

Kerstin Shands writes: How are points of departure and arrival – and the ‘middles’ in-between – visualized in spiritual autobiographies recounting the ultimate in personal and spiritual development (or the passionate pursuit of it): transcendent and transformative encounters with an ultimate reality or God? Focusing primarily on the writings of Lauren Winner, this paper will explore the imagery embedded in Winner’s writings with particular regard to the complex and capacious matrimonial metaphors wedded to the teleological aspects of the spiritual journey.

Selected Reading

Lauren F. Winner, *Girl Meets God: On the Path to a Spiritual Life*, New York, Shaw Books, 2002.
— *Real Sex: The Naked Truth about Chastity*, Grand Rapids, Brazos Press, 2005.
— *Still: Notes on a Mid-Faith Crisis*, Harper, 2012.

Kerstin Shands is Professor of English at Södertörn University in Stockholm where she currently teaches full-time. Among her books are *The Repair of the World: The Novels of Marge Piercy*; *Embracing Space: Spatial Metaphors in Feminist Discourse*; and *Neither East Nor West: Postcolonial Essays on Literature, Culture and Religion* (editor).

Anna Walczuk writes: Is myth, with its universal implications, an effective instrument to accommodate highly personal narratives? Can myth be a helpful mode of life-writing to render not only a simple register of facts, but primarily man’s inner quest leading to God, and thus reconciling the limited human self with the limitless Divine? Addressing these issues my paper focuses upon C.S. Lewis’s *Till We Have Faces* as a modern re-working of an ancient myth and the compelling spiritual autobiography of a convert.

Selected Reading

C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* [1956], Collins, Fount Paperbacks, 1981.
— *Surprised by Joy* [1955], Collins, Fount Paperbacks, 1982.
— ‘Myth Became Fact’ in *Undeceptions: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, (ed.) Walter Hooper, Geoffrey Bles, 1971.
T. S. Eliot, ‘Religion and Literature’ [1935] in *Selected Prose*, Penguin Books, 1965.
Lucius Apuleius, *The Transformations of Lucius otherwise known as The Golden Ass*, transl. Robert Graves, Penguin Books, 1985.

Dr Anna Walczuk teaches English literature at the Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland. The thesis for her doctorate was a comparative study of G.K. Chesterton and C.S. Lewis. She has published a book on irony in Muriel Spark. At present she is working on the poetry of Elizabeth Jennings.

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DAY CONFERENCE

You Turn: Figuring Conversion in Narrative

Saturday 3 November 2012

The Seminar Room
Corpus Christi College
Merton Street
Oxford
OX1 4JF
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Programme

- 10.00 Arrivals and coffee
 10.30 Introductions
- 10.45 **Andrew Tate**
'I will live': On Dickens and Conversion
- 11.55 **David Parry**
*'God breaketh not all men's hearts alike':
 Early Modern Conversion Narratives in
 Contemporary Perspective*
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.00 **Kerstin Shands**
*Journeys Toward Grace: Turning Points and
 New Beginnings in Contemporary Spiritual
 Autobiography*
- 14.40 **Anna Walczuk**
Mapping Spiritual Experience through Myth
- 15.20 Tea
 Work in progress
 Plans
 Prayer
- 16.00 Close

Andrew Tate writes: Why did Dickens' writing infuriate some of his religious contemporaries? Was Ruskin right to claim that, for the great novelist, 'Christmas meant mistletoe and pudding – neither resurrection from dead, nor rising of new stars, nor teaching of wise men, nor shepherds'? This paper will examine Dickens' contribution to nineteenth-century understandings of conversion with detailed reference to a range of novels and short stories. It will argue that a strong incarnational theology informs his narratives of the awakening conscience.

Selected Reading

Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton, *Literature and religion in mid-Victorian England: from Dickens to Eliot*, Palgrave, 2003.
 Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature: An Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2006.
 Dennis Walder, *Dickens and Religion*, Allen, 1981.

Dr Andrew Tate is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English & Creative Writing at Lancaster University where he also the Associate Director of the Ruskin Research Centre. He has published widely in the field of literature and theology and his books include *Douglas Coupland* (2007), *Contemporary Fiction and Christianity* (2008), and, co-authored with Arthur Bradley, *The New Atheist Novel* (2010).

David Parry writes: The seventeenth century saw the conversion narrative emerge as a genre with distinct literary conventions, suggesting that the spiritual experience of Christian believers conforms to particular patterns. But what about believers whose experience didn't fit the template? Recent studies of early modern conversion from different angles raise questions pertinent to how we think about Christian conversion today. What is the relationship between psychological, sociological and theological accounts of conversion? Can the continuities and discontinuities of conversion form a coherent narrative?

Selected Reading

Michael Davies, *Graceful Reading: Theology and Narrative in the Works of John Bunyan*, Oxford, 2002.
 Craig Harline, *Conversions: Two Family Stories from the Reformation and Modern America*, Yale UP, 2011.
 D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England*, Oxford, 2005.
 Kathleen Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World*, Oxford, 2012.
 Rob Wilson, *Be Always Converting, Be Always Converted: An American Poetics*, Harvard UP, 2009.

Dr David Parry teaches early modern English literature at the University of Cambridge, where his Ph.D. research focused on rhetoric in Puritan writing. Following his Ph.D., he completed a Government of Canada Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the University of Toronto.

Booking Form

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