THE GLASS

NUMBER 18 SPRING 2006

'The Kingdom of God is between you' – Bakhtin and the Christian Reader
Roger Pooley 4

At Play in the Fields of the Lord: 'Plato's Pharmacy' and God's Heavenly Book
Leslie Baynes 13

Reason's Disciple: After Master Derrida
Kevin Mills 28

Christian Literary Studies
Roger Pooley and Paul Cavill 36

Book Reviews 42

Including William Poole, *Milton and the Idea of the Fall*; Christopher Cannon, *The Grounds of English Literature*; Wesley A Kort, *C S Lewis Then and Now*; D Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England;* Alister McGrath, *Creation*; Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*

Poems by David Barratt, Barry Gritt and Walter Nash

Notes on Contributors 69

News and Notes 71

Published by the Christian Literary Studies Group, a Professional Group in association with the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship. Editorial and subscriptions: *The Glass*, 10 Dene Road, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2AA.

© the contributors 2006
ISSN 0269-770X

CLSG
www.clsg.org
editor@clsg.org

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher. The views of the contributors do not necessarily reflect editorial stance. The CLSG holds personal details on computer for the purpose of mailing in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1984.

Editorial

The name of Jacques Derrida, who died in October 2004, was fairly prominent at the CLSG autumn conference 'Beyond Derrida', held in Oxford a year afterwards. Discussing secrecy in his book *A Gift of Death* Derrida noticed the saying of Jesus in Matthew 6:6: 'When you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.'

Secrecy tends to compel the attention of postmoderns, and others. Roland Barthes remarked in 'The Death of an Author' that 'literature, by refusing to assign a "secret", an ultimate meaning to the text (and the world as text), liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases – reason, science, law.'

Michael Edwards, for long a member of the CLSG, commented in 1984 on the Derrida phenomenon: 'Many reactions to Derrida's "terrorism" and "nihilism" have been fierce, and I dare say that a Christian response would be expected to come sharper than others. Derrida seems after all to be removing all the requirements for a Christian thematic: the knowability of the self, the accessibility of the world, the autonomy of truth, the permeation of being and the existence of a Supreme Being. Although his position is self-evidently atheist, however, what I suggest is threatened here is not Christianity but a pseudo-Christian philosophy unaware of itself. Much of his deconstructing is, to change the metaphor, a genuine hygiene' (*Towards a Christian Poetics*).

Lately Edwards has remarked that 'the history of recent philosophy, from Hume to Derrida, is the history of a series of awakenings to what we have lost. Indeed, such discourses derive their force from the Christianity they abjure' (*Ombres de lune*, 2001). His book has not yet appeared in English, but we hope to print a translation of the key chapter, 'On Christian Poetics', in the next issue of *The Glass*.

What secret, if any, lies beyond Derrida? His book *The Gift of Death* (*Donner la mort*) engages with the Czech dissident writer Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays*. Where the humanist and not very heretical Christian Patočka believes that as persons we are 'defined by our unique placement in the universality of sin', Derrida finds the individual's singularity to lie not in sin and its remedy but in his or her death and finitude.

There is of course another take on personhood, in relation to the *imago dei*, but although Derrida is oddly negligent of the moral-political stand taken by Patočka – a Charter 77 signatory virtually put to death by the interrogators of a police state – he does put his deconstructive finger on the inconsistency of postulating goodness, repentance, sacrifice and so forth with 'no need of a revelation or the revelation of an event'. That is, with no secret. Not only

Patočka but Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard and Heidegger belong, he says, to a tradition of proposing 'a nondogmatic doublet of dogma … a thinking that "repeats" the possibility of religion without religion.' And there are many eloquent voices in this company, Edwards' pseudo-Christian philosophers among them. But a revelation, or the revelation of an event, are needed and are given. The Logos of John's gospel, and the mystery of Paul's Gospel, has to be specifically that and more.

Roger Kojecký

‘The Kingdom of God is between you’ – Bakhtin and the Christian Reader

Roger Pooley

This paper is based on a talk given to the CLSG in November 2004, ‘Confessions of a Christian Bakhtinian’, and retains some of the personal tone and approach of that talk, while attempting to make it more detailed and better documented in some of the sections. It arose from two encounters after seminars at Keele, where I teach. The first was given by Ann Shukman on Bakhtin many years ago, where she was challenged to explain Bakhtin’s principle of dialogue as compatible with Christianity, which seemed to require an authoritative notion of language. The second came from Fred Botting, who asked me what I was, in theoretical terms, to which my immediate response was ‘A Christian Bakhtinian who hasn’t recovered from being taught by Raymond Williams.’ If the element of intellectual autobiography seems rather egotistical, one defence would be that the narrative of my understanding of Bakhtin reflects the way that the (still incomplete) process of translation of his work has determined the way he has been understood. There is, I know, a tradition of ‘confessions’ running from Rousseau to Confessions of a Window-Cleaner*, which is not really saying sorry at all; what follows is, I hope, a little less self-justifying than that tradition.*

In the western literary world, Bakhtin’s largely posthumous triumph has been staggering. It is difficult to imagine what contemporary criticism would look like without his key ideas. They run parallel to certain tendencies within the postmodern and the deconstructive approaches to literature and culture, which is one reason why they have been so successful, and yet they have their roots in more traditional ways of reading and thinking. So they are less threatening, as well.

Bakhtin himself was a Christian, an unorthodox Orthodox, a neo-Kantian and a utopian Marxist; his ideas have been taken up in any number of critical pursuits well beyond those positions, and few of them bear any obvious Christian traces. I wonder why Bakhtin has been so attractive and fruitful for so many. I want to look at some of the big ideas in Bakhtin – dialogue, novelisation, carnival – and what they have to offer the Christian critic, or, at least, the critic trying to be Christian in their calling. Of course, being a Christian Bakhtinian isn’t that unusual. Apart from Mikhail Mikhailovitch himself (at least some of the time), a number of Bakhtin’s Russian admirers have seen him as an Orthodox philosopher as much as a literary critic. A number of studies have discussed his Christianity, or appropriated his ideas for the discussion of the Bible. When I wrote for advice in this to Graham Pechey, one of my old undergraduate supervisors and author of a number of important articles on Bakhtin, he replied: ‘Welcome to the company

of Christian Bakhtinians, of whom I am one'.[1] So the category is not my invention. The connections between Bakhtin's own faith and his writings will repay investigation.

Ruth Coates' *Christianity in Bakhtin* (1998) is an important attempt to take Bakhtin's Christianity seriously throughout his oeuvre. In doing so, she may have exaggerated the Christian content of some of them.[2] In so far as I can work it out from comments and translations, Bakhtin's Russian admirers are more likely to foreground his Christianity; earlier Western appropriations of his ideas were more likely to see the Marxist influences and possibilities. There is also an argument among American scholars of Bakhtin, about how central Christianity is to the books in the Bakhtin canon.

Certainly my first encounter with Bakhtin circle ideas was with *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, attributed to Volosinov, but now reckoned by many Russian scholars to have been heavily influenced by Bakhtin, if not written by him.[3] It was exciting because it appeared to offer a way out of the prison house of language debate by insisting 'that the utterance is a social phenomenon'. This cut across the (then rampant) division between the Saussurean notion of language as an abstract, self-referential system, and its Romantic, or at least Crocean opposite, an insistence on the individual, expressive intention as the basis for understanding language. (In one of those odd twists of intellectual fashion, Saussure was as influential on Russian linguists of the 1920s as he was on structuralism in the 1960s and 70s.) This 'monologic utterance' (84) was rejected in favour of a more social model:

> A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends upon my addressee. A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee…(86)

So, somewhere between the 'egotistical sublime', the death of the author and the intentional fallacy, here is a hypothesis that we can apply to historicist reading and modern appropriation alike. The book was published in Leningrad in 1929, and makes it clear that its notion of speech community is perfectly compatible with Marxist ideas of 'the concrete social milieu' and ideology. Not that the Stalinists thought so. Bakhtin was forced into internal exile, and Volosinov died in 1939. Although in retrospect one can trace numerous links between this book and Bakhtin's ideas of the importance of dialogue, they appeared to be addressing different issues. For Volosinov, the ridiculous polarity between Sausserean and idealistic notions of language is the target; for the Bakhtin of *The Dialogic Imagination*, the essential difference is between the novel and the fixed generic rules of pre-novelistic writing such as epic. To put it in literary critical terms (which Volosinov does not – he was a musicologist as well as a linguist), the contrast is between the analysis of writing as it is heard or received, and the already dialogic nature of some kinds of writing, even before they are received. Dialogue becomes more than a social activity; it is a marker of the social existence of a work of literature, if not a metaphysical principle. We could put it philosophically, as Michael Holquist has done, and say that, for Bakhtin, existence is dialogue, and

everything we can say about language and literature flows from that.[4]

The first book that Bakhtin published under his own name, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929), carries this idea of dialogue onto another level. From being simply descriptive, it has become a desideratum. It is what makes Dostoevsky great. It is also a theory of personhood and society, one which the novelist is particularly concerned, and uniquely able, to work out.

> …at the centre of Dostoevsky's artistic world must lie dialogue, and dialogue not as a means but as an end in itself. Dialogue is here not the threshold to action, it is the action itself. It is not a means for revealing, for bringing to the surface the already ready-made character of a person; no, in dialogue a person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the first time that which he is – and, we repeat, not only for others but for himself as well. To be means to communicate dialogically. When dialogue ends, everything ends. Thus dialogue, by its very essence, cannot and must not come to an end. At the level of his religious-utopian worldview Dostoevsky carries dialogue into eternity, conceiving of it as eternal co-rejoicing, co-admiration, con-cord… A single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing. Two voices is the minimum for life, the minimum for existence. (*PDP*, 252)

Small wonder then, that Ken Hirschkop has argued that Bakhtin wants 'to endow language with some kind of inner political impetus' in his theory of language, while maintaining a kind of Kantian ethics of the individual; and that he sees Dostoevsky as creating within the space of the novel 'a Buberian religious community in which the presence of others in the guise of the purely human makes possible a radically new form of personal relation.'[5]

Carnival

My second encounter with Bakhtin was with his concept of carnival, popularised quite early on by Allon White & Peter Stallybrass, in *The politics and poetics of transgression* (1986). This addressed for example, the fair in Jonson and the Billingsgate form of abuse in the eighteenth century as English versions of the carnivalesque. The insistence of Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and his World*, that we need a history of laughter, was a challenge, when translated, to the remaining vestiges of the Arnoldian view of English literature. It was a time when playfulness began to replace the moral defence of the study of English. Instead of high seriousness, there would be *jouissance*. As an undergraduate, I studied a compulsory Tragedy paper in my final year at Cambridge; the notion that there should be a compulsory Comedy paper would have been thought absurd. Literature is serious; that was part of its defence as the centre of a liberal education. I couldn't imagine Raymond Williams writing a companion volume on comedy to his *Modern Tragedy*, either. Sure enough, nothing has changed there. Cambridge still has its Tragedy paper, and Comedy isn't there, even as an option. Look at the research and teaching interests of the faculty, and there are numerous tragedy specialists, but only one comedy specialist, and she's retired. It's not that Cambridge has been peculiarly resistant to theory, though it seemed to be once, long ago during the McCabe affair. Perhaps the lesson is that residual structures die hard in ancient universities. And Bakhtin's call for a history of

laughter has remained, if not unanswered, still drowned out by continued interest in the history and theory of tragedy. Perhaps Umberto Eco's book-destroying monk Jorge (in *The Name of the Rose*) was right: what moral consequences would have followed the rediscovery of Aristotle on comedy? 'That laughter is proper to man is a sign of our limitation, sinners that we are.'[6]

