

“Brilliant and novel. . . . Boyarin brings together here some very hot topics: cultural difference, cultural regulation, and the specific interface between Jewish and Greco-Roman culture. *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* is a book with intellectual range and ambition. And it is fun—as the title promises.”

SIMON GOLDHILL

“Boyarin’s imaginative and erudite book stages a quite stunning encounter between Socrates, the philosophical enterprise he represents, and the rabbinic tradition of Talmudic interpretation. Along the way, Boyarin finds a way of accounting for both the formation and limits of philosophical idealism, returning his reader time and again to the gap that separates ideal worlds from the matter of living. At stake is the meaning of both dialogue and dialectics, both of which assume an important rhetorical dimension. With irony, brilliance, and grace, Boyarin shows how the rhetorical dimensions of irony, comedy, fantastic figures, polyvocality, and omission are essential to understanding the kind of dialogue that remains critical and vigilant in relation to the commitment to truth. Over and against an idealism that would transcend the sensuous world, including errant bodies and wayward utterances, Boyarin insists on the necessity of that chasm that separates ideal truth from the truth of what we can and must live. This is a joyous, serious, and convincing book, one that not only brings the study of Plato (particularly in the double-voice of Socrates) into a necessary engagement with Talmudic interpretations, but reminds us again how important it is for rethinking the dialogic conditions of truth to pay close attention to what fails to conform to authoritative law, to the faltering effort to find one’s way, and to a critical project that requires new forms of becoming, and new ways of becoming slightly less serious, in order to move, with others, closer to what is true.”

JUDITH BUTLER