THE GLASS

Mark Knight, *An Introduction to Religion and Literature*; Helen Wilcox (ed.), *The English Poems of George Herbert*; Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S.Lewis*; Sanford Schwartz, *C.S. Lewis on the Final Frontier: Science and the Supernatural in the Space Trilogy*; Deborah Bowen (ed.), *The Strategic Smorgasbord of Postmodernity: Literature and the Christian Critic*; Ira B. Zinman, *Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Bible: A Spiritual Interpretation with Christian Sources*; Alison Searle, *'The Eyes of Your Heart': Literary and Theological Trajectories of Imagining Biblically*; Walter Nash, *Memorabilia* and *Recent Intelligence*; John Milton, *Paradise Lost: Parallel Prose Edition*, ed. Dennis R. Danielson; Kevin Mills, *Fool.*

Editorial

'When,' (in Genesis 3) ' the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.' It is such a simple, everyday, action, a woman giving food to her husband, commonplace in all cultures, but it is invested in scripture with tremendous significance. Historic or not, it's a potent, polysemic myth.

In that sentence from Genesis there's a clue to something else that may be going on, in that the fruit was 'desirable for gaining wisdom'. And we are told that it was forbidden by God, and that its taking was punished by him. And so we are led to understand, in our acquired wisdom, that our mortality, 'the heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to' are the effect of that cause.

On 10 June 1826 Samuel Coleridge witnessed a spectacular thunder storm at Highgate, and mused in his Notebook that it can be taken as symbolic of 'the common because total Crash in Adam'. At about that time he made a studious re-reading of Genesis, concluding that the Bible records both the 'history of the revelations of the will of God, and the renitence of the false and evil will in man.'

Discussing the genesis of his novel *The Lord of the Flies* William Golding remarked in an essay entitled 'Fable', transposing perhaps the Biblical proverb about trouble, that 'Man produces evil, as a bee produces honey'.

To the newcomer to Christian theology 'Original Sin' might seem a good description of what Eve and Adam did, but it's a way to refer to the tendency of all individuals at least some of the time to do wrong. We often like to explain things by their origin, and this tendency we trace back to Eden. Reinhold Niebuhr (Barack Obama's favourite philosopher) is reported as observing that of all Christian dogma, original sin is the one that doesn't need to be proved.

T. S. Eliot had a lot of time for T. E. Hulme, not least for his totalising view of the human condition. Original Sin, Hulme said in his little book *Speculations*, is 'the conviction that man is by nature bad or limited, and can consequently only accomplish anything of value by disciplines, ethical, heroic or political.' Eliot had given a new direction to literary criticism with his early essays and reviews, but once he was a convinced Christian he thought to turn the ship round to a new, theological, course. In *After Strange Gods* (1934) with a convert's zeal he set about unmasking 'the operations of the Evil Spirit today'. He disconcerted many readers of his earlier work with his exposé of writers like Hardy and Lawrence, remarking in an aside, 'I doubt whether what I am saying can convey very much to any one for whom the doctrine of Original sin is not a very real and tremendous thing.'

People today, especially Christian readers, may regard the effect of the Fall as a sinister, looming feature of our moral landscape, an archetype of collective significance, a myth which is compelling as an account of the phenomena it deals with. But what are we to *make* of the Fall? We may invoke it to make a generalisation about the state of the world, or the fragility of ideals, may see evidence of it watching the TV news, and we may ourselves feel the anguish of it, and even complicity. As readers we can observe what writers have done with it.

How useful is it as a rubric in reading and criticism? Does it in some way elucidate a murder in Dostoevsky, or in *Othello*? Did this myth inform the imaginations of Dostoevsky and of Shakespeare?

Elizabeth Jennings, who died in 2001, has a late poem, 'Eden', which makes use of the trope of the Fall to evoke a troubled spirit:

…we pause at last, and then the fall
Happens. Sky grows darker and we lose
All sense of ease and leisure.. Something is
Wrong at the heart of us …
We gaze towards the city and each mind collects
Round sudden ruins wrought by our misdeeds.

Michael Edwards in *Towards a Christian Poetics* (1984) asks, 'Is there a shadowy presence behind tragic heroes, in the person of "Adam", the first and greatest man? Adam is certainly their archetype, as Chaucer's Monk implies by beginning his "tragedies" with Adam's story.'

Ana Acosta, in *Reading Genesis in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2006), notes how the Fall has status as 'the origin of history, and the mechanism for explaining it'. Then again, with Kant, it becomes the 'beginning of history conceptualised as the progress of freedom'.

Mark Twain was preoccupied with the Fall throughout his life, using it for target practice in his sniping at Christian orthodoxy (see Terry Wright in *The Genesis of Fiction*, 2007.)

In Milton's *Paradise Lost* Eve succumbs to the Serpent's 'persuasive words, impregned with reason, to her seeming, and with truth.' And Russell Hillier comments in a recent article in the *Modern Language Review:* 'If Satan's imbruting of himself in the serpent is a warped incarnation, Eve's eating from the forbidden tree is a distorted Eucharist'.

Thomas Mann's first story, published in 1894 with the title 'Fallen', alludes to the fall trope, telling of a medical student's first love, an affair with an actress, which ends abruptly in disillusion. But in a section of *Joseph and His Brothers* written in 1942, the Fall is not a cliché of moral and sexual lapse, but a subject in Jacob's storytelling to an admiring young female relative, Tamar, and provides a vehicle for the author's irony: 'She heard [from Jacob] of the garden eastwards in Eden and of the trees in it, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge; of the temptation, and of God's first attack of jealousy: how he was alarmed lest man, who now indeed knew good and evil, might eat also of the tree of life and be entirely like "us".'

In Albert Camus, *The Fall* (*La Chute*, 1956), 'The fall occurs at dawn'. A fall from one of the bridges on the Seine, easily missed in the first reading, is used as a motif, repeated as in an echo chamber, portending the protagonist's story of moral decline.

In a lecture given in the year *La Chute* was published, the Oxford scholar and critic Helen Gardner, who confessed herself to be a Christian, remarked that 'There is a widespread recognition today, and this was by no means the case thirty years ago, that the story of man's Fall and his redemption through Christ is, at the very least, a myth of unique beauty and spiritual significance'. In another lecture she singled out the poet Edwin Muir as an exemplar: 'The two great legends he felt himself to be living through were the myth of the Fall and a myth of universal purification'.

A fall implies a position fallen from; so we have Eden (like heaven) and earth, and hell, and sometimes hell on earth. A 1980s pop song would like to reverse it: heaven is a place on earth. These quasi-spatial relations raise the prospect of recovery. At a previous conference we noticed that heresy depends on, and is in a sense supportive of, orthodoxy. Earth depends on heaven, and heaven in a sense depends on earth. The Fall is a Christian doctrine, and in that understanding the fallen predicament is too severe for mankind just to get up or to go up; outside help from the Creator is needed. After the Fall, our fall, we need salvation, if possible a new creation, and if the death sentence can indeed be set aside, that is good news and something to live for and, in Jesus' paradox, to die for.

The Fall of Man

The sin is not the taking of the fruit;
temptation is a branch of innocence.
It is the lies, the lies that follow suit.

Sweet love can do no wrong (but any brute
skilled in deceit can offer that defence).
The sin is not the taking of the fruit.

It is the consequence, the absolute
demise of decency and common sense,
and the whole pack of lies that follow suit.

The broken promises, affairs en route
to new deceits, the maimed intelligence —
the sin is not the taking of the fruit.

It is the hardening within, the mute
refusal to confront the evidence,
and all the sweaty lies that follow suit.

So easily man falls; the grade's acute,
the steps are little, but the drop's immense.
The sin is not the taking of the fruit.
It is the lies, the lies that follow suit.

Walter Nash

The Fall was a turning point in Michelangelo's painting of the Genesis story on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Rome, c. 1512.

After the Garden: Re-imagining the Fall in Contemporary Fiction

Andrew Tate

'All good biography,' claimed Rebecca West, 'as all good fiction, comes down to the study of original sin, of our inherent disposition to choose death when we ought to choose life'.[1] West, like many of her early twentieth-century literary peers, was intrigued by the possibilities of faith. She kicked against a particularly Calvinist version of Christianity but could not transcend its claims *tout court*.[2] And this austere reading of all 'good' literature, particularly acts of life writing – in a quotation deemed significant enough to be used as the epigraph for Victoria Glendinning's biography of West – is a reminder of the imaginative power, even amongst those writers who do not view themselves as orthodox believers, of one of the most controversial doctrines of Christian theology. The late J. G. Ballard, it is claimed, believed that his most controversial novels – those that explore human unreason, cruelty and perversity – were best understood in Catholic countries where the concept of original sin endures.[3] One strand of Ballard's fiction – most vividly embodied in the dystopian worlds of *Crash* (1973), *High Rise* (1975) and *Kingdom Come* (2006) - certainly seems to despair of humanity's ability to find a cure for its own maladies.

The suggestion that the human race has an inclination for wrongdoing – in West's terms, a proclivity to embrace death instead of life – rather than a natural tendency to act with justice is nothing short of a scandal for many generously minded liberal thinkers. But this shocking theological claim also fascinates many who also find it intellectually repulsive. Albert Camus, for example, existentialist *sans pareil*, was disturbed and gripped by the story of a primal descent from grace: his last completed novel, *La Chute* (1956) – translated as *The Fall* (1957) – consciously plays on the idea of the exile from Eden in its narrator's embittered monologues. Camus, however, resented and resisted the Christian belief in 'fundamental culpability'.[4] This rejection of hereditary guilt might be expected given the moral-humanist trajectory of Camus' writing, but rather more surprising, is the fact that some confessing Christians do not recognise the strictest interpretations of a creed that insists on the unavoidable and universal fact of human depravity. Indeed, in

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[1] Quoted as the epigraph to Victoria Glendinning's *Rebecca West: A Life*, New York, Knopf, 1987.

[2] For a detailed discussion of West's complex, shifting understanding of original sin see Carl Rollyson, *The Literary Legacy of Rebecca West*, Lincoln, iUniverse, 2007. See also Alan Jacobs, *Original Sin: a Cultural History*, London, SPCK, 2008, pp. 211-38.

[3] The philosopher, John Gray, makes this claim in a discussion with the musician Mike Skinner in a dialogue for *The Guardian*: 'Ballard says that people from Catholic countries are less shocked by his books than people from Protestant countries, because they still believe in original sin – there are murderers and psychopaths inside us. It doesn't mean you accept that state of affairs, it means you have rules and conventions which stand in the way. That's what used to be called civilisation – though, of course, there's nowhere that's more than half-civilised.' 'Geezer, What are you thinking?', *The Guardian*, 7 December, 2008 (http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2008/dec/07/mike-skinnner-streets-john-gray) (Accessed 3 November 2009).

[4] See Henri Peyre, 'Camus the Pagan', *Camus: a Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Germaine Brée, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1962, pp. 65-70 (p. 69).

his formidable (and commendable) cultural history of the concept, Alan Jacobs argues that no single piece of religious teaching 'generates as much hostility as the Christian doctrine we call "original sin"'.[5] The idea, he notes, inspires some critics to utter revulsion whilst other believers regard it as 'utterly indispensable' (among them G. K. Chesterton, who claimed that it is the sole Christian doctrine to be 'empirically provable') (pp. ix-x). In the nineteenth century, Herman Melville, reflecting on the obsession of his friend, Nathaniel Hawthorne, with a 'Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity', notes that from such ideas 'no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. For, in certain moods, no man can weigh this world, without throwing in something, somehow like Original Sin, to strike the uneven balance'.[6]

Rumours that original sin, in one guise or other, continues to preoccupy – both to disturb and to intrigue – persist in contemporary culture. Against the prevailing wisdom, for example, Merold Westphal commends Lenten reflection on the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud – who he concedes are most familiar as 'three of most militant atheists of modern times, three founding fathers of secular humanism' – because he thinks of them also as 'the great modern theologians of original sin'.[7] Similarly in *Philosophical Myths of the Fall* (2005), a study that reappraises the religious sensibility of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, Stephen Mulhall notes that 'original sin is … the subject of multiple interpretations, disputations, and reformulations across two millennia of theological and liturgical conversation and controversy' but its crux rests on the belief 'that human nature as such is tragically flawed, perverse in the very structure or constitution'.[8] Mulhall cites a particularly vivid claim of Wittgenstein: 'People are religious to the extent that they believe themselves to be not so much *imperfect* as *sick*'. For the linguistic philosopher, morality was not a goal to be strived for by a steadily improving species, but a chimera that distracts from the fact of human depravity. 'Anyone who is halfway decent will think himself utterly imperfect,' he insists, 'but the religious person thinks himself wretched'.[9] Whatever theological controversy such a piece of teaching might generate, the concept of native transgression, remains a compelling idea for story-tellers in early twenty-first century culture. Crime fiction and the variety of revived Gothic genres thrive on motifs of vice; if some writers are keen to demystify wickedness – to tease out social or psychological explanations – others retain a sense of the fundamental and terrifying mystery of evil.

From a Christian perspective, all stories are bound up with the master narrative of God's redemptive work in history. That plot, however, has a beginning in the story of Adam, Eve and the serpent in a garden we call Eden. The vast array of competing readings of the garden narrative – the temptation, the eating of the fruit and the subsequent exile from the lush landscape – signify one of the ways in which popular culture remains a theological space. So much contemporary narrative seems bound up with the dynamics of transgressive experience that the language of the Fall seems utterly prescient as a frame for interpretation the current cultural landscape. The title sequence of the long running, American-suburban Gothic TV series, *Desperate Housewives* (2004-) mischievously plunders (and animates) images

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[5] *Original Sin: A Cultural History*, London, SPCK, 2008.

[6] Herman Melville, 'Hawthorne and His Mosses', *The Literary World*, August 1850.

[7] Merold Westphal, *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1993, p. 3.

[8] Stephen Mulhall, *Philosophical Myths of the Fall*, Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 6.

[9] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. P. Winch, Oxford, Blackwell, 1980, p. 51. Quoted in Mulhall, p. 5.

of women from the body of Western art: it begins with Hans Memling's Adam and Eve (c. 1485), in which the two naked figures, now sporting fig-leaves, shyly clutch the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The first in the apparently ubiquitous series of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* novels (2005-8) has a quotation from Genesis 2:17 as its epigraph ('But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die'). The cover image of the same novel features two outstretched palms holding out a crimson coloured apple. This contemporary Gothic sequence, primarily written for a teenage readership, not only re-writes the tropes of Vampire mythology and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* but allows its own plot to be read in the light of Jewish scripture. Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000) trilogy is most controversial for its quasi-deicide (the plot hinges on the struggle to overthrow a despotic, false god known as the Authority) but it also includes a striking – and equally heterodox – rewriting of Genesis 3. At the end of *Northern Lights*, Lord Asriel, the novel's Byronic anti-hero, reads from the Genesis 3 account in the Bible of his world (one similar but parallel to our own):

> For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and your daemons shall assume their true forms, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.… But when the man and the woman knew their own daemons, they knew a great change had come upon them, for until that moment it had seemed that they were at one with all the creatures of the earth and the air, and there was no difference between them:
>
> > 'And they saw the difference, and they knew good and evil; and they were ashamed, and they sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness.'[10]

This Romantic-Gnostic iteration of the temptation and fall narrative is central to the trilogy's representation of innocence and experience. Pullman's two central protagonists, Lyra and Will, are re-cast as a second Adam and Eve whose 'fall' into erotic awareness is troped as salvific. The tempter in this neo-Romantic piece of myth making is no Satanic evil-doer but a saintly ex-nun turned physicist who embraces her role with caution. By contrast, Voldemort, the Satan-like villain in the *Harry Potter* sequence (1997-2007), for example, is associated with snakes and serpentine imagery as a sign of his demonic lust for power and aspiration to god-like control over life and death.

Twenty-first century narrative has a plethora of re-iterations of the temptation and fall narrative. If the 'fall' of humanity is the subject of much fiction, some novelists have chosen to focus on the specifics of the original, primary *ur-text*, the account given in Genesis 3 of humanity's first, defining sin. This article will focus on a single contemporary novel that explicitly re-writes the early chapters of Genesis: *Fallen* (2005) by the American writer David Maine is the second of his three novels that re-examine key narratives from the Jewish scriptures: *The Flood* (published in the US as *The Preservationist*; 2004) focuses on the story of Noah; *The Book of Samson* (2007) is a first-person account of the violent life and death of one of the Jewish people's Judges. These narratives are earthy, strange and strikingly Biblical – God is a reality in the lives of Maine's characters as much as he is for their Biblical equivalents. *Fallen* is the most theologically and artistically ambitious of this thematically connected sequence. Any Anglophone iteration of the Fall story written in the modern era must reckon – consciously or otherwise – with *Paradise Lost* (1667). John Milton's poetic ambition was to 'assert eternal providence, / And justify the ways of God to men' (Book 1, ll. 25-6). Maine's *Fallen* might, *pace*

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[10] Philip Pullman, *Northern Lights*, London, Scholastic, 2001, p. 372.

Milton, superficially be read as an attempt to assert eternal *contingency* rather than providence and justify the ways of men to God. The narrative tracks the story of the world's first family with an inverted chronology: we begin, in chapter 40, with Cain, an old man on the verge of death, and track backwards to Adam and Eve, just as they are kicked out of the garden and, apparently, abandoned by their Creator ('God leaves them then').[11] If the Fall has been re-written by Romantic critics as a narrative of ascent – the *happy Fall* – Maine's novel uses a different direction: rather than an ascent, or a descent, the novel follows a fall *backwards*, into time and the pre-history of human sin, to an era just after the exit from Eden and the separation of Adam and Eve from an era of happiness and plenitude. This reverse narrative resonates with E. L. Doctorow's recent literary commentary on Genesis:

> If not in all stories, certainly in all mystery stories, the writer works backward. The ending is known and the story is designed to arrive at the ending.… The known ending of life is death: The story of Adam and Eve, and the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, arrives at that ending. Why do we suffer, why must we die?… The story has turned the human condition into a sequential narrative of how it came to be; it has used conflict and suspense to create a moral framework for *being*.[12]

Doctorow's argument – one incidentally that is resolute in its rejection of the doctrine of original sin – emphasises the idea that the sequence of human history might have been otherwise; human agency turns on the idea that we might make wrong choices. *Fallen* is part of a tradition of re-writings of Genesis stories – a literary practice explored in Terry Wright's exemplary study, *The Genesis of Fiction* (2007) – that frequently challenge orthodoxy. [13] Is *Fallen* simply another heretical gloss on Genesis? All re-writings – certainly from Milton's seventeenth century epic – are read, initially at least, with suspicion. In his *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, C. S. Lewis acknowledges that Milton's poem may have theological deficiencies but he also defends the Christian orthodoxy of the poem. He argues that this celebrated narrative extends an invitation to its readers 'to join in this great ritual *mimesis* of the Fall … which all Christendom in all lands or ages can accept'.[14] One question which has guided the preparation of this article is to ask how 'the great ritual *mimesis* of the Fall' operates in a postmodern literary text – one that does not fit into simple theological or, indeed, literary categories.

The unconventional narrative shape of *Fallen* is an echo of Emily Dickinson's desire to 'Tell all the Truth but tell it slant'; Maine echoes a great nineteenth-century American literary heretic in defamiliarizing a religious story we think we know. *Fallen* shares its backwards narrative strategy with Gaspar Noé's *Irréversible* (2002): this violent film begins with its own chronological ending in which two men are arrested; a sequence of scenes cuts backwards and we gradually understand why the arrest took place. We witness revenge for a crime revealed to be a terrible sexual assault and, eventually, an Edenic scene in which we see the assaulted woman, newly pregnant, blissfully unaware of the terrible ordeal that she will become subject to, reading in a park surrounded by carefree children. The final (and chronologically

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[11] David Maine, *Fallen*, Edinburgh, Canongate, 2005, p. 244. All subsequent references will be given parenthetically.

[12] E L Doctorow, 'The First Book of Moses, Called *Genesis*', in *Revelations: Personal Responses to the Books of the Bible*, Edinburgh, Canongate, pp. 17-23 (pp. 18-19).

[13] Terry R. Wright, *The Genesis of Fiction: Modern Novelists as Biblical Interpreters*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, p. xii.

[14] C. S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, London, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 92.

first) image is of the words 'Le Temps Detruit Tout' ('Time Destroys Everything'). The reversed narrative of *Irréversible* heightens our awareness of the ruthless logic of plot, the ineluctable pattern of event and sequence. *Fallen* is similarly concerned with crime and punishment: the fatal choice of Adam and Eve will lead not only to their own unceremonious exit from paradise but to Cain's rebellion against God and to the first murder. The dynamic of the Fall is not, in this instance, a vertical descent only but also a movement back towards a lost origin – an origin that can be recuperated only in writing.

The article is particularly indebted to Michael Edwards' invaluable exploration of language and literature as postlapsarian phenomena in *Towards a Christian Poetics* (1984). After the Fall of humanity, language itself is broken and so too is its ability to represent the world which is 'no longer   [...] a coherence of expressive signs to be read as Adam read it'. The world, in Edwards view, is 'indeed a single text but a corrupt one … it now bears the stamp of fallen Adam, that is, of ourselves. It is only legible in part, and part of what we read in it is our own fallen condition'. [15] One response to our shared exile from Eden, according to Edwards' logic, is the generation of stories – an enterprise that both reflects and rebels against the pathology of sin. '[W]e cannot imagine stories in Eden,' reflects Edwards. In a world that has yet to encounter 'evil and death', he notes, 'the present would be presence, and the real would be enough. According to the old adage, a happy people has no history; it also has no story' (pp. 72-3). And it is with the story of the unhappy first son of the world's first family that I want to start an exploration of Maine's novel.

The First Family: Adam Raised a Cain (and an Abel)

Fallen begins with an act of reading – or, at least, with a memory of reading, an attempt to interpret that is both individual and communal, as painful as it is perplexing. The elderly Cain, a lonely figure who knows that he has reached the end of his days, is attended only by his stubborn son and, more perplexingly, by his brother, Abel, who has been dead for decades; as he waits for death, Cain remembers his own story and considers the meaning of a notorious sign: the infamous (and ambiguous) mark given him by God after he slew his younger, pious brother. This bodily reminder of violent sin – Cain is, after all, the man credited with bringing murder into the world – 'burns upon him all the time.… Its hurt is open and shameful like a scab picked until it bleeds' (*F*, p. 3). The sign also generates competing interpretations by all who encounter the cursed, mysterious figure of Cain:

> Some say it is a letter – the first letter of his name, reversed to show God's displeasure [...] others, less fanciful perhaps or just duller, claim it is no picture at all. Merely a smear unreadable, the Devil's thumbprint or God's. [...] But the miracle lies in the seeing. For all those who look upon the mark see it differently. Like the Tower of Babel reflected mirrorwise, everyone who lays eyes upon Cain's face beholds something different from all the others, sees the message spelled in a different tongue, though the message is always the same (*F*, p. 3).

Maine's novel opens, then, with a kind of exuberant commentary on Genesis 4:15. Is Cain's mark an indication of God's condemnation or an incongruous blessing, a sign of unwarranted grace? From its opening page, *Fallen* is a narrative that demands theological reflection, whatever the specifics of the reader's belief or disbelief. We are placed in a world that is decisively post-lapsarian: fusing Cain's

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[15] Michael Edwards, *Towards a Christian Poetics*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1984, p. 11.

'smear unreadable' with an anachronistic allusion to the confusion of tongues at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) is a reminder that the practice of interpretation is always vexed, confusing, fragmented and potentially narcissistic. This foregrounding is vital for a narrative that is partly about reading and misreading. Valentine Cunningham has emphasised the 'inevitably belated' nature of the practice of reading:

> It's always posterior work.… A reader has to be, by definition, forewarned and forearmed; is always a bearer of earlier knowledge and knowledges; is always in some sense already fallen into knowledge. Reading is always a postlapsarian business. It has always eaten of the tree of theoretical knowledge. So it is never innocent.[16]

Jews and Christians are so familiar with story of Cain, his great sin and the history of his parents that an 'innocent' reading is impossible. *Fallen* plays on this prior knowledge – even if recognition of the narrative for many readers in supposedly post-religious cultures exists at the level of archetype, pattern and trope rather than intimacy with the Biblical account – and confronts our interpretative assumptions. The inverted narrative strategy (the movement backwards) together with novel's hybrid idiom (a melding of the Authorized Version of scripture and colloquial US dialogue) intensifies the self-conscious practice of reading: it is impossible to forget our readerly identities. The text recalls Stanley Fish's famous interpretation of *Paradise Lost* in which he claims that the real subject of the poem is

> how its readers came to be the way they are; its method … is to provoke in its readers wayward, fallen responses which are then corrected by one of several authoritative voices (the narrator, God, Raphael, Michael, the Son). In this way … the reader is brought to a better understanding of his sinful nature and is encouraged to participate in his own reformation. [17]

If Maine's intentions in writing *Fallen* are (as yet) still more obscure than those of Milton, it is clear that the novel is intrigued by how Biblical figures and plots might be interpreted. Is Cain the forefather of all violence or a man misunderstood and unfairly banished? The novel refuses simple, moralizing answers but confronts both the complexity of human action and the dreadful, ruthless logic of sin. The first (but chronologically final) pages of the novel are a supplement to the Biblical narrative of Cain's life as a murderous outcast: the economical, elliptical account in Genesis 4 ends by telling its readers that Cain, now married, founded a city and named it for his son, Henoch:

> No city, regardless of its charm and wonder, could outshine the shadows of that notoriety. No boulevards, no matter how flawless, could make a straight lineage that crooked. No city need ever be named Cain to ensure that name's preservation for posterity (*F*, p. 11).

In each chapter we are confronted with the consequences of particular sins before arriving at the moment of transgression itself: for example, in one of Maine's fabulations, Cain asks his spectral brother, too late, if he is forgiven (*F*, p. 52). The 'daily preoccupation' of this outcast, wandering figure – ignored or attacked by

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[16] Valentine Cunningham, *Reading After Theory*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2002, pp. 4-5.

[17] Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, Harvard University Press, 1998, p. x.

those he encounters – is 'the immediate reality of bearing all humanity's loathing' (*F*, p. 52). In the subsequent – but earlier – chapter, we encounter an evasive Cain – who, in a direct of echo of Genesis 4:9-10 – refuses to acknowledge responsibility for his brother ('I'm not his keeper, nor his mother either', *F*, p. 53). This twenty-first century incarnation of Adam and Eve's eldest child, an archetype of the bad seed, draws on the brief narrative given in Genesis 4, but amplifies and fleshes out the character. Cain is a saturnine individual and even '[a]s a boy he dwelt upon serious thoughts. As a fetus in his mother's womb he was prone, quite likely, to serious ruminations while his lighthearted brother simply enjoyed spinning and kicking in the watery gloom' (*F*, p. 4). This speculative image of the world's first womb-dwelling infant already laden with melancholy echoes a line from Oscar Wilde's epigrammatic *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890-1): 'Humanity takes itself too seriously. It is the world's original sin. If the cave-man had known how to laugh, History would have been different'.[18] Such glib theologizing is more perceptive than it knows, and a useful way of approaching Cain who resists the redemptive action of God's comedy and is alienated from the possibility of divine laughter, the wit with which broken, fallen stories might be re-made.

In *The Great Code* Northrop Frye reminds us both that the story of Cain inaugurates a motif in the first books of the scriptures of 'the passing over of the firstborn son, who normally has the legal right of primogeniture, in favor of a younger one' and that the exiled elder son became one of a number of dispossessed Biblical figures to be heroized by the Romantic movement in works such as Byron's drama, *Cain: a Mystery* (1821).[19] *Fallen* neither clumsily sanctifies Cain's evil deed nor presents him as diametrically opposed to his brother. Although Maine does not re-write the fundamental character types encoded in Genesis, the narrative does accommodate a certain psychological complexity. In this version of the first story of sibling rivalry, Cain has lived in the wilderness, miles from his family for some years, alienated, in particular, from his father. But the murder itself – presented in a single sentence chapter as a deliberate act by a man who is barely able to understand what he is undertaking – occurs when Abel has sought out his brother to ask to join him in his exile (*F*, p. 71). In this tragically thwarted act of reconciliation the narrative blurs the line between the brothers who tradition has interpreted as emblematic of the radical separation between holiness and irreverence. If the younger sibling is limned as sweet tempered, dutiful and rather pompous, Cain is sceptical, unhappy, lonely and inventive; in short, Cain is a figure easily understood by a twenty-first century readership. He typifies a kind of alienated modernity – burdened with the need to question authority, blessed with the ability to create, and blighted by his own violent disappointment. Cain can calculate, order and plan but he also resents the apparently capricious nature of God's affections: Maine includes a dramatic version of the episode from Genesis 4 in which the Lord accepts and multiplies Abel's flock but spurns Cain's harvest offering ('Behold! I consume the better part in holocaust', *F*, p. 119). The passage both indicates the clarity of God's judgement – Cain's sacrifice is dutiful but grudging – and elicits sympathy for a character we know to be wayward and who we have already seen commit fratricide. Yet the episode demands that we evaluate our own relationship with providence in a fashion truly rare in modern literary fiction.

