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Daniel BOYARIN and Virginia BURRUS

Hybridity as Subversion of Orthodoxy? Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity

Hybridity inflects Jewish and Christian identity in precisely the places where “purity” is most forcefully inscribed. In the formative texts of both traditions, heresy is pushed “outside” via its syncretistic representation, even as the other religion is brought “inside” through its close identification with heresy. Athanasius of Alexandria’s 4th-century construction of doctrinal orthodoxy in opposition to the “Judaizing” heresy of Arius here serves as a case study of the imperializing hybrid identity inscribed by Christian heresiology. Talmudic tales of contested martyrdom in turn offer examples of the Jewish representation of heresy as a problem of “Christianizing” practice that produces the Rabbi as a resistant hybrid subject. Bringing the discursive analysis of ancient texts into dialogue with present contexts, the authors acknowledge both the promise of a “Third Space” of hybridity opening onto inter-religious negotiation and the menace potentially conveyed by such hyphenated identities as the “Judeo-Christian”.

Key words: heresiology · hybridity · patristics · postcolonial · rabbinics · syncretism

L’hybridité affecte les identités juive et chrétienne précisément là où la notion de “pureté” s’affirme avec le plus de force. Dans les textes de références des deux traditions, l’hérésie est “évacuée” au moyen de sa représentation syncretique, même si l’autre religion est “incluse” par son identification avec l’hérésie. Au 4ème siècle, Athanase d’Alexandrie développa une doctrine orthodoxe face à l’hérésie “judaïsante” d’Arius. Cette dernière sert ici d’étude de cas de l’identité hybride à caractère impérialiste inscrite dans l’héresiologie chrétienne. Les récits talmudiques de martyres contestés offrent pour leur part des exemples de la représentation juive de l’hérésie comme étant un problème de pratiques “christianisantes” faisant du rabbin un sujet à l’hybridité résistante. Les auteurs proposent une analyse discursive des textes anciens à la lumière des contextes actuels et constatent ainsi la possibilité d’un “troisième espace” de l’hybridité ouvert à une négociation inter-religieuse et, en même temps, la menace potentielle que ces identités—qui ont des liens historiques entre elles—soient qualifiées de “judéo-chrétiennes”.

Mots-clés: hérésie · hybridité · postcolonial · rabbinique · syncrétisme

Analysis of ancient heresiology suggests that hybridity inflects Jewish and Christian identity in precisely the places where “purity” is most forcefully inscribed. In the formative texts of both traditions, heresy is pushed “outside” via its syncretistic representation, even as the other religion is brought “inside” through its close identification with heresy. The theorizing of internal deviance is thus closely linked to that of religious difference. If the heretic is both here and there, self and other—a hybrid, in Homi Bhabha’s terms—the same can be said for the other religion. Moreover, the construction of a hybridized “other” implicitly puts the purity of orthodox identity into question, as Bhabha’s critical analysis of colonial discourse has taught us to expect: “Colonial specularity, doubly inscribed, does not produce a mirror where the self apprehends itself; it is always the split screen of the self and its doubling, the hybrid” (Bhabha, 1994: 114). Put somewhat differently: “The threat from the hybrid is finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside” (Bhabha, 1994: 116). Just so, the orthodox subject is ever returned to itself split and doubled by heresy, and thus also by the religious other, as the duality of self/other, inside/outside is broken down.

Athanasius of Alexandria’s construction of doctrinal orthodoxy in opposition to the “Judaizing” heresy of Arius will here serve as a case study of the hybrid identity inscribed by Christian heresiology. Talmudic tales of contested martyrdom will, in turn, offer examples of the Jewish representation of heresy as a problem of “Christianizing” practice that produces the Rabbi as a hybrid subject. Behind this analysis of discourse lies an acknowledgement of the dynamic syncretism in which all varieties of Christianity and Judaism, as well as other religions of the Roman Empire, participated “in situations of cultures-in-contact” (King, 2001: 469; see also Frankfurter, 2003). To invoke “syncretism” or “hybridity” in this context is not, however, to focus attention on conglomerate cultures or identities, contrasted (whether implicitly or explicitly) with the prior or contiguous purities that syncretism itself supposedly disrupts (whether intentionally or unself-consciously). Rather, our aim is to mark the extent to which religious cultures—particularly in contexts of overt pluralism and inequalities of power—are neither static nor autonomous but are always emerging “at the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space”, as Bhabha puts it (1994: 38).