The focus of interest on Bakhtin's Rabelais book was, then, on his celebration of carnival, a religious festival in origin, but one that temporarily reversed the structures of authority and the prestige of asceticism. It is easy enough to see the Marxist origins of his admiration for the forms of carnival. It celebrates the people and popular art over high art; the 'lower bodily stratum' over the bourgeois mistrust of the embodied when it is not 'separated and completed', and it expresses the relative nature of human authority:

> Carnival with all its images, indecencies and curses affirms the people's immortal, indestructible character. In the world of carnival the awareness of the people's immortality is combined with the realisation that established authority and truth are relative.[7]

There may have been a realisation, but does it change anything? Isn't carnival part of what Herbert Marcuse called 'repressive toleration', a moment of permissiveness which only serves to reinforce the need for a return to order? (Incidentally, reopening my cracking '60s copies of *One-Dimensional Man* and *Eros and Civilisation* to check the reference made me think it's time for a Marcuse revival. The moment for such concepts as 'the language of total administration' and the 'Catastrophe of Liberation' has surely come round again.) The idealisation of carnival, which by itself might present Bakhtin as a kind of antinomian or even anarchist, needs contextualising. Some of these contexts might be Christian. The emphasis on the body, which in some parts of Rabelais and his World seem to be anti-clerical as well as anti-bourgeois in a Marxist way, might also be a homage to the idea of incarnation, a debt paid by the ascetics of the monastery in a temporary breathing space before Lent. For many Orthodox Christians, Lent itself is a great Lent, and the rest of life a little Lent – except that Sunday always celebrates the Resurrection. That rhythm of self-denial and celebration could have a bearing on the Western Christian concept of carnival. Equally, for the Orthodox, the concept of incarnation has a strong link with art. In the iconoclastic controversy the argument for icons was that Christ, in his incarnation, justified the representation of the Son of God in pictorial terms.

The anti-authoritarian caste of *Rabelais*, written in the late 1930s, is often seen as a coded attack on Stalinism. Ruth Coates argues that carnival is, primarily, a 'strategy of negation', an attempt to assert the human spirit over the forces of centralisation; but that it goes beyond the immediate anti-Stalinist context:

> As to what indeed can be known of that ultimate utopia, and the possibilities of giving it serious, but not official expression in the world, I suggest that Bakhtin finds it modelled in the gospels, and particularly in the life and discourse of Jesus Christ, the universe's prime fool and its carnival king.[8]

This is not a view of Christianity that will appeal to everyone. Every so often *Songs of Praise* will feature an ordained clown, and I confess to planting a jester with cap and bladder in the congregation when I once preached on the foolishness of Christ. It was certainly memorable, but I hope the vicar's announcement of his resignation at the end of that service was going to happen anyway. Ralph Wood takes issue with her endorsement of Bakhtin here: 'The Gospel is upsidedown foolishness only to those who reject it, whether they be the peasants or the powerful', he argues. 'Believers are indeed fools, but only to the falsely wise who are too proud to wear the mask of the Author and Finisher of their salvation.'[9] Wood is referring back to the key text of 1 Corinthians 1:18 here, though of course that is not the only reference to the foolishness of Christ. I also agree with Wood that folk wisdom is not as sacrosanct as Bakhtin seems to think. Bakhtin's championing of the people here seems both anti-Stalinist but also oddly compatible with Soviet aesthetics in that period. Remember Shostakovitch's struggles when he was accused of not giving the workers tunes they could sing. But of course there is a much subtler Renaissance version of Christ's folly in Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*: Erasmus wrote 'it is quite clear that the Christian religion has a kind of kinship with folly in some form, though it has none at all with wisdom.'[10] Distinguishing the many layers of irony in Erasmus's masterpiece is not straightforward, so any quotation will need to be cautious, but it is a reminder that the praise of folly needs to be part of Christian understanding, particularly among its intellectuals as well as its more self-important leaders.

Late in his life Bakhtin, in conversation with V N Turbin, dropped another remark into this controversy. 'The Gospels are also carnival!'[11] What could he mean? Alexander Mihailovitch, probably the most theologically acute of Bakhtin's theological commentators, argues that dialogue is a supreme value for Bakhtin, but carnival is morally ambivalent. Certainly the world turned upside down is the *effect* of the Gospels (the phrase, of course, is from Acts 17:8). The language of the parables and of the Beatitudes would substantiate the claim, too. The last shall be first. So far Bakhtinian readings of the Gospels, at least those that I have found in English, have been more concerned to read the Gospels using the dialogic approach.[12] Malcolm Jones' work in particular has explored how texts with claims of authority actually work on us. It is one thing to assent to the authority, or inerrancy, or infallibility of the Bible. How that translates into the process of reading and living is not so much a matter of checking with the official statements of UCCF or the Westminster Assembly, or the Book of Common Prayer. It is a process of dialogue.

Other concepts in *Rabelais and his World* have been immensely productive in reframing some of the comic figures and narratives of the Early Modern period. The definition of 'grotesque realism' opens up another way of thinking, not just about Rabelais' monsters, but Falstaff and Sir Toby Belch,

too. One the one hand, the grotesque doesn't present an individual body so much as 'orifices and convexities that present another, newly conceived body…a point of transition in a life eternally renewed' (318). On the other hand, mockery and abuse is almost entirely bound up with the grotesque in their popular forms, at least: so Falstaff and Belch are given at least temporary licence as satirists even if (in true, temporary, carnival fashion) the favoured position, or the joke, has to come to an end. You can see it in Chaucer's fabliaux-based tales as well, like the arse jokes in The Miller's Tale. There are whole books applying *Rabelais and his World* to Shakespeare and his contemporaries – for example a collection of essays edited by Ronald Knowles, *Shakespeare and Carnival after Bakhtin*, and Michael Bristol's enormously influential *Carnival and Theatre*. Theatre can be a world turned upside down (temporarily and figuratively). The concept of carnival, then, is not just ideological, a reaction against the authorities. Like dialogue, it forges a link between social being and artistic expression.

The third major concept I want to consider is 'novelisation', the process described in some of the essays in *The Dialogic Imagination* which contrast the novel's generic eclecticism with those of older forms such as epic. So the novel is not just a site where dialogue between characters takes place (the same might be said of the drama), but where, uniquely, dialogue between genres is the norm. There is, perhaps, a misleading dichotomy here. The novel is not the only leaky genre – witness the neoclassic debate about the decorum of Shakespeare's tragedies during the Restoration. But Bakhtin is clearly right in showing how the novel will take over other forms – the diary, the legal confession, the spiritual autobiography, the found manuscript – and imitate them, cannibalise them, or pastiche them.

At this point, I would have to say, I was appropriating Bakhtin much as I did other theorists being published at the time, sometimes warily, sometimes a little too uncritically. I certainly hadn't identified him as a Christian critic. Then I had a visit from an old research student friend, over from in Finland and feeling a bit isolated intellectually. He had converted to Greek Orthodoxy. So we decided he needed to read some Bakhtin. About a month later came a triumphant postcard, proclaiming that we were dead right, but had we seen all the ideas from Orthodoxy in him?

This coincided with the translation of many of Bakhtin's early essays in *Art and Answerability*, notably 'Artist and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', which have a more transparently Christian cast than the works that made Bakhtin's name in the West. In this long and subtle essay there are really three figures: the author, the hero he constructs, and a third figure, the Other, who is the reader, but one who is contacted in spirit and love. That, argues David Patterson, reveals the essentially religious nature of true artistic activity: 'When art and life do not become one in the wholeness of my responsibility – when criticism is confined to explication and commentary – I lose the word and with it my self and soul.'[13] The religious act and the aesthetic activity, then, should be images of each other.

There are contexts for this in Romanticism, in the Russian symbolists, and

even in Kandinsky's linking art and spirituality. But Bakhtin has another set of targets in view, the classical and neoplatonic conflict of soul and body. What is distinctive about Christ, and from him all Christian activity, is a unique synthesis 'of *ethical solipsism* (man's infinite severity towards himself, i.e., an immaculately pure relationship to oneself) with *ethical-aesthetic* kindness toward the other.'[14] That running together of ethical and aesthetic is rich and suggestive.

Out of all the currents feeding into Bakhtin's thought here, one is obviously the doctrine of Incarnation, especially as expressed in the Orthodox theory of icons. Bakhtin also uses incarnation as a metaphor for form, which is the incarnation of the author; and also, explicitly, and parallel to, the reader's act of evaluation.

One can see parallels with Auerbach's contrast of Biblical and classical narratives in the first two chapters of *Mimesis*. For Auerbach, the key to understanding Christian realism, as opposed to the rigid classical distinctions of decorum, is that giving someone a cup of cold water could be the cause of eternal salvation. For Bakhtin, the self-emptying Christ of Philippians 2 can be the pattern for author and reader alike. 'To be artistically interested is to be interested, independently of meaning, in a life that is in principle consummated. I have to withdraw from myself, in order to free the hero for unconstrained plot movement in the world.'[15]

Reading allegory

How might all this apply to allegory, the subject of the conference in which this first appeared? How might a Christian Bakhtinian reading of allegory work? I offer four comments as prolegomena.