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[18] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890-1), Chapter Three. Jacobs also cites this line, p. x.

[19] Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: the Bible and* Literature, London, ARK, 1983, pp. 180-82.

One of the most potentially subversive elements of Maine's account is the suggestion that Cain's motivation is rooted not only in a rebellion against an inscrutable God but in a lack of maternal care. We learn, for example, that Eve has always resented her eldest son: he is synonymous with her exile from Eden, a reminder of paradise she has lost and as a child 'is loud and bright and harsh like this place we've been sent to' (*F*, p. 169). In one of the novel's darkest inventions, Cain's painful birth is attended by disquieting omens – Adam is stung by a scorpion and spends days in a delirious state – and Eve believes that Cain has already committed murder in the womb, killing his twin (*F*, p. 178). This re-writing of the Biblical text allows Maine to confront the concept of original sin. Adam directly refutes his wife's belief (couched in empirical language) that 'the evidence points' to Cain's innate evil: 'I don't believe that human beings are born evil. It makes a mockery of God's commands' (*F*, p. 178, p. 180). Adam's creed anticipates – and rejects – St Augustine's anguished belief that not only in God's sight is 'no man is free from sin, not even a child who has lived only one day on earth' but that '*I was born in sin and guilt was with me already when my mother conceived me*'. [20] *Fallen* echoes and explores a vast and complex history of coming to terms with a Biblical text that emphasises the consequences of humanity's separation from God. But it also explores the world before the moment of alienation between Creator and created. Adam, we are told, has been burdened with worry 'ever since he left that place where worry was never an issue' (*F*, p. 125). How does the novel represent the lost experience of proximity to the divine?

Memories of the (Vanished) Garden

'The need for story comes with the exile from Eden,' argues Michael Edwards. Whether we believe that such a place once existed is scarcely the point, he suggests: it is enough that we know, without doubt, that 'we are not living there now' and that a figurative 'flaming sword 'turns every way' between our notion of what a garden of perfection would be and our experience of what the world is' (p. 73). *Fallen* is not only a story of the Fall but also a story about how stories of that descent from grace are narrated. The lost, lamented paradise of Eden is brought alive for Cain and Abel in chapter 16 ('The Conversation'), when Adam tells his adolescent sons the truth of their origins – that their first home was another, far distant place. Maine, via the hesitant Adam, retells the creation story: he 'fashions a crude little figurine' from dirt and salvia and asks his sons to imagine the possibility of breathing life into such an inanimate object: 'What would this make you?' (*F*, p. 148). Abel gives the pious, correct answer ('God') but Cain's answer typifies his modernity: he interprets his father's story as a metaphor (a term Abel does not understand). This sceptical response, however, is contradicted by his father who claims to know, against what reason might assume, that he is the world's first man (*F*, p. 149). Cain's scepticism is proleptic of a twenty-first century reader's scientific assumptions: it would be a mistake to align Maine's narrative with Creationism, but it certainly allows textual space for a creative collision of world-views. This episode also plays on the idea that in the postlapsarian world Adam's language – once unified with the created order – itself is subject to corruption, brokenness and limitation. His attempt to invoke the world before the Fall is hesitant: 'Impossible to describe,' is how Adam refers to the 'vanished Garden' (*F*, p. 149-50). Cain's demand that he 'try' to describe this perfect world is met ('So Adam tries') but, playfully, Maine erases the description – there is a gap, an erasure in the text that emphasises the sublime nature of a world outside language. Indeed, the primary

[20] St Augustine, *Confessions of a Sinner*, translated by R. S. Pine-Coffin, London, Penguin, 2004, pp. 4-5.

way in which the forfeited world is evoked is via nostalgic reflection – a kind of homesickness – in the days and years after the exile: after the first slaying of a gazelle, for example, Adam bitterly reflects on their new world: 'We're well and truly out of the Garden now, aren't we? Killing others to keep ourselves alive' (*F*, p. 223). In another conversation, Adam realises that the search for a more secure land in which to dwell is simply an acknowledgement that he and his wife both long for a return to Eden: 'Might as well just say you want the Garden again and be done with it' (*F*, p. 219). For Eve, a year after their banishment, 'the memory still burns' and 'lingers . . . [l]like the faint odor of a long-dead flower; like the remembered scent of a lover' (*F*, p. 219). Significantly, however, the text includes one attempt to represent the paradisiacal world: later (or earlier) in the narrative, the reader encounters Eve's memories of the Garden before the rupturing event of the Fall, recollections charged with a vivid, lyrical naturalism:

> Morning sun hazing through the trees, flowers all around flashing orange-yellow against her eyeballs. No clouds but then there never were; just this early mist that would burn off soon. Stream bubbling gaily, peacocks strutting nearby, bees humming a contented air as they piled into the day's labors. All Creation alive, docile, at her feet and pretty happy to be there.… If she were completely honest, she'd have to admit a little boredom. Walking helped to fill the space that yawned inside her (*F*, p. 201).

Maine draws on a tradition of representing the prelapsarian world as one of perfect natural harmony in which humanity and the landscape are aligned rather than in competition. This idealised pastoralism might be read as self-conscious parody of literary cliché but the image is qualified, re-written even, by the first woman's emotional state: Eve might have been bored in Eden. Harold Bloom, in his typically controversial commentary on what many Biblical scholars assume to be the earliest Jewish writings, suggests that in the J text, Eden 'is … less a locale than an era, an earliness now forever forsaken'.[21] *Fallen* echoes this conceptual shift from a spatial to a temporal understanding of the prelapsarian world: Adam and Eve search for a world that no longer exists, never quite realizing that it is their own perception – and their experience of time – that has changed. This change in their experience of reality was engendered by a specific incident – both in the Biblical narrative and in Maine's text. How then does *Fallen* represent the temptation and first sin of humanity?

The Fall

The final chapter of *Fallen* – Chapter 1, 'The Old Man' – does not return the reader to the plenitude and harmony of an unfallen world but to the moment immediately after Adam and Eve have been banished from the Garden. This elision of Eden is an unconscious reminder to theologically aware readers that there is no return to the garden: our hope lies not in nostalgia but in a fundamental remaking of the world – in Christian terms, the radical, absurd advent of grace. As Stephen Mulhall observes of the doctrine of original sin, 'from the Christian perspective, the first Adam appears and can be properly understood only in the light, or through the eyes, of the second Adam' (p. 116).

Despite its retro-linear construction, Maine's narrative is interrupted by memories and moments of regret. In chapter 16, for example – the episode in which Adam tells his sons of the world's original state – the reader becomes a

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[21] *The Book of J*, translated from the Hebrew by David Rosenberg; interpreted by Harold Bloom, New York, Grove Weidenfeld, 1990, p. 177.

private witness to Adam's memories of the immediate aftermath of succumbing to temptation: banished by God, he prays wildly for forgiveness (*F*, p. 152). Later in the narrative, we encounter the temptation itself: as in the Genesis narrative, Eve is spoken to by a snake – she initially believes that 'the Tree that was forbidden to her and Adam both' is speaking. But this uncanny serpent that bears Eve's own face, subtly persuades the woman that God's injunction against eating the forbidden fruit is solely to prevent his creation from becoming like him: 'Eat it, eat *this*, here – and you'll become just like him. What do you think of that?' (*F*, p. 203). Maine makes vivid use of what Michael Edwards, again in *Towards a Christian Poetics*, describes as 'an abuse of language', the serpent's 'fallacious gloss' that precipitates the Fall (p. 10). The narrative describes the sudden sexual awakening of Eve – and subsequently of Adam – and the birth of a whole culture of desire. Although the moment is rendered with comic sweetness, it also foreshadows the emptiness of the imminent expulsion from Eden: after Adam eats the fruit, Eve's 'excited frenzy of moments earlier' leaves 'only the dull ache of trepidation' (*F*, p. 205).

The primary contrast between Maine and Philip Pullman's versions of the temptation and subsequent fall is that the former does not apologise for humanity's behaviour. His narrative may sympathise with Eve's existential distrust of God but it does not tacitly advocate the popular idea of the 'happy Fall'. What then of culpability? *Fallen* emphasises the agency of Adam and Eve in breaking their covenant with God – they are not mere puppets, nor are they victims of arbitrary divine wrath. In reading backwards we are made aware of Eve's penitence and Adam's guilt, of the inheritance of Cain and the death of Abel; we are confronted with a world in which imperfect human love is a shadow of proximity to God's perfection. In the final page, Adam laments that the discovery of sex is 'no substitute for Paradise' and Eve responds with the simple, sad conclusion that '[i]t's what we've got' (*F*, p. 244).

According to most mainstream theology – certainly since St Augustine – there were no stories, sex or sickness in paradise. Literature, from this perspective, is always bound up with the fallen nature of the world. For Michael Edwards, narrative itself is a response to our postlapsarian condition:

> We tell stories in a fallen world. By their matter they may lament and counter that fall.… The strange power of story, however, is also to achieve those ends simply by being itself. Whatever its 'content', it opens a story-world, where everything coheres infrangibly.… That world may well be as fallen as the one we inhabit daily; it may even be more terrifying or more grotesque. Yet as a narrated world it represents a desirable otherness. Story quits a world that does not, seemingly, have a story – or whose only story: 'There was a fall from Eden', may be repeated but cannot be finished – for a world that within the consciousness of the tale, does. We tell stories because we desire a world with a story. (p. 73)

How does Maine's iteration of this formative Biblical story contribute to our understanding of the Fall? It is neither a pious gloss on the text nor neo-Romantic restatement of the doomed heroism of Adam, Eve and the serpent. *Fallen* might superficially appear to be a self-consciously outrageous re-writing of orthodoxy. And certainly the speculative plot and character developments depart from the source material. But *Fallen* shares more with the central Augustinian understanding of original sin than with post-Christian antinomian or Gnostic ideas. Sin begets sin in *Fallen*. We might be eager for signs of grace and for those we need to return to the novel's first page: Cain, who has committed the most heinous of crimes, lives. The mark on his forehead burns and reminds him of his sin; but it might be read, finally, as a sign that he is not abandoned, that the promise of grace exists even for those who share his fallen nature.

Sonnets

III
We bookish men, confiding in the mind,
soon lose the confidence of what we mean;
thought-galleries are darker than a mine
and every pitfall makes a breach to mend;
in daily rigour each one works his stint
at thesis, doctorate, edition, tract,
into this pious torment they are tricked —
hard labour, hardly better than a stunt
to have a fellowship, a high degree,
a reputation among 'them that know',
a senseless sense of being an elite;
when recognition comes, it comes too late,
too late the honoured scarlet, nothing's new
in no-man's land; the common wear is grey.

VI
To church I go, and break out in a rage;
'they manacle the sinner with their cant,
they fill the hungry with their naked want,
fears they inspire, in order to assuage,
doubts they provoke, in order to remove
faults they impute, in order to forgive,
hell they imply, in order to reprieve,
then speak incomprehensibly of love.'

'And what is wilderness, compared to this?
here is a comely falsehood, a sweet show
a Punch and Judy pitched at heaven's gate'
but as I speak, with cackling emphasis,
a voice in me says 'wait, and you will know;
come in; be still; prepare for nothing; wait.'

Walter Nash
Two poems from the sequence 'From the Wilderness' in *Recent Intelligence: A Sonnet Cycle*, 2009.

Metaphysical Encounters: Fallen and un-Fallen Worlds in the Poetic Fiction of C.S. Lewis

Anna Walczuk

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) is widely known as a medieval and renaissance scholar, an Oxford don, Fellow of Magdalen, later Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge, and also as a Christian apologist and imaginative writer. This article will focus on some of the fiction of C.S. Lewis in so far as it addresses the Fall. Lewis considers its consequences for the life of man in the earthly world which has become man's proper dwelling place, as well as providing a threshold for human attempts at crossing borders and a springboard to launch into the wider cosmos. In the discussion I am going to take into consideration two novels from what has been often referred to as C.S. Lewis's space trilogy, namely *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938) and *Perelandra* or *Voyage to Venus* (1943)[1], which blend the traditional narrative form with theological treatise, framed in a discourse which makes extensive use of symbol and metaphor, in a way that is strongly evocative of poetry.

In both novels C.S. Lewis uses a fantasy of space travel and interplanetary adventure to explore, in theological and moral terms, the primordial rebellion against God of one of his self-important angels, and the impact of that primal revolt of Satanic self-assertion upon the status of man and the history of humanity. Space voyaging, which annihilates the barriers and constraints of physicality, serves as a convenient frame for C.S. Lewis's theological fiction. The interplanetary journey through the so-far unknown heavens, often filled with an interplay of light and colour, and permeated with delicate sounds of music, provides for the novelist a setting for that act of imagination which seeks to render the quality of Being without any Fall. Then, through contrast and comparison, the quality of Being after the Fall is portrayed, and the reader is invited to reflection upon the post-Edenic condition of Earth.

Like other writers who introduce an ethical dimension to their imaginative work and try to combine the aesthetic aspect with the quest for value,[2] C.S. Lewis pleads the attribute of truth for his interplanetary fiction. The authorial voice in *Out of the Silent Planet* confesses, 'our only chance was to publish in the form of fiction what would certainly not be listened to as fact.'[3] Hence Lewis's theological and philosophical reflection on the Fall gets couched in the form of fictional narrative. It draws on the unique prerogative of poetry to plunge into the

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[1]   The third novel in the trilogy is *That Hideous Strength* (1945).

[2]   It seems that while the moral dimension of literature was taken for granted in earlier literary periods, it was largely abandoned in the literature of the twentieth century. However, the preoccupation of twentieth century fiction with truth is attested by the continuing appeal of humanistic criticism. See Daniel Schwarz, *The Humanistic Heritage: Critical Theories of the English Novel from James to Hillis Miller*, Macmillan, 1986. In postmodern fiction a notable example of the opposite tendency is provided by Muriel Spark, who speaks of her fiction in terms of a search for absolute truth. See e.g. Muriel Spark's interview with Frank Kermode in 'The House of Fiction,' *Partisan Review* (1963) 30, p.1.

[3]   *Out of the Silent Planet*, Pan Books, 1982, p. 179. All subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *OSP*.

otherwise inexpressible and transcendental, and in this way posits to the reader a metaphysical quest for a better understanding of the reality of the Fall and its lasting and far-reaching consequences for the entire creation.

The main protagonist and adventurer in Lewis's fiction is Dr. Ransom, an Oxford don and a philologist, whose professional interest in language, scholarly curiosity and philosophical inclinations make him a suitable instrument to touch the metaphysical mysteries. In *Out of the Silent Planet* Ransom is captured by an obsessed scientific genius, Professor Weston, and his companion, money-driven and materialistic Devine, to be taken in Professor Weston's ingenious space ship to Malacandra, which is the 'true' name of Mars in Old Solar, the language which is spoken everywhere in Deep Heaven. In the subsequent novel, *Perelandra* or *Voyage to Venus*, Ransom is voluntarily transported in a supernatural device to Perelandra, or Venus, in order to prevent there an impending catastrophe, suggestive of the Fall, which threatens the future of the young planet. In both cases Ransom becomes an envoy: first from the Fallen world of the Earth to the ageing but un-Fallen world of Malacandra, and then to the new world of Perelandra, just coming into full being, and in its pristine innocence unprotected against assaults from another world which might already be infected with the Fall, so rendering Perelandra vulnerable to a disastrous repercussion.

Two other protagonists from the Earth, Weston and Devine, in a sense embody the Fall and re-state its message through the Cosmos. That is why they are being referred to respectively as 'bent' and 'broken', which is the nearest equivalent of 'bad' or 'corrupt' in Old Solar. In his interplanetary fiction C.S. Lewis constructs an imaginative model of the perennial mechanism of yielding to temptation[4], and demonstrates how the 'bent' condition in Weston further deteriorates until it reaches the state of 'un-man' whose mind is filled with 'fear and death and desire' (*OSP*, p. 156), which are visible fruits of the Fall. Later, on Perelandra, Weston loses even those 'bent' traces of humanity, and he becomes a mere receptacle for the spirit of evil.

Looking upon the Earth from the cosmic perspective, Ransom learns that its true name is Thulcandra, which means 'the silent planet', or in other words, the planet which, through the Fall, has been excluded from the Divinely-ordered commonwealth of heavenly bodies, and consequently from any spiritual communication with the rest of the Cosmos. Oyarsa, a tutelary spirit of Malacandra, says to Ransom: 'Thulcandra is the world we do not know. It alone is outside the heaven, and no message comes from it' (*OSP*, p. 140). When viewed from the distance created by metaphysical epistemology, which the narrative invites, Thulcandra is seen as 'an enemy-occupied territory (…) in a state of siege.'[5]

It should be stressed that Ransom as an envoy in fact acts in two capacities: first, that of a missionary who has been entrusted with a religious function clearly including a redemptive component, and second, that of a representative of the Fallen world, who is acutely conscious of its flaws and defects, but, at the same time, perceptive of its various assets, and dedicated to its universal well-being. It is a vital factor in the overall design of Lewis's fictitious discourse that Ransom, regardless of his special redemptive function, does not cease to be a representative of the Fallen world, and as such a bearer of the burden of the Fall, who, however, has been allowed to get to know the rest of the un-Fallen cosmos. Ransom, as a

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[4] The analysis of the mechanism of temptation, with the strategies and tactics employed by tempters, is the subject of some of C.S. Lewis's non-fiction prose, e.g. *The Screwtape Letters* (1942).

[5] *Voyage to Venus (Perelandra)*, Pan Books, 1982, p. 8. All subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *P*.

character engaged in the metaphysical adventure, is equipped with three traits which make his encounters with the un-Fallen worlds illustrative in depicting the fundamental nature and profound consequences of the Fall. These are: his sensitivity to beauty, his preoccupation with language, which in turn is linked to his interest in words and literary art, and finally his commitment to truth. All of them – beauty, language and truth – are profoundly interrelated,[6] and each of them indicates an area of experience where the Fallen condition of the Earth and of Man can be seen most clearly. The discussion that follows will briefly address all the three notions.

One of the first things that Ransom learns during his celestial travel is that the universe is not 'peopled with horrors' (*OSP*, p. 39). With the observant mind of the scholar he begins to understand that in his native Fallen world the eyes of the viewer have been rendered partly incapable of seeing beauty in its entirety and fullness. It is one of the most breathtaking discoveries Ransom makes on his newly found path of metaphysical epistemology that, in the extraterrestrial worlds he gets to know, there seems to be no room for ugliness. The concept of the ugly is absent from the rational and emotional spheres of life on Malacandra, just as the concept of evil is absent from the mind of the Lady on Perelandra. So Ransom gradually finds out that his loathing of things which he considers ugly and repulsive on the un-Fallen planet of Malacandra, is connected not so much with their intrinsic violation of some established, or deeply ingrained, aesthetic canon, but rather with his own fear of the other and his instinctive shunning of the unfamiliar. Similarly to all other inhabitants of Thulcandra, Ransom is infected with a peculiar twist of imagination which sometimes prevents him from seeing the beautiful and compels him to see it as hideous.

Therefore in his interplanetary encounters with realities other than those supplied by his terrestrial experience, Ransom perforce modifies his concept of beauty. His voyage through the cosmic and metaphysical space makes him grow up and mature. He gets a different view of Space which, he believes, can be better rendered in the human language by another term: the Heavens. He discovers that what he has always seen as a 'black, cold, vacuity' (*P*, p. 35) is in fact an 'empyrean ocean of radiance' (*P*, p. 35). Cosmic space where Thulcandra, or the Earth, lives its isolated life in exile, is not barren and dead, but just the opposite, it is 'the womb of the worlds' (*P*, p. 35) brimming with life. Everything is beautiful on Perelandra. The only ugly things are the mutilated bodies of Perelandrian creatures scattered by Weston on his trail of destruction. However, even they are not ugly as such, on account of some inherent aesthetic quality, but their apparent ugliness is related to moral categories. It is the atrocity performed on the creatures' bodies by the human agent of evil that morally nauseates and aesthetically disgusts Ransom.

In the earthly world verbal language, when viewed from the vantage point of Christianity, on account of its intrinsic almost mystical connection with the Biblical Logos, which lies at the foundation of the universe, has become both an important prelapsarian means to human beings' self-realisation in humanity, and at the same time a postlapsarian instrument of confinement. Accordingly, man after the Fall is always caught between two contradictory pulls: on the one hand the need to express things – himself, his experience, the surrounding world – in words, and on the other hand the painful awareness of the inadequacy of words, and the insufficiency of language to do justice to such realities. During his

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[6] The inner connection between truth and beauty has resounded in ethics and aesthetics since antiquity; and it finds compact expression in John Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn* in 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' (l. 49).
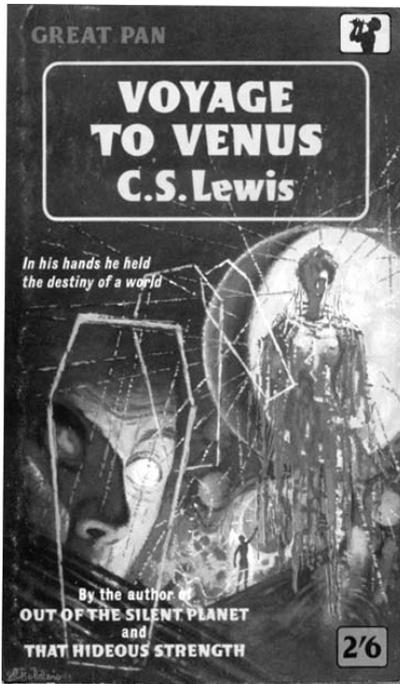
The 1953 edition of *Perelandra* was marketed as space fiction. Lewis states in a prefatory note that none of the human characters is allegorical.

interplanetary journey Ransom experiences how cold, unfriendly and colourless Space gets transformed into what he gradually recognizes as exquisite Deep Heaven, which he read about in ancient authors. In consequence, he rectifies some of his misconceptions about language. His findings and reflections are particularly relevant since for Dr. Ransom, as a philologist, words are the primary frame of reference and a natural milieu for thinking. One of the first observations he makes is that language is too vague to express reality: 'it is words that are vague. The reason why the thing can't be expressed is that it's too *definite* for language' (*P*, p. 28). Ransom realises that 'words are slow' (*P*, p. 31) when they have to come to grips with the intensity of experience. The reality that surrounds him turns out too much full-size and too rich to be contained in verbal language: 'while Ransom was on Perelandra his sense of taste was something more than it was on Earth: it gave knowledge as well as pleasure, though not a knowledge that can be reduced to words' (*P*, p. 149). Enamoured of earthly beauty and highly susceptible to the aesthetic appeal of poetry, the philologist from Thulcandra feels pained and helpless when he is confronted with the disparity between the manifold corpus of his sensual and spiritual experience and its possible verbal counterpart: 'The very names of green and gold, which he used perforce in describing the scene, are too harsh for the tenderness, the muted iridescence, of that warm, maternal, delicately gorgeous world' (*P*, 30). So gradually Ransom becomes aware of the rift which separates the Fallen terrestrial language from the multidimensional reality unaffected by the Fall.

The Earth's Fallen logic is unsuited to the ordering logic of Malacandra and Perelandra. This incompatibility is revealed in the operation of language, and especially in the imperfect or even entirely distorted relation between concepts and their verbal signs, as well as that between true reality and its verbal expression. It seems that outside the Earth the link between what the linguists call the signifier and the signified is much more intimate and direct. The very idea of being a bad man is conceptually alien to the inhabitants of Malacandra, which is why no exact equivalent for a 'bad man' exists in the Old Solar. Though the Lady on Perelandra does not understand many words imported from Ransom's native world, because she is unfamiliar with the respective concepts, e.g. she asks, 'What is *alone*?' (*P*, p. 58), yet at the same time she seems to have a deep-seated conviction that words are straightforward and clear pointers to the reality they signify. When Ransom asks in desperation, 'Who is this King?' the Lady imperturbably answers, 'He is himself, he is the King. (…) How can one answer such a question?' (*P*, p. 58). The Lady's words, heard from the terrestrial perspective, have a curious ring of the Biblical 'I am who I am' given as divine guidance to the banished planet. In the un-Fallen world of Perelandra there is no displacement: each thing is itself and

is called as such. The Lady is very quick to see the volubility of the visitors from Thulcandra, who can produce sham realities in a charade of words. That is why she laughs when Ransom discusses Maleldil's laws, of which she has direct and exact knowledge: 'you had nothing to say about it and yet made the nothing up into words' (*P*, p. 67). The disrupted relation between language and reality is also the reason why Ransom encounters great difficulties when, on Malacandra, he has to translate Weston's speech for Oyarsa. Later, on Perelandra, he confronts a similar obstacle, when his attempts to make the Lady realise the impending threat for her position prove pointless, and it becomes evident that his explications are beyond the comprehension of those who live where 'Paradise had never been lost' (*OSP*, p. 66).

'Forced out of the [terrestrial] frame,' and 'caught up into the larger pattern' (*P*, p. 135) of Deep Heaven, Ransom realises the futility of the earthly distinction between myth and fact.[7] When the philologist from the Earth gets to know more about Malacandra, he understands that his initial knowledge of the planet was infinitesimal and parochial. Ransom sees with his own eyes things which the patronizing attitude of his fellowmen on Earth would relegate to the realm of fiction and pure invention:

> He knew that it would seem like mythology when he got back to Earth (if he ever got back), but the presence of Oyarsa was still too fresh a memory to allow him any real doubts. It even occurred to him that the distinction between history and mythology might be itself meaningless outside the Earth (*OSP*, p. 169).

Not surprisingly, later, when Ransom lands on Perelandra, almost all that he notices upon his arrival presents itself as heraldic, since everything in that world free from the Fall is reaching out towards a reality which transcends the surface. Looking at the faces of encountered mermen and mermaids, Ransom recognizes dormant humanity: 'He remembered his old suspicion that what was myth in one world might always be fact in some other' (*P*, p. 92). Since all is truth in the celestial commonwealth, from which the Earth was excluded as the result of the Fall, then poetry and mythology are not fanciful lies, as on the Earth, but are different ways of stating facts, and that is why they have an equal status accorded to them by the inhabitants of Malacandra. The comprehension of this actuality is a major step which Ransom takes in his metaphysical adventure:

> Long since on Mars, and more strongly since he came to Perelandra, Ransom had been perceiving that the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial – was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall (*P*, p. 131).

Hrossa, a rational species (hnau) inhabiting Malacandra, to a greater degree than other rational species, such as sorns and pfifltriggi, are engaged in literary and narratory activity. C.S. Lewis as a scholar, literary critic and imaginative writer is aware that such activity presupposes a profounder awareness of time, because a sense of time is inscribed in the nature of all literary art, and such activity is linked to time ontologically: poetic and narrative art need time to come into being, they evolve in time, and require time to be fully taken in and absorbed by their receivers. Although both Perelandra and Malacandra are subordinated to the passage of time, the concept of time and its operation in Deep Heaven is

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[7] An interesting discussion of myth becoming fact through Christianity can be found in the writings of G.K. Chesterton, highly esteemed by C.S. Lewis, and especially in Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* (1925).

completely different from what it is like in the world of the silent planet. The Lady on Perelandra, in spite of her primeval innocence, is conscious of time: she knows that she grows old every day as she gains knowledge. However there, unlike on Earth, where growing old is perceived in terms of the approach of death, the Lady associates it with a sense of completion and fullness of being, for she treats time as a reflection and derivative of epistemology. Conversing with Ransom, who tries to make her aware of things of which she has been ignorant, the Lady admits: 'You make me grow older (…) I have been so young till this moment that all my life now seems to have been a kind of sleep' (*P*, p. 60-1).