Bhabha, of course, has in mind a contemporary “postcolonial” context shaped by modern colonialism and neo-colonialism. Yet Rebecca Lyman has made a strong case for reading the ancient heresiologists through the lens of current postcolonial theory based on political and cultural resonances between (post)modern and (late) ancient contexts (Lyman, 2003a, 2003b). As participants in Roman Hellenism, early Christians join with Jews and pagans in a tensely competitive “cultural discussion on ancestral origins and the identity of transcendent truth within a plurality of traditions” in which creative processes of displacement, disassembly, and recombination of prior cultural elements produce a spectrum of hybridized discourses and subjectivities—hybridized less because “mixed” than because emerging in a play of mimicry in which imperial claims to oneness of truth and power are both appropriated and disrupted (Lyman, 2003a: 216; cf. Boyarin, 2001). When,

in the 4th century AD, Christianity shifts from a “colonized” position toward one of political and cultural hegemony, the discourse of heresiology initially forged by earlier Christians as well as Jews in a period of shared persecution comes to be voiced by Christian bishops who collude, however ambivalently, with imperial power. For Judaism, the context also shifts: no longer positioned by Christians as a competing “heretical” sect, the Rabbis adapt to their recolonized position as subjects of a Christian empire.

The late Roman Empire witnesses not only the “triumph” of Christianity but also the birth of “religion” constituted as a “totalizing”—indeed, an imperializing—discourse (Cameron, 1991: 58; Jacobs, 2004: 23–24). Yet even when conceived as an “orthodoxy”, religious identity is never pure: all subjects are hybrid, differential, marked by the trace of their others. As Andrew Jacobs points out, “Christian discourse was henceforth split against itself. Christian writers of Empire are also the writers, in a fashion, of Jewish resistance” (2004: 14). That resistance, moreover, finds its voice in rabbinic texts that both accept and subvert the interpellation of Judaism as an “other” religion within hegemonic Christian discourse (Boyarin, 2004). The cultural heteroglossia that is the byproduct of both imperialism and colonialism thus produces multiple, competing hybrid discourses that navigate between high-pitched demands for a universal truth and deep-seated claims for cultural particularity and superiority. Whether the inevitable hybridization of orthodox discourse—both Christian and Jewish—is ultimately a positive source of subversion or a menacing strategy for annihilating “otherness” is a question to which we will return in the conclusion.

Judaizing Arians: Athanasian Heresiology

Alexander of Alexandria claims that the Arian Christians “denounced every pious apostolic doctrine and, just as the Jews do, have organized a gang to fight against Christ”, adding that Arius’s teaching resembles that of the archetypal Jewish-Christians Ebion and Artemas, as well as the “Judaizing” heresy taught by Paul of Samosata (ep. Alex. 4–5, 35). Alexander’s episcopal successor, Athanasius, tirelessly elaborates his master’s points in his earliest anti-Arian work, the first *Discourse against the Arians*. The Arians, declares Athanasius, “take and eat with Eve”, thus falling into a heresy that, if considered true doctrine, would force one “to call even Caiaphas a Christian, and to reckon the traitor Judas still among the Apostles, and to say that they who asked for Barabbas instead of the Savior did no evil” (Ar. 1.1–2). The reference to Caiaphas recurs: “If then henceforth openly adopting Caiaphas’s way, they have determined on judaizing, and are ignorant of the text that verily God shall dwell upon the earth, let them not inquire into the apostolical sayings; for this is not the manner of Jews” (Ar. 1.13.53). More generalized depictions of the Arians as virtual Jews based on their supposed denial of the divinity of the Son—which renders them doctrinal, if not literal, Christ-killers—are repeated throughout the *First Discourse*: “They ought also to deny Christ with the present Jews” (Ar. 1.8); “it is a Jewish pretense” (Ar. 1.14); “it is a device of our present judaizers”