First, allegory is, most explicitly of the narrative modes, a practice of reading as much as a mode of writing. Allegorising is something you do as an interpreter as much as an author. Certainly allegorical reading predates allegorical writing in the history of Biblical interpretation. The Bible itself contains some allegorical reading, from Joseph's dream interpretations in Genesis to Paul's readings of the Old Testament. Bakhtin's model of reading as dialogue would seem to be particularly appropriate here, although, at least in the works so far translated, Bakhtin does not directly address allegory. Yet allegory places the dialogue of meaning between writer and reader explicitly at the centre of the work:

> *Wouldst thou lose thy self, and catch no harm?*
> *And find thy self again again without a charm?*
> *Wouldst read thy self, and read thou knowest not what,*
> *And yet know whether thou art blest or not,*
> *By reading the same Lines? O then come hither,*
> *And lay my book, thy Head, and Heart together.*[16]

Second, allegory has a strong Christian history after the Bible, from Augustine's readings of Genesis and the parables to *The Faerie Queene* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Why are the two mutually hospitable? Is it the desire to fix meanings, to move from religion to theology? If, as Susan Sontag once

argued, interpretation is the revenge of the intellect on art, allegory is very often the revenge of systematised religion on myth. Gordon Teskey, in a provocative study, proposes a principle: 'The more powerful the allegory, the more openly violent the moments in which the materials of narrative are shown being actively subdued for the purpose of raising a structure of meaning.'[17] Does allegorical reading, then, tend to be coercive rather than dialogic? Obviously, if a character is named Despair, or Pliable, the reader will recognise that the author has closed down the options rather more than if they were called Smith or Jones. But allegories are rarely that straightforward, taken as a whole. Christian allegory tends to view events in this world as shadows, merely signs of what lies beyond – the spiritual reality being more real (certainly more permanent) than material reality. Yet, even in that 'merely' lies a difficulty. Leopold Damrosch comments that Bunyan's allegory 'shifts back and forth between two extremes: on the one hand, this world is the equivocal shadow of a truer world to which his signs point; on the other hand, this world is authoritatively allegorical and therefore the best embodiment of value and meaning.'[18] One can add to that a Bakhtinian idea that both author and reader become self-conscious enough to be aware of what they are doing, effectively to be able to comment on their own writing or reading. His late piece 'The Problem of the Text', which is not so much an essay as a series of notes, offers several angles on this. Here is one: 'To express oneself means to make oneself an object for another and for oneself… But it is also possible to reflect our attitude toward ourselves as objects… In this case our own discourse becomes an object and acquires a second – its own – voice.'[19] To enter into dialogue, as reader or writer, involves an element of self-reflection, not so much a suspension of disbelief but a suspension of unreflective selfhood. Reading or writing allegory is the laying open of such an internal movement of mind and feeling.

In his 1961 notes for reworking his Dostoevsky book, Bakhtin describes the function of faith in Dostoevsky's characters in these words:

> Not faith (in the sense of a specific faith in orthodoxy, in progress, in man, in revolution, etc.) but a *sense of faith*, that is, an integral attitude (by means of the whole person) towards a higher and ultimate value… The type of people who cannot live without an ultimate value and yet at the same time cannot make a final choice among values. The type of people who construct their lives without any attitude toward ultimate value: plunderers, amoralists, philistines, conformists, careerists, the dead.…[20]

Is a feeling for faith enough? For a philosopher and theorist of literature in his last years, especially? It comes as the last of a triptych. The first is just one sentence: 'Not theory (transient content), but "a sense of theory"'. Then comes a longer paragraph about confession 'as an encounter of the *deepest I* with *another* and with *others*', a dialogue, in other words. A feeling for faith is, then, a dialogic faith. The kingdom of God is between us. In the beginning was the conversation.

1 Pechey has published a number of essays on Bakhtin; see especially his 'Philosophy and Theology in "Aesthetic Activity"', in *Bakhtin and Religion: A Feeling for Faith*, ed. Susan M Flech and Paul J Contino (Evanston, 2001) and 'Not the Novel: Bakhtin, Poetry, Truth and God' in *Bakhtin & Cultural Theory*, ed. Ken Hirschkop & David Shepherd (second edition, Manchester, 2002).

2 See the long and perceptive review by Ralph C. Wood, 'Christianity and Bakhtin', *Modern Theology* 18:1 (2002), pp.119-124.

3 See Caryl Emerson, *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin* (Princeton, 2000), p. 74n3; but contrast the earlier arguments of Titunik, Volosinov's translator, helpfully summarised and developed in Morson & Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin, Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford, 1990), pp.101-110, which demonstrates what is at stake in collapsing the work of the Bakhtin circle into the work of Bakhtin himself.

4 Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World* (1990), especially ch.2.

5 Hirschkop in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*. See also his 'Is Dialogism for Real?' in *The Contexts of Bakhtin*, ed. David Shepherd (Amsterdam, 1998). Bakhtin admired Buber's I and Thou, and read him under the influence of his German tutor before he went to university in 1913. See Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), p.27.

6 Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, tr. William Weaver (1984 ed.), p. 474.

7 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, tr. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington, 1984), p.256.

8 Ruth Coates, *Christianity in Bakhtin*, CUP, 1998, p.151.

9 Ralph Wood, 'Christianity and Bakhtin', pp.119-124.

10 Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*, tr. Betty Radice (Penguin, 1971), p.201. See M.A.Screech, *Ecstasy and the Praise of Folly* (Duckworth, 1980) and, especially, *Laughter at the Foot of the Cross* (Allen Lane, 1997).

11 Cited in Felch and Contino, *Bakhtin and Religion*, p.11.

12 See Walter L. Reed, *Dialogues of the Word: The Bible as Literature according to Bakhtin* (Oxford, 1993) and Malcolm Jones, 'A Bakhtinian Approach to the Gospels: the problem of Authority', *Scando-Slavica* 42 (1996), pp.58-76. For a dialogic reading of the Good Samaritan, see ch. 8 of David McCracken, *The Scandal of the Gospels* (New York, 1994).

13 David Patterson, 'The religious aspect of Bakhtin's aesthetics', *Renascence* 46 (Fall 1993), 55-71.

14 M M Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability* (Austin, 1990), p.56.

15 *Art and Answerability*, p.112.

16 John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), 'The Authors Apology'.

17 Gordon Teskey, *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca 1996), p.3.

18 Leopold Damrosch Jr., *God's Plot and Man's Stories* (Chicago, 1985), p.151.

19 M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and other late essays* (Austin, 1986), p.110.

20 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* tr. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, 1984), p.294.

At Play in the Fields of the Lord: 'Plato's Pharmacy' and God's Heavenly Book

Leslie Baynes

In books I find the dead as if they were alive. – Richard de Bury, *Philobiblon*.[1]

WRITING IS ALWAYS INVOLVED IN QUESTIONS OF LIFE AND DEATH.[2] JACQUES Derrida made this observation in 'Plato's Pharmacy', his deconstruction of the *Phaedrus*, but it is also fitting as an overarching statement about the function of the heavenly book in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. This is paradoxical, for at the ancient heart of Western attitudes about writing is a fundamental contradiction. For many Greeks, of whom Plato is representative, writing is suspect; the 'living voice' is superior to the written word. Therefore one may infer, as some have, that if the voice is living, its contrary, writing, must be dead. Derrida himself is the most well-known expositor of such phonocentrism.

Ancient Near Eastern thought, however, would have none of this. In the ancient Near East, including ancient Israel, writing is authoritative; writing is effective; writing is an almost unequivocal good. I am not setting up a dichotomy between the 'Greek mind' and the 'Hebrew mind,' an idea that has been rightly discredited.[3] This discrediting, nevertheless, does not alter the fact that the two civilizations often evaluated books and writing quite differently. From this observation stems the paradox of using Derrida's reflections on Plato as a tool to analyse Judaeo-Christian heavenly books. A caveat is in order as we begin to do this: I do not pretend to great expertise in the works of Derrida; I am a Biblical scholar and not a critical theorist. But I do believe that even a little dabbling in Derrida can yield interesting results that can help us understand the heavenly book motif better. Because I am merely a dabbler, I will confine my analysis mainly to an application of his essay 'Plato's Pharmacy' to the motif in several ancient Jewish texts. Before entering into a discussion about the heavenly books themselves, then, we must take a closer look at that essay.

The *locus classicus* for Plato's critique of writing is his dialogue *Phaedrus*, and, more specifically, the myth of Theuth that Socrates tells there.[4] According to that myth Theuth,[5] the ancient Egyptian god often represented as an ibis, invented numbers and astronomy, games of chance, and letters (γράμματα).[6] The ordering of the list is probably purposeful: 'first serious inventions, then draughts and dice, then letters'.[7] That is, letters, like games of chance, are for play, not for serious work, a claim Socrates makes explicit later. Taking these inventions to Thamus the king, Theuth outlined their benefits for humanity. Writing, he averred, would make the Egyptians wiser and improve their

memories. But Thamus categorically rejected this claim, noting that Theuth attributed to letters 'a power opposite of that which they really possess. For this invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practise their memory.'[8] Theuth had discovered a remedy not for memory (μνήμη) but for reminding (ὑπόμνησις). Because of this, Derrida can observe:

> If writing, according to the king … produces the opposite effect from what is expected … it is because … it doesn't come from around here. It comes from afar, it is external or alien: to the living, which is the right-here of the inside, to *logos* as the *zoon* it claims to assist or relieve.… Knowing that he can always leave his thoughts outside or check them with an external agency, with the physical, spatial, superficial marks that one lays flat on a tablet, he who has the *tekhne* of writing at his disposal will come to rely on it. He will know that he himself can leave without the *tupoi*'s going away, that he can forget all about them without their leaving his service. They will represent him even if he forgets them; they will transmit his word even if he is not there to animate them. Even if he is dead, and only a *pharmakon* can be the wielder of such power, *over* death but also in cahoots with it. The *pharmakon* and writing are thus always involved in questions of life and death.[9]

Derrida is not discussing heavenly books here, but he may as well be. Heavenly books do not 'come from around here,' but come from afar, distant from the land of the living. Derrida's reflections on the term *pharmakon*, too, are appropriate in theorizing heavenly writing. Socrates applies the word to the written discourse of Lysias that Phaedrus holds under his cloak at the beginning of the dialogue: 'You seem to have found the φάρμακον to bring me out [of the city]. For as people lead hungry animals by shaking in front of them a branch of leaves or some fruit, just so, I think, you, by holding before me discourses in books, will lead me all over Attica and wherever else you please'.[10] In the myth at the end of *Phaedrus* Theuth applies the same word to writing in general, calling his own invention of letters a 'φάρμακον of memory and wisdom'.[11] Derrida argues convincingly that the two uses of the term, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the dialogue, should be interpreted in tandem.[12] But to interpret it, one must first attempt to know what it means. This is a problem. From it we obviously derive our 'pharmacy.' But a φάρμακον can be either a poison or a cure, even a dye or a paint, and Harold North Fowler in his Loeb edition of the dialogue translates it alternately as 'charm' and 'elixir'.[13] Derrida, of course, revels in the multiplicity of meanings of the word, and it is a pivot on which his argument turns:[14] 'The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus, the play, the production of difference'.[15] The juxtaposition of *biblia* with the *pharmakon*, a word of such slippery meaning, he writes, is not accidental:

> This association between writing and the pharmakon … seems external; it could be judged artificial or purely coincidental. But the intention and intonation are recognizably the same: one and the same suspicion envelops in a single embrace the book and the drug, writing and whatever works in an occult, ambiguous manner open to empiricism and chance, governed by the ways of magic and not the laws of necessity. Books, the dead and rigid knowledge shut up in biblia, piles of histories, nomenclatures, recipes and formulas learned by heart, all this is as foreign to living knowledge and dialectics as the pharmakon is to medical science.[16]

Books and writing, therefore, possess the same inherent ambiguity as a *pharmakon*. They are a poison or a cure; they kill and they make alive;[17] they mediate between the living and the dead. Taken to a higher plane, heavenly books do the same things. A name written in a heavenly book guarantees life; its absence, or its blotting out, dooms that person to death. Sometimes what is written in a heavenly book is 'rigid' knowledge; it records what is, what was from the beginning, or what will certainly come in the future. But however heavenly books function, and they do function in several different ways, at a fundamental level they deal with matters of life and death, presence and absence. This is true from their first appearances in ancient Mesopotamian texts, and it holds true for the way both heavenly and earthly books function in the Hebrew scriptures. Within the Hebrew scriptures themselves, there is no opposition or antithesis between compromised, derivative, earthly writing and heavenly books. Biblical writing is a *pharmakon* inasmuch as it mediates life and death, but it is no *pharmakos*, or scapegoat to be expelled either from the earthly city or the heavenly Jerusalem.