Although hrossa, who are poets by nature, are subject to what in earthly terms appears as time, they not enslaved by time. On the contrary, they are liberated from its bondage and immersed in eternity. That is how Huoi, a Malacandrian friend, explains it to Ransom: 'A pleasure is full grown only when it is remembered. You are speaking, *Hmān*, as if the pleasure were one thing and the memory another. It is all one thing' (*OSP*, p. 84). And then he further describes what is common knowledge on Malacandra, 'that every day in a life fills the whole life with expectation and memory and that these *are* the day' (OSP, p. 86). In the un-Fallen world each present moment, the *now* in the flow of time, is redeemed by the past, in so far as it becomes history and memory, and it is elevated by the future, in so far as it is the subject of hope and expectation. Poetry in turn is the best means to grasp and express this truth: like mythology, it unites the present, the past and the future, under the common denominator of timelessness.

Even though time is inscribed in the ontological structure of Malacandra and Perelandra, nowhere, apart from on Earth, is time perceived as a destructive or oppressive factor of life. It is so only in the Fallen world of Thulcandra. Time as a burden, restriction and a cause of potential obliteration becomes not only a matter of philosophical speculation, but also a painful experience of immediate reality. When Weston's space ship is allowed to return to Earth, it has to work its way under severe time constraints, with the looming threat of its complete disintegration and the loss the travellers' lives. So Weston, Devine and Ransom, on their way back to Earth, locked up in the space capsule, acutely sense earthly temporal limitations, and literally face the crushing consequences of being subjected to the rule of time that has not been redeemed in their Fallen world.

Where there is time, there must necessarily be the end of time, which in human terms means death. Even though Malacandra and Perelandra, like the Earth, live in time, yet death there has a completely different status from Thulcandra. It is worth noting that Weston, as a messenger of the Fall, comes to Perelandra, where there is the abundance of life, to teach the Lady death. The Lady, however, immune from the influence of the terrestrial concept of death, is not in the least alarmed or startled, and so she placidly asks Weston: 'And will you teach us Death?' (*P*, p. 104). Afterwards she innocently listens to Weston's response: 'It is for this that I came here, that you may have Death in abundance' (*P*, p. 104). The Lady is completely ignorant of what death is in the world from which Weston has come. In her innocent ignorance she does not know that on Earth death means the frustration of life, and that it is connected with fear, degradation and disintegration. On Thulcandra, banished from the celestial communion, death carries implications of nullity. But on Malacandra and Perelandra death, or rather the end of individual time, is perceived differently. During his interplanetary adventures Ransom's horizons regarding death get broader. So when he returns from his voyage he already knows that in Deep Heaven, unlike on Earth, 'Death is not preceded by dread nor followed by corruption' (*OSP*, p. 186). In the un-Fallen commonwealth of celestial bodies death is perceived as an indispensable part of an

overall plan. For hrossa it is an integral element which fits smoothly into the whole paradigm of life, and as such it must be viewed in terms of a natural completion and fulfilment.

Yet it should be emphasised that in his poetic, visionary novels, C.S. Lewis makes it clear that the Fallen condition of the Earth and of mankind is not a permanent state. Before his departure from Perelandra Ransom becomes a witness of the Great Dance, and he participates in what may be called in terrestrial terms a mystical experience. Thus the earlier Miserific Vision, in which he was involved, struggling with Weston's animated body controlled by the Satanic spirit, is ultimately substituted with the Beatific Vision, where the siege of the Earth is lifted, existential traumas are healed, contradictions resolved, opposites reconciled, and Thulcandra as a new creation regains its true nature, and – no longer a silent planet – gets reunited with the Field of Arbol, the Heavenly Commonwealth.

Making

They say that poets are born, not made –
eh, lad, what a lie!
What can they know of your labouring shade
up after midnight, learning a trade
your sight cataracted, your confidence frayed
as years go by?

Lost in pursuit of form and design
long hours you keep,
almost achieving the almost fine
as you sip your coffee or quaff your wine,
or glimpse a skill in the turn of a line
as you fall asleep.

And by contrivance, or circumstance,
words that you use
set rhythms afoot in a mime of the dance
or pause in a pose of governance
or sway in the scented and sonorous trance
of a beckoning Muse.

Words that were fresh are sadly worn
as years go by;
coming to praise, they remain to mourn,
makers of music plangent, forlorn;
yet out of their making, poems are born,
as poets die

Walter Nash

Wordsworth's 'Fallen' Language

Jessica Fay

In Book V of *The Prelude* Wordsworth narrates a dream in which the world is threatened by an apocalyptic disaster (5. 49-139).[1] The dreamer however is unconcerned by the prospect that nature is about to be destroyed and the risk that humanity might perish; rather he is anxious about the fate of language. The dreamer imagines an encounter with an Arabian stranger who is carrying a shell in one hand and a stone in the other. In the 'language of the dream' (l. 87) these objects symbolise books of poetry and geometry, and the Arab must bury these books in the ground in order to save their linguistic contents against imminent world destruction. The dreamer agrees that there are enough 'on earth to take in charge / Their wives and children and virgin loves' (ll. 153-4). That is to say there are enough people to take care of man and nature: it is language that needs preserving. Thus the dreamer wishes to assist the Arab who seeks to bury and, thereby, protect and preserve books and words, which he refers to as 'poor earthly caskets of immortal verse' (l. 164).

Wordsworth introduces this dream by mourning the earthly state of language:

> Oh, why hath not the mind
> Some element to stamp her image on
> In Nature somewhat nearer to her own?
> Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
> Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail? (1805. 5. 44-8)

The poet laments the idea that books and words are mere 'frail shrines' or 'poor earthly casket[s]' of the immaterial thoughts they communicate. That is to say language is the imperfect mortal vessel in which thought and emotion are conveyed: words are frail and perishable.

Wordsworth's meditations on language are often abstract and obscure; moreover they are also often equivocal. Take for example the following passage again from Book V of *The Prelude*:

> Visionary Power
> Attends upon the motions of the winds
> Embodied in the mystery of words;
> There darkness makes abode, and all the host
> Of shadowy things do work their changes there
> As in a mansion like their proper home.
> Even forms and substances are circumfused
> By that transparent veil with light divine,
> And through the turnings intricate of verse
> Present themselves as objects recognised
> In flashes, and with a glory scarce their own. (1805. 5. 619-29)

The 'mystery of words' is the place in which 'darkness makes abode'. The poet characterises words as shadowy, mysterious, and suspicious. The illusive, unfixed 'motions of the winds' somehow embody the power of language. But in this same

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passage Wordsworth describes words as 'objects', which through 'the intricate turnings of verse' are bathed in a divine light, and as such 'present themselves' through a 'transparent veil' in flashes of glory. It is evident from his use of obscure imagery that Wordsworth struggles to articulate a single coherent position regarding language. It is typical of him to be both anxious about language and in awe of its potential.

This article is concerned with Christian ideas of Fall and Incarnation. In the light of Wordsworth's attitude towards language however I will consider these concepts not in relation to humanity, but in relation to language. I begin therefore with the premise that in Wordsworth's writing there is a consciousness that language has Fallen, along with humanity, into a state of mortality and imperfection. I will begin by tracing this Fall of language in the Book of Genesis.

Within the boundaries of Eden, God gave Adam dominion over language: God brought 'every beast of the field and every foul of the air' to Adam 'to see what he would call them' (Genesis 2:19). Before the Fall there was no confusion or ambiguity between the objects Adam saw and the words he used to signify them: language was neither mysterious nor inadequate. After the transgression of Adam and Eve however (Gen 3) a second Fall takes place which disrupts the original linguistic harmony. This disruption is explained in the narrative of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). Here I follow Deeanne Westbrook's recent study of Wordsworth and the Bible.[2] Westbrook notes that in the opening sections of *The Prelude* (the 'glad preamble') there is an undercurrent of confusion, wandering, lost direction, bondage, captivity, and exile, which she seeks to understand in terms of the Tower of Babel passage. She claims that this anxiousness in Wordsworth's writing and thinking stems from his awareness that the language he inherits, and necessarily uses, is a ruined one. Westbrook argues that 'the Biblical plot of humanity's [F]all and redemption has an echo in the equally devastating myth of fallen language' (p. 397). Following Westbrook I will use the narrative from Genesis 11 as a means of interpreting Wordsworth's ideas about language. (I do not however intend to suggest that Wordsworth specifically used this passage as a source.)

God's punishment at Babel is threefold: it consists of the dispersal of the people, the confounding of language, and the ruination of the Tower. After Babel it seems that humans inherit and speak an imperfect language, which is characterised by dispersal, disunity, and confusion. We see almost the same sentence repeated in verses eight and nine of Genesis 11: that God intervened to punish the people by scattering them 'abroad upon the face of all the earth' and confusing their language. Outside the Garden of Eden, then, the connection between language and location (or dislocation) becomes particularly important. Outside paradise, in other words, language is transformed by the location of its speaker or writer. Therefore I wish to extend Westbrook's study of Wordsworth's Fallen language by focusing on two key motifs from the Babel passage: firstly the geographical dispersal and dislocation of the people; and secondly images associated with the unfinished remains of the 'fallen' tower − rubble, stones, and ruins. There are two questions to address: firstly, what is the connection in Wordsworth's thought between language and place; and secondly, within this context, what is the significance of the recurrence of images of rocks, stones, and ruined remains in his poetry?

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2 'Wordsworth', in Rebecca Lemon et al. (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Literature*, Chichester, 2009, pp. 397-412.

Language and Place

In order to address this first question I will turn to Wordsworth's *Essays upon Epitaphs* (1810).[3] In these *Essays* Wordsworth discusses the origins and merits of various types of monument and inscription. Significantly within this discussion he explains what might be the most appropriate type of language for epitaphs in particular and poetry in general. He works on the basis that epitaphs reveal the origins of language, suggesting that in the poetry of epitaphs one may perceive language in its paradigmatic form: such language is an adequate 'shrine' or 'earthly casket' of the sentiment of its writer. But what are the characteristics of such language?

The language of epitaphs is often physically connected to a certain place – for example inscribed on a rock or stone memorial. Moreover these stones are located in close proximity to the remains of the deceased, which are buried in the churchyard, which is beside the church at the centre of the community. Wordsworth writes: 'the delineation, we must remember, is performed by the side of the grave; and, what is more, the grave of one whom he loves and admires' (*Essays*, p. 332). Wordsworth explains that the location in which epitaphs are written and read means that their language has particular qualities. Specifically, this churchyard location will intensify the emotional state of the writer and ensure that his motivation to write or speak is authentic. When the writer has been authentically moved his language will be characterised by sincerity: 'where the internal evidence proves that the Writer was moved, in other words where this charm of sincerity lurks in the language of a Tombstone and secretly pervades it, there are no errors in style or manner' (*Essays*, p. 345). Thus the epitaph, which is written and read in memorial of a friend and within a community churchyard, contains language that is sincere, heartfelt, and articulate. Furthermore Wordsworth suggests that the material location of an inscription functions to sustain the meaning or sentiment behind its language. He explains that the natural environment in which the deceased is buried and commemorated gives 'to the language of the senseless stone, a voice enforced and endeared by the benignity of that nature with which it is in unison' (p. 328). Jonathan Roberts summarises the poet's position: he argues that 'writing is at its best' for Wordsworth when 'meanings are sustained by the non-linguistic: the grave, the churchyard, the community within which the inscription makes sense.'[4] In practice therefore the reader's understanding is aided by the material location of the inscription. It is thus the situation of epitaphs that gives their language its exemplary qualities.

The situated language of epitaphs therefore has characteristics which are different from those of the newly Fallen language of Genesis 11. According to the Babel narrative Fallen language was initially a scattered or dislocated language. The punished people were dispersed across different lands and so too (we infer) were the ruined rocks and stones of the never-to-be finished tower. The confused language of Babel becomes associated with disunity, alienation, and dislocation whereas, for Wordsworth, the paradigmatic language of epitaphs is fixed to and enhanced by its stable location.

Wordsworth highlights the 'physicality' of the language of epitaphs in what is perhaps the most frequently examined passage from the *Essays*. Again using mysterious or abstract language Wordsworth makes the following complex statement about words:

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[3] *Selected Prose*, John O. Hayden (ed.), Penguin, 1988, pp. 322-70.

[4] 'Wordsworth's Apocalypse', *Literature and Theology*, 20 (2006), 361-78: 370.

Words are too awful an instrument for good and evil to be trifled with: they hold above all other external powers a dominion over thoughts. If words be not […] an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift; such a one as those poisoned vestments, read of in the stories of superstitious times, which had power to consume and to alienate from his right mind the victim who put them on. Language, if it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, un-remittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve.
(p. 361)

This passage once more demonstrates Wordsworth's suspicious and uncomfortable relationship with language; but he writes that language is at its best when it 'incarnates' thought. The poet's examination of the language of epitaphs culminates here in what I will call his 'incarnational metaphor'. The roots of Wordsworth's metaphor are in the Gospel of John which figures Jesus as the Son of God and the Word of God (John 1:1). At the Incarnation the Word of God became flesh when Jesus came into the mortal Fallen world and, in Christian tradition, the Incarnation took place in order that humanity should be redeemed from its Fallen state. There are a number of interpretations of Wordsworthian 'incarnational poetics', and each is differently nuanced: some focus on the philosophical implications of Wordsworth's statement (such as David P. Haney's *Wordsworth and the Hermeneutics of Incarnation,* 1993); others focus on the theological heritage of the metaphor (including Deeanne Westbrook's *Wordsworth's Biblical Ghosts,* 2001); others (such as Karen Mills-Courts's *Poetry as Epitaph,* 1990) comprehensively survey the history of the concept of language as incarnation since it was used by Plato. Thus it is difficult to articulate a succinct coherent explanation of Wordsworth's 'incarnational language'. What follows however is a brief overview of what, for the purposes of this paper, I understand by the concept.

I wish to explain 'incarnational language' in contrast to 'representational language'. As I understand it, representational language is semiotic. That is to say it involves signs and their referents: there is a 'thing' in the world which a word or sign arbitrarily signifies. Wordsworth compares the representational relationship between word and object to the relationship between the body and its garments: the body and its clothes are arbitrarily linked, discrete objects, which are separable. In the case of incarnational language on the other hand, something more, or other than, representation is going on. In the *Essays upon Epitaphs* Wordsworth makes a distinction between representational language and incarnational language when he argues that language should 'not be what the garb is to the body but what the body is to the soul' (p. 360). On an incarnational model thoughts are intimately and mysteriously harnessed to words in the way that the body is harnessed to the soul. Thus when he uses this incarnational metaphor Wordsworth employs an analogy between bodies and words. Consequently 'incarnational' words are figured as the physical, bodily manifestation of intangible thought.

For Wordsworth the language of an epitaph is exemplary because it is the 'incarnation' of the sentiment of its writer. In turn the physicality of such language is emphasised when epitaphs are inscribed onto rocks or stones. Moreover the physical location of the inscription helps to communicate this immaterial sentiment to the reader. In short, these physical words embody and locate immaterial sentiment. Haney and Westbrook both suggest that Wordsworth becomes anxious about language when words are dissociated or disconnected from the emotional and material context for which they were intended. Hence there are two answers to the first question I have addressed: (1) The connection that Wordsworth perceives

between language and place is evident in his writings on epitaphs, which culminate in his conception of language as an incarnation of thought. (2) This incarnational relationship is most likely to hold when language is materially and emotionally embedded in a certain location.

Rocks and Stones and Ruins

In Genesis 11 God's punishment includes the dispersal of the world's people, and the disintegration of the tower into ruin. Besides Wordsworth's writings on epitaphs, stone monuments, and inscriptions his poetry continually employs images of ruins, rubble, and relics. In light of the Babel passage I will now consider the significance of the recurrence of such images in Wordsworth's poetry. I propose that if the vertical (undamaged) Tower of Babel was a symbol of harmonious language, then its scattered ruins or relics are memorials to the paradisiacal state of language that was lost. I suggest that the scattered ruins of the tower share (at least) two characteristics with epitaphs: firstly epitaphs commemorate a lost past and secondly they exhibit what is for Wordsworth an exemplary form of language. I begin my argument with two examples from Wordsworth's poetry: Michael's ruined sheepfold and Margaret's *Ruined Cottage*.[5]

The sight of a heap of rubble from the ruined sheepfold prompts the narration of Michael's story:

Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
There is a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that place a story appertains. (ll. 14-8)

Michael began building the structure with his son, Luke; but Luke is forced to leave the family home to work off a debt and does not return. The fold is therefore never completed. This ruined structure — the sheepfold — is significant in that it not only symbolises affection for a lost past, it also symbolises a promise of the future restoration of happiness. The fold is 'An emblem of the life [Luke's] Fathers lived' (l. 420) and also a promise that Luke and Michael 'both may live / To see a better day' (ll. 399-400). Michael clings to the heap of stones when Luke fails to return home. Similarly Margaret cannot bear to leave her ruined cottage while she waits for her husband to return from war. She attaches herself mentally and physically to these ruins, and in doing so becomes a kind of ruined monument herself. Geoffrey Hartman has noted that Margaret waits for her husband in faith: she does not know when, if at all, he will return. Hartman suggests that this waiting in faith is similar to the experience of Christians who wait for the return of Jesus. He argues that Margaret's husband is 'absent rather than dead and leaves her in a mental state uncomfortably close to that of believers who know Christ is absent, not dead, and await his return'.[6]

These ruined structures are therefore memorials of a lost past, but they also represent covenants or promises associated with some future restoration of happiness or harmony.

Likewise in Book IX of *The Prelude* Wordsworth recalls:

5 Quotation of *The Ruined Cottage* (1789) and 'Michael' (1800) is from *The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill, OUP, 1984, reissued 2008, pp. 31-44 and 224-36 respectively.
6 'A Touching Compulsion' in *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, Methuen, (1987), pp. 18-30, p.29f.

> Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
> Of the Bastile I sate in the open sun
> And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
> And pocketed the relick.   (9. 63-6)

The Bastille, which was a symbol of French royal oppression, had been ruined in 1789. Wordsworth evidently continues his journey through Revolutionary France with a stone relic of the ruined Bastille in his pocket – the *ruined* Bastille being a hopeful symbol of French Revolutionary values. Wordsworth's relic of this building is therefore, like Michael's ruined sheepfold and Margaret's ruined cottage, a symbol of an anticipated harmonious future. (In all three examples however there is a sense of proleptic pathos: Michael never sees his son again, Margaret is never reunited with her husband, moreover Wordsworth's retrospective disappointment at the outcomes of the Revolution is perhaps discernible in the sharp 's' and 't' sounds and the strong rhythm of the present passage.)

These images of ruins and relics denote a substantial physical and emotional attachment between a person and a place or object. For Wordsworth this emotional sensibility, like that which inspires the language of an epitaph, is what makes the tales of Michael and Margaret worthy topics for poetry. Like these stone ruins and relics, epitaphs – and the incarnational language they exhibit – also facilitate for their reader a means of glimpsing both the lost past and the promised future. That is to say epitaphs commemorate the mortal life of the deceased, but they also look forward to the immortality of the soul. What is more Wordsworth's *Essays* declare that epitaphs hinge on this belief in a promised future: 'without the consciousness of a principle of immortality in the human soul, Man could never have awakened in him the desire to live in remembrance of his fellows' (p. 323). In short, he writes, epitaphs are 'a humble expression of Christian confidence in immortality' (p. 330).

In terms of my interpretation of the Babel narrative, I propose that Wordsworth's ruins (the cottage, the sheepfold, epitaphic stone monuments etc.) function as would the scattered relics of the ruined tower: if the Tower of Babel is a monument to a lost harmonious language, then its ruined remains would point towards the future restoration of linguistic harmony in which 'Incarnation' plays the vital part. This promise of the restoration of linguistic harmony is Biblically located firstly in the Acts of the Apostles, and secondly in the Book of Revelation. In Acts 2 the disciples are scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, as were the people in Genesis 11. In the New Testament however the dispersal is not a punishment; rather it is a commission. The confounded language of Babel is reversed such that language is no longer a barrier to communication. Rather than language being problematic, the opposite becomes the case. Secondly, in John's vision the linguistic division and diversity that was inflicted on the people at Babel is removed at the end of time when those selected for salvation repeatedly shout 'Hallelujah' and sing God's glory in unison (Revelation 19:1-7). Westbrook's article summarises the linguistic cycle outlined in the Bible:

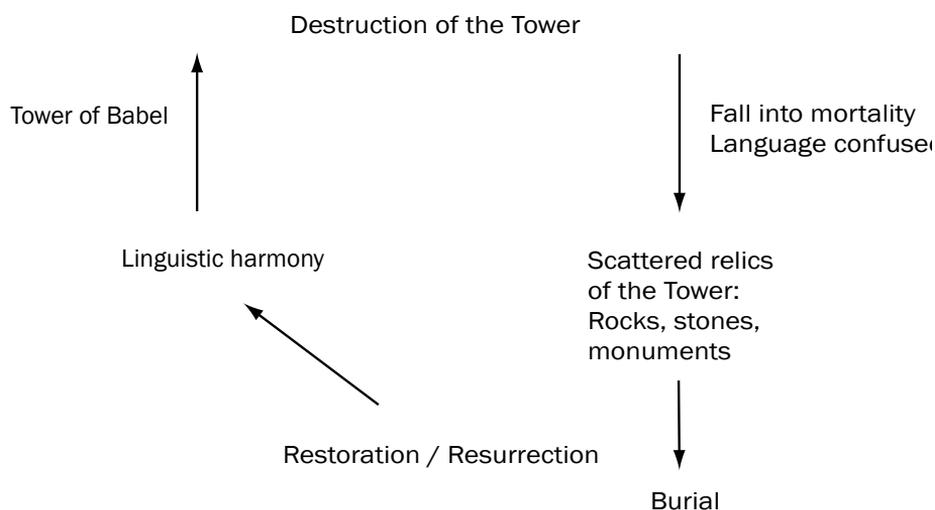> [A]n originally perfect language lapses into confusion, a garbled speech that will endure through history, finally to be redeemed at the apocalypse when it takes the form of a hymn of praise sung in unison by those singled out for salvation. ('Wordsworth' p. 397)

The link between this Biblical retrieval of comprehensible language and Wordsworth's retrieval of the same is 'incarnation'. Biblically the Incarnation of the

Word of God eradicates the Fallen state of humanity. In Wordsworth's discourse the obscurity of dislocated language is replaced by communicative harmony when the writer's language is itself 'incarnational'.

In conclusion I return to the 'Arab Dream' passage from Book V of *The Prelude*. The Arab's urgent desire to bury books in the face of apocalyptic disaster takes on a particular meaning in the context of 'incarnational language'. Wordsworth's incarnational metaphor gestures towards the Christian understanding of Jesus as the Incarnation of the Word of God (John 1:1). At the Incarnation the divine Word took on flesh and earthly life: the Word became Incarnate. The Bible explains however that the 'Word of God' had to die and be buried before He was raised. Alison Jasper writes that Christianity has always assumed the need for bodily resurrection: 'Christians are invited to escape from the finality of death, that otherwise defining bodily event, and to live and flourish in the distinctive resurrection body'.[7] Similarly the Arabian stranger from *The Prelude* believes that burying books, which contain incarnational language, will save this language in the looming apocalypse. The Arab buries his books in the hope that they will be raised to a new world of linguistic harmony. Again therefore the burial site is the place in which Wordsworth's anxiety about the perishability and mortality of language is subdued. Wordsworth thus employs an analogy between bodies and books, both of which are implicated in a cycle of Fall, Incarnation, and restoration. Moreover in the New Testament stones feature in Mark's description of Jesus' empty tomb (16:3-4) and in John's account of the raising of Lazarus (11:38-44). In both instances stones are moved away (or dislocated) to reveal that new life has been restored. I summarise my argument in the diagram below:

Destruction of the Tower

Tower of Babel

Fall into mortality
Language confuse

Linguistic harmony

Scattered relics
of the Tower:
Rocks, stones,
monuments

Restoration / Resurrection

Burial

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[7] 'Body and Word', in Andrew Hass, David Jasper and Elizabeth Jay (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, OUP, 2007, pp. 776-92, p. 777.

There is vertical and horizontal imagery at work in the texts I have been discussing. On the one hand the Babylonians attempted to build and climb a tower that would 'reach unto heaven' (Genesis 11:3). Building and climbing are counteracted by images of 'falling', and burial. On the other hand the epitaphic paraphernalia of rocks, stones, and ruins are scattered across a horizontal plain. Wordsworth's anxiety about language as a Fallen, mortal, and imperfect form of communication is subdued by his ideas about language and place, and the concept of language as incarnation. I propose therefore that Wordsworth's ideas about language may be interpreted in terms of the Christian cycle of Fall, Incarnation, burial, and resurrection.

I began this article with the premise that the Fall of man (Genesis 3) has a parallel in a Fall of language and with this premise I have done three things. Firstly I traced this linguistic Fall in Genesis 11:1-9. I concluded that the fallen language of the people of Babel is a dislocated or scattered language. Secondly I explored how, for Wordsworth, language is connected to place, suggesting that he is most comfortable with language that is materially rooted or buried in a particular location or attached to a particular object or relic. Finally I argued that incarnational language, which is discernable in the exemplary language of epitaphs, metaphorically allows the poet to glimpse that anticipated communicative harmony.

It seems therefore that Wordsworth's ideas about language, which are often obscure and abstract, may be understood in terms of material images such as stone memorials and inscriptions, and their physical location. In this interpretation however, I do not mean to suggest that Wordsworth himself is conscious of these connections. Rather my point has been to show that the poet has a complex, dialectical conception of language and that his ideas may be considered in relation to Christian ideas about the Fallen state of man. Yet thinking about Wordsworth's writings in the context of the Tower of Babel passage and the notion of Fallen language is not without its problems. For example what is to say that language characterised by dispersal, diversity, and ambiguity is problematic to begin with? Stephen Goldsmith has argued that the fall of the Tower positively facilitated social and cultural identity.[8] Moreover Wordsworth's 'incarnational poetics' in a sense is an attempt to uphold linguistic localism: he positively promotes language that is embedded and understood in a specific place; he does not lament disunity. But then again he praises the language of epitaphs because it is universal and open to all: 'the first requisite, then, of an Epitaph is, that it should speak […] the general language of humanity' (*Essays*, p. 331). Thus my argument does not seem to make the poet's writings about language any clearer; instead Wordsworth's ideas become all the more ambivalent and complex. Yet ambivalence and confusion are the very qualities of language that resulted from the Fall and ultimately it is a Fallen language which Wordsworth necessarily used.

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Tolkien: Legends of the Fall

B. C. Livingstone

'No stain yet on the Moon was seen.'[1]

My world view changed when at the age of eleven or so, I came across an unexpurgated adult account of the Holocaust. I cried: for the Germans who had given us Beethoven and Grimm's Fairy tales, no less than for the Jews.

Anyone who thinks at all about the conditions of life upon this planet must be struck at some stage by the cruelty of other people and the cruelty of Nature. Gilbert Murray, humanist and religious sceptic, said that as a child in Australia the cruelty to animals at his school in the bush nearly drove him mad.[2] There are questions to be answered, whatever one's system of belief or, indeed, unbelief: why are people the way they are and why is Nature the way it is? The success or otherwise of one literary attempt to address these issues is the purpose of this paper.

Like Tolkien, I was born in South Africa, and a sojourn in Africa, no less than in Australia, intensifies your sense of the malevolence of Nature. As Aldous Huxley said of Wordsworth, if he'd lived in the Tropics he'd have been a devil worshipper.[3]

Perhaps that's why, ever since I was old enough to consider the implications of the words, I've intensely disliked the hymn *All Things Bright and Beautiful.* Apart from that verse about 'The rich man in his castle /The poor man at his gate' which is such a gift for Marxists, what about those things that are not bright and beautiful? What about the tsetse fly, the putse fly, the spitting cobra and the crocodile? What about the ebola virus that dissolves your intestines? What, for that matter, about the minds that dream up computer viruses? Where did they all come from? As Blake asked of his Tyger, 'Did he who made the lamb make thee?'