(Ar. 1.39). Citing the similarity of the Arians to the “Judaizing” Paul of Samosata, Athanasius labels Arian christology a “sentiment . . . of the Samosatene and of the present Jews”, and queries, “why then, if they think as Jews, are they not circumcised with them too, instead of pretending Christianity, while they are its foes?” (Ar. 1.38). Overall, Athanasius is less interested in historical succession than in doctrinal or behavioral affinity, as he conflates the teachings of Arius with those of “the Jews”: his anti-Judaism is less supercessionist than heresiological, and the Arians are most forcefully aligned not with past but with “present Jews”. Failure to recognize Jesus as the one prophesied in the Scriptures “was the lot of the Jews, *and is still*” (Ar. 1.54, emphasis added). If Arians are virtual Jews, the Jews are also, like all heretics, Christian apostates.

Athanasius’s construction of the Arian heresy as Judaizing serves, of course, as a foil for his construction of Trinitarian orthodoxy: true Christianity is represented as the negation of heresy, even as heresy is represented as a “denial” of orthodoxy. As Alain Le Boulluec (1985) points out, a negative image of heresy (as opposed to a representation of sheer alterity in which the other bears no resemblance at all to the self) is already inseparably bound to the image that it negates, much like that of a photographic image to its “negative”. Yet heresiological discourse constructs the relationship of heresy to orthodoxy not simply as one of negation but also, and rather more ambivalently, as one of mimicry (Lyman, 2003b). Thus, Athanasius suggests that heretics skillfully mimic true Christianity, above all by decking their teachings in scriptural dress: the Arian heresy, “in her craft and cunning, affects to array herself in Scripture language . . . that with the pretense of Christianity, her smooth sophistry (for reason she has none) may deceive men into wrong thoughts of Christ” (Ar. 1.1). The problem with heresy, then, is that it looks very much like true Christianity. In Bhabha’s terms, the heretic is a mimic, “not quite” Christian (thus also very nearly Christian), and the consequence of this, it would seem, is that the Christian is “not quite” (thus also very nearly) heretical. But what could that mean?

At first glance, the interval of difference marked by “not-quiteness” appears to be filled by the figure of “Judaism”. If the heretic is a Jew/Christian, the true Christian is . . . simply a Christian. Yet we have already seen that hybridity is something other than a conglomerate identity from which elements can be added or subtracted. To return again to Bhabha’s language: the hybrid is produced through “a discrimination of the mother culture from its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something *different*—a mutation, a hybrid” (Bhabha, 1994: 111). Thus, Athanasius’s charges of “Judaizing” represent heresy less as a “mixed thing” (as if the “cultures” of Christianity and Judaism both pre-existed his discourse and remained intact in the exchange) than as a “mutation” of Christianity, a partly failed mimesis, and thus a mimicry that conveys both adulation and mockery. This, in turn, renders the purity and authority of orthodoxy problematic. As the heretic becomes virtually indistinguishable from the orthodox Christian, due to the devious play of mimicry inscribed by orthodox discourse itself, the Christian subject is likewise denied any mirror of simple

“recognition”. S/he too becomes “a split screen of the self and its doubling, the hybrid”.