But what, exactly, is a heavenly book? Within the many literary contexts in which it appears and in 'real world' theological analysis, the heavenly book is probably best described as a construct of the religious imagination. When we read about heavenly books, needless to say we are not reading about physical rolls of papyrus or parchment, but of idealized perceptions of them projected into the heavenly realm. For the purposes of this study, I define a heavenly book simply as a piece of writing stored in heaven that is restricted almost entirely to heavenly use. If such a book comes down to earth to be read, as it sometimes does, it is only a copy (in writing or in an oral rendition) of the original in the heavenly realm.

The motif 'heavenly book' remains a constant in a given text, but the functions of that book differ *in situ*, according to the needs of the literary context. There are three main types of heavenly books. First, in the Hebrew scriptures, by far the most common is the book of life. Registration of individuals' names there is a binary operation: one is either in or out of the book, and while a person's actions certainly affect that registration, the book of life does not record those actions. Second is the book of deeds. Through the book of deeds, heavenly accounting of people's works, good or evil, regulates entrance into eternal happiness or final damnation. The third type is the book of fate, which appears only rarely in the Hebrew scriptures, but much more frequently in earlier ancient Near Eastern texts and the later Pseudepigrapha. The book of fate, as its name suggests, records what will happen in advance, either to an individual or to a larger community, and so it is strongly deterministic.

All of these heavenly books mediate life and death. For Jewish writers up to the first century, writing, not speech, is primary and authoritative. Through the exteriority of heavenly writing, not through the presence of speech, are found, alternatively, life and remembrance, or death and obliteration. In these texts, writing is certainly a *pharmakon*, but it is not a trickster. The remainder of this paper will test that thesis through the analysis of the motif of heavenly writing

in a myth from the ancient Near East, several texts from the Hebrew scriptures, and two works of the Jewish Pseudepigrapha, in the light of Derrida.

Books and Writing in the Myth of Anzu

Meditations upon the relationship of writing and speech begin early in the ancient Near East in the Mesopotamian myth of the bird-God Anzu. Anzu covets the tablets worn by Enlil, the chief god of the Sumerian pantheon. These tablets, a common motif in Mesopotamian literature, are books of fate. On them is written the destinies of the people and their land.

> On the tablets of destinies in his hands Anzu was wont to gaze …
> He resolved in his heart to make off with supremacy!
> 'I myself will take the gods' tablet of destinies,
> I will gather to myself the responsibilities of all the gods,
> I will have the throne for myself, and take power over authority,
> I will be commander of each and every Igigi-god.' I. 67, 71-75

Waiting until Enlil was busy at his bath, Anzu

> took control of the tablet of destinies,
> He took supremacy, [authority] was overthrown!
> Anzu soared off and [made his way] to the mountain,
> Awful silence spread, deathly still[ness] reigned.
> Their father and counsellor Enlil was speechless.
> The cella was stripped of its divine splendor. I. 80-85

The initial effect of Anzu's theft is shocked silence, and the text highlights the speechlessness of Enlil, bereft of his tablet. It appears as if Enlil cannot speak because he no longer holds the tablet. In such a reading, the tablet not only determines destinies, but is in fact Enlil's means of communication. This hypothesis becomes more credible when one notes that Anzu's power of speech is transformed when he possesses the tablet: 'His [utterance] has become like that of divine Duranki./ [If he commands, the one he cur]ses will turn into clay,' the other gods observe (I.111-12) after the bird seized the tablet.[18] It seems possible that in stealing the tablet of destinies, Anzu had taken over Enlil's very power to communicate. Indeed, Enlil's voice is not heard again until Ninurta, the warrior champion of the tablet-less gods, regains possession of the tablet in order to return it to Enlil (III.39-40).[19] But Ninurta, in turn, is seduced by the power of the tablet and how it transforms his speech, and he plots to keep it: 'Why [surrender] the trap[pings of kingship]?/ [My utterance has become] like that of the ki[ng of the gods]. I will not re[turn] the tablet of destinies' (III. 20-22).[20]

Bringing these interplays of speech and writing in the Anzu myth into conversation with Plato's myth of Theuth produces some interesting results that help set up the rest of the paper. First, as in the *Phaedrus*, in the Anzu narrative we have before us a myth some of whose central concerns are the interactions of speech, writing, and power. Socrates argues that writing is an orphan: that is, writing without its 'father,' speech, is helpless and vulnerable.[21] In the Myth of Anzu, on the other hand, the rightful 'father,' Enlil, without his writing, is

the 'orphaned' one, and he is not only helpless, but very likely speechless as well. Writing and speech in the Anzu myth are not presented in a dualistic, dichotomized system, which is the charge that Derrida levels against that other bird identified with the writing, Theuth: in Theuth, 'the hierarchical opposition between son and father, subject and king, death and life, writing and speech, etc., naturally completes its system…'.[22] The myth of Anzu subverts binary oppositions. Interiority (speech) requires exteriority (writing) to live; the inside needs the outside. In the Platonic tradition, 'the supplement comes in the place of a lapse … a nonpresence'.[23] In the Sumerian myth, however, the 'lapse' is the absence of writing itself.

Books and Writing in Selected Texts of the Hebrew Scriptures[24]

Ancient Hebrew texts echo this Mesopotamian evaluation of the necessity and efficacy of writing, even earthly writing, when they discuss memory. But memory of what, and to what purpose? In Exodus 17:14 the Lord instructs Moses to 'write this as a reminder in a book (*sepher*) and recite it in the hearing of Joshua: I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.' Ironically, what is to be remembered is that something else will be forgotten; namely, the nation of Amalek, which the Lord will 'blot out.' This term, the opposite of remembrance in this context, indicates physical annihilation – death. Conceivably, the Biblical author could have used any number of different metaphors to pledge the genocide of Amalek, but the metaphor he chose comes from the world of writing, a world in which to be written is to live, and to be erased is to die.

Another use of the language of writing for remembrance in the Hebrew scriptures is strictly metaphorical, expressed in the phrase 'tablet of your heart'. For example, Prov 3:1-3 warns the student not to 'forget my teaching', but instead to write it on the 'tablet of your heart'.[25] Both the function of writing as remembrance and the permanence of inscribing on a tablet come together metaphorically to indicate a total interiorization of Torah. We see this also in Jeremiah 17:1, where 'the sin of Judah' is 'written with an iron pen; with a diamond point it is engraved on the tablet of their hearts,' but Jeremiah 31:33 is certainly the most well-known example of the metaphor: 'This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'[26] Such a law, God implies, is impossible to forget. Writing is remembering, and to remember via writing is to live.

Regarding this metaphorical writing, Derrida notes that 'there is … a good and a bad writing: the good and natural is the divine inscription in the heart and soul; the perverse and artful is technique, exiled in the exteriority of the body'.[27] But for the ancient Jews, there is only good writing when it is God's writing, and the Platonic division between soul and body is nonsense; the Hebrew word for human, *nephesh*, a unity of living breath and animated body, contrasts with the Greek soul/body dichotomy.

In ancient Jewish thought, human beings are not the only ones who can rely unapologetically upon writing. Malachi 3:16 notes that the Lord himself has a

book of remembrance (*sepher zikkaron*) of those who 'revered [him] and thought on his name,' those whom, in his good time, he will reward. Here the function of the book of remembrance is to record who belongs to the Lord and exclude those who do not; in other words, it is a book of life, a heavenly citizenship list:

> Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the Lord and thought on his name. They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them. Then once more you shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. (Mal 3:16-18)

The fact that the author of Malachi attributed a book of remembrance to the Lord suggests an important theological question that may be directed to heavenly bookkeeping in general: what sort of god is it who requires written reminders? Nowhere does ancient Jewish literature even begin to ask that question; it is not something that attracts its attention. The background of the idea that God uses a reminder book, however, is not too hard to guess: most probably it is an anthropomorphism, an extension to God of a characteristic of rulers, or at least their officials, who use books and writing to keep administrative records (e.g. Ezra 6:1-5; Esther 2:23, 9:25,32). But while the Jews appear never to have looked askance at a God who uses written records, the Greeks did. Several Greek authors are instructive on this point and put Jewish attitudes into sharp relief.

Aeschylus in his *Eumenides* 273-75 reflects the belief, not uncommon in the Greek world, that the gods used writing in conjunction with remembrance:[28]

> μέγας γάρ Ἅιδης ἐστὶν εὔθυνος βροτῶν
> ἔνερθε χθονός,
> δελτογράφῳ δὲ πάντ᾽ ἐπωπᾷ φρενί.
>
> For great is Hades, judge of mortals
> beneath the earth,
> and he observes everything with his recording mind.

Aeschylus uses the language of writing metaphorically to express the concept of the god's memory. Such language, however, evidently did not sit well with Euripides, or at least with the speaker in this fragment of his *Melanippe*:

> δοκεῖτε πηδᾶν τἀδικήματ᾽ εἰς θεοὺς
> πτεροῖσι, κἄπειτ᾽ ἐν Διὸς δέλτου πτυχαῖς
> γράφειν τιν᾽ αὐτά, Ζῆνα δ᾽ εἰσορῶντά νιν
> θνητοῖς δικάζειν· οὐδ᾽ ὁ πᾶς ἂν οὐρανὸς
> Διὸς γράφοντος τὰς Βροτῶν ἁμαρτίας
> ἐξαρκέσειεν οὐδ᾽ ἐκεῖνος ἂν σκοπῶν
> πέμπειν ἑκάστῳ ζημίαν. ἀλλ᾽ ἡ Δίκη
> ἐνταῦθά πού᾽στιν ἐγγύς, εἰ βούλεσθ᾽ ὁρᾶν.

