

Plato in Medieval England

Pagan, Scientist, Alchemist, Theologian

by Sears Jayne and edited by Christopher Moore

DESCRIPTION:

From the time of the Roman Republic, continental Europeans traveling to England brought knowledge of Greek and Roman intellectual culture in the form of books of every genre. But, until 1111 CE, the island contained not a single Platonic dialogue. And for the next two centuries, it had only a partial Latin translation of the *Timæus*. A Latin *Phaedo* eventually appeared, in 1340, and the *Meno* in 1423. But this hardly limited the number of ideas people had about Plato. He was a proto-Christian, a sage, a scholar of the cosmos, and a healer. And he had an elaborate oeuvre that did exist in England, works of astrology, numerology, medicine, and science, including *Cado*, *Theobrodus*, *Calf*, *Circle*, *Herbal*, *Question*, *Alchemy*, and *Book of Prophecies of a Greek King*.

This book tells the story of Plato in Medieval England, from a name with too few works to a sage with too many. Based on a complete survey of all extant manuscripts, publications, and library records until the fifteenth century, it traces with extraordinary precision the movement of opinions and information about Plato from Europe to England and then into its various monasteries, schools, and universities. This erudite and illuminating sociology of knowledge provides novel insight into the dubious English career of our best-known philosopher. This is intellectual history and reception studies at its most surprising.

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