Intriguingly, the issue of mimesis is at the heart of Athanasius’s theological debate with his Arian opponents. Athanasius aligns himself with the divine Word who is the perfect image of the Father, placing the Arians on the side of stage actors mouthing frivolous and made-up lines—their words, in effect, created out of nothing, mimicking their own claims for what amounts to a pseudo-Son. While he understands that the Son is ever begotten by the one who is ever Father, he complains that the Arians take up his language of Fatherhood and Sonship *mockingly*: “They turn to silly women, and address them in turn in this womanish language; ‘hadst thou a son before bearing? now, as thou hadst not, so neither was the Son of God before His generation’” (Ar. 1.22). Athanasius refuses to take part in such wildly inappropriate “sport and revel”, sternly insisting on the distinction between the Original and its mere copies:

For God does not make man His pattern; but rather we men, for that God is properly, and alone truly, Father of His Son, are also called fathers of our own children; for of Him “is every fatherhood in heaven and earth named”. (Ar. 1.23)

Behind this assertion lies the distinction between the exact reproduction of the Father (the divine Son) and the inexact mimesis (mimicry?) at work in creation (human “sons”, begotten of fathers *and* mothers). The Arians, in their mockery of the favored Athanasian theological terminology of Fatherhood and Sonship, get it all backwards: they imply that the divine begetting imitates mere human generation. For this they themselves will surely “incur much derision and mockery” (Ar. 1.23).

As Athanasius is reduced to mimicking the very mockery he attributes to the Arians, his own strident claims to authority are both exposed and subtly destabilized by their very excessiveness. Much, if not all, hinges on whether his absolute view of the revelatory authority of the Scriptures that—according to him—offer unmediated testimony to the unique, originary, and non-metaphorical Fatherhood of God can bear the weight of such claims, given that this debate is from the start exegetical from the perspective of all involved parties. If motherhood, for the ancients, is the matrix of materiality that introduces difference into animal generation, it is no accident that the Arians (as Athanasius represents them) have appealed to mothers in such a way as to introduce difference into the very generation of Divinity. They have thereby opened up the divine–human mimesis to two-way traffic, while also indirectly acknowledging its inevitable inexactitude—its differential structuring as “mimicry”—a position consistent with their insistence on the Son’s difference from the Father. Can Athanasius effectively block that circulation of mimicry? (Can he expunge the threat of the m/other from his theology?) Or has he (along with his God) become “a split screen of the self and its doubling” through his very efforts to assert his own “originary” authority? As Bhabha notes, the production of hybridity within colonialist (or in this case “orthodox”) discourse “may lead . . . to questions of authority that the authorities—the Bible included—cannot answer . . . The

display of hybridity—its particular replication—terrorizes authority with the *ruse* of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery” (1994: 115). By putting Arian hybridity on display, with its “ruse” of recognizing the scriptural authority of language of Fatherhood and Sonship, Athanasius has exposed the contingency and partiality of his own scripturally authorized claims for Christianity.

Judaism is implicated in the hybridization of Athanasian orthodoxy via the centrality of scriptural authority for Athanasius. Athanasius is uncomfortably aware that “the present Jews” also study “the Law and the Prophets” and thus he must reiterate his opening point that “the devil, the author of heresies, because of the ill favor which attaches to heresies, borrows Scripture language, as a cloak wherewith to sow the ground with his own poison also, and to seduce the simple”. Those who read the Scriptures and still deny Christ are like the Jews: “til now they understand nothing, but are walking in darkness” (Ar. 1.8). The scripturalism of the Arians brings Athanasius face to face with the monstrous image of Christians who (like the Jews) read the Scriptures but still “vomit forth” false teachings (Ar. 1.10; cf. Ar. 1.36). In their very Judaizing (not despite it), the Arians are near-miss Christians: exegetical practice attracts Judaism to Christianity. Thus, Athanasius’s thoroughgoing resort to the authority of the Scriptures—particularly in a text in which he has not yet fully developed his theory of the authority of the “ecumenical” Nicene Council and its creed—undermines his ability to distance himself from his opponents. Nor, seemingly, is Athanasius inclined to attribute the apostasy of the Jews to the incompleteness of their Scriptures (which would of course distance them from the Arians): his complaint must be rather that the Jews, like the Arians, deliberately misread the text.