> Do you believe that judgements leap winged to the gods,
> and then someone writes them on the tablets of Zeus,
> and Zeus, casting his eyes on them, judges mortals?
> But the whole of heaven would not suffice
> when Zeus writes down the sins of mortals,
> and when he looks he could not send his penalty to each.
> But Justice is near, if you want to look.[29]

As Friedrich Solmsen writes, 'Euripides (or his character) wishes to discredit the notion that Zeus 'remembers' and punishes men's sins – the same notion which Aeschylus so emphatically endorses. Euripides discredits it by putting it before the audience in the less dignified alternative: he pictures Zeus as relying on the μνήμη of written records.'[30]

In contrast to Euripides' denigration, no such critique of the use of books as an aid to memory appears in the Hebrew Bible. Whether consulted by God or man, heavenly or earthly, books and writing are an unequivocal good; never are they linked with a loss of dignity, either human or divine. Nowhere in the Hebrew scriptures do we find anything approaching the philosophical argument against using books for remembrance that Socrates levels against Phaedrus.[31]

In Plato's myth of Theuth, Socrates claims that an unavoidable side effect of dependence on books is loss of the powers of memory. Books, rather than increasing brain power, erode it: 'This invention,' says the king to whom Theuth, the inventor of letters (γράμματα), presents them, 'will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not practise their memory.'[32] One should rely instead on the 'living voice' and face-to-face communication.[33]

As we have seen, Socrates himself urges a reliance on the 'living voice'[34] rather than the dead letters that are external to the human agent.[35] In this context it is worthwhile to repeat the words of Derrida noted at the beginning of this paper in order to highlight the concept of remembrance:

> Knowing that he can always leave his thoughts outside or check them with an external agency, with the physical, spatial, superficial marks that one lays flat on a tablet, he who has the *tekhne* of writing at his disposal will come to rely on it. He will know that he himself can leave without the *tupoi*'s going away … Even if he is dead, and only a *pharmakon* can be the wielder of such power, *over* death but also in cahoots with it. The *pharmakon* and writing are thus always involved in questions of life and death.[36]

Another way in which books and writing function as a remembrance is that they remain after the death of the writer. The writer himself may leave, but his words (Derrida's *tupoi*) do not go away, 'even if he is dead'. Socrates in the Theuth myth problematizes the capacity of (orphaned) written language to exist apart from its speaker/father, but Job in the Hebrew scriptures relies upon it. Job 19:23-26 perfectly encapsulates his hope and confidence in the staying power of the written word:

> O that my words were written down!
> O that they were inscribed in a book!
> O that with an iron pen and with lead
> they were engraved on a rock forever!
> For I know that my redeemer lives,
> and that at last he will stand upon the earth;
> and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
> then in my flesh I will see God …

Job longs for the inscription of his words because they will remain as a remembrance 'forever' after his death. Job will die, but he knows that his redeemer lives, and it is only writing that can mediate between the two. Job fantasizes that his words, thus inscribed, could remain as a witness to his anguished thoughts and feelings 'after my skin has been thus destroyed'. When their existence is external to a person, written words can do that. Thus writing as a *pharmakon* forges a link between life and death.

Books and Writing in the Pseudepigrapha

We have looked at attitudes about books and writing in one ancient Near Eastern myth and in several texts from the Hebrew scriptures; now we will examine the same themes in two books of the Pseudepigrapha, Jewish literature that purports to be written by revered figures from Israel's past. One of the best known of these is *1 Enoch*, which is actually a collection of material purportedly by or about an otherwise minor antediluvian character from the genealogy in Genesis 5. Enoch, a descendent of Adam and the father of Methuselah, 'walked with God; then he was no more, for God took him' (Gen 5:24). The singular nature of Enoch's fate, coupled with the fact that the Hebrew scriptures have nothing more to say about it, proved irresistible to later authors, who embellished the laconic account of Genesis with great gusto.[37] In all of these pseudepigraphal texts, Enoch is a writer, a role that has no correlation to his original appearance in Genesis. Why is this? There are reasons both historical and literary that could be adduced, but I suggest that Enoch's ambiguous status after his translation – not alive in any earthly sense, but not dead, either – is strangely analogous to the status of books as I have theorized them here, as mediators of life and death.

Heavenly books play a key role in the so-called 'Animal Apocalypse' (AA) embedded in *1 Enoch*, which takes the form of *vaticinia ex eventu*[38] within the context of a dream that Enoch narrates to his son Methuselah.[39] This dream vision narrates the events of Israel's history up to the time of its writer (c.160 BC), and it uses animals allegorically to stand for human actors; for example, the people of Israel are 'sheep', and God is the 'Lord of the sheep'. When human figures appear in the symbolic world of the apocalypse, however, they represent angels.[40] Heavenly books of deeds come into play in 89:61, right after the advent of seventy 'shepherds' and right before the destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 BC. These seventy shepherds are 'seventy angels whom God commissioned to shepherd Israel',[41] and the books are to register their actions, for unlike most shepherds in the Bible, these are not altogether good:

> And [the Lord of the sheep] called seventy shepherds … and said to [them]: Each of you from now on is to pasture the sheep and do whatever I command you. And I will hand (them) over to you duly numbered and will tell you which of them are to be destroyed, and destroy them. (89:59-60)

The shepherds are to care for the sheep, yes. But they also must follow God's command of selective culling, which signifies the deaths of the people. However, the 'Lord of the sheep' knows that the shepherds will overstep their bounds, and this is one reason why books are necessary:

> And he called another and said to him: 'Observe and see everything that the shepherds do against these sheep, for they will destroy from among them more than I have commanded them. And write down all the excess and destruction which is wrought by the shepherds, how many they destroy at my command, and how many they destroy of their own volition; write down against each shepherd individually all that he destroys. And read out before me exactly how many they destroy of their own volition, and how many are handed over to them for destruction, that this may be a testimony for me against them, that I may know all the deeds of the shepherds, in order to hand them over (for destruction), and may see what they do, whether they abide by my command which I have commanded them, or not.' (89:61 ff.)

The meaning of the destruction of the sheep is clear: it is their punishment for 'going astray' (89:51,54) from their Lord; because of this, the Lord purposely gives them into the hands of the 'wild animals' in the Babylonian assault. But what is the author's motivation in introducing shepherds who kill more 'sheep' than God allots? R H Charles summarizes an answer to this well:

> Though God rightly forsook Israel and committed it to the care of angels, though, further, Israel was rightly punished for its sins, yet the author and the Jews generally believed that they were punished with undue severity.… How was this to be accounted for? The answer was not far to seek. It was owing to the faithlessness with which the angels discharged their trust.[42]

The scribe writes down the deeds of the shepherds 'every day' (89:70), and he presents the books to the Lord three times (89:70-71, 89:76-77, 90:14-17). Again the question arises: why does the Lord need a written record? Would he know what the shepherds were doing without it? As in Malachi 3:16, there is no hint of any embarrassment on the part of the author for the Lord's sake because he needs books, but, unlike Malachi, the context of the AA does provide an answer to the question. The Lord of the sheep makes his first appearance in the text in 89:15, and from that point until 89:54, he is closely involved with his sheep.[43] But in 89:55, he abandons them to the wild animals (i.e., the Babylonians who will kill them or take them into exile). The Lord departs the scene, and it is only at this point that he commissions the 70 shepherds and appoints the scribe who guards the guardians. In other words, the Lord of the sheep is now a *deus absconditus*; he has purposely withdrawn, and since he is no longer paying attention to the 'flock,' he needs written records to know what is happening and to know how to punish the 'shepherds' in good time.

In the end, the over-zealous angels are indeed judged, found guilty, and thrown into the abyss of fire (90:25). While writing certainly does mean death for those inscribed in the heavenly book in this case, it brings forth life and judgement for those the shepherds have wronged. Here, perhaps more than in any of the other texts examined in this paper, we find a model, oddly enough, of play, and the interplay of life, death, and writing. How can one comprehend life without the notion of death, and how can one die without life? If one is an ancient Jew, can one either live or die without the mediation of texts?

The final text under consideration here, the *Testament of Abraham*, is also from the Pseudepigrapha.[44] Usually dated to the first century AD, it imaginatively narrates the heavenly travels of the eponymous patriarch before he dies. On these travels, guided by the angel Michael, Abraham observes a heavenly judgement scene that is, of course, mediated by books. The books play their part in the context of a dramatic scene full of human interest, and their function is to help all the players in it remember the sins of the particular human soul being judged. Speaking to this soul, a woman accused of murdering her daughter, the judge says,

> 'How shall I have mercy on you, since you did not have mercy on your daughter whom you had, the fruit of your womb? Why did you kill her?' And she answered, 'No, Lord. The murder was not my doing, but rather, that daughter of mine lied against me.' Then the judge commanded the one who writes down what needs to be remembered (τὸν τὰ ὑπομνήματα γράφοντα) to come. And behold, (there came) cherubim bearing two books, and with them was an exceedingly large man. And he had on his head three crowns, and one crown was higher than the other two crowns. The crowns are called the crowns of witness. And the man had in his hand a golden pen. And the judge said to him, 'Give proof of the sin of this soul.' And that man opened one of the books which the cherubim had, and sought out the sin of the woman's soul, and he found (it). And the judge said, 'Exhibit the sin of this soul.' And, opening one of the books which were with the cherubim, he looked for the sin of the woman and found (it). The judge said, 'O miserable soul, how do you say you didn't commit murder? After the death of your husband, didn't you commit adultery with your daughter's husband and kill her?' … When the woman heard this she wailed, saying, 'Woe is me, woe is me, that I forgot all the sins I committed in the world. Here they are not forgotten.' Then they took her, too, and handed her over to the tormentors. And Abraham said to Michael, 'Lord, who is this judge? And who is the other one who convicts sins?' And Michael said to Abraham, 'Do you see the judge? This is Abel, who first bore witness, and God brought him here to judge. And the one who produces (evidence) is the teacher of heaven and earth and the scribe of righteousness, Enoch. For the Lord sent them here in order that they might record the sins and the righteous deeds of each person.' (Testament of Abraham Rec. B, 10.16–11.4)

The books of deeds in this judgement scene function for remembrance. The word used to name them, τὰ ὑπομνήματα, can mean simply 'notes,' but because its root is μνήμη, it clearly connotes remembrances, memorials, or memoranda. On the word ὑπομνήματα, Clement of Alexandria, who writes perhaps no more than a century after the production of the *Testament of Abraham*, is particularly instructive. At the beginning of his *Stromateis*, Clement explicitly articulates the connection between ὑπομνήματα and memory. He writes almost apologetically

that his text is not a carefully-wrought treatise for display, but rather 'μοι ὑπομνήματα εἰς γῆρας θησαυρίζεται, λήθης φάρμακον' ('my notes stored up for old age, a remedy for forgetfulness'). Immediately striking in Clement's words, of course, is that fact that the ὑπομνήματα are a φάρμακον for forgetfulness, an obvious allusion to Plato, and an allusion which Clement enlarges as he continues. These ὑπομνήματα, he writes, are a 'rough image,' a 'shadow' of the 'clear and living words' that he has heard. Clement applies Plato's concept of a 'φάρμακον for forgetfulness' to his ὑπομνήματα somewhat playfully, then, since he believes that this is in fact how his notes function for him, as a crutch for his memory. In his contrast of the superiority of 'clear and living words' to the 'rough image' and 'shadow' that is writing, Clement is Plato's heir. The written word is a useful if regrettable tool, inferior to the living voice.

But even if the author of the *Testament of Abraham*, like Clement, uses the term ὑπομνήματα to indicate writing as a goad to memory, his attitude toward the written word diverges significantly from Clement's. In this text, the spoken words (if not the living voice, since the woman is dead!) of the soul aim to deceive. The woman claims forgetfulness ('woe is me, that I forgot all the sins I committed in the world'), and the only trustworthy place to go to disprove her spoken words is to the books. The writing is certainly exterior to the woman, but it is no forgetting of self. Quite the opposite. She does not read the book, but the book reads her. There is no 'incompatibility between the *written* and the *true*' as in the Phaedrus, according to Derrida,[45] and there is no difference between ὑπομνήματα and true memory. Even more, the heavenly book motif functions here as a guarantee of the divine as well as the human memory. In this scene, therefore, heavenly books act as not only as an authoritative means of judgement in a judgement scene, but also as a reminder of God's book in Malachi 3:16. Unlike Clement, unlike the Greek authors, heavenly beings in Judaism express no embarrassment in relying upon the written word.

Conclusion

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida notes that 'there remains to be written a history of this metaphor, a metaphor that systematically contrasts divine or natural writing and the human and laborious, finite and artificial inscription.'[46] This paper is a selective epitome of a larger work that attempts to do just that. How does the work of Derrida aid in that effort? We must remember that the Hebrew scriptures make not the slightest movement toward any theorization of writing whatsoever. The place accorded writing is accepted without comment, a theologoumenon, an unwritten law. Using the work of Derrida as a frame or as a template suggests that when ancient Judaism produces books, and when God holds heavenly books, it is quite literally a matter of life and death. When in the company of these Jews, Platonic phonocentrism has to eat its words. For the Jews, it is not the case that 'what writing itself, in its nonphonetic moment, betrays, is life.'[47] For the Jews, writing is not '[the] end, [the] finitude, [the] paralysis' of 'history as the spirit's relationship with itself.'[48] Rather, writing is the only thing that is real and true and trustworthy, so much so that the root of all presence, the creator God, unlike Plato's Thamus the king, values the

exteriority of writing, not least for its pharmaceutical properties in re: μνήμη. Writing, the concretization of absence, is held dear by Presence. Through writing, God's people remember that.[49]

---

1 Richard de Bury, *Philobiblon*, trans. E C Thomas, Oxford, Shakespeare Head/Basil Blackwell, 1960, p. 17.

2 Jacques Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, University of Chicago Press, 1981, pp. 104-105.

3 James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, OUP, 1961; cf. Thorlief Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1960.

4 Another important place where Plato philosophizes about writing is in the *Seventh Letter* (341b-342a), but the authorship of that letter is disputed. See Ludwig Edelstein (*Plato's Seventh Letter*, Philosophia Antiqua 14, Brill, 1966, pp. 76-85), who uses precisely the passage about writing to argue that the *Seventh Letter* is not Plato's. Regarding the indisputably genuine works, my analysis will make no attempt to distinguish between 'the Socrates of history and the philosopher of Platonic faith', as N T Wright so nicely phrases it (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 3, Philadelphia, Fortress, 2003, p. 48).

5 'Theuth' is the form in which it appears in *Phaedrus*, but elsewhere 'Thoth' is more common. See for example, C J Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth: Two Key Figures of the Ancient Egyptian Religion*, Studies in the History of Religions [Supplements to Numen] 26, Brill, 1973.

6 *Phaedrus* 274 C-D. For more on the Greeks' fertile thinking on these topics, see Deborah Levine Gera, *Ancient Greek Ideas on Speech, Language, and Civilization*, OUP, 2003.

7 C J Rowe, ed., *Phaedrus*, Warminster, Aris & Phillips, 1986, p. 209.

8 *Phaedrus* 276 D.

9 Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', 104.

10 *Phaedrus* 230 D-E.

11 *Ibid.*, 274 E.

12 Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', 65-75.

13 Harold North Fowler, Plato: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Loeb Classical Library 36, Harvard University Press, 1914, pp. 425, 563.

14 Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy,' 71-72.

15 *Ibid.*, 146.

16 *Ibid.*, 72-73.

17 Deut 32:39.

18 The power of speech to make changes in the physical world is reminiscent of God's ability in Genesis 1 to create with a spoken word ('God said, "Let there be light. And there was light."'). But there is no heavenly book of destinies in Genesis 1. Could the emphasis on creation by speech alone, without the use of a book, be the priestly author's reaction against the Mesopotamian tablet of destinies?

19 The tablet has prophylactic powers as well; it wards off the arrows that Ninurta lets fly against Anzu in the battle to regain the tablet (II.66-67).

20 For the cuneiform text and a general discussion of the Anzu myth, including a comparison of the tablet of destinies to Sethian writings, see Amar Annus, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu*, State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts 3, Helsinki,The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001, pp. v-xxx.

21 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 275 E.

[22] Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy,' 92-93.

[23] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 303.

[24] Space allows the examination only of a few texts; they are, however, wholly representative of the way in which writing is treated in the Hebrew scriptures.

[25] See also Prov 7:3.

[26] This metaphor also appears in Greek texts that may be roughly contemporaneous with the Hebrew ones, i.e., Pindar *Olympian Ode* 10: 'Read me the name of the Olympian victor, the son of Archestratus! Tell me where it is written in my heart!' (ἀνάγνωτε… πόθι φρενὸς ἐμᾶς γέγραπται). See Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, Clarendon, 1968, p. 26 n. 2.

[27] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 17.

[28] Cf. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 789; Callimachus, *In Cererem* ('To Demeter') 6.56; Babrius 127 in the Loeb edition.

[29] Francois Jouan and Herman Van Looy, eds., *Euripide Fragments* 6.2, Les belles lettres, 2000, p. 381, my translation.

[30] Friedrich Solmsen, 'The Tablets of Zeus', *CQ* 38, 1944, pp. 29-30.

[31] To the best of my knowledge, there is only one Jewish text prior to the second century AD that treats writing at all negatively, and that is in the so-called Similitudes of *1 Enoch* (dated to the first century AD):

> And the name of the fourth is Penemue: this one showed the sons of men the bitter and the sweet, and showed them all the secrets of their wisdom. He taught men the art of writing with ink and paper, and through this many have gone astray from eternity to eternity, and to this day. For men were not created for this, that they should confirm their faith like this with pen and ink. For men were created no differently from the angels, that they might remain righteous and pure, and death, which destroys everything, would not have touched them; but through this knowledge of theirs they are being destroyed … (*1 Enoch* 69:8-11).

This passage, part of a list of evil angels, implies that ignorance of 'the art of writing with ink and paper' which the text associates with knowledge and wisdom, would have guaranteed humanity ignorance of death. Like Thoth, Penemue is not doing humanity any favours by initiating it into the mysteries of writing. No further elaboration of this idea is given in *1 Enoch*, but it does reiterate Derrida's point that writing and books are inextricably linked to matters of life and death, here obviously in a negative and even destructive way.

[32] *Phaedrus* 275 A.

[33] *Ibid.,* 274-78.

[34] *Ibid.,* 276 A.

[35] *Ibid.,* 275 A.

[36] Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy,' 104-105.

[37] In addition to the collection of Enoch literature represented in *1 Enoch*, there also survives *2 Enoch* and *3 Enoch*, as well as other Jewish texts such as *Jubilees* in which Enoch plays a significant role.

[38] Cf. Dan 10:21-12:4 and *1 Enoch*'s Apocalypse of Weeks.

[39] Cf. *1 Enoch* 83-85.

[40] Enoch is always portrayed as a human in the Animal Apocalypse, which has interesting implications that are realized in Enoch's transformations in the *Testament of Abraham* and *2* and *3 Enoch*.

[41] Patrick A Tiller, *A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch*, SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature 4, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1993, p. 51. Unless otherwise noted, translations of *1 Enoch* come from M. A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: A New Edition in the Light of the*

Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments, Clarendon, 1978.

42 R H Charles, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*, Clarendon, 1912, p. 200.

43 George Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, Hermeneia; Philadelphia, Fortress, 2001, p. 389.

44 There are two recensions of this work, A and B; the text under consideration here appears only in Recension B. The translation that follows is mine from the Greek.

45 Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy,' 68.

46 Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 15.

47 *Ibid*., 25.

48 *Ibid*., 25.

49 I cannot close this paper without remembering to thank Roger Kojecký and Valentine Cunningham for their hospitality during the 2005 annual conference of the Christian Literary Studies Group. May it be written in the heavenly book of deeds!

Faith FAQs

What is the point, in church, of going there?
– Prayer
What act might I perform as well elsewhere?
– Prayer
What words, if any, should I try to say?
– Pray
If God is listening to me, will I know?
– No
If he's to grant my prayer, shall I know when?
– Then
What are my options if I don't believe?
– Grieve
What if I won't believe, will God still bless?
– Guess
Why should I worship Him, or glorify?
– Try

Walter Nash

I Danced out of Charity

I don’t blame myself: I blame the others.
Though they were on opposite sides,
They were both equally human
And there was something
Of a lost spark of the divine about them.

One was a man of good conscience.
He had to crush rebellion: he had no choice:
For it was he who upheld his father’s throne
By his powerful arm, and he prayed ‘God save the king.’

The other was also a man of good conscience
And though simple people jeered at the blood on his hands,
No violence was found in his mouth.
But in his heart he said:
‘God hang the king.’

I say God is on no one’s side but his own.
God can hang in the name of religion, say I.

Now, say I: seal up the tomb of love.
The treasure within is too costly
To be wasted on an unloving world.

Barry Justin Gritt

Reason's Disciple
After Master Derrida

Kevin Mills

Disciple[1] a follower or pupil of a leader, teacher, philosophy etc. [2] any early believer in Christ, esp. one of the twelve Apostles (*OED*).

Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way (Ps. 2:12, *KJV*).

…he came to Jesus and said, 'Hail, Master;' and he kissed Him (Matt. 26:49, *KJV*).

Difference is articulation (J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*).

1. Some Versions of Judas

Jorge Luis Borges's Labyrinths includes a piece entitled 'Three Versions of Judas', which explores Christianity's interpretative problem with the treacherous disciple.[1] Judas is lodged in Christian tradition as both the damned betrayer of Jesus and as a figure necessary to the scheme of salvation. He is a hand-picked companion of the Son of the God, and yet his nefarious dealings with the powers that be, lead to Jesus' arrest and execution – an execution upon which hinges our salvation. Judas either plays into the hands of a scheming God, or acts as a conscious and willing agent in the soteriological drama. Borges picks up on the fact that the Christian tradition has always been, to some extent, unsure what to make of him. The more orthodox interpretations cited by Borges include the following: Judas betrayed Jesus out of greed – he did it for the money; he was predestined to damnation – a mere pawn in the game of Redemption; he was a zealot who thought to spur Jesus into open political rebellion against Rome. Of course, some of these alternatives might lead one to question Jesus' judgement in taking up with Judas in the first place. But the focus of Borges's parable, or short story, or essay, is the much more interesting, heretical idea that Judas was a kind of martyr: he chose to sacrifice his own spirit in an act of absolute asceticism: to damn himself to hell in order to make salvation possible.