Meditate long enough on the evidence of Nature red in tooth and claw, and you reach the position posited by C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain*: not why a loving God should allow suffering, but why the idea of a loving God should ever have arisen in the first place. If this seems, as the Friar says to the Wife of Bath, a long preamble to a tale, then I hope its relevance will become apparent in due course. I am trying to establish the issues that Tolkien set himself to address, if not to solve

Milton's explanation for the savagery of Nature is that all animals were originally herbivorous and began eating each other as the result of the fall of Adam and Eve. As he puts it in Book X of *Paradise Lost:*

> Beast now with beast gan war, and fowl with fowl,
> And fish with fish; to graze the herb all leaving,
> Devour'd each other; nor stood much in awe
> Of man, but fled him, or with countenance grim
> Glared on him passing (710-714)

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[1] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'A Journey in the Dark', *The Lord of the Rings*, 3 volumes, London, 1999 (1, p.415).
[2] Gilbert Murray, *Humanist Essays*, London, 1964, p.8.
[3] 'Wordsworth in the Tropics' in *Do What You Will,* London, 1975.

Had Milton lived in a later era, he would, of course, have retracted that passage in the light of meat-eating dinosaurs existent before the human race. Carnivorousness cannot be blamed on the Fall of Man. Is the cruelty of Nature, then, built into the fabric of things?

This problem of the apparent sadism of God was one that exercised Charles Darwin. Darwin's religious views were complex, in keeping with his mind. Leaving aside the whole evolution debate, two things in particular appear to have troubled him. One was the death of his young daughter: a perennially difficult issue to answer. The other was the *Ichneumon* wasp that paralyses a caterpillar and then lays its eggs. When the grubs hatch out they feed on their involuntary host: helpless, and still alive. The wasp was the real-life inspiration for the horror film *Alien*.

The carnivorous principle is a problem in itself, but this example seems to go beyond a mere carnivore quickly killing its prey. What sort of a mind would think up, or endorse, such a process? Two conclusions may be drawn: one, that God is neither good nor loving; or two, that there is no God, just the indifferent processes of Nature.

There is also a third conclusion, not reached by Darwin, as far as I know, but certainly postulated by C. S. Lewis. In his discussion with C. E. M. Joad – 'The Pains of Animals' – Lewis concedes that 'the insect world appears to be Hell itself, visibly in operation around us.'[4] Lewis's conclusion is that Nature, as well as human nature, has become corrupted: the result of a Fall, but not the Fall of Man. The 'Great God' – quoting Tennyson – and 'the god of this world' – are not one and the same being. This is the point at which Tolkien comes in. For *The Lord of the Rings* is, *par excellence,* the vision of a ruined world, while *The Silmarillion* is the modern equivalent of Milton's exploration of a supernatural fall.

Any dealing with *The Silmarillion* must be prefaced by an apology. It has been called, not unfairly, 'the telephone directory in Elvish', and must be the only serious rival to *Finnegans Wake* for sheer unreadability. However, it does provide the background for what is actually going on in *The Lord of the Rings*, and in its own right does have a magnificence of imaginative conception, if not of execution.

In addition to creating new languages, Tolkien undertook the ambitious task of creating a new religion – that of the Elves – by blending Jewish, Greek and Norse concepts into a new synthesis. Since this will not be familiar to all, what follows is a brief synopsis with minimal quotation, and with further apologies to those for whom all this is already known.

Ilúvatar (i.e. 'God' in Elvish) creates the Ainur, eternal spirits who are the 'offspring of his thought'. He shows them a theme, from which he bids them to make a great music. In this he allows a great deal of autonomy: reminiscent of God's invitation to Adam and Eve to subdue the Earth, and entirely in keeping with Tolkien's own theory of sub-creation. To be a writer and invent imaginary worlds is to be a participant in the creative activity of God.

In an Elvish version of Lucifer's transmutation into Satan, Melkor – later Morgoth – is the greatest of the Ainur in power and knowledge. Wanting to go his own way, he breaks the harmony of the music: taking other Ainur with him, and introducing discords. Tolkien is making the point that the anomalies we find in Nature precede the Fall of Man.

Three times Melkor is defeated, and each time a new theme is created. The choices and actions of created beings have real and irrevocable consequences. To restore the harmony is not simply to return to the way things were, but to produce <u>something new. It</u> is the same sort of idea as that expressed by Milton with 'the

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4   In *Faith, Christianity and the Church*, London, 2002, pp.195-6.

paradise within thee greater far'[5]. Lose Paradise the place, but gain paradise the condition.

Ilúvatar stops the music and shows the Ainur a vision of Arda (i.e. the world). They have the chance by taking physical form to enter it and govern it. The greater Ainur become known as the Valar, the lesser as the Maiar. Among the Maiar are Gandalf, Sauron and the Balrogs.

The attempts by the Valar to prepare the world for Elves and Men are thwarted by Melkor/Morgoth who wants the world for himself and destroys their work. Through the process of destruction and new creation – a sort of cosmic dialectical materialism – the world assumes its form. This is, I think, the explanation of those malevolent forces in Nature independent of Sauron that are apparent, but unexplained, in *The Lord of the Rings*. There are two trees, also, in *The Silmarillion.* These are the source of Melkor's greatest conflict: not with the other Valar, but with the Elves.

The Noldorin elf Fëanor creates the Silmarils, containing light from the two trees of Valinor before the creation of the Sun and Moon. Melkor destroys the trees, steals the jewels and flees to Middle-earth drawing the Elves after him in a series of ruinous wars. The fault is not all with Melkor, however. There is something savage in Feanor's creativity. His thirst for knowledge becomes the thirst for power, a sort of idolatry. A sort of fall. And in *The Lord of the Rings* Elrond recalls how the Elven-smiths were ensnared by Sauron through their desire for knowledge (1, p. 317).

Melkor's theft also includes identity theft. In his fortress of Angband, captured Elves are twisted and tortured into Orcs: reflecting the view frequently articulated in *The Lord of the Rings* that evil is good which has been spoiled.

If the concern of the Elves is with the Tree of Knowledge, Men are concerned with the Tree of Life. On the island of Númenor, the power of Men lies in their ignorance of immortality. Seduced by Sauron, they seek to seize immortality from the Elves by an attack on the undying lands. In a punishment that recalls both Noah and Atlantis, the island is buried under a great wave. It is against this backdrop of fallen Elves and fallen men within a fallen world that *The Lord of the Rings* is set.

Consequences of the Fall

When Paul writes in *Romans*[6] of the whole creation groaning, he seems to be suggesting something that has gone wrong with the whole fabric of Nature, rather than just the human race. This seems to be the concept taken up by Tolkien. Although the narrative gives us ruined landscapes, and corpse-laden marshes reminiscent of the First World War, Elrond insists that, 'Nothing is evil in the beginning. Even Sauron was not so'[7]. Tom Bombadil's memory stretches back to the unspoiled world. 'Tom was here already, before the seas were bent. He knew the dark under the stars when it was fearless – before the Dark Lord came from Outside'[8].

This Dark Lord must be Morgoth rather than Sauron, for there are brief references to sources of natural evil that pre-date Sauron. On Mount Caradhras, Boromir hears 'fell voices' crying in the wind, and Aragorn responds that 'there are many evil and unfriendly things in the world … and yet are not in league with Sauron but have purposes of their own'[9]. Gandalf warns that, 'There are older and

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[5] *Paradise Lost*, xii.585.

[6] 8:22.

[7] 1, p. 351.

[8] 1, p. 173.

[9] 1, p. 379.

fouler things than Orcs in the deep places of the world'[10]. This is presumably an oblique reference to the Balrog, but there are sources of evil older than Balrogs. 'Far, far below the deepest delvings of the Dwarves, the world is gnawed by nameless things. Even Sauron knows them not'[11]. An echo, perhaps, of that malign natural force the dragon Nidhog of Norse mythology, gnawing at the root of the world ash tree to bring about the Day of Doom. Shelob, too, is older than Sauron, in existence 'before the first stone of Barad-dûr'[12].

Sauron's contribution to the ruination of the created world is that he can 'torture and destroy the very hills'[13], achieving on a supernatural scale the sort of damage wrought by Saruman's Orcs in their destruction of the trees. Confronted with the ruin of the Shire, Frodo detects the common thread. 'Yes, this is Mordor. Just one of its works.'[14] The restoration of the Shire is another echo of the Eden Story with the renewal of the ruined tree, and the reminder of humanity's duty of stewardship towards the Earth.

If *The Lord of the Rings* is not about the Fall as an event, it is concerned with its consequences. Although from the perspective of the modern reader the Third Age is of great antiquity, the inhabitants of Middle-earth seem to be living in the midst of ruins, conscious of some catastrophe that has overtaken their respective races in an immensely distant past. The Elves are dwindling, leaving Middle-earth. Rivendell, Lothlórien and the Grey Havens are last-ditch outposts. The Dwarves cannot match the mighty skills of their ancestors. Faramir, in a sort of folk memory out of the Gondorian collective unconscious, has a recurring dream of a 'great dark wave climbing over the green lands'.[15] Osgiliath is a ruined city. The giant statues at key points in the realm of Gondor have fallen into decay. The voices of the Orcs are full of hate and anger,[16] as if with the consciousness of what they once were. The only people who do not seem to share this sense of loss are the Hobbits, who are unaware of everything. One characteristic that the Hobbits do, however, seem to share with the other races of Middle-earth is their lack of consciousness about any supreme being.

In Book VIII of *Paradise Lost* Adam questions Raphael minutely in his attempt to understand more about the created world and its creator.[17] At this stage of the poem, however much he still needs to learn, Adam enjoys a direct link to God which is severed two books later by the Fall. Thereafter, he is in the same position as the rest of us.

In this sense, all the races of Middle-Earth are the children of Adam. Maybe something divine exists, but any sense of what it is is blurred. Denethor expresses his desire to burn like the heathen kings, and Gandalf speaks of the heathen kings under the domination of the Dark Power,[18] but it is not clear what religion there is to be heathen *against*. Gandalf says, 'Naked I was sent back',[19] but we are not told from where or by whom. The Dwarves revere their ancestors, the Elves dream of starlight. The men of Gondor face the west before eating. 'We look towards Númenor that was, and beyond to Elvenholme that is and to that which is beyond

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[10] 1, p. 406.
[11] 2, p. 122.
[12] 2, p. 414.
[13] 1, p. 349.
[14] 3, p. 360.
[15] 3, p. 289.
[16] 2, p. 48.
[17] 250ff.
[18] 3, p. 145.
[19] 2, p. 123.

Elvenholme and will ever be'[20]. But what he thinks it is that lies beyond Elvenholme, Faramir does not say: it seems more a guess than a certainty.

When Frodo is trying to make up his mind what to do, Aragorn refers to 'powers at work far stronger' than the members of the Fellowship[21]; but he does not explain what they are. Within Mordor, Sam sees a star. 'The thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach.'[22] That is as close to overt religious awareness as we get; although we might see it as nothing more than a form of nature worship.

The skill with which the narrative unfolds ensures that no one group of characters knows what another group is doing at any given time. Isolation is the human condition: alone in the hostile world, pressing on without hope, trusting to chance or 'luck'. This ancient view of things accords perfectly with its modern equivalent. 'You just keep going!' says Al Alvarez in the film *Sylvia,* rejecting the soft option of suicide. That, perhaps, is why *The Lord of the Rings* has attracted such a diversity of modern readers, and why Tolkien's pre-Christian world has seemed to speak so powerfully to its post-Christian descendant.

For Tolkien himself, *The Lord of the Rings* was a religious, even a Catholic, work.[23] Why? There is, of course, considerable dramatic irony in the way events are revealed; so that the reader has a much better awareness than any of the characters of the overall progress of the Fellowship. Ghân-buri-Ghân notes, despite the obliterating fog from Mordor, that the wind is changing. At the worst point of the siege of Gondor a cock crows in welcome of the invisible dawn, to be answered by the 'great horns of the North, wildly blowing'[24], and it is this sense of some other power at work behind and beyond the Dark Power that led Auden to identify the theme of The *Lord of the Rings* as the operation of divine grace within a fallen world.[25]

For me, the subtlest aspect of *The Lord of the Rings* is Tolkien's exploration of that difficult balance between divine foreknowledge and human free will that is a paradox of the *Genesis* story. There are any numbers of instances of chance which are not chance at all. Gandalf knows that Gollum has a part to play before the end.[26] Frodo, in danger from a Black rider, encounters the Elves, in which meeting, as Gildor the Elf puts it, 'there may be more than chance'.[27] Chance brings Tom Bombadil to the rescue.[28] The task of the Ring is *appointed* for the Shire-folk, 'when they arise from their quiet fields to shake the towers and counsels of the great'.[29] It is plain to Frodo that he and Sam were meant to escape together from Saruman's Orcs.[30] Those same Orcs bring Merry and Pippin, 'with marvellous speed, and in the nick of time, to Fangorn, where otherwise they would never have come at all'.[31] Pippin investigates the Palantir before Gandalf does.[32] And so on.

[20] 2, p. 352.

[21] 1, p. 531.

[22] 3, p. 234.

[23] *Letters*, London, 1981 p. 172.

[24] 3, p. 113.

[25] In Neil Isaacs and Rose Zimbardo (eds.), *Tolkien and the Critics: Essays on Tolkien's 'The Lord of the Rings'*, Notre Dame, 1968.

[26] 1, p. 79.

[27] 1, p. 112.

[28] 1, p. 165.

[29] 1, p. 355.

[30] 1, p. 534.

[31] 2, p. 117.

[32] 2, p. 240.

Gandalf makes several cryptic references to 'chance, if chance it was.' This becomes specific in his conversation with Frodo. 'Behind that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was *meant* to find the ring, and *not* by its maker. In which case you also were *meant* to have it. And that may be an encouraging thought.'[33]

If Frodo was meant to have it, does he have the right to refuse? Would it make any difference if he did? The arrow that pierces the Orc Grishnákh's hand is 'aimed with skill or guided by fate'.[34] Which is it? Or is it both? Tolkien leaves the reader to decide.

As choice is at the heart of the *Genesis* story, so choice is at the heart of *The Lord of the Rings*. Isildur chooses to retain the ring, Bilbo to surrender it: both decisions momentous in their consequences. Aragorn, in a sort of paraphrase of Pascal, brings to Rohan, 'the doom of choice'.[35] Aragorn himself, driven to choose between rescuing Merry and Pippin or following the Ring-bearer, i**s** torn by doubt about his ability to make correct decisions, remembering always the fatal choice of his ancestor, Isildur. How far is he a free agent, and how far is he constrained by his heredity?

For the powerful, the temptation offered by the Ring is to use it as a source for good. The end will justify the means. Gandalf, Galadriel and Faramir perceive the lie and decline the offer; Saruman, Denethor and Boromir succumb, or would if they could.

Sam has to choose between rescuing Bill the pony or staying with the Fellowship;[36] between protecting Frodo in the Tower of Cirith Ungol from the Orc Snaga, or chasing the escaping Orc Shagrat.[37] Gandalf has to choose between rescuing Theoden and rescuing Faramir: to choose the one will mean the death of the other.

On occasion, free will seems in danger of disappearing altogether. Frodo comes to realise that the Ring has a will of its own, constantly seeking to dominate *his* will. Sometimes it is not clear whether he has any choice at all. In 'The Prancing Pony', he puts on the Ring 'in response to some wish or command that was felt in the room'.[38] In the barrow mound 'something seemed to be compelling him to disregard all warnings'.[39] On the throne of Amon Hen, Frodo hears the words,

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[33] 1, p. 74.

[34] 2, p. 63.

[35] 2, p. 32.

[36] 1, p. 406.

[37] 3, p. 215.

[38] 1, p. 212.

[39] 1, p. 257.

'Verily I come, I come to you.' Who is speaking: Frodo, or the Ring itself? Then the voice of Gandalf interposes itself inside his head. 'Fool, take it off!'

> The two powers strove in him. For a moment, perfectly balanced betweentheir piercing points, he writhed, tormented. Suddenly he was aware ofhimself again. Frodo, neither the Voice nor the Eye: free to choose, and with one remaining instant in which to do so. He took the Ring off his finger.[40]

Watching Frodo within Mordor, Sam notices that, 'sometimes his right hand would creep to his breast, clutching, and then slowly, as the will recovered mastery, it would be withdrawn'.[41] On the brink of the chasm in Mount Doom Frodo says, 'I do not choose now to do what I have come to do.'[42] *Is* that his choice, or has he fallen victim to the operation of an external force? Gollum resolves the problem for him, fulfilling Ganfdalf's prophecy about his role. Is Gollum operating according to his own free will, or is he an agent of Fate? If an answer is not – and cannot be – given, the question is, nonetheless, thought-provokingly articulated.

In the fourth century, Jerome described the story of Eden as truth in the form of a folk tale. However metaphorically you treat the *Genesis* account, if you see the Fall as an actual explanation of the human condition you will not be taken by surprise at some strange new eruption of human depravity. It is the ultimate curse of heredity. If you reject the Fall, you must come up with some other explanation. Typically, this involves the belief that people are born good, but are corrupted by environment. Improve social conditions, and perfection awaits. This sort of view was at its apogee in the nineteenth century, and receives its clearest expression in Tennyson's 'Locksley Hall':

> Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs
> And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns.

It was a view put under strain by the evidence of Auschwitz, but probably more so by the slaughter of the First World War, arising from the dream of universal peace. 'Never such innocence again,' as Philip Larkin put it.[43]

The longing for universal peace may be innocent but it is, after all, a noble aspiration. It is the dream of Isaiah: not only that swords shall become ploughshares, but that the war within Nature itself will be healed, and the wolf will lie down with the lamb. It is the dream of Tolkien's Elves '…when Thangorodrim was broken, and the Elves deemed that evil was ended for ever, and it was not so'.[44]

Unless you are on the side of Sauron, the issue is not whether peace is *desirable*, but whether it is attainable, and life had taught Tolkien otherwise. Frodo wishes for no killing in the Shire. Despite his wish, the result is seventy-odd dead ruffians, and nineteen dead Hobbits.[45] When Tolkien read 'The Field of Cormallen' chapter to C. S. Lewis, both wept in memory of their experiences on the battlefields of France. And Tolkien feared a repetition for his children. As he put it, 'To be young in 1939 was as hideous as to be young in 1914.'[46]

In Tom Bombadil's song in the barrow mounds, the last line ends cryptically

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[40] 1, p. 527.

[41] 3, p. 252.

[42] 3, p. 265.

[43] 'MCMXIV'.

[44] 1, p. 318.

[45] 3, p. 357.

[46] 'Foreword to the Second Edition', 1999, 1, xviii.

'Where gates stand for ever shut, till the world is mended'.[47] Galadriel says there will be no reunion until 'the lands that lie under the wave are lifted up again'.[48] *Appendix A* says of Arwen, '…there is her green grave, until the world is changed.' The meaning of these suggestions is opaque within *The Lord of the Rings*, and we have to look outside it to *The Book of Revelation* for the explanation of this concept.

What Tolkien presents us with is not a steady progress towards perfection, but an ongoing struggle with evil in some new form to be faced by each new generation. 'Always after a defeat and a respite, the Shadow takes another shape and grows again'.[49] Sauron himself is but a servant or emissary.[50] The evil of Sauron cannot be wholly cured, nor made as if it had not been

Memory of the Ring intermittently troubles Bilbo's mind; Frodo's wound will never really heal. 'Much that was fair and wonderful shall pass for ever out of Middle-Earth.'[51] The Elves, destroying their own power in the destruction of Sauron, dwindle and vanish from the world, leaving their influence only through the mingling of the elven with the human as in Luthien and Beren, Arwen and Aragorn. And in this blending of the higher with the lower, the immortal with the human, is Tolkien's hint of the Incarnation.

Felix culpa

In the divine plan, from the Fall arises the Redemption. In the *Genesis* account, a warning is given to the serpent: 'It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' The lamb is slain before the foundation of the world. The failure of the first Adam will be followed by the success of the second. For the unexpected happy ending – the Incarnation, or the intervention of Gollum – Tolkien coined the term 'eucatastrophe'.

The word appears in Tolkien's essay 'On Fairy-Stories', a work more complex and less accessible than its title would suggest.[52] As Tolkien puts it: 'The Evangelium has not abrogated legends; it has hallowed them, especially the "happy ending" … The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation.… To reject it leads either to sadness or to wrath.' The reaction to the Evangelium is true also of the reaction to Tolkien's own work, given the antipathy with which *The Lord of Rings* has been regarded in some quarters since its publication.

Philip Larkin quipped of the modernist novel that it had 'a beginning, a muddle and an end'.[53] Tolkien broke the modernist mould by asserting the primacy of narrative, falling foul of postmodernism in the process. No longer having recourse to grand narratives would put paid to the story of the Fall, no less than to the story of the Ring. Tolkien would no doubt have rejected the rejection of teleological narrative if he had known about it at the time of his writing; although he does show an awareness of the subjectivism that was in the wind when Aragorn says, 'Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men'.[54]

Other critical objections focused not only on the belief that there was a story to tell, but on the *kind* of story. Certainly, the opening chapter of *The Fellowship of the Ring* is not encouraging; and when readers, in defiance of critical opinion, voted

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[47] 1, p. 188.

[48] 3, p. 313.

[49] 1, p. 67.

[50] 3, p. 178.

[51] 2, p. 185.

[52] In *Tree and Leaf*, London, 1964 pp. 62ff.

[53] 'On the "Classic Formula" for a Novel', *New Fiction* No. 15, Jan. 1978.

[54] 2, p. 38.

The Lord of the Rings their favourite work in survey after survey, Germaine Greer confessed it her nightmare that Tolkien might turn out to be the most influential writer of the twentieth century.[55]

If this may be deemed a superficial reading of that in which the key note is anguish, hostility has gone beyond a dislike of the genre of fantasy, or a critique of narrative style, to a rejection of Tolkien's whole world view. As Tolkien observed in the Foreword to the Second Edition,[56] 'Some who have read the book, or at any rate have reviewed it, have found it boring, absurd or contemptible.'

Tom Shippey gives an anecdote in support of this. Following a discussion programme in which they had participated, a fellow panellist who had vilified the work confessed in the lift to loathing *The Lord of the Rings* too much ever to have read it.[57] Perhaps a merely aesthetic rejection, or perhaps Tolkien had touched some other sort of nerve.

The Fall is an unfashionable doctrine and – in an age that denies the possibility of meta narratives – a concept profoundly unpalatable to many: which is exactly to be expected if the doctrine should happen to be true. And literary explorations of the Fall cannot be exempt from the unpopularity that attends their source.

Paradise Lost has had a chequered history, and *The Lord of the Rings* is, in my view, its closest modern thematic equivalent. And what C. S. Lewis said of the one is equally applicable to the other: where it is not loved, it is deeply hated. Reactions that will last, presumably, to both works until the world is mended.

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[55] In *W: The Waterstones Magazine*, Winter/Spring 1997.

[56] 1978.

[57] 'Foreword', *J.R.R. Tolkien Author of the Century*, London, 2000, p. xxxiii.

Eviction from Eden: The Fiction of Elizabeth Bowen

Nicola Darwood

One of the main themes in of Elizabeth Bowen's fiction is that of eviction from a personal Eden, associated with a loss of innocence, particularly the loss of childhood innocence or of sexual innocence. This loss, this inability to return to the safety of childhood, can be seen as analogous to the Fall, the eviction of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Bowen refers to this eviction in her essay 'Out of a Book' published in *Orion III* in 1946, saying 'It is not only our fate but our business to lose innocence, and once we have lost that it is futile to attempt a picnic in Eden.'[1] Although writing specifically about the inability of a reader to re-read a novel once he or she has begun to think critically about that particular text, her words apply equally to the loss of innocence which occurs when a child or adolescent leaves the safety of childhood behind and moves into a world of knowledge, of adulthood. Bowen's novels make frequent, if sometimes rather oblique, references to the story of the Fall that has its origins in Genesis and this essay will identify and analyse some of these allusions. It is, perhaps, worth recalling what Bowen said about the relevance of material in novels. In her essay 'Notes on Writing a Novel' which appeared first in *Orion II* in 1945, she said: 'Relevance – the question of it – is the headache of novel-writing.'[2] She continues:

> Relevance in scene is [...] straightforward. Chiefly, the novelist must control his infatuation with his own visual power. No non-contributory image, must be the rule. [...] Irrelevance, in any part, is a cloud and a drag on, a weakener of, the novel. It dilutes meaning. Relevance crystallises meaning. The novelist's – any writer's – object is, to whittle down his meaning to the exactest and finest possible point. What, of course, is fatal is when he does not know what he does mean: he has no point to sharpen. Much irrelevance is introduced into novels by the writer's vague hope that at least some of this may turn out to be relevant, after all.[3]

Working on the assumption that Elizabeth Bowen would have tried to practise what she preached, it seems reasonable to assume that she strived to exclude irrelevancies from her own writing and that, therefore, all images and allusions have specific relevance to the novel in which they appear. However, in order to understand Bowen's use of Biblical allusion it would be useful first to ascertain Bowen's own stance on Christianity. She published relatively little on her own faith: there is an essay 'Christmas at Bowen's Court' (published in 1950) which provides a little background information about the place of religion in her childhood,[4] but it is her essay 'The Light in the Dark' (also published in 1950) which alerts us to Bowen's own notions of spirituality. In this essay she suggests that:

> The idea of Christmas is like a note struck on glass – long ago and forever. For each of us, this is the earliest memory of the soul. Day-to-day existence, as it goes on, drowns

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[1] 'Out of a Book' in Elizabeth Bowen, *Collected Impressions,* 1946, Longman Green and Co, pp. 249-263, p. 265.

[2] 'Notes on Writing a Novel' in *Collected Impressions*, pp. 264-269, p. 261.

[3] Ibid, pp. 262-263.

[4] 'Christmas at Bowen's Court' in Allan Hepburn, (ed) *People, Places, Things: Essays by Elizabeth Bowen*, Edinburgh University Press, 2008, pp. 32-37, p. 35.

so much in its clamour, deadens so many echoes – but never this. Behind our busy thoughts and distracted senses remains a silence in which, again each year, the sweet resounding ring of the note is heard.…We have expected Christmas, almost without knowing – wherever we are, wherever we turn, it claims us. The Holy Night links up all childhoods; we return to our own – to the first music, the first pictures, the first innocent and mysterious thrill and stir. […] This is a time when magic joins hands with holiness. […] As creatures, we are formed to adore, and marvel. In answer we have been given Christmas.[5]

Robert MacCarthy's essay 'Bowen Religion', originally given as an address in Farahy Church on 4 October 1992, provides further information about Bowen's faith. Brought up as a Protestant, she came to the conclusion that 'one had to look for God in one's heart, and worship him in the fastnesses of the home';[6] nevertheless, as MacCarthy notes, the Church of Ireland played a major role in her life. He suggests that Bowen 'had a real knowledge and feel for the church's liturgy in which she was a regular and frequent participant', noting that she remained 'a supporter of the continued use of the Book of Common Prayer in the face of what she describes as her 'excellent but deluded' vicar's desire to introduce the revised liturgy.'[7] This would suggest that Bowen had a strong if traditional faith, a faith which is alluded to in many of her novels.

Before turning to the representation of the Fall in Bowen's fiction, a discussion which will lead ultimately to Bowen's use of Biblical allusion in her last published novel, *Eva Trout, or Changing Scenes*, it seems appropriate to look at a number of commentaries on Genesis. Of course, there are many interpretations of the story of the Fall which have been incorporated into general understanding of this well-known episode, indeed Jasper and Prickett state that the 'story of the Fall, like a number of other Biblical myths, suffers from being too well-known, and therefore overlaid for us, even at a first reading, by multiple strata of subsequent information.'[8] This statement, of course, immediately highlights the problems faced by any scholar attempting to produce a study which focuses specifically on just one story in the Bible.

Noting that the phrase 'The Fall' 'is firmly anchored in the Christian tradition of the West,'[9] Claus Westermann suggests that 'one must be extremely careful and prudent in putting the question, 'what does the text actually say?'[10] Henri Blocher highlights one of the popular misconceptions of Genesis 3, stating that '[t]raditionally the churches, commentators and theologians entitle the third chapter of Genesis "The Fall". There is nothing in the text, however, to suggest that metaphor.'[11] Two further misconceptions that have been fuelled by more modern interpretations of the story of the Fall are identified by Jasper and Prickett. The first is that the serpent represents the Devil. Jasper and Prickett discount this reading, arguing that this identification arises mainly from Milton's *Paradise Lost*.[12] This is

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[5] 'The Light in the Dark', ibid., pp. 37-38.