Both Jewish and not—almost but not quite Jewish—as a reader of the Scriptures: this, then, is the hybrid Christian subject produced by the Athanasian discourse of orthodoxy. The impulse to subsume difference by converting the colonized “other” is inevitably only partly successful, and Christian identity bears in its hybridity the indelible trace of the “remains of the Jews”, to borrow Andrew Jacobs’s (2004) memorable phrase.

Christianizing Martyrs: Talmudic Heresiology

Where the Christian colonization of the Jewish Scriptures produces a hybridized Christian subject, the Jewish counter-colonization of martyrdom produces a hybridized rabbinic subject, likewise articulated via heresiology. For the Rabbis, heretics are first and foremost Christianizers. Sometimes they betray their troubling hybridity through an unseemly penchant for martyrdom. Sometimes they are exposed for enacting a mere mimicry of true martyrdom.

Rabbinic literature, as is well known, makes its most significant claims in narrative. In the tale of the proto-martyr Rabbi Akiva, we find an explicit appropriation of Christian martyrology, as Saul Lieberman has persuasively argued (1939–1944: 422; 1974: 230). The mimicking of martyrology is, more-

over, directed to the service of an anti-Christian heresiology that opens up all of the hybridity of the rabbinic orthodox project. In one story, a highly problematic Jewish figure, Papos ben Yehuda, invites Rabbi Akiva to abandon his study and practice of Torah during a period of imperial persecution. Rabbi Akiva refuses the invitation, producing a parable to support his refusal. In the parable, the Jews are the fish whom certain men (obvious symbols of the empire) wish to catch, and Papos is the fox who tempts them to join him on land, where they will be safe. The fish answer that if they are endangered in their natural habitat, the water, they will be in even greater danger if they abandon that habitat. Indeed, since they are fish, they will surely die on land:

Rabbi Akiva explains, “with all your soul”—even if he take your soul. Our Rabbis have taught: Once the Evil Empire decreed that that no one should study Torah and anyone who studies Torah would be pierced by the sword. Papos ben Yehuda came and found Rabbi Akiva sitting and teaching and gathering large congregations with a scroll of the Torah in his lap. Papos said to him: “Are you not afraid of that nation?” He [Akiva] said to him:

“Are you the Papos ben Yehuda of whom they say that you are a great sage? You are nothing but a fool. I will spin you a parable, to what is the matter similar? To a fox that was walking by the seashore and he saw schools of fish and said to them, ‘Why are you gathering?’ They said, ‘In fear of the nets and weirs that people make to catch us.’ He said to them, ‘Come up onto the dry land and we’ll live together, you and I, just as our ancestors did.’ They said, ‘Are you the fox of whom they say that you are the most cunning among animals? You are nothing but a dolt! If here in the place of our life it is so [that we are endangered], if we go up to the land which is the place of our death, how much more and how much more so?’ And so you. If now that we are studying Torah of which it is said: ‘It is your life and the length of your days’, it is so with us [that we are endangered], were we to refrain from it, how much more and how much more so?”

The application of the parable follows in the form of the continuation of the story. Both the “fish” and the “fox” end up being hunted and caught by the “men”. The fox, however, now confesses to the fish that he is in worse shape than they, for his death is meaningless, while theirs is momentous:

It is said that not many days passed before they arrested Rabbi Akiva and bound him in prison and they arrested Papos also and bound him with him. Said Rabbi Akiva to him, “Papos. Why have you been brought here?” Papos said to him, “Happy are you, Rabbi Akiva, who has been arrested for the words of Torah. Woe to Papos, the son of Yehuda, who has been arrested for *superstitiones!*” (Babylonian Talmud Berkahot 61b, according to Oxford Opp. Add. Fol. 23)

We have here the typical elements of a rabbinic martyr story—a sage’s provocation by public teaching despite the forbidding on pain of death of such activity by the Evil Empire, and the opposition and astonishment of another sage at such strange behavior.