One thing that emerges from this consideration of Judas is that the very idea of discipleship, of following a master, is never straightforward or unproblematical. Judas is both disciple and anti-disciple, both follower and not follower, irreducibly: he does not cease to be a disciple simply because he betrays the master. His betrayal may have been an act of the highest devotion. Similarly, acts of the highest devotion may be betrayals. Is this not what Friedrich Nietzsche pointed out in his characterisation of 'the most dangerous party member', in *Human, All Too Human*, the one who by an 'all too devout pronouncement of the party principles, provokes others to apostasy'?[2]

In a sense, Judas is actually the archetypal disciple. I am thinking of a remark made by Paul Ricoeur, in his reading of Mark's gospel: 'It is not correct to say that Judas alone is the only opponent…. Everyone betrays, denies,

flees….'[3] Disciples are unruly creatures. They may fall asleep on you in the hour of your greatest need, or they may swear allegiance unto death, only to deny all knowledge of you the next morning. They may turn your memory into a religion, or rewrite your rebellion and heterodoxy as an ideology of obedience. They may even sell you to your enemies. What, then, does it mean to follow in the sense in which one might be said to follow a leader, teacher, or philosophy? We probably have two models – one from religion, the other from philosophy. Both seem to me to be troubled by what we might call the Judas principle, or, to give it its rhetorical name: *anacoluthon*.

2. Anacoluthon

Anacoluthon, from *akoluthia*, meaning follower, or disciple. From this root we get our word 'acolyte'. The negative prefix an-, then suggests a following (or follower) which (or who) does not follow. But perhaps all following is captured by anacoluthon, since all joining involves the point of articulation, the partial bridging of interstices which marks both the uniting and the dividing of object with object, or subject with subject. Perhaps the acolyte both follows and does not follow in the same movement. Instability is inherent in the connection in which one person or thing attaches to, joins, or cleaves to another. The double meaning of 'cleaving' – sundering and adhering – reveals the ambiguity of relation. The disciple or acolyte is a cultural predicate, attached and detached by an unstable bond, seam, hinge to/from the master, founder or forerunner: connected by an articulation which is, by definition, un*master*able. We might say that the disciple is the follower/not follower, the devout betrayer, constituted by a belatedness, a coming after. The disciple may seek to repeat, double, reiterate, amplify, elucidate, continue or complete the founder's project, only to find themselves subject to the heretical necessity of articulation. To articulate is, as Master Derrida has observed, both to join and to sever.[4] The more articulate the disciple, we might say, the greater the risk or promise of heresy. Wherever the disciple *articulates* their *following*, a double-jointedness occurs, whereby the text subjects to juncture/disjuncture for a second time, the following/not following of a personal attachment/detachment. The unruly disciple swings both ways.

3. Reason's Disciple

Reason's disciple is, typically, the follower who does not follow, who betrays merely by following. So, Plato betrays Socrates by writing, poisoning his system in trespassing against its proscription, and, by the very same means, curing him – rescuing him from oblivion with the memorial of written dialogues. I am following Derrida, here, of course.[5] Plato himself is then betrayed by Aristotle, who resolutely refuses to deny reality to the material world, who studies Nature and who writes the *Physics*. And so it goes.

Curiously, such diversions from the way of the founder, which constitute progress in the articulation of reason, are forgotten or occluded in its methods. So, the syllogism, in its touching commitment to the chain of predications,

represses the memory of betrayal or deviation, and thus it always, in a certain way, brings to light a failure to follow. Since a predicate may always not follow, may be unruly, tangential, or elliptical, articulation in the form of predication always subjects the syllogism to the presence of its other – anacoluthon. Anacoluthon, is, perhaps, the anti-syllogism, the return of the repressed in the articulation of reason. It brings to light the slippage between thought and expression, naming the gap or dehiscence of which expression is itself the predicate.

4. Heretical Orthodoxy

Reason, always implies anacoluthon. Reasoned argument, that is to say, is the determination of what follows. Does the conclusion follow from the premis(es)? 'Does it necessarily follow?' we ask when we want to question an argument, or disrupt a discourse. 'Do you follow?' the master asks the pupil. These questions are always unanswerable, for following is unmasterable – it is that which the master cannot predict, foreclose, or determine. By what instantaneously repetitive exchange might it be known? To trace a trajectory from implication to inference and back, to replicate and continue a movement of thought, would be to undo the situatedness of both the founder and the follower, to perform a groundless manoeuvre in air. It would be, then, an act of divination, in defiance of reason. Is the history of ideas, in this sense, the history of divination? An heretical orthodoxy? Anacoluthon?

5. The Founder

The founder swings from the same unstable hinge as the disciple, in the dangerous promise of what follows/does not follow. The founder is only a founder inasmuch as a following can be established. Founding is thus always also finding. The founder must find in the disciple, already taking place, that which forms in the founding. There is no founding without discipleship, no Socrates without Plato, no Christ without Judas. The founder, then is constituted by the belatedness of discipleship, always already betrayed by the act of founding/finding. Like the disciple, the founder is thus captured by anacoluthon: having to share both the belatedness of the finding and the inaugurating or bringing to light of the found(ed).

6. I Must Follow

Modern philosophy is distinguished as that which does not follow; it breaks with what precedes it. Thus we find Descartes, the solitary founder, beginning his *Discourse on Method* with the determination not to be a follower:

> …there came a day when I resolved to make my studies within myself, and use all my powers of mind to choose the paths I must follow. This undertaking, I think, succeeded much better than it would have if I had never left my country or my books.[6]

Already Descartes is both following and not following: looking for a path, a way already marked out and trodden, but turning away from predecessors,

leaving behind his country and, most significantly, his books. He looks inside himself for the already trodden way which 'I must follow'. 'I' is famously what does follow. And it follows precisely because Descartes does not follow. It is his refusal to follow that leads to the '*cogito ergo sum*'. The 'I' is, characteristically a follower, produced by not following. It is uncovered in a solitude that is stressed by Descartes' text in order to mask the discipleship of the ego. Descartes tells us that he shut himself up inside a stove in order to find within himself the object of his study. In the warmth and silence, a thought articulates itself: the thought of articulation, or, more precisely of an articulation which hides its own articulacy under a series of putative unities:

> One of the first things I thought it well to consider was that as a rule there is not such great perfection in works composed of several parts, and proceeding from the hands of various artists, as in those on which one man has worked alone.[7]

As though to legitimate the choice of solitary speculation, the disavowal of multiplicity in production and constitution represses articulation, joining, combination. It attempts to seize the hinge, to establish fixity and continuity – an untroubled passage for discourse which would render the 'I am' a necessary corollary of the 'I think', the *ergo* becoming translucent, almost invisible. But its visibility is re-established by the admission that this was not the first thing, but 'one of the first things' presenting itself to the 'I': one thing selecting itself, as if by chance, out of a multiplicity; one thing, detached, unitary, apparently *sui generis*. Yet, the principle of selection is the solitariness of the 'I', the masking of its following, the legitimation of its not following. Solitariness selects solitariness as its starting point. Where else can the founder find what is needed? Here, in the warmth of the stove, the enclosed self disavows all exterior influence, gestating itself in a not following of the world beyond. Yet the stove, external, environmental, the space around, becomes the figure of internal self-enclosure necessary to the birth of the ego. The inner space derives from the outer in a kind of ergonomics of the self.

*Ergo*nomics. This co-implication of inner and outer space must be replicated within the *ergo* – the predicating of the 'I am' upon the 'I think', for the solitariness constituted by the external space gives rise to the 'I think'. The movement from outer to inner crosses through the *ergo*. We might ask, then, if the *ego* follows the *cogito*. What would such a following mean? Is the *ergo*, lodged between the thinking self and the found, or thought self, masterable by the *ego*? We know that the *cogito* is already a following/not following since it has been constituted by the leaving of books and country, and by the finding of a path. Is the ego another double-jointed disciple?

We may be reminded once again of Nietzsche. In *Beyond Good and Evil* there is this meditation upon the predication of the ego:

> A thought comes when 'it' will and not when 'I' will. It is thus a falsification of the evidence to say that the subject 'I' conditions the predicate 'think'. It is thought, to be sure, but that this 'it' should be that old famous 'I' is, to put it mildly, only a supposition, an assertion.[8]

In Descartes' meditation, that 'it' sends itself towards the *ego* in the articulatory moment of the *ergo*. It enables the predication of the *ego*, allowing it to emerge from the *cogito*, to follow and to not follow the *cogito*. Anacoluthon brings to light a certain logic in Nietzsche's claim, turning what he calls a supposition into precisely the matter of 'grammatical custom' that he insists it is.

7. Kantian Ergonomics

Who follows Descartes? Who does not? Kant repeats Descartes' decision to follow none but himself. In this, he necessarily both follows and does not follow Descartes. The Preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* contains the following Cartesian gesture: 'I have to do with nothing save reason and its pure thinking; and to obtain complete knowledge of these, there is no need to go far afield, since I come upon them in my own self'.[9] In place of Descartes' abandoned books, Kant informs the reader that he has rejected those 'writers [who] pledge themselves to extend human knowledge beyond all limits of possible experience'.[10] In place of Descartes' distant country, is Kant's not needing 'to go far afield'. Descartes' sense of distance from influence is not, it seems, necessary to Kant, since he is not tasked with finding the self which is to be the subject of exploration. This is, presumably, because Descartes had already found it (in Germany, of course). As Descartes found within himself the ego's path, Kant finds 'reason and its pure thinking' gestating within his 'own self'. Reason, then, seems to occupy the anacoluthic space of the following, not following ego, discipled to the found and founding self.

Kant's reasoning is, then, *ergo*nomic, both in the sense of its adaptation to its environment – its comfortable location within himself, and in the sense that it follows the law of the Cartesian *ergo*. One might rewrite his *mise en scène* thus: 'I find reason and its pure thinking in my own self, therefore (ergo) I do not need to go far afield'. Once more, the question of predication troubles the solitude of the thinker, who, resisting, but also establishing, a distance between reason and the ego, tries to connect without mediation, only to find the breach already there. The exteriority which crosses though Descartes' *ergo* appears again in Kant's, this time in negative form as an unspecified, and therefore unquantifiable, proximity. Distance is reduced, but not overcome. So, the Cartesian *ergo* becomes the one and only conduit of reason, and once again it belongs both to the inside and the outside of the self. It remains within the grasp of an irreducible anacoluthon: it can never be resolved into either a following or a not following. Is reason always in a sense an ergonomics? How comfortably does it pass through the *ergo*?