[6] Quoted in Robert MacCarthy, 'Bowen Religion' in Eibhear Walshe (ed.), *Elizabeth Bowen Remembered: The Farahy Addresses*, Dublin, Four Courts Press Ltd, 1998, pp. 35-39, p. 37.

[7] Ibid, p.37.

[8] David Jasper and Stephen Prickett, 'The Fall: Genesis 3:1-13' in David Jasper and Stephen Prickett (eds.), *The Bible and Literature: A Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Limited, 1999, pp. 94-100, p. 95.

[9] Claus Westermann, *Creation*, trans. John J. Scullion, S.J., SPCK, 1974, p. 108.

[10] Ibid, p. 89.

[11] Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning*, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1984, p. 135.

[12] David Jasper and Stephen Prickett, p. 95.

a point also made by Westermann who suggests that by interpreting the serpent as the representation of Satan, the meaning of the story is 'obscured'.[13] The notion that the serpent is Satan in disguise is also dismissed by David Atkinson who suggests that this misinterpretation may arise from the Book of Revelation, which speaks of the devil as an 'ancient serpent' and that the snake in itself is not evil or a representation of the Devil, but a device which ensures that it is left to mankind to make the decisions about trust in God.[14]

Westermann highlights what he believes lies behind the story of the snake's temptation of Eve: that mankind 'is created with a strong drive to live and to know',[15] an important point to consider when reading Bowen's fiction. He continues by suggesting that by giving into temptation and eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, man's 'eyes are indeed opened and he knows something that he had not known before. [...] Man has certainly become wise; but he has paid dearly for it with what he has lost.[16]

Milton's *Paradise Lost*, according to Jasper and Prickett, also complicates the issue of when Adam and Eve compounded the sin of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil by physically consummating their relationship. Milton states that this occurred after eating the apple but before God rained down his judgement on the unhappy couple, but Jasper and Prickett note that no reference to this is made until Genesis 4:1 in which it is stated 'And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived'. They continue:

This cross-linking of sex with the Fall has, of course, an inner logic without the literal story. Unfallen humanity, so the implication runs, was destined to be immortal, and therefore, having no need of reproduction, had also no need of sex. But for most humans sex has other, less functional uses. [...] Certainly the effect of linking sex with the Fall, in both the biblical and Miltonic versions, has been to suggest that there is an inherently 'fallen', if not downright evil quality to sex. [17]

Indeed, Blocher states that to read Genesis 3 as a story which imputes that a 'sexual offence' occurred once Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree would be a misleading interpretation. Whilst St Paul might have said that Eve was seduced by the snake, the verb used has, according to Blocher, different connotations within the context of Genesis. Blocher states that 'it means to lead astray, to deceive, and we must not ourselves be deceived if some choose to translate it 'to seduce'.[18] Gerhard von Rad's discussion of the verb 'to know' in relation to the act of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil adds to our understanding of the story of Genesis 3. He says, 'so far as knowledge of good and evil is concerned, one must remember that the Hebrew *yd'* ("to know") never signifies purely intellectual knowledge, but in a much wider sense "an experiencing," a "becoming acquainted with," even an "ability". [19] He continues:

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[13] Claus Westermann, p. 92. He continues: 'The text says nothing about this, and one thereby misses the telling point which the narrator wants to make: the serpent with its cleverness is a creature of God; God himself has created this being which leads man to disobedience [...] The narrator also wants to say that it is not possible to come to terms with the origin of evil. There is no etiology of the origin of evil.' (ibid).

[14] David Atkinson, *The Message of Genesis 1-11: The dawn of creation*, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1999, p. 82.

[15] Claus Westermann, p. 93.

[16] Ibid, pp. 95-96.

[17] David Jasper and Stephen Prickett, p. 98.

[18] Henri Blocher, p. 147.

[19] Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, SCM Press Ltd, [1961], 1972, p. 89.

'Knowledge of good' should not immediately suggest a capacity for distinction within the moral sphere in a narrower sense; it certainly does not indicate the knowledge of absolute moral standards or the confrontation of man with an objective idea. [...] 'Knowledge of good' should not immediately suggest a capacity for distinction within the moral sphere in a narrower sense; it certainly does not indicate the knowledge of absolute moral standards or the confrontation of man with an objective idea.[20]

I would argue that all these readings of Genesis 3 have a direct bearing on any consideration of Bowen's allusions to this chapter of the Bible in her fiction. Within her novels, there is often a strong desire to know, and the ejection from Eden does not always come from being sexually seduced (as happens to Emmeline in *To the North*) but rather from gaining knowledge (Lois in *The Last September* or Jane in *A World of Love*). Serpent-like characters can be identified in her fiction, and references to orchards, gardens and apples fairly litter Bowen's novels.

Harriet Blodgett suggests that Bowen's novels are 'essentially Christian'. This is not, she continues, 'a completely new idea in Bowen criticism, although it is scarcely a popular one.'[21] Blodgett writes extensively about Bowen's representation of the story of Genesis, stating that '[a]pparently the myth of the Fall, informing her imagination, provided her inescapable subject.[22]

Whilst it is possible to read allusions to Genesis 3 in Bowen's fiction, I would argue that Blodgett's reading is a reductive one, as she views Bowen's fiction through a particularly narrow lens.[23] While I would contend that there are many ways in Bowen's fiction can be read, it is evident that Bowen repeatedly made use of the story of Genesis 3, however, it is not my intention here to identify allusions to this text in each and every one of her novels, rather to focus on a few specific examples.

In Bowen's third novel, *Friends and Relations*,[24] Janet's realisation of the depth of her feelings for Edward, her brother-in-law, links their relationship and that of her mother-in-law, Elfrida, and her lover, Considine, in relation to the Tree of Jesse and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Janet is forced to realise that she needs to make a choice between her marriage with Rodney and the possibility of a life with Edward but she is aware that if she chooses the latter, then the result will be chaos. For Janet, her innocence, and her Eden remain rooted in Batts Abbey, her marital home (complete with Edenic orchard) and in her marriage to Rodney, but her acknowledgement of her love for Edward appears to cast her out of that particular Eden.

When they meet in London, Edward is alarmed to discover that she has changed, the 'goodness' which he felt epitomised Janet has disappeared: '[h]er very innocence, her unguardedness, [...] seemed in their present triumphant misuse to shadow decay, so that the whole bitterness of an unfruitful autumn was present in this belated flowering.'[25] By deciding to cross the divide between

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Harriet Blodgett, *Patterns of Reality: Elizabeth Bowen's Novels*, The Hague, Moulton & Co NV, 1975, pp. 8-9.

[22] Harriet Blodgett, pp. 19-20.

[23] Although Blodgett somewhat grudgingly concedes that Bowen might have had other influences, such as Jungian psychoanalysis, Greek mythology and the writing of other authors such as Stendhal, she foregrounds her theory that Bowen was, above all else, a Christian writer, writing about Christian issues.

[24] Elizabeth Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, Vintage, [1931], 1999 (hereafter referred to as *FR*).

[25] *FR*, pp. 119-120.

innocence and experience Janet is unable, to revert to Bowen's image, 'to attempt a picnic in Eden'.

In *To the North*,[26] Bowen utilises the Modernist motif of the city as a corrupting force, with London and Paris as the settings for Emmeline's loss of innocence and 'Farraways', Lady Waters' country house, representing, according to Hermione Lee, 'a garden of Eden for Emmeline'.[27] Residing in London, Markie, the instrument of Emmeline's fall from grace and, arguably her eviction from Eden, is described by the narrator as someone whose features are shaped by 'malevolence', with a 'mobile, greedy, intelligent mouth and the impassive bright quick-lidded eyes of an agreeable reptile'[28] – the reptilian reference can, of course, be considered analogous with the serpent in the Garden of Eden who tempts Eve. The actual point of Emmeline's passive submission to Markie's will takes place in Paris: ostensibly narrating the evening spent wandering in the gardens of Paris, the following passage explores the effect of Markie's seduction after an afternoon of 'suspended crisis'.[29] There was

> a slackening of tension, the gentleness of the bemused afternoon – in which like someone who has lost his memory he was tentative and dependent and she, like someone remembering everything, overcome – carried them on to night with the smoothness of water, quickening to the fall's brink with a glassy face.[30]

One might assume that Bowen equated loss of innocence with the acquisition of sexual knowledge, and indeed Blodgett suggests that 'Miss Bowen's novels implicitly urge that sexual activity be restricted to the fully committed marriage partner'.[31] Whilst 1930s society might well have believed that any sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage immediately classed a woman as 'fallen', it is instead the Biblical connotation that equates a specific loss of innocence with the original Fall – that is, the exercise of free will and subsequent eviction from the Garden of Eden – that should be used to examine Emmeline's situation. Emmeline's belief that she should be considered 'ruined' is evident in an exchange between Emmeline and Markie when Markie expresses his concern for the future. Stating that he is 'alarmed' and that they '*are* riding for a fall', Emmeline asks 'How, a fall?' to which Markie responds: 'Oh, I don't know … But it will be the devil.'[32]

A sense of Eden can also be found in Bowen's fifth novel *The House in Paris.* Here however, Eden is presented as a place threatened by outside influences. Geographically, Eden can be found in Ireland, Bowen's childhood home and the land to which Karen flees whilst she is considering the possibility of marriage to Ray. The apparently idyllic nature of County Cork provides a stark contrast to the 'hellish' appearance of the eponymous house in Paris with its dark hall, its walls covered in 'a red flock wallpaper' which has 'stripes so artfully shadowed as to appear bars', and a hall with no windows and therefore no natural light.[33] Commenting on the duality of Ireland as a place of Eden, Lee states, 'As usual, Ireland stands for a lost innocence. But the country's deceptively peaceful look […]

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[26] *To the North*, Vintage, [1933], 1999, (hereafter referred to as *TN*).

[27] Hermione Lee, *Elizabeth Bowen*, Vintage, [1981],1999, p. 75.

[28] *TN*, p. 7.

[29] *TN*, p. 140.

[30] *TN*, p. 141.

[31] Blodgett, p. 65.

[32] *TN*, p. 184.

[33] Elizabeth Bowen, *The House in Paris*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, [1935], 1976, pp. 23-24.

is an image for all quietness at risk'.[34]

In her portrayal of Robert Kelway's house in her wartime novel, *The Heat of the Day*, Bowen explores the notion of both a physical and psychological Eden. Although there are few direct references to Genesis 3, in this novel Bowen writes against the notion of Georgian pastoral in her exploration of the eviction from Eden. The pastoral tradition would suggest that Robert's country house, Holme Dene, should be read as a paradigm for 'Britishness', representing an Edenic, traditional, conservative way of life. However, although its name is in itself Edenic (Dene being, of course, an anagram of Eden), Holme Dene with its 'CONCEALED ENTRANCE'[35] and 'betrayed garden',[36] does not provide the sense of an Eden needed by the traitor Robert Kelway.

Whereas *The Heat of the Day* provides few analogies to Genesis 3:1-11, references to these Biblical verses are very apparent in *A World of Love* and *The Little Girls*. For example, Dinah's cottage garden at Applegate in *The Little Girls* is suggestive of an Eden – the very name of the cottage is synonymous with the first garden, the apple being generally depicted as the fruit that Eve ate before she and Adam were cast adrift. However, as von Rad notes, there is no direct reference in the text of Genesis 3 as to the species of fruit. He suggests that the traditional notion of the apple tree in fact arises from Latin Christianity, a notion which may have been associated with the Latin word *malus* ("bad") with *malum* ("apple") – it is an interpretation that persists today.[37] Once an orchard, the garden at Applegate still retains vestiges of its past, with trees that are '[t]wisted, old but only too fruitful still'.[38] As a result of the hard work of Dinah and Frank, the garden continues to bear fruit, although rather than the fruits of the past, it now provides 'Provençal and other exotic vegetables, the 'musts' of the better cookery book'.[39] Whilst their cultivation can be seen to reflect a desire to become self-sufficient, such labour could also be read as an attempt to recreate Eden, a lost childhood, as does Dinah's recreation of her childish burial of artefacts.

The contrasting portrayal of two other gardens associated with Dinah provides an analogy for the loss of innocence both of the young girls and society. Described in contrast to the 'unenchanted' land surrounding the Burkin-Jones' rented house,[40] the pre-war garden of Mrs. Piggott (Dinah's mother) is represented as a garden of Eden, but one which, literally, has gone to seed. Although the gardens of *The Little Girls* provide a geographical location for Eden, it is the psychological realisation that Dinah is unable to return to the Edenic existence of her childhood which is, perhaps, more effective. In an echo of the story of Good Friday, when Dinah disinters a casket buried with her friends when they were children and finds that the contents of the casket have disappeared, Dinah suffers a nervous breakdown which leads to the realisation that she can no longer 'picnic in Eden'.

If *The Little Girls* provides a physical embodiment of the Garden of Eden, *A World of Love* supplies the tempter. The younger sister, Maud, is one of Bowen's most dislikeable children whose malevolence is alluded to early in the novel when she is found in the kitchen collecting eggs. Her mother finds Maud's consumption

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[34] Hermione Lee, p. 89.

[35] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Heat of the Day*, Vintage, [1948], 1998 (hereafter referred to as *HD*), p. 105.

[36] *HD*, p. 121.

[37] Gerhard von Rad, 1961, p. 91.

[38] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Little Girls*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1963:1982 (hereafter referred to as *LG*), p. 17.

[39] *LG*, pp. 17-18.

[40] *LG*, p. 112.

of eggs quite abhorrent, a disgust which she voices to her daughter, berating her for 'sucking them like a serpent',[41] an allusion, perhaps, to the serpent in the original Garden of Eden. Not only does Maud like to suck the contents of the eggs, she collects the 'chipped-off drippings' from candles which she states are 'useful for images' (*WL*, p.23), a pastime which suggests the making of wax voodoo dolls and the practice of sticking pins in the dolls in order to cause pain. Not averse to quoting from the Bible to support her arguments, Maud's interest in the supernatural, highlighted by her constant, but invisible, companion Gay David and adherence to rituals, add Gothic elements to the novel, Gothic elements that can be seen again in *Eva Trout, or Changing Scenes,* Bowen's last completed novel, published in 1968. However, as will be seen, Bowen manipulates these allusions in a way which might lead the reader to question Bowen's own interpretation of the story of the Fall.

While Lee may denigrate the novel's plotting as 'clumsy',[42] I would argue that, as with her earlier novels, Bowen creates an intricate web in *Eva Trout*, a web which draws the reader into the world of the eponymous heroine and one which raises many questions in relation to knowledge, innocence, sexuality, passion and identity and takes the discussion of these issues found in her earlier novels a step further. Eva, of course, is the main protagonist of the novel who apparently stumbles through life, always seeking a home, a place to be, a chance to create an Eden which she never knew as a child.

I am not alone in my reading of this novel as one which is imbued with Christian references generally, and references to Genesis 3:1-11 specifically.

As Neil Corcoran points out, the very title of the first section of *Eva Trout*[43] is 'Genesis'.[44] This title can, of course, be interpreted in more than one way, first as a reference to the first book of the Bible, and second to the fact that this part of the novel narrates Eva's beginnings.

To add to the title of the first part of the novel we have Bowen's naming of her protagonist, Eva. Traditionally, Adam's wife is known as Eve. Named by God after she and Adam have eaten from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, she is called *Hawwah*. Westermann translates this as Eva, the 'mother of the living', and states that her name is one which reflects her ability to give birth to life itself.[45] Von Rad states that '[t]here can hardly be any doubt that the narrator [of Genesis] connected *hawwā* (Eve) very closely with the Hebrew word *hay, hayyā* = life'.[46] It is perhaps ironic therefore that Eva's son Jeremy is not her natural son, but one adopted through nefarious means whilst Eva is in America. However, Corcoran suggests that Eva 'may also be seen as the figure of what Catholic theology has called the 'second Eve', the Virgin Mary, since she is, in a sense, and remains, a virgin mother.'[47] The obvious difference, of course, is that the Virgin Mary gives birth to her son, whereas Eva buys her child. Eva's surname, Trout, also merits consideration in any discussion of Bowen's use of Biblical analogies as it is suggestive of *icthus*, the symbol used by early Christians as a secret sign of their

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[41] Elizabeth Bowen, *A World of Love*, Vintage, [1955], 1999 (hereafter referred to as *WL*), p. 22.

[42] Hermione Lee, p. 200.

[43] Elizabeth Bowen, *Eva Trout, or Changing Scenes*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, [1968],1982 (hereafter referred to as *ET*).

[44] Neil Corcoran, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Enforced Return*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 136. Corcoran provides a comprehensive list of the Biblical allusions in *Eva Trout.*

[45] Claus Westermann, p. 104.

[46] Gerhard Von Rad, p. 96.

[47] Neil Corcoran, pp. 136-137.

religious beliefs. *Icthus*, whilst being the Greek word for fish, is also an acrostic for Jesus (*Iesous*) Christ (*Christos*), God (*Theou*), Son (*Uiou*) and Saviour (*Soter*).[48]

As already argued, in Bowen's fiction when innocence is lost, a person is cast out of his or her Eden. But the question which arises is what does Eva do to be ejected from Eden, for it is, arguably, the actions of her parents which have placed her in limbo. With no childhood home with which to associate with an Edenic existence, Eva's place of safety, her only notion of a sense of Eden, is represented by the castle in which her first school is housed. Eva's fascination with the castle, and her desire to return to it and claim it as the place in which she would have spent her honeymoon, suggests that she might have considered it her particular Eden, albeit perhaps a false one, but it is a place in which she felt relatively safe and secure. It was, after all, the first place in which 'after the malicious lying of her misleading dreams in which she was no one, nowhere, she knew herself to be *here*'[49].

The notion that Eva has been cast out of Eden (whether by her own actions or the actions of her parents) is explicitly revisited in Professor Holman's letter in which he refers first to the apple Eva eats and then to the loss of her apple, '[e]scaping from others in the bag it cleared the edge of the seat the bag was on and symbolically bounded towards me across the aisle';[50] Eva's propensity for eating apples can, of course, be directly associated with Eve's act in the original Garden of Eden as can Henry's plea of mitigation: 'The woman tempted me' to which his father replies, 'Adam […] was a cad'.[51]

Eva's later reliance on the presence of her son to provide her with a sense of her own identity is emphasised during her exchange with Jeremy's sculpture teacher who, in another reference to Genesis 3, is known as Miss Applewhite. Following Jeremy's disappearance and becoming distraught at the thought of her loss,

> Eva, faltering in every part of her body, became afraid: perceiving some sort of ottoman or divan she got to where it was and let herself drop. The thing was against a wall, to which she was able to turn her face, at the same time muffling her mouth with both hands. Then, gradually loosening her fingers, she said between them: 'If he is in the past, there is no future. He was to be everything I shall not be.' (ET, p.199)

For Iseult, Eva's teacher, the narrator suggests that her fall from grace, her ejection from Eden, is irrevocably bound up by her relationship with Eva. When she first meets Eva she is a young teacher:

> At that time, that particular spring at Lumleigh, the young teacher was in a state of grace, of illumined innocence, that went with the realisation of her powers. They transcended her; they filled her with awe and wonder, and the awe and wonder gave her a kind of purity, such as one may see in a young artist. No idea that they could be power, with all that boded, had so far tainted or flawed them for her. About Iseult Smith, up to the time she encountered Eva and, though discontinuously, for some time after, there was something of Nature before the Fall. There was not yet harm in Iseult Smith – what first implanted it? Of Eva she was to ponder, later: 'She did not know what I was doing; but did I?'.[52]

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[48] http://www.planeticthus.com/help-center/about-ichthus.aspx, accessed 1/11/09.

[49] *ET*, p. 53.

[50] *ET*, p. 125. Corcoran mistakenly suggests that the apples belonged to the Professor (Neil Corcoran, p. 136).

[51] *ET*, p. 114.

[52] *ET*, p. 61.

Arguably, though, Iseult's fall from grace can also be attributed to the passion she has for her husband, Eric. Indeed, as she says to Constantine, 'Passion makes for mistakes – one can throw one's life away'.[53] This is a passion, an acquisition of sexual knowledge, which led her to leave teaching and marry, setting up home in the middle of a plum orchard, Eric's own dream of Eden. In an ironic twist, the business fails not because of his loss of innocence but because of his own lack of experience.

Whilst it is not, perhaps, Eva's own actions which have cast her out of Eden, the actions of others – her parents, Iseult, Jeremy, Eric – ensure that Eva is never able to attain a sense of Eden, to find a place to be. At the moment of her greatest happiness, she is the victim of matricide – a melodramatic way, perhaps, for Bowen to show us that '[i]t is not only our fate but our business to lose innocence, and once we have lost that it is futile to attempt a picnic in Eden.'[54]

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[53] *ET*, p. 42.
[54] Elizabeth Bowen, *Collected Impressions*, 1946, p. 265.

Figures of Evil: Tim Winton's *The Turning* and the Bible

Roberta Kwan

In the title story of *The Turning,* Tim Winton's 2004 collection of seventeen interconnected stories, three of the characters talk about 'whether people [are] basically good or evil at heart'.[1] The narrative contemplates timeless questions concerning evil, its origins, who is responsible for it and how it might be overcome. Such concerns are implied and obliquely pondered through stories of lives upon which the imprint of evil – death, accidents, betrayal, failure, addiction, estrangement, abuse, corruption, obsession, war and more – is evident.

Winton draws upon his native Western Australia as the setting for most of his fiction. Most of the stories in *The Turning* are set in or affected by the events occurring within one of two fictional, small, working-class, coastal towns that feature in earlier work: twelve relate to Angelus in the south-west and three to White Point, part-way up the coast. Angelus is racked by a history of whaling (a major theme in *Shallows*) and, in *The Turning,* police corruption. Winton's characters are working-class and unrefined, ordinary strugglers and stragglers often leading, in Thoreauvian terms, 'lives of quiet desperation'. Winton narrates his characters' difficult lives using language that combines poetic elegance with the inelegant idiom of the working-class. Throughout his work there is an abundance of Biblical allusions and images that reflect his upbringing within Protestant Christianity; he states that 'the Scriptures were very influential in my upbringing'.[2] The self-acknowledged influence of William Faulkner (among other Southern American authors) is apparent in Winton's work.[3] Of particular relevance to *The Turning* is Winton's Faulknerian insistence on the importance of the past, with frequent allusions to the notion that: 'The past is never dead. It's not even past' (*Requiem for a Nun*). Winton's mid-life work (he was 44 when *The Turning* was published) focuses on middle-aged characters, and rummages around in their pasts to gain insight into the present.

The majority of the stories in *The Turning* feature characters who were children in the 60s, adolescents in the 70s and middle-aged at the chronological end-point of the overall narrative (paralleling Winton's own life). It is through the unfolding of these fictional lives that a narrative of evil can be discerned within the structure of the collection. The shape of Winton's narrative contains echoes of the Bible, arguably the archetypal narrative of evil both because of its truth-claim and its seminal influence on the imagery, archetypes, themes and structure of the story-telling of Western culture. Michael Edwards contends that, '… if the Biblical reading of life is in any way true, literature will be drawn strongly towards it. Eden, Fall, Transformation, in whatever guise, will emerge in literature as everywhere else.'[4] Similarly, Paul Ricœur argues for the pre-eminence of what he calls the 'Adamic myth' about the beginning and end of evil.[5] *The Turning* is predominantly drawn towards the Fall and its consequences, the Adamic myth, but not without glimpses of Eden and Transformation.

1   Tim Winton, *The Turning,* Pan Macmillan, 2004, p. 149.
2   H.A. Willis, 'According to Winton', *Eureka Street*, 4, 7 (1994), pp. 20-25, p. 20.
3   See, for example, Willis, ibid.
4   Michael Edwards, *Towards a Christian Poetics*, Macmillan, 1984, p. 12.
5   Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil,* Harper & Row, 1967.

Winton's narrative may be thought of as alluding to a prelapsarian quality of *grandeur*/greatness (using the Pascalian terminology which Edwards adopts) in the childhood of his characters. In 'Aquifer', the earliest years (the 1960s) of the unnamed, middle-aged narrator were marked by trust and idealism, symbolised by his acceptance of the authority and irrefutability of the 1194 telephone time-announcer ('He sounded like he knew what he was on about ...' (p. 40)), and realised in his obedience to his parents' instructions to stay away from the local swamp. The historical events from this era included in the narrative augment this tone of nostalgic grandeur, with references to the opening up of new suburbs in Perth ('Our homes were new.... They were as fresh as we imagined the country itself to be.'(p. 38)) and the 1969 moon landing (p. 44).

Cosmologically, the Bible records, in Genesis 3, an historical Fall[6] that displaced the trajectory of the entire creation from *grandeur* to *misère*/wretchedness – Pascal's summation of the fallen world. Similarly, *The Turning* asserts that as they moved beyond early childhood many of its characters experienced some sort of historical rupture, or a more ongoing entanglement with evil, located in specific times and events, including real historical ones, resulting in personal *misère*. Winton uses a Fall-like language of temptation to describe the locus of this rupture for the narrator of 'Aquifer'. The swamp was a 'hissing maze' (p. 43) and 'the wild beyond the fences and the lawns and sprinklers was too much for me.... I surrendered to the swamp without warning' (p. 43). The narrator's 'Fall' was concomitant with growing doubts about the 1194 time-announcer and the orderliness of time, reflecting the distrust of the first humans. 'I was beginning to have second thoughts about the 1194 man.... Time wasn't straight and neither was the [1194] man ...' (p. 43). It also brought him into contact with death as the consequence of evil. It was at the forbidden swamp that, at the age of 10, he witnessed the drowning of his foe, Alan Mannering, and from that time was haunted by both his own silence about what he had seen and a consciousness of the inevitability and pervasiveness of death. Suggestive of God's judgement of Adam after the Fall in Genesis 3:19 – 'for dust you are, and to dust you will return' – the narrator began to perceive a material connection between the living and the dead, especially the boy whose death he had never publicly acknowledged, such that '[e]very time a mosquito bit I thought involuntarily of some queasy transaction with fair, silent, awful Alan Mannering. If I'm honest about it, I think I still do even now' (p. 49). By mid-life he resignedly recognises that his past, attached to the irresistible magnetism of the historical universality of death, was not something from which he could simply detach himself, concluding, in language imitative of Faulkner: 'the past is in us, and not behind us. Things are never over' (p. 53).

In the many stories focusing on his adolescent years, Vic Lang, the chief protagonist in the collection, observes and experiences profound pain and evil, including thwarted and obsessive love, the deaths of his infant sister and fellow school students, the increasing impact of police corruption and ensuing drug trafficking in his town of Angelus, and his father, Bob's, turn to alcoholism and eventual abandonment of the family due to an inability to cope as the only honest policeman in the police force. The Vietnam War is alluded to several times throughout the narrative, with the implication that it both reflects and contributes to Vic's experience of evil. In considering the course of his life his wife, Gail, suggests a connection with the enduring magnetism of 'victims' for Vic: 'Perhaps you could put Vic's fascination down to the times, Vietnam in shrieking flames on TV

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[6]   Note the emphasis in Romans 5:12-19 on the one man through whom sin entered the world whom Paul juxtaposes with the one man who brought justification for sinners – the historical man, Jesus Christ. 'One' (*heis*) is used twelve times in these eight verses.

every night. That naked burning girl running down the road over and over again' ('Damaged Goods', p. 58). The significance of these experiences is highlighted in 'Defender' – set at the chronological end of the book's narrative – when Gail points out: 'Do you realize that every vivid experience in your life comes from your adolescence? ... You're trapped in it.' (p. 302) At this point Vic is middle-aged and on the verge of physical and mental breakdown through, as Winton intimates in an interview, a narcissistic obsession with his own victimhood.[7]

It is significant that within the Biblical narrative evil entered the creation after God had declared it 'very good'. Therefore, Genesis 1-3 sets up, in Ricoeur's words, 'a *radical* origin of evil distinct from the more *primordial* origin of the goodness of things' (p. 233, his italics). As such, evil is fundamentally defined relative to good – as fallenness. Such a definition has at least three implications. Firstly, it explains why 'evil' can be used broadly to describe all phenomena that are not good and hence fallen – including sin, suffering, death and, of particular importance in literature, the fallenness of language. All four instances of evil are evident in the immediate post-Fall narrative in Genesis 3 and 4, and can be found in the narrative of *The Turning*. In particular, the weaving of evil into the fabric of language can be seen, firstly, in the disjunction between Winton's own mastery of language and the wretchedness of his characters – Winton's prose combines witty, eloquent, lyrical language with gritty, sombre themes; and secondly, in the way he follows the shape of the Biblical narrative in both his and his characters' language. Boner McPharlin (in 'Boner McPharlin's Moll') is Angelus' petty criminal, a somewhat simple-minded teenager who is preyed upon by corrupt police officers, becoming their drug mule. He is visited in hospital by the story's narrator, Jackie, after he is found beaten up. From earlier stories, the reader knows that his beating was at the hands of the police. Jackie does not know this, but for the first time in their relationship, the normally silent Boner attempts to communicate with her through speech.

> My mother, he murmured, my mother was like a picture, kinda, real pretty.... She had big hands all hard and black from grubbin spuds. I remember. When I was little, when I was sick, when she rubbed me back, in bed, and her hands, you know, all rough and gentle like a cat's tongue, rough and gentle. Fuck. Spuds. Always bent down over spuds, arms in the muck, rain runnin off em, him and her. Sky like an army blanket. (p. 272)

When Boner, whose life is desperately wretched, finally narrates his own story he begins, not with the immediate evil circumstances, but with his childhood that contained happy memories. Winton evokes a profound sense of nostalgia and poignancy through his descriptive language and syntax – his use of multiple clauses, especially in the fourth sentence, suggests unharried, halcyon peace, as do the similes. The imagery of the army blanket and the cat's tongue, together with the rough vernacular of working-class Australia, depict the goodness of a mother's love in the midst of the hardships of rural life. Jackie responds to this language. She perceives significance in Boner's words, meaning behind his narrative, which she attempts to discover. 'She's … gone, your mum?' (p. 272) Both Winton's language and what it describes reflect where Edwards considers literature to begin: 'in what remains of the Edenic experience, in this wonder, ... this need to praise the innumerable riches of our condition, which lie at the origin of so many works … in

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[7] Janet Hawley, 'Where do I go from here?', *Good Weekend*, *The* Age, 25 September 2004, pp. 22-24, 26, 29.

the praise of language itself.'[8]

However, language and literature did not escape the Fall. The corruption of language affects the literature that uses it to create new worlds that are also, invariably, fallen. Fallenness asserts its dominance in the next paragraph of Boner's narrative as Jackie and the reader discover that his mother was probably murdered by his father. 'I come in and he's bent down over her, hand in her, blanket across her throat, eyes round, veins screamin in her neck and she sees me not a word sees me and I'm not sayin a word.' (p. 272) Winton's language has changed to mirror the brutality of the scene. The syntax conveys an urgency and confusion, the imminence of danger, through rapid, disjointed clauses. The blanket becomes literal, and the only imagery highlights a reversal consequent to fallenness – it should be vocal chords that scream, not veins. The means of communication in Boner's world has been infiltrated by fallenness: human touch is perverted into the service of evil; similar to the experience of the narrator of 'Aquifer', silence no longer conveys peace but anguish and fear – indeed, for Boner it becomes dangerous to speak. Moreover, Boner's temporarily-harnessed ability to communicate verbally disintegrates, matching the alienation that is part of the fallout of the act. Jackie's comprehension flounders: 'I couldn't make out much of what he was saying' (p. 272). The nexus between narratives of the fallen world and a fallen language result in an inevitable gulf, a disconnect between words and reality. As Edwards writes, literature 'soon meets a fallen language and a fallen world, problematic and unfortunate relationships among words, beings and things' (2007, p. 8). Despite Winton's skilful portrayal of the horror of the situation, there is a limit – he cannot completely place Jackie or the reader into the room, into Boner's psyche. There is a loneliness in the experience of evil that words cannot bridge. This loneliness expands in subsequent paragraphs as evil, especially Boner's betrayal by the police, dominates his narrative and becomes further entwined with language. Boner's psychological confusion and despair is reflected in Winton's use of increasingly obfuscated, disorderly and crude language, such that his attempt to communicate becomes meaningless to Jackie. 'He began to cry then. A nurse came in and said maybe I should go. Boner never said so much again in one spate – not to me, anyway. I couldn't make head nor tail of it …'. (p. 273)

A second implication of a Biblical conception of evil is that it elucidates the dialectic between what Edwards notes as a person's first 'true' nature (*grandeur*) and his/her second 'fallen' nature (*misère*). This dialectic is immediately invoked by the title of *The Turning*. The motif of turning is prevalent throughout the Biblical narrative. Its predominant use renders it synonymous with repentance – turning back to God. However, the motif is also used to describe a turning away from God to evil (see, for example, Psalm 14:1-3 and 53:1-3; Jeremiah 3:19, 32:40 and 34:16; and Romans 3:12). The Romans and Psalm references, which are closely linked – Romans 3:12 quotes Psalm 14:1-3 and 53:1-3 – confer a universality to this turning, thus alluding to the initial turn of humanity at the Fall. Augustine makes this explicit: 'when the will abandons what is above itself, and turns to what is lower, it becomes evil – not because that is evil to which it turns, but because the turning itself is wicked.'[9] At the Fall, evil was incorporated into the human will when it turned from God, when it attempted to subvert the good will of God and assert its own autonomy; marking the birth of the second human nature.

Winton uses the language of turning to highlight instances of the dialectic.

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[8] Michael Edwards, 'Lunar Shadows: Reflections on Literary Criticism', *The Glass,* 19, Spring 2007, p. 7.
[9] Augustine, *City of God,* edited by Philip Schaff, translated by Rev. Marcus Dods, T & T Clark, 1886, p. 369.

In the title story, Raelene, the main protagonist, contemplates the wretchedness of her abusive husband Max. '[H]is mouth was turning down at the sides like a man disappointed. Raelene couldn't pin down when it was that Max turned sour' (p. 137). From the perspective of mid-life, Jackie, at the conclusion of 'Boner McPharlin's Moll', looks back with bitterness and regret upon her adolescence and the plan of the corrupt Angelus police officers to make her Boner's unwitting moll. 'They'd turned me. They played with me, set me against him to isolate him completely. Boner was their creature' (p. 292).

These two examples draw attention to a key moral and philosophical dilemma in deliberations about evil – the question of responsibility. Is evil freely enacted or determined? The implication of the text is that Max is responsible for his own turning, whereas Jackie apportions at least some blame for her turning to forces beyond her control. The controversial doctrine of original sin – '*peccatum originalis*, the belief that we arrive in this world predisposed to wrongdoing'[10], derived from the Biblical narrative, engages with this question. It contains four main propositions to which there are allusions in *The Turning*: firstly, sin is universal – all people sin in all aspects of their lives; secondly, sin is inherent in a person's nature and present from birth; thirdly, the sinful nature is inherited; and fourthly, sin has an historical origin in the unique sin of Adam.[11]

I Believe in Original Sin

Winton subscribes to this doctrine. In his 1994 interview with H.A. Willis he states: 'I still hold to the idea of original sin. I just can't see it as avoidable' (p. 24). He continues with his definition of original sin, which iterates two of the propositions. 'I think [original sin is] the flaw in our nature. I think it's demonstrable, it's witnessable every day. You are hard pressed to find somebody who doesn't have those kinds of signs of the flaw in them' (p. 24). 'Nature' highlights the inherentness of original sin; 'our' its universality.

The inevitability of humans enacting evil renders the attribution of responsibility problematic. The Biblical narrative affirms *both* the necessity of evil in the fallen world and affirms human responsibility: the co-existence of the two human natures means the bondage of human beings to evil is attributed to the will and not to 'a metaphysical definition of humanness' (Blocher, p. 100). Moreover, essential humanness is not lost – even after the Fall humanity retains the image of God, Pascal's *grandeur* (Gen 9:6). Therefore, although human beings will, as a result of their second nature, participate in evil, they are still free at each instance of 'temptation' to choose to act in accord with their first nature. The fact that each human being does and will choose evil, indeed has his/her will bent to do so, is the 'tragic necessity' (Blocher, p. 101) of original sin, but it does not equate to fatalism. Ultimately, people are held responsible for their *own* real acts of evil. The universality of death – the punishment for sin – is evidence that 'all sinned' (Romans 5:12).

The complexities of the doctrine reveal themselves in Winton's acute and realistic portrayal of the human condition, reflecting Veronica Brady's description of Winton's understanding of human existence as 'polyphonic rather than monological'[12]. Brady argues that in *Cloudstreet* this rich multiplicity arises from the confidence Winton gains from the Christian framework of the novel, which can also be said of *The Turning*. As its narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that all

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[10] Alan Jacobs, *Original Sin: A Cultural History*, SPCK, 2008, p. xvii.

[11] For greater detail, see: Henri Blocher, *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle,* Apollos, 1997.

[12] Veronica Brady, 'Looking into the light: Tim Winton's interleaved continuing place', *Barcelona English Language and Literature Studies*, 5, (1994), 9-17, p. 13.

the characters are of necessity caught up in evil, possessing a certain solidarity in evil. For example, the evil enacted by the corrupt Angelus police officers unites the characters across several narratives. In 'Small Mercies' – told through the perspective of Peter Dyson by a third person narrator – the drugs trafficked by the police have debilitated his former girlfriend Fay Keenan. Jackie's recognition of the role of the police in her and Boner's demise has been noted. The damage done to the Lang family is narrated from multiple perspectives across the collection, including the infrequently used second-person narrative mode in 'Long, Clear View'. This story situates the reader within the mind of Vic as a 14-year-old, absorbing his visceral reaction, his deep unease with the malevolence he feels and experiences in Angelus, resulting in him keeping vigilance with his father's shotgun. Evil is indeed a tragic necessity. There is causation, mitigating circumstances and much undeserved suffering; Winton's characters are not totally, existentially free.

But this necessity is not fatalistic. Winton does not morally absolve his characters or lapse into reductionistic nihilism. His narrative highlights the multifariousness of human evil through his non-chronological ordering of the stories, and use of different character viewpoints and variety of narrative perspectives facilitated by the short story format. Consequently, there is a continual shift in perspective regarding the locus of responsibility for evil. The overall effect is the assertion that, in addition to their solidarity in victimhood, the characters are also united by their own enactment of evil or involvement in it. Interwoven in the narrative is an awareness of the flawed or second nature of the characters. Winton's realistic writing of what Andrew Riemer describes as his 'characters' fundamental humanity'[13] ensures that their flawed natures become increasingly palpable as the narrative progresses. Thus, the collection asks searching questions such as whether Jackie's teenage vanity contributed to Boner's ruin (pp. 291-92), the extent to which Peter and Fay's obsessive adolescent relationship damaged them and contributed to Fay's drug addiction, and whether a positive difference in the outcomes of many lives would have ensued if Bob had been courageous enough to leave the police force or report his misgivings. As noted, Winton portrays Vic as:

one of those characters I keep seeing, who are obsessed with their own problems, to a narcissistic degree. They are so fascinated by their own problems, they become their own project. It becomes a strange sort of pride to carry their wounds.[14]

Each character's choices and actions add to the collective evil in a fictional world that resonates deeply with ours because of the *misère* and evil found in both.

A third implication of the Biblical conception of evil is that, in Henri Blocher's words, it 'dispels as a subtle and pernicious lie the symmetrical opposition of good and evil in dualistic systems' (p. 92), and thus the Bible subordinates evil, hinting at the possibility of its eventual subjugation and destruction. There is sure hope for humanity because evil is subordinate to good. A second turn for fallen humanity – more prevalent in the Biblical narrative – propels that narrative beyond fallenness. The Bible asserts that the 'Christological turn'[15] – the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – ensures the destruction of all evil and the re-creation

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[13] Andrew Riemer, 'The Turning', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 2004, http://www.smh.com.au/news/Books/The-Turning/2004/10/01/1096527917643.html# accessed 9 Jan 2010.

[14] In Janet Hawley, 'Where do I go from here?', *Good Weekend*, *The* Age, 25 September 2004, pp. 22-24.v

[15] Paul Ricœur, 'Evil, a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53, 4, (1985), 635-648, p. 644, uses this term to refer to Karl Barth's attempts to think Biblically about the problem of evil.

of all who have turned to God through Christ. Winton alludes to this Christian notion of turning in his epigraph – an extract from T.S. Eliot's *Ash Wednesday*, in which the speaker struggles with both a desire to turn from the world to God and an inability to turn because of human frailty. Although the emphasis of *The Turning* is on the characters' fallenness and wretchedness, it is a wretchedness that is acutely aware of a lost greatness and, to a lesser extent, the possibility of renewal and re-creation. There are suggestions of a second turning which echo the archetypal Biblical transformation.

Such an echo resounds in the name 'Angelus', with its Biblical roots in Luke 1:26-38. The 'angelus' brings Mary the mysterious, joyous and momentous news that she had been chosen to bear and give birth to the divine Son, the everlasting Messianic ruler. Without space to elaborate, it is worth noting the seemingly incongruous disparity between the Incarnation, the turning point of God's offer of renewal and re-creation to fallen humanity, with the wretched town of Angelus. In the title story, the divine Son, and specifically his sacrificial death and gift of forgiveness, is explicitly linked with the spiritual renewal of born-again Christians Sherry and Dan, referred to by Raelene in the phrase 'when you turned' (p. 153).

> Raelene warmed to the idea of Jesus and the business of forgiveness. The word *sacrifice* gave her goose bumps.… She could see for herself what all this guff had done for Sherry and Dan; it was the thing that lit them up (p. 149, Winton's italics).

Implicitly, the idea of sacrifice resulting in re-creation is surprisingly embodied in the character of Boner McPharlin. Within the narrative, Boner's tragic, mid-life death becomes the catalyst for Jackie's self-awareness, which dawns at his funeral.

> As the coffin sank, the sigh I let out was almost a moan. The sound of recognition, the sound of too late.… My life, my history, the sense I had of myself, were no longer solid. All I knew was this, that I hadn't been Boner's friend at all. Hadn't been for years.… Just the outline now, but I was beginning to see. ('Boner McPharlin's Moll', pp. 291- 92.)

The narrative suggests that an outcome of Boner's death is hope for Jackie's personal turning. She was beginning to 'see'. Edwards points out how 1 Corinthians 13:12 illustrates the difference in seeing, and hence understanding, between the present fallen world and the future, re-created world. Now, when a person 'looks', reality is self-focused and poorly perceived. But there is hope of a future age when one's view of reality will be perspicacious, 'face to face' without any distortion or obstruction. Within the Biblical narrative, this transformation is effected by the Christological turn and a personal turning to God. Within Jackie's personal narrative, Boner's death provides the catalyst for the possibility of change (although there is no suggestion that this equates to Christian conversion). In this way, it follows the pattern of the archetypal death of Christ. Through the suffering of one, there is hope for others.

In the narratives of the Bible and *The Turning* this hope is signified by the word 'new'. The Biblical narrative describes the person who has turned to God as 'a new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15), foreshadowing for that person the guarantee of participation in a day when all things will be new (Revelation 21:5) as all signs of the Fall are destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:52-53). When Raelene finds out that Sherry and Dan are born-again Christians she experiences great angst as she oscillates between wanting to embrace their Biblically-based faith and rejecting it

and them. She struggles to the end of 'The Turning' when, through the unorthodox medium of a Jesus snowdome, she turns and experiences the hint of a transcendent faith, so that in the midst of an episode of brutality from Max she knew '[s]he was safe from him [Max] now, not safe from tonight but gone from him altogether.… Everything was *new*' (pp. 160-161, my italics). This transcendence is accompanied by a 'spill of light' (p. 160), an image Winton frequently uses to signify spiritual transformation. Although not the final story in the collection, Raelene's spiritual transformation represents the end-point of the narrative of evil in *The Turning*. Eden, Fall and Transformation have all emerged in Winton's realistic and evocative narrative of human beings struggling within the existential fact of their and the world's evil. Although well-entrenched in evil, *The Turning* is a narrative with a vision beyond the fallenness of this world.

A Convalescence (Spring /Summer 2009)

The world bursts into blossom; bright
hibiscus rings my garden round
in folds of varied flame, the oleander's
controlled explosion sets alight
the margin of my neigbour's ground
where bougainvillea wanders,

and on the valance of my blind
a bluetit hangs, an acrobat
boldly defiant of befalling hazards,
with urgent business on his mind –
foraging tit-bits, while my cat
pursues athletic lizards –

and from the green depth of a bush
weaving an interludic strain
of cheerful song and confidential chatter,
responding blackbird talks to thrush
for all with ears to hear; it's plain
I'm getting better,

summer's alive upon the sense
while spring still loiters in the air,
and heaven and earth, benignly celebrating,
declare a time of mutual confidence;
yet I am neither here nor there,
but held between them, waiting.

Walter Nash

Book Reviews

Mark Knight, *An Introduction to Religion and Literature*, Continuum, 2009, 166pp., £15.99, pb., 978 0 8264 9702 4 (hb. £60)

The front cover of this enterprising book bears the image of a somewhat friable stone tablet, with letters cut in bas-relief of a text in language which looks like Portuguese and could be Galician. The substance of this text is scriptural, the gospel account of Jesus and his disciples celebrating the Passover. The tablet is mostly obscured by wear, but a strong light shining on the stone's rightward edge makes phrases identifiable; e.g., *meus deixibles*, 'my disciples', *Jesus havia els ordenat* … 'Jesus had commanded them' … *pararen el sopar Pasqual* … 'they were to prepare the Passover feast', &c. With a little effort, some things can be made out. It appears, almost, that this image embodies the process of 'throwing light' on texts.

On the back cover, the publisher claims: '*An Introduction to Religion and Literature* offers a lucid, accessible and thoughtful introduction to the study of religion and literature', an exercise in circular definition accommodating three preselected adjectives to reassure prospective readers that the work is at once deeper, clearer, and much easier to understand than they might suppose. In sum, if we are to judge the book by its cover, it claims to throw perhaps a good deal of light on an assumed relationship between whatever is received as Religion and whatever is acknowledged as Literature, leaving, in each case, room for further definition. That might make for lengthy treatment, but the work is quite short – 128 pages of text, plus an ample *apparatus* of notes and a bibliography such as a good college library might easily supply. Its style is copious and confident. Its substance is literary criticism, tempered by religious perception.

The author, Mark Knight, is a Reader in English Literature in the Department of English and Creative Writing at Roehampton University in South-West London. He is gifted and enthusiastic, and conveys an impression of a confident and popular teacher. His publications include *Chesterton and Evil* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2004), *Nineteenth Century Religion and Literature: An Introduction* (with Emma Mason, Oxford University Press, 2006) and *Biblical Religion and the Novel*, (ed. with Thomas Woodman, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006).

His object in the present book, as he explains in its introductory pages, is 'a religious reading of literature'. Here he firmly rejects as 'mistaken' the idea that 'religious readings of literature are confined to the works of religious writers', meaning, I think, that the works of ostensibly non-religious writers (novelists, poets, playwrights and such) may make no display of creed, yet still be susceptible to credal interpretation. The religious interpretation may throw new light on the writing's covert significance, and then again the writer's experiential wisdom may actually supply, or at least supplement, the religious reading. Knight quotes G.K.Chesterton on the presence of the author in literary interpretations: '(we) have a general view of existence, whether we like it or not; it alters, or to speak more accurately creates and involves everything we say or do, whether we like it or not.' This is true to anyone's experience of authorship, and Dr Knight readily concedes the point, yet seems reluctant to allow to 'the author' a significant place in schemes of higher interpretation. Here the critical stance is predetermined. Authors cannot fully understand what they are doing. Whatever the author might have meant to say about his work has to be of minor consequence. Who is the author? He that died o' Wednesday. Even if he is still around on Thursday morning, his intentions are no longer relevant to the ongoing hermeneutic business. This is a mandatory post-structural position in literary theory, articulated by Roland Barthes, and refined by Dr Knight's most quoted *savant*, Paul Ricœur.

His plan is to shed a theological light on some writings he has enjoyed, or

studied, or used as curricular texts. For this purpose he has only to take his pick as he outlines a procedure for the book's proposed six chapters: each chapter combines close readings of literary texts 'with an exploration of a particular religious idea, drawing on critical, theoretical, and recent theological material as it does so.' The works selected are an array of mainly, if not entirely, modern literary works. 'Some of the writers chosen are not English' he explains, 'and do not strictly fit under the rubric of English Literature, but they are not unfamiliar to the syllabi of many English degree programmes, and I include them without apology. Other writers here included may seem surprising, given the issues being discussed. Again I do not apologise.'

He does not apologise? It is a strange device, not to apologise for not apologising for something that needs no apology. It reminds me momentarily of Luther: 'Here I stand, God help me, I can do no other', but rather more seriously of Frank Sinatra.:

> I planned each charted course,
> Each careful step along the byway
> But more, much more than this,
> I did it my way.

Dr Knight's way is a graduated *anabasis* from First Occasions to Last Things, pausing for breath at Personhood, Giving, Tolerating and Sinning. It goes smoothly up the garden path from Eden to Evermore, and the reader hardly knows where the time has gone. This is, it must be said, an *accomplished* book. It resonates at times like a well-tempered doctorate.

Its style is in general clear and urbane, though not wholly innocent of a spry jargoning that supports some questionable propositions. One instance is the first subtitle of the book's first chapter: 'Creating Space and Time for Multivocality'. I cringe a little at this. It may be that I am not at ease with unattached participle clauses. They smack of the advertisement text – 'finding the right spot for your indoor plants' – or the newspaper headline – 'preparing Britain for Armageddon'. There is no Who or Which or Where or How, to tie them down to a working function; they are only showcases for maybe happenings.

The need to create space and time for multivocality, arises, it appears, from the Bible's terse narrative of Creation. In Genesis, it all happens in seven days; in St John's Gospel it transpires in a few words, 'all things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made'. These statements convey no real feeling of location and duration, no palpable sense of a many-tongued, many-peopled world. The use of literature, as I think Dr Knight might see it, is to expand imaginatively the blanks in the Creation account, to calendar the Big Bang, to make maps of Eden, to report the variations of human response and conference (if that is what 'multivocality' means).

Milton is cited as a space/timesaver in some lines from the prologue of the first book of *Paradise Lost*, the lines addressing the *Creator Spiritus*:

> Thou from the first
> Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
> Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss
> And mad'st it pregnant.
> *Paradise Lost*, I, 19b-22a

Dr Knight comments: 'it is a surprise to find the prologue using pregnancy as a trope to describe the world that God brings into being'. The Biblical account of Creation posits a period of six 'days', from start to finish, but, says Knight, 'the reference to pregnancy suggests something more extended and developmental. Not only is the nine months associated with human pregnancy more elongated than the six days used to structure Genesis 1, the birth that pregnancy results in is

the start of a new life.'

But is 'with child' what *pregnant* really means in this passage? I might suggest that it has to do with the moment of conception rather than the period of gestation, and comes to something much more like 'impregnated', an abrupt happening with no extension in time, and little in the way of multivocality. This is a view reflected, for example, by John Hollander and Frank Kermode in *The Literature of Renaissance England*, *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1973. Their footnote, on p. 760, to lines 19b – 22a of *Paradise Lost*, I, outlines a complex process:

> The creation of the world as told in Genesis, the impregnation of Mary by the descending Dove of the Holy Spirit, and the secondary creation of Milton's great poem, are here brought together.

My [Shorter] *Oxford English Dictionary*'s philological notes on 'pregnant' < Latin *praegnans*, describe, firstly, the historical 'assimilation' of that word to the form *praegnas*, consisting of *prae*, 'before', and *gnas*, perfect tense of *gnasci*, a deponent verb meaning 'be born'. 'Before be born' might indicate human pregnancy, but classical sources suggest a slightly different use of *praegnas*: e.g Virgil, *Aeneid*. X , 704-5, *et face praegnas / Cisseis regina Parim* 'and with a blazing torch impregnated Cisseius' queen (i.e. Hecuba), with Paris'. Hecuba, by this account, had no time for gestation. The event was instantaneous. This 'be born' sense is the primary sense of *pregnant* as registered by the *OED*, which goes on to record, as 'transferred' , the meaning *fertile, fruitful, prolific, teeming*', a nuance which fits the Miltonic context quite well.

Pregnant is the last word of a sentence that cuts obliquely across the square frame of the verse-lines. Milton's frequent practice in *Paradise Lost* is to off-set constructions in this way, with the effect of bringing into special prominence, or 'accenting', some word or phrase in the middle of a line or at the boundary of a subordinate clause. So here, with *brooding*, head of a participial clause attached to *[thou] dovelike sat'st / <u>brooding on the vast abyss</u>* (my emphasis). The *OED* tells the story on *brooding*: 'to sit as a hen on eggs: to sit or hover without outspread wings', with a first citation of *birds sit brooding in the snow*, in *Love's Labours Lost* (in the song, 'When icicles hang by the wall'), this first entry being promptly followed by a reference to Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I.21.

Creation, by this account, is a species of hatching; something that occurs after an unreckoned period of time (time is man-made); its location is blank space, its 'eggs' are the paraphernalia of worldly substance. So in the course of one sentence the Holy Spirit is seen first as 'hatching', then as 'impregnating' – indeed a complex operation. The one thing the *Creator Spiritus* does not do, however, is nurse the vast abyss through a nine-month nuisance of childbearing That is a conjecture that makes no textual sense. Dr Knight, I guess, would reject my analysis as a piece of 'periodization' – rummaging in verbal histories, and ancient styles, rather than reading with a freshly receptive mind uncontaminated by the finished business of the past. In that case, I would plead, in self-defence, that a wish to enter Milton's creative mind, to understand his language, to perceive his method of composition, though perhaps a deluded undertaking, is surely no more deluded than a knack of choosing preferred meanings on 'theological' grounds and trying to press them into a text.

Is that what Dr Knight is doing throughout the book? In justice, I think not, though there are places where an excellent piece of critical exposition gains nothing, or very little, from its proposed 'theological' cover. This leads me to one last, hesitant, complaint. The book's title, *An Introduction to Religion and Literature*, might suggest to the general reader something in the nature of a *magnum opus.*

Knight demurely refuses to see that his title bears any such implication. The book, he says, 'makes no attempt to be exhaustive or systematic', but provides 'a series of linked snapshots underlining the belief that an introduction is a starting point for a reader rather than a concluded and encyclopaedic treatise.' May I say, gently, that this strikes me as a cop-out? 'Snapshots' is cute and disingenuous; these are not snaps from a tourist's mini-cam, they are carefully posed studies from a professional's Zeiss. There is enough of substance here to have justified, maybe, one long summary chapter or section on that vast enveloping theme 'Religion and Literature'. What we are left with is an image of light fingering a stone tablet, brightly illuminating what it falls on, leaving the rest in the recessive dark. Never mind. The publisher, I should add, is to be congratulated on a workmanlike production, in typography and presentation, that has served the author well.

Walter Nash

George Herbert, *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox, Cambridge University Press, 2007, xlv + 740 pp., 95 GBP (US$ 189), hb. 978 0 521 86821 1

The great Puritan thinker Richard Baxter, in expressing his admiration for the poetry of the parson of Fugglestone-cum-Bemerton, gave the opinion that 'Herbert speaks to God like one that *really believeth a God … Heart-work* and *Heaven-work* make up his Books.' Helen Wilcox's assured edition of Herbert's English poems demonstrates a fidelity to the essence, the heart-work and the heaven-work, of arguably the greatest devotional poet of the seventeenth century. The volume deserves a place on the bookshelf of any serious scholar of the British Renaissance, and would be an invaluable resource for aficionados of English literature. As the flyleaf of the book announces, this work promises to be the definitive edition of Herbert's English poetry for a long time to come.

