws, while serious, do not entirely vitiate certain of Arbel's findings. As mentioned above, chapters four and five demonstrate that in a wide range of texts, both ancient and late ancient, the idiom for describing the interaction between a divinity and a human visionary was consistently tangible and sensual. Thus, Hekhalot literature stands in a venerable tradition in its application of figural language to the deity and the angels (pp. 122–35). Seen from this view, the vibrant ekphrastic language that is so often associated with Near Eastern cult sites, including the Jerusalem Temple, may have continued to exert a strong impact on Judaism long after the Destruction in 70 C.E.

Likewise, Arbel is no doubt correct that descriptions of the transformation of the Hekhalot visionary into a more-than-human figure have specific thematic affinities to the pattern of elevation and deification in numerous ancient Near Eastern sources. In this case, however, the lines of continuity are less than mysterious. In the wake of path-breaking studies by scholars such as James Vanderkam and John Collins, Arbel rightly points to the direct relationship between the biblical figure of Enoch, who looms so large in the development of early Jewish apocalyptic, and the Sumero-Akkadian figure Enmeduranki (pp. 95–102). It is perhaps no wonder, then, that the parade example of "transformative mysticism" in Hekhalot literature is the elevation of Enoch himself in *3 Enoch*. But this passage, which is far from typical of Hekhalot literature, raises two important questions that Arbel fails to address. First, what is the relationship between this text—with its strong affinities to and perhaps even direct dependence on earlier Jewish apocalyptic sources—and the rest of the Hekhalot corpus? In other words, does this pattern of transformation, which apparently continued to characterize the apocalyptic genre even into the Byzantine period, tell us anything about Hekhalot mystical praxis as it is described elsewhere? Second, if in this case—as in so many of the others that Arbel reviews—the biblical tradition plays such a central role in the formation of Hekhalot literature, how is the impact of other ancient Near Eastern sources on early Jewish mysticism to be disentangled from that of the Hebrew Bible? Indeed, in order to demonstrate specific continuity with ancient Near Eastern traditions other than the Bible, Arbel presumably would have had to demonstrate the *absence* of a given pattern or theme in the Bible. Even the most convincing parallels that she brings do not meet this essential analytical criterion.

A final chapter in the study explores the social location of the authors behind the Hekhalot texts (pp. 139–56). This worthwhile, but demanding, task is somewhat out of place in a study that is not otherwise dedicated to a methodical socio-historical analysis of the material. Building on studies of Second Temple Jewish prophetic, wisdom, and apocalyptic literature, Arbel identifies the people behind the texts variously as sages, priests, scribes, and, more generally, as "intellectuals." These findings largely confirm the important research conducted by Michael Swartz, who is the sole researcher to have subjected Hekhalot literature to thoroughgoing sociological analysis (*Scholastic Magic* [Princeton, 1996]). Arbel does not, however, explain how the rather general profile she provides fits within the specific contours of late antique Jewish society. Arbel notes that, although the central heroes of Hekhalot literature (especially Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael) are famous rabbinic figures, certain aspects of this literature—especially its attitude towards revelation—stand in tension with rabbinic Judaism. But how then are we to understand the emphasis on rabbinic education in these texts, not to mention its direct dependence on rabbinic literature? And, if early Jewish mystical literature does reflect certain

priestly concerns, does it point to the existence of actual priestly-mystical circles in late antique Jewish society, perhaps outside the "mainstream" of rabbinic Judaism? Such questions are further complicated by the numerous complexes of cultic traditions that were transmitted within rabbinic literature itself. In my view, we ought to be very cautious about presuming that cultic traditions *per se* reflect the ideas or interests of a specific priestly class.

Research on early Jewish mysticism—whether historical, literary, sociological, anthropological, comparative, or otherwise—should not begin from the assumption that Hekhalot literature represents an internally coherent religious system. Moreover, for the categories "mysticism" and "myth" to remain analytically valuable they must be used with great precision and specificity, especially when they are applied to such a diverse and unstable body of evidence. Only then will it become clear how scholars can avoid the mistake of reducing the heterogeneous set of textual artifacts that make up the Hekhalot corpus to a unitary expression of a *sui generis* mystical disposition.

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*Der Amun-Re Hymnus des P. Boulaq 17 (P. Kairo CG 58038).* By Maria Michela Luiselli. Kleine ägyptische Texte, vol. 14 Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004. Pp. xxii + 109, plates. €38.00 (paper).

The long hymn to Amun preserved in papyrus Cairo CG 58038 certainly represents one of the better-known religious texts from ancient Egypt. Surprisingly, however, there has not been a complete hieroglyphic transcription and commentary since E. Grébaut, *L'hymne à Amon-Ra des papyrus égyptiens du Musée de Boulaq* (Paris, 1874), even though translations have been frequent. The publication reviewed here sets out to close this gap. It gives a short overview of the various manuscripts (pp. xiii–xxii), a transliteration and translation of the different sections with a short commentary on contents and philological questions (pp. 1–38), a synoptic hieroglyphic transcription (pp. 39–99), and a glossary (pp. 100–109), as well as a complete photographic record.

In principle, this should be a most welcome publication, and the topic has been well chosen. Unfortunately, a number of problems seriously detract from the value of the book. From a purely technical standpoint, the photographs are blurred and sometimes indistinct. Moreover, they have been needlessly reduced to about two-thirds of the original size of the papyrus. Printing them at a right angle to the rest of the publication would have allowed reproduction in natural size even within the layout of this book. Even more seriously, the hieroglyphic synopsis is marred by innumerable small blunders. Most of them do not significantly affect the translation, but on the whole, no one should use this publication as a reliable source for orthographic questions. In order to give an idea of the problems, I will give some examples: entire words are missing in part I, verse 18 (G has remnants of *rmṯ*). Part II, verse 24: Hall's plates show traces of *ỉb* before *wỉ3* in G. Verse 29: in G, there are difficult signs at the end of the line. Part IV, verse 6: *n.t rʿ* omitted after *hrw*.

Misreadings and smaller omissions are not infrequent. For instance, part I, verse 11: in the transcription of B, the arm-sign below the *m* has been omitted. Additionally, the version given is misleading since the formula *ỉn šms.w mw.t.f rg(.t)* "by Shemsu, his mother being Reget" (which is really a separate note forming part of the title and set off by a dividing stroke below the name Shemsu in l. 7) is inserted as if it formed part of the actual text of the hymn. For the same verse, the transcription of E taken over from Lopez' edition should be questioned. The reviewer believes that the scanty traces might also fit the expected *nb md3.w ḥḳ3 p[wn.t]*. Verse 18: in A, the *r* of *rmṯ*, the *ḳ* of *ḳm3* and the *w* of *ʿw.t* are omitted in the transcription.

Part II, verse 2: instead of the divine determinative, read the guinea-fowl (first part of *nḥḥ* "eternity"). Verse 8: instead of the strange *ỉ3w.t*-sign *before* the verse-point, H really has first the verse-point, and *afterwards* a paleographic variant of the *sḫm*-sign stylized like a sistrum. Verse 12: