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Review of "The Accomodated Jew: English antisemitism from Bede to Milton"

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repetition of phrases such as “just weeks” or “just a few months later” ultimately created a breathless quality that a judicious editor might have mitigated.

Linda McJannet, *Bentley University*

The Accommodated Jew: English Antisemitism from Bede to Milton. Kathy Lavezzo. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016. xviii + 374 pp. \$65.

Lavezzo aptly characterizes her study as an exercise in cognitive mapping, one where the aim is to provide a model for the “spatial unconscious” undergirding the transhistorical phenomenon of anti-Semitism as made manifest in early modern English culture from the twelfth century through the seventeenth century (9). The texts she analyzes are well known, both to scholars of the literature of the era and to historians of anti-Semitism: Cynewulf’s *Elene*, Thomas of Monmouth’s *The Life and Miracles of Saint William of Norwich*, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*, Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, and Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*. Likewise, Lavezzo’s conclusions do little to alter the current scholarly consensus about the meaning of these texts or how to understand anti-Semitism in its broadest terms. Lavezzo explains, “I mean to stress how careful attention to historical and geographic particulars erodes fantasies of the economic Jew by demonstrating how capitalism is a phenomenon in which *some* people, hailing from *all* religious and ethnic identities, have participated, at various levels of intensity and success” (21). As Lavezzo acknowledges in her discussion of Karl Marx’s “On the Jewish Question,” the notion that the figure of the Jew in anti-Semitic polemics operates chiefly as an unstable screen figure for the (presumably) non-Jew actually doing the writing is a well-established explanation. Indeed, her study reflects deep familiarity and appreciation for the scholarship that has preceded her work, most especially Steven F. Kruger’s *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe* (2006), the study that remains for me the most perceptive on the subject. While *The Accommodated Jew* does not offer any sort of radically new argument about the broad structural function of anti-Semitism, the study does provide a strikingly innovative program for rereading these canonical texts with an eye to understanding how their geographical tropes encode, self-reflexively, a prejudice that demands the division and demarcation of living space, especially modern, urban locales.

Indeed, it is in her sustained and deeply nuanced examination of the geographical tropes that Lavezzo offers novel and perceptive readings that ought to be of genuine interest to scholars seeking to understand both anti-Semitism and early modern English culture. Lavezzo illustrates clearly and persuasively how Chaucer’s “Prioress’s Tale” contributes to an anti-Semitic tradition in England where buildings are used “to connote Christian purity and Jewish danger” by linking “the Jew to a latrine and the Christian

to a church" (118). Lavezzo provides a compelling genealogy for situating Marlowe's Barabas and Shakespeare's Shylock as participants trading off of a persistent fear that "under the cover of their homes, Jews perform horrible anti-Christian deeds" (195). Equally astute is her reading of Milton's closet drama *Samson Agonistes*. She contends that "by attacking the materialism of the temple and its inhabitants in a highly physical manner (its literal destruction), Samson embodies his author's paradoxical stance toward the Christian church and Jewish outsiders" (239). Further on in this reading of Milton—which comprises the book's final substantive chapter—Lavezzo returns to the commonplace that anti-Semitism functions as a privileged fictive medium that enables the non-Jew to externalize and thus realize a vision of the self that highlights irreducible traits that are marked for destruction because they are coded as immoral and undesirable. Ultimately, Lavezzo argues that "Samson thus attacks 'Jewish' materialisms through 'Jewish' means" of violence (242), and so doing, Samson in his tragedy reflexively baptizes Milton, the Christian author.

Over the course of making its argument, *The Accommodated Jew* introduces many nonliterary texts that have received little to no prior critical examination. In passing, Lavezzo offers accounts of the Hereford world map (ca. 1285), Bede's *On the Temple* and *On the Tabernacle*, and a startling account of an illustration in the Bodleian Library taken from the manuscript *The Child Slain by Jews*. Equally engrossing are the included maps detailing the location of Jewish residences in England. Kathy Lavezzo's study *The Accommodated Jew* is a welcome addition to current scholarship on English anti-Semitism. Equally important, Lavezzo's work provides a highly successful model for pursuing the program of cognitive mapping as a way to understanding how spaces inform our sense of life.

Matthew Biberman, *University of Louisville*

The Burley Manuscript. Peter Redford, ed.

The Manchester Spenser. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017. xiv + 448 pp. £90.

In the chaste prose of Peter Beal's online Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts, 1450–1700, the Burley Manuscript is "a folio composite volume of state letters, tracts, and verse, collected by, and mostly in the hand of, William Parkhurst (fl. 1604–67), Sir Henry Wotton's secretary in Venice and later Master of the Mint, including various works in verse and prose attributed to Donne, chiefly in a scribal hand, partly in Parkhurst's hand, 373 leaves (including blanks), in old calf." The manuscript, a notable source for the study of Donne's letters, is preserved among the papers of the Finch family of Burley-on-the-Hill, Rutland, and is now kept in Leicestershire Record