Wilcox's previous scholarship on the seventeenth-century devotional lyric makes her an ideal candidate for the task of illuminating Herbert's verse. Her critical analysis is always finely balanced and judicious and her commentary shows a healthy and abiding respect for the subtlety, complexity, and depth of early modern theology and metaphysics. Her careful editing makes available the cream of Herbert scholarship and opens up the riches of *The Temple* to seasoned scholar and unfledged initiate alike. Wilcox prefaces the poems with a detailed chronology of Herbert's life and times, and follows this up with a critical introduction that, running to a digestible fifteen pages, is at once succinct, pithy, and informative. To this is added a functional glossary of quintessentially Herbertian terms such as 'box,' 'cordial,' 'dust,' 'frame,' 'mirth,' 'rest,' 'spell,' and 'sweet,' together with accompanying explanations of their shifting patterns of meaning across the spectrum of Herbert's verse. Before the reader passes over the threshold of *The Temple*, Wilcox supplies a section on Herbert's 'Miscellaneous English Poems,' which includes his memorable poem 'To Doctor Donne,' composed on the receipt of Donne's gift of a seal bearing the emblem of Christ crucified upon an anchor. The collection *The Temple* itself, which takes up over six hundred pages of the volume, is meticulously edited. Each poem is introduced by three sections that aid in establishing context: first, a section entitled 'Texts,' which examines the relevance of each lyric's place and aspect in relation to both the original Williams and Bodleian manuscripts and the first printed edition of *The Temple* of 1633; second, a section on 'Sources' that traces the Biblical or generic origins of the poem in question; and, finally, a section on 'Modern Criticism' which gives a concise and lucid conspectus of critical opinion up to the present time with admirable economy and grace. The poem is followed by a series of line-by-line notes positively bristling with insights

into the Biblical, classical, historical, rhetorical, and philological facets of the lyric under consideration. Some of the most helpful and incisive Herbert scholarship has been written in the course of the past fifty years – one has only to consider the efforts of Barbara Lewalski, Richard Strier, Helen Vendler, Rosemund Tuve, Rosalie Colie, Camille Wells Slights, Arnold Stein, among many others. Wilcox has done a masterful job of selecting only the most instructive reflections from the wealth of possible readings available in order to shed light upon Herbert's lyrics. Wilcox's own profound grasp of Scripture is apparent on every page as she weds Herbert's words to his chief inspiration, Holy Scripture, what Herbert fascinatingly dubbed 'This book of starres.'

For the reader who has an appetite for more, Wilcox has appended an exhaustive thirty-three-page bibliography of all things Herbertian. Equipped with so fine and copious a bibliography, scholars writing about Herbert will not feel the need to 'chase up that reference' for a long time to come. Wilcox's indices, too, facilitate ready consultation. Alongside an 'Index of poem titles' and an 'Index of first lines,' she has added an 'Index of Biblical references' detailing those lyrics pertinent not only to each book of the Bible, but even to each individual psalm. This latter feature is especially welcome since, as Wilcox points out, 'Herbert's lyrics are psalm-like in their musicality, in their variety of mood and in their capacity to express the spiritual ups and downs of many a reader' (p. xxviii). It seems unfair to recommend any possible improvement to an act of such impeccable scholarship. I would venture that the edition might have benefitted from the insertion of Izaak Walton's brief but colourful *Life of Mr. George Herbert* of 1670 which, although it sometimes tends towards hagiography, paints as nuanced a portrait of the poet as we are likely to possess. The addition of Walton's brief life would also help flesh out for readers the rather skeletal chronology with which the volume commences.

During the early Spring of 2009 I was fortunate enough to be able to visit St Andrew's Church in Bemerton where Herbert spent those closing three pastorally and poetically fruitful years of his life. Today the village has become a virtual suburb of Salisbury; you can easily drive on past the small turning winding into the charming village of Bemerton before you are aware that it is there. The parsonage that Herbert made it his first responsibility to rebuild still stands not a stone's throw from the church door. A plaque bearing the charitable verse exhortation to his successor, that Herbert originally inscribed upon the mantle of his chimney-piece, is now fixed, for those who have eyes to see, upon the parsonage's façade:

> *TO MY SUCCESSOR*
> *If thou chance for to find*
> *A new house to thy mind,*
> *And built without thy cost;*
> *Be good to the poor,*
> *As God gives thee store*
> *And then my labour's not lost.*

Inside St Andrew's Church, before the stained glass Memorial Window depicting Herbert dressed in his canonical coat and with his viol tucked under his arm, the Visitors' Book is crammed with the entries, many of them very recent, of travellers hailing from the four corners of the globe. The words of these twenty-first-century pilgrims give testimony, should we need proof of it, to the simple and complex delight that Herbert still affords the contemporary reader, and lend credence to the spell that his poetry continues to cast, a lyrical poetry which Herbert described, in one of his characteristically breath-stopping phrases, as 'in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd.'

Russell Hillier

Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S.Lewis,* **OUP USA, 347pp., 2008, £16.99 978 0 19 531387 1**

Shortly after receiving this book to review I found BBC1 devoting a whole hour to its discussion, hailing it as *The Narnia Code*. This necessarily changed my attitude towards the review. Instead of suspecting that the book under review might sell at most some thousand copies, and the review itself, however enthusiastic, would lead to a handful of sales or orders put in to the University library, I now realised that already the book would be selling probably by the ten thousand, and my readers would already be thinking about buying it. This suspicion was reinforced when I discovered it was the American branch of OUP that were publishing the book, the USA being the place where the Lewis enthusiasm and research is at its greatest, and that its price was more in line with that for popular books rather than academic ones.

Not that the book is un-academic. Michael Ward has been researching and teaching C.S.Lewis for some ten years, and studying him for some thirty. He gained his doctorate for writing on Lewis. And he is clearly one of the best equipped up-and-coming Lewis scholars the U.K. has. This is combined with his being a C. of E. clergyman. Yet in its manner of writing, in the excitement it generates, its sense of drama that a great epiphany has been given to him, Ward writes as a popular writer might do. In this, of course, he follows Lewis himself, and the immediately attractive thing for me about the book is just how Lewisian its methodology is. For example, plenty of groundwork is laid for his thesis. He is aware of possible objections and logically works through them. But he is not afraid to show his enthusiasm and establish reader relationship. It is not obviously technically academic language, though the weight of meaning and argument is, and the quality of its close reading.

Although the title suggests the book is about the seven Chronicles of Narnia ('the Narniad'), in fact Ward draws from the whole corpus of Lewis's work to establish his argument, working through material found in early works, poetry, academic literary works, the other fiction and only then the relevant Narnian text. He quotes many other critics but none extensively. He claims to be breaking new ground, walking where no other Lewis critic has walked before. In the last chapter he tells us of his epiphany in 2003 that led to this new ground. He writes with the conviction of those who have had some blinding revelation, though in this case the revelation was backed by those years of teaching and research.

The underlying unity of the Narniad, Ward claims, is based on Lewis's amazing knowledge of the medieval worldview, so clearly set forth in *The Allegory of Love* and even more so in *The Discarded Image*. It is specifically centred on Lewis's own fascination with its astrology and the sevenfold ring of planets that circled the earth. The planets include the Sun and the Moon, then the more obvious planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jove, and Saturn. The medieval world saw a pattern of connected knowledge based on these, with each planet having certain characteristics that mirrored characteristics of human temperament, fortune, and even God himself. The classical mythology was Christianised and made into science at the same time. Lewis understood not only the main characteristics of these mythological gods, but their secondary characteristics, where they had perhaps subsumed characteristics of lesser gods. For Lewis, the great opposition is between Jove and Saturn, the latter being the dominating planetary influence of his century.

Lewis's use of this planetary pattern of characteristics can be seen in certain poems, such as *The Planets*; and in his other fiction. *Perelandra* and *Out of the Silent Planet* are, of course about Venus and Mars. But Ward shows that much of *That*

Hideous Strength also involves the procession of planets descending to earth, imparting their particular characteristics to the forces of good, and confounding the forces of evil.

Ward's breakthrough came when he realised that in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* the characteristics of Jove were pre-eminently manifested. Ward writes:

'He had not originally conceived the idea of a series that would enable him to portray all seven planets; rather, he had found a way of reimagining Miracles using the imagery of Jupiter, because Jupiter's kingly aspect was especially associated with the ideas he had expressed in Miracles, and because Jupiter, in any case, was his favourite planet...' (p.222)

This explains for him the difficulty Tolkien experienced with the book, the apparently bizarre appearance of Father Christmas. If we read that figure as a 'jovial' cypher, and then see Aslan in his Jupiter-like sovereignty, then we are on the way to a unified and coherent reading. Similarly, if we see Prince Caspian as martial, we can trace the Mars-like qualities of Aslan and those that are inspired in the boys. But Mars is also, apparently, a sylvan deity: hence Lucy seeing the trees move, and the trees invading the battlefield at the end. Certainly, the film-makers of the 2008 movie understood this, extending the battle-scenes to almost parodic dimensions, but also emphasising the trees.

Each of the other novels can be assigned a presiding planet: *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* has the sun, whose god Apollo is also a dragon-slayer; and *The Silver Chair* has Luna, whose colour is silver and who drives people to lunacy and to live in darkness. Similarly, *The Horse and his Boy* is presided over by Mercury; *The Magician's Nephew* by Venus; and *The Last Battle* by Saturn. But other deities, or manifestations of Aslan, or of fortune, intrude. Thus, in *The Last Battle*, the Saturnian tragedy is finally overtaken by the festivities of Jove: Jove conquers Saturn, as he does in Greek mythology (and in Keats' *Hyperion*).

Sometimes, I feel, the 'fitting together' of all these elements makes heavy weather, as in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader.* Whilst Ward warns against an overdetermined reading, he is somewhat guilty of it himself in his eagerness to make his case. Everything is necessarily fitted into the thesis. One of my fears is that lesser teachers than Ward will from now on provide reductionst interpretations of the individual books, so that they become fixed allegories rather than providing a set of mythic symbolism that can generate a multivalenced reading. Ward's emphasis on Lewis's nuanced readings of medieval astrology, which at one level he (Lewis) freely admitted was 'not true', could just as easily be represented as implying that Lewis did believe in astrology, full stop.

My own feeling is that, when things settle down, Ward will be found to have added another interpretive tool, and another proof of the unity of the Narniad. But it will not alter most people's basic readings of the individual texts. This is because, for all the mythological revelations, they are not always at that basic level of imaginative reception which forms a reader's gut response to a text of fantasy. Let me explain what I mean from one of my own favourites, *The Silver Chair.* Even after reading Ward's exposition of it in terms of Luna, which does help to explain the 'silver' of the chair, and the use of lunacy as a way of testing truth, to me the imaginative force of the novel comes in terms of its heights and depths, its layers of space from Aslan's high heaven on the cliff top to the land of Bysm below even the underworld. Tall people take centre stage in the giants and their cliffs and castles. In this it contrasts with *The Dawn Treader*, where the horizontal dimensions of the sea are emphasised. Like *The Magician's Nephew*, it contains a crucial temptation sequence, and also a mother, here dead rather than dying – an autopbiographical motif, surely.

I still see its unity with the Narniad in terms of Romance (of which more

below) and the central quests of each book. But each quest is different: here it contrasts to *The Horse and his Boy* in that it is a quest to the north rather than from the south; and to *The Dawn Treader* in its circular motion. Unlike all the others it demands a journey to the underworld. Ward has made me see its link to H.G.Wells' *The First Men on the Moon*, but Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* still seems to me the likely inspiration in terms of adventure stories, and the classic descent to the underworld I see in terms of most epic journeys and Romance. The beautiful enchantress, the not-to-be-forgotten directions, and the temptation are perfectly well understood as generic (or modal) features, with no reference needed to its lunar symbolism. Ward himself admits the absence of the moon for much of the book but bravely stumps up a (somewhat unconvincing) explanation.

Although Ward mentions Northrop Frye once, and quests once, I see no evidence he is aware of Frye's *The Secular Scripture,* which traces such Romance patterns of quest so clearly. It takes Ward till p.163 to admit that 'the Narniad belongs to the Romance genre', though even then he does not explain what he sees as the generic features. Obviously, Lewis was aware, as Ward notes, of Jung's use of astrological motifs as well as his psycho-analytic theory with its own journeys to the underworld, but from a literary perspective, the failure to see Romance patterns and the unity to be found in those is a major *lacuna.*

Ward majors on a term of his own inventing to describe Lewis's achievement. He calls it 'donegality'. By this he means the felt experience generated by an imaginative text which goes to the heart of the matter being conveyed, which is somehow its essence. The term comes from Lewis's own favourite Irish county, Donegal. By its 'donegality' he means not only its uniqueness as a county of Ireland, its quiddity or *ipseitas,* but the way this uniqueness is conveyed to the reader by the text. Thus each planet has its own uniqueness, but in imaginative literature, this uniqueness has to be conveyed by myth or image. This success in conveyance Ward sees as Lewis greatest triumph.

Whilst this new terminology may be seen as an example of Ward's own 'joviality', especially his false etymology of 'don egalite' (an equal presiding intelligence, but why not 'a gift of equality'?), it is not a helpful term. If its definition is missed (it occurs no sooner than p.75), then the term conveys nothing. At least the Duns Scotus' term that G.M.Hopkins uses of *haeccitas* has some genuine provenance.

One may wish to argue with Ward over smaller matters, too, such as the thesis that Lewis's defeat at the hands of Elizabeth Anscombe at the Socratic Club caused him to turn away from apologetics to writing the Chronicles of Narnia is a thesis commonly touted these days (though I have never seen the details of Anscombe's argument set out). Ward accepts this, even if with modifications. For this I can see little solid evidence. *Post hoc ergo propter hoc* is not a valid logical deduction. I really fail to see *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* as some sort of re-jigging of *Miracles*, especially when we know for sure that its central images had been with Lewis for years. The Socratic Club experience probably was, in God's mercy, a necessary humiliation for an overconfident Lewis, but I cannot see it as the key which opened Narnia.

However, these are minor differences of opinion. What I see as the book's strength for Christian scholars is as an example of Christian scholarship working at its best, and working in the very way that Lewis himself adopted. Belief cannot substitute for deep and profound knowledge of its subject matter, but it can provide a ready sympathy to read the master's works perceptively – and to keep pushing at the boundaries of the layers of a scholarship that all too easily generates its own traditions. Ward's close readings of the Lewis texts remind me of G. Wilson Knight's close readings of Shakespeare, readings which excited me as a student as

no other Shakespeare criticism had done before (or since!). Michael Ward has done a great service not only to Lewis scholarship, but to also Christian scholarship.

David Barratt

Sanford Schwartz, *C.S. Lewis on the Final Frontier: Science and the Supernatural in the Space Trilogy*, 2009, OUP, 240 pp., £15.99 hb. 978 0 19 537472 8

About seventy years after its publication, in the first decade of the third millennium C.S. Lewis's imaginative writing does not seem to have lost its aesthetic and intellectual appeal for the general reader and the literary critic alike. The enduring interest of the issues which C.S. Lewis raises in his fiction is demonstrated by Sanford Schwartz in this stimulating and well-researched study of Lewis's 'Space Trilogy'.

The subtitle of Mr Schwartz's book, however, referring to 'Science and the Supernatural', may be either deliberately or accidentally misleading, at least with regard to 'science' – unless medieval cosmology, together with various philosophical concepts or social and psychological doctrines, are to be classified as science. Even Darwin's ideas of evolution and natural progress, which are interwoven into Mr Schwartz's expository and polemical prose, stand, it may be argued, to one side of the strictly scientific. Nevertheless the inclusion of 'science' in the title of this perceptive study of Lewis's cosmic fiction may be a critical stratagem to boost the up-to-date relevance of Lewisian themes in the present times. If that was Mr Schwartz's intention, the tactic appears redundant because even without it, the book convincingly demonstrates, on ample evidence and with many astute observations, the significance in the human history, of the perennial motifs incorporated into the fabric of C.S. Lewis's fantasy fiction.

Science, including the natural, social and political sciences, is given prominence in Mr Schwartz's study, but one cannot help thinking that sometimes it is done at the expense of theology which gets overshadowed by the scientific on the one hand, and on the other by the vaguely supernatural. It is true that Mr Schwartz justifies this omission, or a certain marginalising of the theological issues, by identifying what he sees as a need to shift the focus of discussion from an excessive preoccupation with theology which characterises earlier studies of Lewis's writing. Such a change in the general trend of Lewis's criticism is partly understandable, but still it seems that it does not do justice to the specific character of Lewis's imaginative writing, which is closely knit with both his scholarly pursuits and his faith .

The Space Trilogy, comprising three novels: *Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*, is set on three planets: Mars, Venus and Earth. It restates in terms of interplanetary fantasy the common knowledge that man's life, since the Fall, has always been characterised by a conflict, or in Marxist terms, a struggle, between the spiritual and materialist *Weltanschauung*. It is a noteworthy omission, or a significant characteristic, that in the impressive array of thinkers, philosophers and writers whom Mr Schwartz quotes or invokes in his book, and who left an indelible imprint on the intellectual background of the times, Karl Marx is one of the few important philosophers whose name has not been in any conspicuous way referred to in Mr Schwartz's discussion of C.S. Lewis's fictional discourse about man's plight and the condition of the world.

The proper subject matter of Mr Schwartz's critical study is the ongoing warfare between broadly understood Christian tradition and various tendencies in modern thought which run against the divinely sanctioned order. So his book, with a great deal of impressive scholarly support, presents and discusses diverse manifestations and modifications of these tendencies in the 19th and 20th centuries,

and in today's world. The notion of 'warfare' is appropriate to C.S. Lewis's perception of the existential and metaphysical state of affairs, but Mr Schwartz, in the general tone of his analyses, is more inclined to think in terms of tension, friction, or even partly executed and partly aborted attempts at compromise, and this is, of course, a milder and more temperate version of the image of warfare.

C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy represents not only an interesting blend of fantasy and realism, but also a remarkable combination of a traditional adventure story or a Gothic thriller, with a treatise addressing a number of questions of philosophical, theological, cultural, or socio-political interest. And Mr Schwartz should be credited for scrupulously attending to both planes in Lewis's fiction: the imaginative as well as the ideological. Consequently, his study draws attention to analogies and symmetries in the construction of the novels, and presents an insightful analysis of structural parallels in the trilogy, which he encourages us to see as a closely integrated and carefully organised system of independent components. On the other hand Mr Schwartz's book gives an exhaustive overview of highly influential philosophical concepts and intellectual constructs that have been shaping the face of the world and dramatically affecting the course of human history. Mr Schwartz invites the reader to see them as either reflected or embedded in the plot of C.S. Lewis's interplanetary fiction.

Among the propagators of these high-ranking movements the most conspicuous position is given to Charles Darwin and Henri Bergson, and the widespread milieu of their advocates, adversaries, intellectual associates and followers. Looking closely at Lewis's plots and his depiction of the three planets of the Solar System: Malacandra (Mars), Perelandra (Venus) and Thulcandra (Earth), in the three consecutive novels, Mr Schwartz gives a survey of the most representative intellectual movements which had a great impact upon the times, and he tries to account, in the light of Lewisian space fiction, for their assets, traps, overt dangers and often promising, though unrealised, potential. So at the beginning (*Out of the Silent Planet*) the reader gets a perspective on the Darwinian 'developmental paradigm' with its struggle for existence and survival of the fittest, and their further consequences in e.g. capitalism, imperialism, racism, eugenics and the 'contempt for the Other'. Orthodox Darwinism with its mechanical view of life gets transfigured into the creative evolution of Henri Bergson (*Perelandra*) with *élan vital* as a motive power of continual Becoming and the principle of all progress, as well as a way of fighting natural human limitations, especially the constrictions of time. Finally the merger of the spiritual and materialism is brought into the foreground (*That Hideous Strength*) involving the suppression of individuality and the growth of totalitarianism and technocracy, a process which become identified as a distinctive feature of the modern secular condition. Mr Schwartz insists on asserting that blending fantasy and realism, which is the specific artistic convention that Lewis uses in his Space Trilogy, enables the reader to look at the condition of the world and the decline of civilisation from a 'sobering vantage point' of another planet or a fantasy *locus* on Earth.

Mr Schwartz's book should be read on two levels: the basic text of his scholarly exposition, and the extensively elaborated 'Notes' which accompany or extend the main argument. A solid substantiation of the propositions and assertions put forward is a commendable procedure. However, the reader gets the feeling that the split is sometimes forced, and that Mr Schwartz's placing of C.S. Lewis's interplanetary fiction in the context of various assaults on the integrity of man and human natural harmony with the Divine would gain in immediacy and clarity if some of the notes were incorporated into the main body of the discussion.

C.S. Lewis on the Final Frontier is a thick book. But it is not the number of printed pages that make up its thickness. It is 'thick' in terms of the intellectual

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density of its content and complexity of the numerous issues it tries to tackle. While it provides some stimulating reading it posits new challenges and introduces queries in well trodden and seemingly safe paths of thought. The reader may disagree with some of its approaches and assumptions, but it does not allow indifference or lazy reading. What is more, beyond the argumentative, critical and expository area of scholarly discussion, Sanford Schwartz's study gives inspiration and opens a whole mine of resource material for further research and inquiry, not only into the work of C.S. Lewis, but also into the laws and mechanisms that govern our social and political life as well as the entire culture – all of which, though firmly planted in the physical world, reaches out and craves for the metaphysical.

Anna Walczuk

Deborah C. Bowen (ed.), *The Strategic Smorgasbord of Postmodernity*: *Literature and the Christian Critic*, **Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007, xi + 344pp. £39.99 (US $59.99) 99781847181619**

The suspicion with which conservative Christians react to postmodern theories is understandable. The postmodern repudiation of a 'master narrative' by which to integrate the events and experiences of human life into a meaningful whole would extend also to the 'totalising' Christian narrative. The postmodern rejection of 'foundationalism' in favour of 'perspectivalism' would rule out in advance any attempt to make claims about 'universal truth.' Such theories can only breed relativism, scepticism, and nihilism. And insofar as postmodern modes of discourse predominate in the humanities and social sciences, Christian scholars in these fields have good reason to feel embattled and alienated.

The purpose of this volume of essays is to argue to the contrary. The nineteen contributors engage postmodern theories, theorists, and works of literature from the perspective of Christian faith. They demonstrate in their various ways that far from posing a threat to faith postmodern theories open up spaces within which constructive dialogue between Christianity and postmodernity can occur, dialogue from which both parties can emerge enriched, as well as corrected and challenged.

That there is commonality of interests enough to make this dialogue possible it is the aim of Deborah C. Bowen to show in her introductory essay. In her view, postmodernity is informed and oriented by five interrelated concerns: the material, the philosophical, the narrative, the semiotic, and the political. Postmodern theorists engage in sustained critique of late twentieth-century Western forms of economic production and consumption. They contend against an epistemology according to which reality presents itself directly to us humans, arguing instead that reality is mediated through ways of seeing and speaking that humans internalise through participating in particular cultures. They expose how narratives and the 'truth claims' embedded in them can function to legitimate the rule of the oppressor and the subjugation of the oppressed. They show how cultures can be read as a system of signs. And finally, they bring the preceding four concerns to bear on political and ethical issues relating to racial minorities, women, and colonized peoples.

It is certainly the case that Christian literary and cultural criticism is occupied with most or all of these concerns. It should and in these essays does subject unjust economic, political and social structures to critical analysis to determine how far these harm individuals, destabilize communities, and perpetuate conditions of oppression. It should and in these essays does value the epistemological humility that is entirely consistent with the attitude of the human creature that lives *coram Deo*. In sum, the values of 'moral responsibility, care for the other, and sharing power justly' are ones on which postmodern theory and Christianity converge.

But if in these terms Christianity judges that postmodern theory is hospitable to those who approach literary and cultural criticism from the standpoint of faith,

does the converse hold true? The essays for the most part suggest that the answer often is negative. Whether or not a postmodern theorist or theory is justified in maintaining this negative valuation of Christianity is an intriguing question that several of the contributors explore. For example, Ada S. Jaarsma opens her essay, 'Word and Flesh: Reading Luce Irigaray' by recalling a question that her professor in graduate school posed to her: 'how can you read deconstruction as a Christian and not do violence to the text'? Her professor supposed that faith acts as a 'colonizing force' when brought to bear on a text that does not conform to its religious perspective. The text is not allowed to speak for itself because the faith of the reader is capable only of 'invading' the text rather than 'engaging' with it. The closed stance of faith, among other things, precludes 'ethical attentiveness to marginalized voices' that may speak from within the text.

This postmodern critique of the supposed closed stance of faith extends at least as far back as Martin Heidegger's classic text *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, to which Jens Zimmerman and Norman Klassen in their essay, 'Simon Critchley: The Ethics of Deconstruction, or Metaphysics in the Dark' allude. Heidegger claimed that believers who adhere to the Biblical 'in the beginning, God…' are excluded from asking the question of the meaning of being, since this question must hold itself open to an unexpected outcome that cannot be determined in advance. But does this claim reflect an adequate understanding of the character of Biblical faith? Jaarsma answers the Heideggerian charge implied in her professor's question by appealing to Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*. Guided by this text, she argues for a concept of faith grasped in terms of a sheer receptivity to a revelation which a believer cannot give to herself, over which she has no control.

In this way, contributors like Jaarsma demonstrate that the postmodern challenge to Christian thought is salutary, insofar as it prompts Christians to re-examine their core convictions and give a fuller account of them. But these authors also show that in the process Christians may discover potential in them to make real contributions to problems that postmodern theories thematise. In his essay, 'Christian Eschatology as a Critical Tool', G.J. Clarke notes the interest in postmodern philosophy and literature in eschatology. He brings out recent developments in eschatology in Christian theology and shows how these can provide an 'intellectual bridge' between Christians and postmodern thinkers.

This affinity of interests between postmodernity and Christianity is perhaps best exemplified in those figures whose thinking is imbued with distinctively Christian sensibilities. Two essays in particular are germane here. Julie Rak introduces in her essay, 'The Located Utterance: Bakhtin, Embodiment, Jesus', the work of Mikhail Baktin, the Russian philosopher whose theories about literature have attracted the interest of Christian scholarship in recent years. For Bakhtin literature can never be separated from life, from material bodies, concrete communities and traditions. Our reading practices in this perspective must become 'embodied,' which in turn raises our ethical awareness of the other. As Bak explains, 'difference must be experienced in physical terms because our perception of our bodies makes us other to ourselves, and to others, in ways which stress our interdependence' .

In his essay, 'Gathering Up God's Remains: The Practice of Michel de Certeau, Tamas Dobozy shows how postmodern insights into the relation between language and being in this Jesuit cultural theorist take a theological turn. Language does not succeed in getting outside itself, to the other. We know things through the 'categories and terms and markers whereby our knowing operates' but we never so much 'come into possession of something 'other' as simply reinforce our modes of knowing by subjecting an alterity to preexisting cognitive categories'. Language evidences the 'trace' of the other that makes its presence felt only by

its absence. This is what drives the proliferation of discourses. 'Interpretation is born of a struggle to exceed the interpreting self – to exit our own 'finitude' and realize the other – but always ends in another interpretation rather than the other as such'. Interpretations thus are an endless series of 'displacements.' Nevertheless they manifest what generates them: 'a power that makes language known to itself in its attempt to go beyond itself. The dynamic of language itself reveals that we await the arrival of the Other.

Several other essays are worthy of mention, especially those in the final section of the volume, in which postmodern insights inform specifically Christian interpretations of contemporary literary texts. However, space allows this reviewer to offer only a small sampling of the 'smorgasbord' of contributions to the dialogue between Christian thought and postmodern theory. Suffice it to say that the reader can rest assured that without exception the quality of scholarship in the remaining essays is high; each of the contributors has indwelled his or her subject deeply. That said, one wishes that several of them had devoted more space to clarifying terms used in the complex discourses they engage. To the uninitiated, those discourses can seem too esoteric and even give the impression of needlessly obfuscating important issues. But then again the volume is not designed to be a primer in postmodernism. It rewards a careful reading, but let those interested be warned in advance that they will have to give the essays undistracted time and concentration.

Christopher Dorn

Ira B. Zinman, *Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Bible: A Spiritual Interpretation with Christian Sources*, Bloomington IN, World Wisdom Inc., 2009, 495pp., $26.95 pb., 978 1 933316 74 1

Zinman is a passionate and devoted reader of Shakespeare's timeless lyrics, and the primary incentive behind *Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Bible* is to identify a scriptural level of interpretation for each of the 154 sonnets. Readers will not find concrete proof here that Shakespeare composed his sonnets with Scripture as a constant and predominent literary and thematic influence. Instead, they will find a fascinating demonstration of the extent to which spiritual parallels in the sonnets can be drawn. The exploration is at times enriching, but the book still appears to contribute to that cultural generator of 'universalising' Shakespeare; to echo Graham Holderness, that Shakespeare is less man and more cultural meeting point for a 'global totality' of individual interests and preferences. Certainly, the Prince of Wales's Foreword supports this universal habitation of the Bard's 'surely miraculous' lines: 'Shakespeare opens our minds to the Divine … whichever tradition we may be born into, it is only by attending to the spiritual dimension of our being that we may properly know what it is to be alive'(xi). In a similar tone, Zinman's Introduction continues: this is 'a beginning glimpse into the depth of Shakespeare's spiritual heart', and that, 'Like Truth, Shakespeare's nature is multi-dimensional and limitless. *Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Bible* is another facet of the diamond that is Shakespeare himself' (xvii).