An instructive parallel is found in the story of the death of Rabbi Hanina ben Teradion in which it is also said that the Sage was “sitting and teaching and gathering large congregations with a scroll of the Torah in his lap”:

Our [ancient] Rabbis have taught: When Rabbi Yose the son of Kisma became ill, Rabbi Hanina the son of Teradion went to visit him. He said to him: “Hanina, my brother, Don’t

you know that this nation was set to rule over us by Heaven, and it has destroyed His house, and burned His temple, and killed His saints, and destroyed His goodly things, and still it exists, and I have heard that you gather crowds together in public, with a Scroll of the Torah in your lap, and you sit and teach!" He [Hanina] said to him, "From Heaven they will have mercy." He [Yose] said to him, "I say logical things to you, and you answer me: 'From Heaven they will have mercy!' I will be surprised if they do not burn you and the Scroll of the Torah with you." (Avoda Zara 17b)

Rabbi Hanina is subsequently brought before the judge and asked: "Why did you engage in Torah?" He replies: "For thus the Lord my God has commanded me!" Consequently, he is sentenced to be burned to death.

At first glance, it might appear that Rabbi Hanina's story is being presented as an unequivocal argument for martyrdom, much as the story of Rabbi Akiva certainly is. The text, however, disables such an interpretation by citing the conversation between Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Yose ben Kisma, in which the latter is highly critical of the provocative behavior of his colleague. In sharp contrast to the disreputable Papos, the sceptical interlocutor in Rabbi Akiva's story, Rabbi Yose ben Kisma is a highly honorable figure. Moreover, his argument that martyrdom is illogical owing to the danger that it entails for the individual and the whole community as well as the Torah itself remains in play at the end of the text, for Rabbi Hanina is indeed burned together with a scroll of the Torah, in fulfillment of Rabbi Yose ben Kisma's admonishing prediction. Thus, where our first story made martyrdom central to a rabbinic orthodoxy resisting imperial authority, our second story suggests that martyrdom is itself a heresy that burns the Torah.

There is hybridity, then, built into the very contrast of these two otherwise closely parallel stories—almost, but not quite, the same. If the narrative of Rabbi Hanina's death demonstrates grave ambivalence toward martyrdom, the story of the death of Rabbi Akiva exhibits no such ambivalence at all. The mimicry that structures the relation between the two talmudic tales of martyrdom pivots on another structure of mimicry shared by both—namely, the mimicry inhering in martyrdom itself. If the story of Rabbi Hanina uncovers in martyrdom an imitation of an implicitly Christian practice that threatens to render a Jew heretical while also delivering the Jew and the Torah into the hands of the (Christian) empire, the story of Rabbi Akiva suggests that it is the Rabbis who are the true martyrs and the Christianizing heretics mere mimics. In both cases, in other words, the "heretic" is a mimic martyr and also a mimic Christian. Where the two tales differ is in their positioning of the orthodox subject vis-à-vis the heretical martyr. At this point we might note the resonance between Rabbi Akiva's parable and the Christian figure of the apostles as fishers of men (Mark 1:17; Luke 5:10; nexus suggested by Galit Hasan-Rokem). Papos, the Christianlike "fox", proposes to the persecuted Jewish fish that they would be safe on land with him, out of the sea of Torah. Akiva protests that even outside of Torah the fish are likely to be caught and killed, and, in the meantime, they have abandoned that which guarantees them life eternal. The rabbinic text places final confirmation of this view in the mouth of the "Christian" fisher of men who confesses "Blessed art thou, Rabbi Akiva, for you have been arrested for the

words of Torah. Woe to Papos, who has been arrested for *superstitio*” (*devarim betelim*, the common name in the Talmud for the crime of Christians in Roman eyes.) We are not, of course, claiming that Papos was really a Christian, any more than Arius was really a Jew; rather our conjecture is that the late Babylonian tradition represented him as a Christianizer. (Elsewhere in the Talmud he is even identified as Joseph the father of Jesus [Shabbat 104b, only in mss.].) Such discursive production of Christianizing heretics projects outward a threatening hybridity harbored within, much as the Athanasian representation of Judaizing does.