Each sonnet is followed by a short statement about the theme, focusing on its relationship to scriptural truth. A 'glossary' gives a literal paraphrase of each quatrain and final couplet in the light of this scriptural 'theme'. A short commentary develops this theme but tends towards paraphrase more than analysis. Usefully, it does comment on each sonnet's position in the development of the whole sequence. The final category of 'biblical passages suggested by' each sonnet is useful to the extent that the book is read as a signpost to deeper immersion in Scripture, particularly posing for readers the choice between the two 'natures'

within man (to sin, or to spiritual reformation), and this perhaps better exemplifies Zinman's achievement.

Other introductory remarks make the broader claims of this book curiously isolated from contemporary Shakespearean and early modern criticism. The statement, 'for writers in Shakespeare's time, it was contrary to English law to make direct reference to religion in their works' (xiv), is made without substantiation and to justify that Elizabethan audiences were 'not unaware' of meanings beyond the literal in texts. Some degree of stretching for textual parallels inevitably occurs, and ideological parallels are occasionally tenuous. Man's 'nobler part' (e.g. Sonnets 146 and 151) – that phrase so famously utilised to emphasize the bawdy – is stated as universally agreed to refer to 'the soul of man' (xvii), and the commentary on Sonnet 116 ('Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments…') curiously omits any reference to marriage, human or spiritual. The only Biblical origins suggested are Isaiah 54:10 and John 13:1. Even if the omission perhaps helpfully extracts this wedding ceremony stalwart from overemphasising human love to attend to the unaltering, 'ever-fixed' 'Divine Love', the Biblical parallels of the spiritual union between God and his beloved could surely warrant attention in the commentary or suggested Biblical passages.

This study serves best as a reference work for a lay audience seeking a spiritual application from one of world literature's most famous collections of verse. It is a comprehensive book reflecting its author's deep regard for Shakespeare and his art, and a deep regard for Scripture and its infallible ability to speak to every circumstance.

Johanna Harris

Alison Searle, *'The Eyes of Your Heart': Literary and Theological Trajectories of Imagining Biblically*, Foreword by Luke Ferretter, 2008, Paternoster Theological Monographs, 231pp., £24.99 pb. 978 1 84227 627 3

This monograph, based on Searle's doctoral dissertation, is a rich, dense and dizzying journey which starts by exploring past and current thought on the relationship between the Bible and the imagination, before making forays into literary texts which reflect Biblical tenets in their imaginative portrayals. In doing so, we explore particular aspects of the imagination through John Bunyan, Samuel Rutherford, Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, and C. S. Lewis. The stated aim is to explore the concept of what it means to 'imagine Biblically' that is, 'to consider the trajectories opened by an analysis of the Biblical text as a literary and religious document and the contribution this makes to an understanding of the imagination.'

The connection between the Bible and the imagination is an area of much debate, but this book is part of a wider theological trend to recognise and reclaim for theology the value of the imagination. Reference is made to many of these works in the opening chapters, and it is useful for its survey of these alone, as well as many of the key texts in the interdisciplinary area of literature and theological studies, with others, less easily defined, thrown in for good measure. A summary seems necessary to indicate the sheer breadth of this book, despite that fact that is almost impossible to catalogue the diverse contents in a review.

Initially then, the book tackles the Biblical concept. There is a reason why such a number of scholars are seeking to reclaim the imagination from the negative connotations which have surrounded it. This can be traced back, in large part, to the King James Version of the Bible, where the word imagination was used to denote a wide range of cognitive activities, most of which were pejorative. It may be this which led to the suspicion with which many have regarded the imagination in the West. But more recent Biblical translations tend to use the word 'imagination' more sparingly

– and more positively, and this works for rehabilitation. For Searle, the Biblical perspective is holistic, incorporating many aspects of the person, and affirming the imagination as a means of communicating truth.

Next, Searle turns her attention to the beginning of English fiction, with John Bunyan's defence of imagination and use of figurative language, Searle's exposition of Bunyan is as purveyor of a form of 'Biblical aesthetic'. Justified by reference to Old Testament typology and use of metaphor, and intended for spiritual transformation, Bunyan is juxtaposed with Paul Ricœur and the germination of the creative process that is found in reading the Bible. This stance is then contrasted and compared with C.S. Lewis's and Tolkien's understanding of creativity in its primary sense (associated only with God) and in its secondary sense, that of sub-creation.

An exploration of Samuel Rutherford's letters in the next chapter is a means of looking at the 'relationality' which proceeds from an understanding of the connectedness between word and world and Word, a connectedness which enables genuine encounter. For Rutherford, as for Jonathan Edwards, the imagination is necessary to conceive and to convey spiritual reality. For Edwards, the imagination can be a powerful form of enslavement, even idolatrous. And there is a distinction to be made; faith cannot be equated with the imagination. Faith can obey, trust and respond in a way that the imagination cannot. Along the way, Bakhtin's dynamic understanding of the self is explored through the interpretative eye of Alan Jacobs.

Such themes continue in the next chapter, but this time the focus is on the moral imagination. Jane Austen's portrayal of characters through omniscient narration is juxtaposed with Robert Alter's emphasis on the suggestive open-endedness of the Hebrew Bible, with the allusiveness and refusal to claim omniscient judgement on the part of the narrator. This is set in stark contrast to the reductionism of structuralism and post-structuralism and their dismissal of characters as persons. Once again, the imagination can be employed for good or ill; it is neither good nor bad in and of itself.

This can be seen in a reading of *Jane Eyre* which signals the dangers of an imagination that is not curbed by the will; Bronte is effectively critiquing the Romantic emphasis upon the imagination, from – Searle argues – a Biblical perspective. The critique is then extended to the postmodern context with its retreat into private worlds and the hopelessness which signifies a failure of the imagination. Rather, we who live in a postmodern era should be alive to the interpenetration of the temporal by the eternal, a scenario which is portrayed by Lewis in *Till We Have Faces* as Orual learns to walk by faith and hope in God. For Lewis, metaphor and narrative were crucial to our understanding of both the temporal as well as the eschatological reality. But given that we can only see 'through a glass darkly' in this respect, it is our imagination which allows us to apprehend the numinous through faith; God's central position in the imagination is vital for envisioning aright. Ultimately, to imagine Biblically is to allow oneself to be caught up into the God-centred and future orientation which the Bible presents, and it is on this note that the book concludes.

The study takes us through a panoply of great literature, and is impressively broad, if, perhaps, at times, just a little too broad and expansive. There is a tendency to cover too many books, and perhaps, at times, lose some of the accuracy of the content. One example; 'In *Till We Have Faces* Lewis is willing for the first time in his career as a writer of fiction to trust the imagination as a means of conveying and receiving truth.' In making this statement, Searle cites Peter Schakel's introduction to *Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis*. But a look at Schakel's introduction will uncover a subtler point; imagination had long been a means of conveying and receiving truth for Lewis, but a shift in Lewis's emphasis and practice of the imagination (but not his basic positions or theory) took place before he wrote *Till We Have Faces*, and it was a change which reconciled reason and imagination for Lewis and in him. For Lewis,

it was the senses and imagination that originally allowed him to 'see' the face of God, and he suggested this as early as *The Pilgrim's Regress* and thus shortly after his conversion.

My other – and perhaps, personal, disappointment – lies in the almost total absence of comment on George MacDonald's thought on the imagination. MacDonald is a literary writer who had more than most to say about the role of the Christian imagination, most notably in his essay, 'The Imagination: its function and its culture', in *A Dish of Orts*. Apart from referring to his 'seminal essay upon the subject' Searle shows no familiarity with it, suggesting only that MacDonald 'goes so far as to equate the imagination of God with the person of the Spirit'. Again, I have my doubts that this is an accurate reflection of his stance, which is closer to emphasising that a wise imagination is indicative of the presence of the Spirit of God. For MacDonald, the human imagination lives and moves and has its being in the imagination of God, and the closer one is to Christ, the more alive the imagination. Yet here too MacDonald, like Tolkien and Lewis after him, was emphatic that the very nature of God's creativity is of a different order, such that he believed human creation should really be called by a different name. For MacDonald, the proper role of the Christian imagination is enquiry after God's creation.

But here I find myself come full circle, and my criticism muted. For the fact remains that despite the absence of reference to his essay, much that MacDonald articulates is articulated along the way in this book, via the wide range of authors and texts. Thus, explorations are made of the essential relation of imagination to faith, the danger of the imagination which is not governed wisely, and the relationship which human creation has with divine imagination. These are integral to what it is to 'imagine Biblically', says Searle, in contradistinction to the idolatrous imagination, or one that is prompted by wrong desires. (It is worth noting how much Searle emphasises the role of the heart in Biblical references to the imagination.)

Ultimately, I welcome such attempts to take us beyond either wariness of the imagination, or blind eulogising. Theologians, I think, still benefit from hearing what MacDonald proclaimed, over a hundred years ago – 'Are we not to worship because our forefathers burned and stabbed for religion? It is more religion we want. It is more imagination we need.' But it is good to read contemporary scholarly books such as this which encourage us to consider the Biblical basis upon which the imagination can flourish and assist in the 'multiple enrichment of creation', as Tolkien put it and as Searle reminds us in the conclusion to her rich consideration of the topic.

Sharon Jebb Smith

Walter Nash, *Memorabilia: Poems from Time to Time*, **St Leonards-on-Sea, Beyond the Cloister Publications, 2009, 110pp. £7.25 pb. 9781899605 08 8.**

Walter Nash, *Recent Intelligence: A Sonnet Cycle,* **St Leonards-on-Sea, Beyond the Cloister Publications, 2009, 57 pp. £5.75 pb. 9781899605 06 4.**

Prolific formerly as an academic writer, Bill Nash is presently producing a range of crafted, intimate and powerful poetry. The academic writing and the poetry share many characteristic features – precision, wit, insight, clarity; but these recent writings, while they are indeed 'intelligence', are intelligence writ small in delicate, tender, waspish and occasionally impish poems.

The two collections focus on different aspects of life and the world. *Memorabilia* is exactly that, and to some extent whether the reader will like it or not will depend on how much of it chimes with his or her concerns. As someone with failing hearing

and a growing sense of the passing of the years, I found there were many points at which I chuckled or winced in empathy. *Recent Intelligence* is less apparently about age and more open-ended in exploring life and its experiences through variations on themes and in the form of the sonnet.

The poems of *Memorabilia* use a range of metres and techniques, and many exemplify a quizzical, sidelong look at the world. Some are pointed social comment. 'Makeover' reminded me why I cannot watch television programmes about a team of people reworking house, garden or personal appearance: the sheer horror of the aftermath and the collusion with a very largely repugnant view of what constitutes beauty – 'the wrong premises' as the poem nicely puts it. 'Speaking of Herod' makes bracing Easter reading like the series of poems that appeared in Nash's *In Good Faith: Devotional Poems 1997–2007*. 'Someone should put in a decent word for Herod' it begins, and in contemporary language someone does so, borrowing the *Nunc dimittis* to contrast Herod's down-to-earth brutality with politicians and their plastic grins who are

> a sight to frighten the turnstiles
> and to be the boring of the people – Israel
> has had better kings than Herod and may have worse

Those who have scruples about the slaughter of the innocents 'whinge', but the speaker asks of the children, 'but what were they doing, getting first-born in the first place?', and suggests that Herod is really an '*idealist*'. Subtly, through the echo of Simeon, and the nostalgic, fascist-tending views expressed, the impression is given that this is a contemporary old man's voice, and thus a new slant on the Biblical narrative is given, and fresh insight into the intellectual temptations of age.

A sequence of five poems, 'Lines for my lass', are at the centre of this collection. Age has both consolations and terrors for the octogenarian lad and his lass. Here memory refreshes, indeed reproduces, what age tends to diminish – beauty and passion and linguistic facility. The neatly-turned sentences of youth become truth understood between the old couple without complete sentences. But that complementarity makes terrible the prospect of loss and aloneness.

There is much that is poignant and pleasurable in this collection. I have two minor criticisms. The first is about the notes, which inevitably say more or less than the reader wants. The pleasure of the Virgilian echo or the Biblical or liturgical reference in the verse is rather spoiled by the chapter-and-verse annotation. And then the 'shocking and moral conclusion' of 'A Sense of Compromise' turns out to be thought-provoking – showing how the imagination can by-pass conscious precepts – more than either shocking or moral. The second minor quibble is that this collection shows a strong preference for closure: the last line or stanza in the poem answers the problem or closes down the argument. 'Early Evening TV' ends with the line 'Switch off', and that rather summarises the tendency of the poems. One that bucks this trend is 'All Hallows', a poem that is in many ways haunting, and all the better for it.

The notes to *Recent Intelligence* are much more informative, as they particularly focus on the technical variations on sonnet form. And indeed these poems are, in some ways despite the form, less prone to closure. There are three sections: the first is 'a record of moral and religious crisis', the second 'ironical/satirical' responses to urban life, and the third 'about related things – the passage of time, penitence, creativity, redemption', as the introduction expresses it. The keynote of the first section is 'wilderness', and it touches on waiting and the dreariness or banality of life without purpose or much hope. The second section turns this feeling outwards to observe, wryly and sardonically, the world around: the affectation

and happenstance of everyday life, including that of the church. A structuring feature of the third section is the liturgical year: Advent, Christmas, Lent. As the collection moves to its conclusion, the garden comes into focus. Here the wilderness is made orderly, domesticated; but the twist in the tail is that it ends with the garden of Gethsemane. As the note says, this poem is 'cheerful', but perhaps wisely, and certainly satisfyingly, it is hard-won, dark-hued cheer.

Bill Nash's poetry is a breath of fresh air: honest, painful, joyous and thought-provoking in content; deft, shapely and precise in expression, form and metre. A happy marriage.

Paul Cavill

John Milton, *Paradise Lost: Parallel Prose Edition*, ed. Dennis R. Danielson, Regent College Publishing, 2008, x + 559 pp., £20 (US$ 29.95), pb. 978 1 57383 426 1

Writing on the durability of *Paradise Lost*, William Hazlitt was of the opinion that 'The way to defend Milton against all impugners is to take down the book and read it.' In 2008, the year of Milton's quartercentenary, marathon readings of *Paradise Lost* were held at universities across the globe, and seemed to bear out the efficacy of Hazlitt's proposed antidote to any aesthetic prejudice readers might hold against the poem. I can avouch from firsthand experience that an oral recitation of Milton's epic not only conveys the splendour and musicality of his verse, but also works to clarify the action and meaning of the narrative, blowing the hermeneutic cobwebs away, so to speak. In a class context, however, only a scattering of students would warm to the prospect of listening to, let alone participating in, an Olympian, sixteen-hour recital of Milton's great argument. More's the pity, since there is no doubt that, on the page, the 'dead letter' of Milton's verse admits numerous impediments to the twenty-first century reader. The complex and labyrinthine syntax, the recondite and arcane classical and Biblical allusions, the serpentine extended similes, and the grand, artificial style are all aspects of Milton's poetic that constitute obstacles to the modern reader's pleasure. Milton is, after all, a poet who is notorious for the diligence and conscientiousness he demands from his readers. Not for nothing has Harold Bloom attached to the Puritan bard the sobriquet of 'the strangling sphinx.'

The publication of Dennis Danielson's parallel prose edition of *Paradise Lost* proves timely, then, for teachers as well as students. In the briefest of prefaces, Danielson presents what he calls his prose 'translation' and defines its status as 'a commentary on the poem, or an interpretation of the epic (since to translate is always to interpret)' (p. x). The text of the poem that Danielson supplies on the left hand page is the first edition of 1667, modified to take account of the additional lines of the second edition of 1674 with, on the right hand page, his own prose 'translation.' The edition reads lightly, not least because it is entirely free of any scholarly apparatus. We are instead presented with only Milton's verse and Danielson's attendant prose gloss. The decision on Danielson's part not to encumber the text with supplementary explanatory and textual apparatus is a calculated and prudent one. The deliberately spartan layout starkly and squarely prioritizes for the reader both the poem, the thing in itself, and Danielson's gloss, as an accompanying aid to the understanding. Danielson's composition of the gloss was an ongoing project that took him no less than a quarter of a century to complete, and it is an undertaking that has the best of intentions.

Inevitably, much is lost in translation. It is of course impossible to unpack the dense allusiveness of Milton's diffuse epic. For example, Danielson translates the 'Gordian twine' (IV.348) into which the Edenic serpent wreathes its coils by the simple expression 'subtle knots' and therefore removes or strips away any reference to the historical account of Alexander the Great's famous solution at Gordium. The

sly duplicity of Satan's ambiguous words, with double sense deluding, now largely bears a single dimension of meaning. In paraphrase, the possible nuances of fallen speech that Milton capitalizes upon dissolve, and the lapsed potentialities of the pun, syllepsis, and irony disappear. The 'Babylonish dialect' Dr. Johnson deplored as a conspicuous weakness of the Miltonic style, and which twentieth-century Miltonists such as Stanley Fish and Christopher Ricks have demonstrated to be one of the poetry's greatest strengths, is rendered by Danielson into lucid and unadorned contemporary English. Equally, Danielson's rendition irons out the original Latinate syntax of Milton's poem, a syntax that invariably imposes upon the reader the moral responsibilities consequent upon the act of choosing. None of these observations should diminish the effectiveness of Danielson's gloss, which succeeds as both a clarifying device for the finer points of this testing and knotty poem, and as a single suggested interpretation of the poem from among myriad competing interpretations. In his regular column for the *New York Times* entitled 'Think Again,' Stanley Fish has argued, in an approving review of Danielson's ambitious edition, that the book can thrive inside or outside of the classroom as 'a powerful pedagogical tool.' Rather than shutting down our options when reading Milton, Danielson's version of the epic narrative, by submitting a series of interpretative choices, should open up debate and invite readers to interrogate the multiple ways in which they might make sense of how Milton works. In the near future various dissenting voices will undoubtedly frown upon Danielson's efforts. Yet Danielson would be the first to concede that there is no substitute for the real thing. In my view, if it is used aright, the parallel prose edition, with its questionably dissimilar relationship between Milton's verse and Danielson's commentating prose, is anything but redundant. The work should hopefully inspire students to become the kind of fit readers Milton advertised, readers who are willing to be strenuous, attentive, and 'uncloistered.' British Universities today rarely, if at all, include on their curricula courses that are exclusively devoted to Milton. Instead, one of the most canonical, anthologized, and influential of English poets tends to be slotted or, worse, squeezed into the odd undergraduate course on English Renaissance or seventeenth-century literature. It would be agreeable to think that Danielson's prose translation will help to galvanize teachers and students alike into taking Milton seriously and, above all, encourage them to enjoy and appreciate anew what is arguably the greatest and wisest poem in the English language. If so, then there is everything to play for in this new edition, for, as Milton himself exhorted, 'Wisdom is the important thing, therefore get wisdom.'

Russell Hillier

Kevin Mills, *Fool*, Cinnamon Press, 2009, 76pp., £7.99 pb., 978 1 905614 80 6

Kevin Mills, poet and professor, teaches literature and mythology at the University of Glamorgan in Wales. In addition to Fool, he has published a number of works in literary theory and criticism. The most recent is The Prodigal Sign: A Parable of Criticism, which combines critical writing with autobiography, dramatic monologues and other experimental cross-genre writing. One might be reminded of N. Scott Momaday, a Native American author who has blended various forms of literature – and sometimes visual art – into a multiplicity of genres that break traditional bookstore or library boundaries. Could it be that a Welsh poet and scholar might have literary links to a Kiowa author in the United States? Perhaps not, but it is always a pleasure to discover writers who bend the rules, combining prose with poetry, and new images that make old ones acquire a new sparkle.

Kevin Mills and this reviewer have something in common too: we both have been published in The New Welsh Review. As an American poet myself, I admit to being enchanted by everything Welsh, especially the Welsh voice whether in poetry

or song: Richard Burton, Dylan Thomas and R. S. Thomas, Dannie Abse and, of course, Bryn Terfel. There are numerous anthologies of Welsh poets and poetry to please readers on both sides of the pond, but what is one to make of Fool?

A Welsh poet can promise good things: an ease of language that is inherently musical, that trips over the tongue and down a steep hill like a brook, laughing. Readers respond to Welsh ponies and a use of English that somehow retains an echo of Welsh, a connection to Druids and Bards from a past that is very much with us, not unlike Momaday's evocation of American Indian traditions.

In browsing through Fool, however, one might note a choppy style and clipped clip-clop rhythm more like those Welsh ponies than a languid flow of the Thames or the Mississippi and, readers might think not of Wales or America at all, but Eastern Europe or writers such as Charles Simic or Vasko Popa. Fools features a condensed, acerbic style echoing poets from other language traditions in Europe, beyond the comfortable music of mainstream British and American voices. Kevin Mills is sensitive to traditions and translations, as he mentions in his poem 'Break' – 'On the passenger seat / there's a new translation / of Gilgamesh. I think / about respraying.' Language interacts here with our contemporary culture as well as links to the past: in this very concise, compact poem there are references to armour, a castle, a ruin, as well as the ubiquitous automobile of our own era.

Similarly, in another short (nine lines) poem, Mills tells us 'She spoke of the pains of learning / Arabic and the gap … dropped her / off near the Cock and Bull, / drove home discussing the Muslim. / An Angel took her to Lime Street, / trains to Builth Road.' Theology and travel are combined to reflect on the essence of education. This poet appears to be quite at home in modern Wales, in a changing Britain, a changing world and how wisdom often requires painful steps. He also tells us, in another poem entitled 'Outside the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans,' that 'the structures that enclosed the hours– / sheepfold, church, mill and home … Stone and timber history reminds us / we have outgrown it.'

Poets zero in on the particular, on the one object that symbolizes all losses. In the same museum poem Mills provides a sudden, sharp focus on a mundane and yet poignant container: 'No-one needs a jug now, / Not the kind of thing you buy. / Blue and white, it once held milk. / It stood on a white tablecloth.... / These things were getting old / when I was young.' Making that nostalgic and yet crucial connection is what poets do, that's their job, and Mills is no 'fool' in this regard, but a sharp reporter.

In another poem he includes what appears to be an accurate transcription of a monologue by a disenfranchised young man: 'Christ / I 'aven got no cloes / nor nothin'....Fuck' em all. I'm off, inni.' Here are pains of learning, when the jug will not suffice.

This poet combines an awareness of linguistics with welcome humour. In his poem titled 'Welsh Lesson,' he reveals: 'I been to the cassle, I 'ave / 'cos I was gerrin' on my mother's / nerves.' Or in 'Othello, like' he confesses: 'I da like Shairkspeare. Done / 'im in school, we did.' The spelling of the Bard of Avon's name is how Mills helps readers to get into a Welsh mind, a non-reader perhaps, but oddly likable and likely to win our affection.

The last poem in the book, 'Insurgence,' speaks of finding a home, crossing thresholds, and mapping territory 'with its own thin body,' a litany of pithy images. Welsh or Serbian, English or Sioux, these are provocative images to intrigue readers who desire to discover the relevance of poetry to psychology, politics, and our efforts to make sense of the world around us. Mills has an interest in theology and mythology, and these fields provide ample ideas for poems – maybe more from him in the near future.

Mary Kennan Herbert

Notes on Contributors

David Barratt with Roger Pooley and Leland Ryken edited *The Discerning Reader: Christian perspectives on literature and theory*, Apollos/Baker Books, 1995. The second edition of his *C. S. Lewis and his World*, retitled: *Narnia: C. S. Lewis and his World* appeared in 2005.

Dr Paul Cavill's most recent book is *The Christian Tradition in English Literature*, Zondervan, 2006 (with Heather Ward). He teaches English language and medieval literature at the University of Nottingham, and is Research Fellow for the English Place-Name Society.

Dr Nicola Darwood teaches 19th and 20th century literature at the University of Bedfordshire and has also taught at De Montfort University. She was awarded her PhD in 2007 for her thesis 'The Representation of Innocence in the fiction of Elizabeth Bowen', and has published an essay on the work of Elizabeth Bowen: 'Empty Boxes, Empty Spaces: Elizabeth Bowen's *The Little Girls'* in *Further from the Frontiers: Cross-currents in Irish and Scottish Studies*, McNair, A. & Ryder, J. (eds.), Aberdeen, AHRC Centre for Scottish and Irish Studies (December 2009). Her research interests include a continued fascination with Elizabeth Bowen, children's fiction and 1930s literature.

Christopher Dorn *is* General Editor at *Reformed Review*, a theological journal of Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan.

Jessica Fay is an M-level research student at the University of Liverpool, interested in Philosophy and Literature. Her dissertation on the implications of Wordsworth's statement that language should be the incarnation of thought is with a view to doctoral research.

Dr Johanna Harris is maître-assistante at the University of Geneva, working on a project directed by Professor Lukas Erne, provisionally entitled 'Shakespeare and the Book Trade'. She has co-edited with Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558-1680* (Palgrave Macmillan, February 2010), and additionally has articles forthcoming in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of English Renaissance Literature.* She is currently editing the manuscript writings of Harley for *The Early Modern Englishwoman* Series (forthcoming, Ashgate).

American poet **Mary Kennan Herbert,** originally from St. Louis, Missouri, now lives in Brooklyn, NY, where she teaches literature and writing courses at Long Island University. She has also taught at other colleges in the New York City area and has led creative writing workshops. Her poems have appeared in many literary and theological journals, in over twenty different countries. Five anthologies of her poetry have been published by Ginninderra Press in Australia. Most recently, one of her poems was published in *Christianity and Literature*.

Dr Russell M. Hillier is Assistant Professor of English at Providence College, Rhode Island. He has published articles on Milton, Bunyan, Coleridge, and Dostoevsky, and his book on Milton's poetry and theology is forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

Dr Roger Kojecký, author of *T S Eliot's Social Criticism*, is among the contributors to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (IVP).

Roberta Kwan is a postgraduate research student in the Department of English at The University of Sydney, Australia. She is thinking through the intersection of hermeneutics, biblical doctrine and literature, with a focus on the fiction of Tim Winton.

Barry Livingstone grew up in Africa, before moving to Britain for postgraduate work as a Commonwealth Scholar. At the time of his retirement from secondary teaching, he was Head of English at Bishop Ramsey Church of England School, Ruislip. He now divides his time between Sussex and Normandy.

Walter Nash is Emeritus Professor of Modern English Language at Nottingham University. He has authored several collections of poems, including *Memorabilia*, and *Recent Intelligence* (reviewed in this issue). He is also the author of numerous books and articles on language and rhetoric. He lives now on the island of Tenerife. More information and a bibliography (to 1998) will be found on http://www.humboldt.edu/~des11/nash/nash.html

Dr Sharon Jebb Smith lives in Aberdeen. She teaches at the University of Aberdeen. Her doctoral dissertation on God and and the self in Samuel Beckett and C.S. Lewis (to be published by Wipf and Stock) was completed at the Institute for Theology, Imagination and the Arts, University of St Andrew's.

Dr Andrew Tate is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English & Creative Writing and Associate Director of the Ruskin Research Centre at Lancaster University. His recent publications include *Douglas Coupland* (Manchester UP, 2007), *Contemporary Fiction and Christianity* (Continuum, 2008) and, co-authored with Arthur Bradley, *The New Atheist Novel: Fiction, Philosophy and Polemic After 9/11* (Continuum, 2010). He edited a special collection on religion and literature for the *Yearbook of English Studies* in 2009.

Dr Anna Walczuk, whose doctoral dissertation was on Chesterton and C.S. Lewis, is Deputy Head at the Institute of English Philology of the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland. Her scholarly interests in English literature of the twentieth century include the rendering of ideas in literature e.g., Europeanism, British identity, history and metaphysics; and how rhetorical devices exploit the potential of language in representing, shaping and manipulating reality. Amongst her publications is *Irony as a Mode of Perception and Principle of Ordering Reality in the Novels of Muriel Spark*, Kraków, Universitas, 2005.

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