If the problem for Athanasius is that Jews and Judaizing heretics imitate orthodox Christianity, above all by quoting the Scriptures, for the Rabbis who told the story of Rabbi Akiva and Papos, the Christianizing heretic, the doubled and deeply paradoxical moment of “orthodox” hybridity is likewise situated in the Jews’ mimicry of Christians—but it is the Jewish mimicry that is now positioned as authentic, while the originary status of Christians is reframed as a poor imitation. Appropriation, then, is no longer assimilation but subversion, as talmudic hybridity opens a discursive space where the “remains of the Jews” talk back.

Rereading Heresiology, Negotiating Religious Difference

The discourse of orthodoxy performs ongoing transactions between hybrid subjects—Christian and Jew—at the ever-emergent borderlines of religious cultures, thereby potentially unraveling its own claims to a cultural supremacy based on originality and purity. As Bhabha suggests:

The “true” is always marked and informed by the ambivalence of the process of emergence itself, the productivity of meanings that construct counter-knowledges *in medias res*, in the very act of agonism, within the terms of a negotiation (rather than a negation) of oppositional and antagonistic elements. (1994: 22)

To expose the inherent ambivalence of agonistic negotiation—the transient historicity as well as the always-contested status of (religious) cultures—is less to relativize truth claims than to inaugurate new political possibilities. In the passage through what Bhabha calls a “Third Space” of translation and negotiation, an “*inter* religious” culture may be discovered, “based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*”. “And by exploring this Third Space”, concludes Bhabha, “we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (1994: 38–39). Focusing on the action taking place at the boundaries of even the most stridently exclusive inscriptions of identity, this critical analysis of late ancient Jewish and Christian discourses attempts to make such a “Third Space” visible—and possibly even habitable.

Yet at the same time we must acknowledge the potential menace of hybridity itself, which can all too easily be turned toward imperialist ends. As the example “Judaeo-Christianity” reminds us, hybridity not only can continue to “colonize” the other but can also serve the purposes of inscribing a virtual

oneness (not quite one, but close enough) in opposition to a purely externalized other with whom there can be no effective negotiation. In our current political moment, any productive mobilization of consciously hybridized identities must refuse the limit to negotiation. One starting point would be to carry this history of discourse a step further in order to surface the operations of hybridity that give rise to the ambivalent and agonistic negotiation of identities not only of Jews and Christians but of Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

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Virginia BURRUS, Professor of Early Church History at Drew University, NJ, received her BA in Classical Civilization from Yale College, and her MA and PhD in History of Christianity from the Graduate Theological Union. Her research interests in the field of ancient Christianity include: gender, sexuality, and the body; martyrdom and asceticism; literary practice and theory; constructions of orthodoxy and heresy; histories of theology and historical theologies. She is the author of *The Making of a Heretic: Gender and Authority in the Priscillianist Controversy* (University of California Press, 1995); "*Begotten, Not Made*": *Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity* (Stanford University Press, 2000); and *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagio-*

graphy (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). ADDRESS: Drew University, Madison, NJ 07940, USA. [email: vburrus@drew.edu]

Daniel BOYARIN, Taubman Professor of Talmudic Culture and Rhetoric, UC Berkeley received his PhD in 1975 from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. In 1994 he received the Crompton Noll Award from the Gay and Lesbian Caucus of the MLA. He has written extensively on talmudic and midrashic studies, and his recent work focuses primarily on cultural studies in rabbinic Judaism, including issues of gender and sexuality as well as research on the Jews as a colonized people. His books include *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (1990), *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (1993), *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (1994), and *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (1997), all published by the University of California Press. *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* appeared at Stanford University Press in the fall of 1999. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* was published by University of Pennsylvania Press in 2004. ADDRESS: University of California Berkeley, NES, 250 Barrows Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720, USA. [email: boyarin@berkeley.edu]