8. Writing and Ergonomics

Is it, perhaps the technicity of writing that enables Descartes and Kant to enclose reason within their own ergonomically designed egological structures? It is, after all, the contiguity of space and time in the unity of an experience which brings to light both the ego and reason. You will know, perhaps, the master's voice in certain of these words. This contiguity is that which, the master says, 'permits a graphic chain to be adapted, on occasion in a linear fashion, to a

spoken chain'.[11] Articulation. Writing articulates the interior, joining it, without precedence or antecedence, to the exterior. Writing is, in this sense, anacoluthon. Both Descartes and Kant are able to characterise themselves as not-followers because writing splits their selves. They can deny their following only because both versions of the self are interior, and, simultaneously, exterior to each other. But, in the text, the exterior crosses through to the interior along the conduit of the *ergo*, enabling them to become their own disciples. Writing accommodates the discipled self by virtue of this ergonomics.

9. Ergonomics of the Soul

If indeed it is the technicity of writing which enables the Cartesian and Kantian foundings, then both founders might appear as disciples of that earlier disciple of both Christ and reason – Augustine. Augustine's writing of his own self, the *Confessions*, performs a prevenient version of self-division: '...these two wills, one old, one new, one carnal, the other spiritual, contended with each other and disturbed my soul'.[12] Here, Augustine distinguishes between the temporal and the spatial modes of extension so that the 'old' and the 'new' contend, and the 'carnal' squares up to the 'spiritual'. Curiously, this suggests not only the contiguity of space and time in the unity of an experience, but the contiguity of two times and two spaces in the disunity of experience, the disunity of *disturbance* within another self – the soul. The soul seems to be an effect of the splitting of the temporal and the spatial, and of their discontiguity; it is necessitated as a textual figure of the observing consciousness. The soul performs the ergonomic function of accommodating the split temporality of old and new, and the split spatiality of carnal and spiritual. It is the appearance within the text of the technicity of writing; as such, it is what enables predication. Self-identity and self-division constitute the soul. If multiple Augustines produce ecstasy – *ek-stasis*, the standing outside of oneself – then the soul gathers together disparate selves, articulates them, joining and separating them in the same movement. It is the ergonomic function of the soul that enables confession – the writing of the self. But this ergonomics is a betrayal of the creed of self-diffraction or dissolution associated with Pauline conversion.

10. The Most Dangerous Party Member

Augustine's self splits around the event or process of conversion. Conversion, then, may be the experiential ground of anacoluthon. William James describes conversion as pure connectivity – the unification of the self:

> To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.[13]

But, the autobiographical and doctrinal texts of that definitive model of conversion Saul/Paul, suggest that conversion is anacoluthic. His Christian subject is both continuous and discontinuous with its pre-conversion self:

> For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me (Romans 7:18-20).

The 'I' here seems to be a narrative effect, imposing a restless unity upon a congeries of unruly agents: me, my flesh, will, sin. The repeated use of 'I', in fact, masks a variety of functions: the narrative, sense-making voice, the desire to do good, the agent which contravenes the desire to do good, are all encrypted in the 'I', which becomes so overdetermined that it splits off into a personified 'sin', dwelling in an overcrowded 'me'. Again, in his Epistle to the Galatians, after recounting the story of his conversion, he insists: 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...' It is precisely the badge of selfhood, the autobiographical narrative, the individuation of Paul as authentic minister and apostle, that gives rise to its opposite – self-negation. The problem is one of the deep logic of conversion: if the 'I' is sacrificed, then who, or what, is saved? Paul's formulation might even be said to betray Christ in his death; Christ's death for the life of the individual, is met with the contradictory death of the individual for the continuing life of Christ.

The Pauline text *is* anacoluthon: the point of cultural articulation, the double-jointed writing of a belated disciple. The persecutor became the disciple and performed his multiple anacolutha by articulating the breach between Jew and Greek, between gospel and epistle, between 'old' testament and 'new' testament, between the eye-witnesses and those who, like Paul himself, according to his own testimony, were 'born out of time'. The most articulate and the most articulated of disciples, Paul inverts Judas, moving from betrayal to discipleship. But, as we have already seen, discipleship is itself betrayal. Paul breaches his trust, exceeds the *ipissima verba*, produces the Church Articulate, supplanting the founder with his own corpus. A belated, textual body of Christ. Paul becomes 'the most dangerous party member...provoking others to apostasy': the apostasy of discipleship, belatedness, and the heresy of articulation.

11. The Orthodox

As Plato, Aristotle, Paul, Augustine, Descartes and Kant all reveal, whatever the nature of our following, whoever we look to as founder, we are all heretics. There is nothing more orthodox.

12. The Breach

Articulation is the breach: the contiguity of space and time in the unity of an experience, their joining and their difference. But it is also the trace of a disturbance: the scarring discomfort that predicates discipleship. So, once more unto the breach. If there are many reasons to return to it now, not least among them will be a troubling suspicion that its double meaning has been lost, or, at least, occluded by advocations of discontinuity that have severed (without joining) epistemes, phrase regimes, metanarratives, discourses: those descriptions of postmodernity that seem to accommodate comfortably various

modes of cognitive dehiscence. Could the news of cognitive dehiscence ever reach us without invisible synapses to reticulate the seeming void, joining/not joining one epoch with another, one discourse, or discipline with another, one text with another? How did we come to hear of the breach? From what vantage point were we able to recognise its outline, trace its topography, or speak of its threatening promise?

13. Kiss

The gaps between these thoughts may open onto, or allow movement towards, many discursive spaces, in which unfold questions of auto/biography, historicity, influence, subjectivity, the connectivity constitutive of the institution, or other concerns which hinge upon the following/not following of one text, discourse, period, or self, and another. With inescapable open-endedness, irresistible freedom, anacoluthon invites speculation on what kind of discursive connections might be made. In doing so, it loosens the fabric of a (male) tradition which has defined itself by both (gender) identity and (individual) isolation. Here, the disruptive work of an ancient, yet largely unexplored trope, brings to light the continuities/discontinuities of what appears to be a history, and subjects them, at every turn, to the hidden, unmasterable work of the space of gestation in which all connections are made and unmade. These turns about the hinge of anacoluthon are outlined in the hope that something may be found or founded to articulate the possibility of connection between solitary/solidary finders, researchers, founders of new texts. What began in the aftermath of a kiss – the physical articulation of a mouth touching the skin of another, concludes with this gesture towards the work of others, who, like its author, come after one master or another, who live in the epoch of AD – Anno Domini / After Derrida. Of course, one should always beware such gestures of recognition: the familiar approach, the kiss of greeting....

---

1 J L Borges, *Labyrinths*, Penguin, 1970, pp. 125-130.

2 W Kaufmann (ed.), *The Portable Nietzsche*, Penguin, 1976, p.58.

3 P Ricoeur,'Interpretative Narrative', trans. D Pellauer, in R Schwartz (ed.), *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory*, Blackwell, 1990, p. 244.

4 J Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G C Spivak, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London, 1976, pp. 65-73.

5 J Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy' in *Dissemination*, trans. B Johnson, Athlone, London, 1981, pp. 61-171.

6 E Anscombe & P T Geach (trans. & eds.), *Descartes: Philosophical Writings*, Thomas Nelson & The Open University, 1970, p. 14.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

8 R Schacht (ed.), (1993) *Nietzsche: Selections*, Prentice Hall, 1973, p. 171.

9 I Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N K Smith, Macmillan, 1929, p. 10.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Of Grammatology*, p. 66.

12 Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. JG Pilkington, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1876, VIII.v.

13 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. M E Marty, Penguin, 1982, p. 189.

Christian Literary Studies

A discussion paper written for a conference in September 2005 of the Christian Academic Network.

Roger Pooley and Paul Cavill

Christian academics and teachers would agree that schoolchildren and students need help in approaching English literature or literary studies from a Biblical perspective. Many academics and teachers would admit to needing help too. This is an area where there are significant challenges to faith and understanding.

A. Some preliminary matters

Consider these related issues:

1. Many don't know where to look for help. There are many books and articles which have been written from a Christian perspective or one sympathetic to Christianity; there are indeed many people with expertise in the area who could help individuals or small groups (see below).
2. Many, both students and others, want an identifiable message, a safe and authoritative voice: 'the' Christian perspective, 'the' Biblical view. A difficulty is that this is an area where interpretative strategies have multiplied, and there is no such thing as 'the' Christian view. This makes the area suspect for many church people, and some populist recent work has reinforced this (see below).
3. Many don't know where this whole subject fits in relation to Christian discipleship, and indeed believe it to be irrelevant. Some take the pragmatic view that trotting out the expected answer (at whatever level) is all that is necessary. Few see the opportunities to develop an understanding of the world and humanity, the Bible and God, through wrestling with the ideas and analysis literary study puts before them.

One preliminary issue that may be discussed here is that there has been a shift of understanding within the church recently. It used to be felt that Science was the enemy of faith, but that is no longer the case. A recent newspaper article suggested that Richard Dawkins was one of the scientists who most influenced some people in *accepting* Christianity. The place of 'enemy of faith' has in some quarters been taken by Cultural Studies/Critical Theory/Literary Theory/Postmodernism, a complex of ideas and interpretative strategies too varied to admit of concise definition. So in a popular book, *Meltdown* by Marcus Honeysett (2002), the writer quotes with approval the aphorism that 'Postmodernism is a long, fancy word for sin' (p. 93) and suggests that 'the assault on Christian truth is particularly potent in universities' (p. 104), going on to identify the discipline of English as 'a particular breeding ground for Postmodern theory' (p. 106). As a counterblast to 'corrosive' theory, he proposes naive Biblicism and assumes that 'absolute truth' is 'objectively' available from the Bible without any process of interpretation. The subject of Literary Studies is marginalised by Christians in a way that issues of science and faith are not.

Readers of *Meltdown* will divide readily into two camps. There will be those who think it is right and that young people need to be warned off such

anti-Christian ideas as might feature in English Literature classes. (And they do, of course; English is no different in this from Economics or Biology, or any other subject in the school curriculum.) And there will be those who think that Christians ought to understand the world in which they live better, and ought to read the Bible more carefully and with greater literary sensitivity – or at the very least, learn to express their concerns more carefully. (A fine treatment of this kind of approach is Kevin J Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning in this Text? The Bible, the Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (1998)). An issue, then, for school kids, students and indeed academics, is that some in the church regard the very process of critical reading (of the Bible or anything else) as morally dubious or even sinful. Not everyone wants 'robust thinking' in this area because it has already been decided that such thinking is not fully Christian.

So while we welcome every initiative to help students think Christianly about their courses, we fear that this might not be an invitation to creative engagement with their studies, which will lead to intellectual integrity and maturity, but to compartmentalisation on the one hand, or alienation from the church on the other. We in the church cannot maintain that 'all truth is God's truth' if we do not trust and support those who work and struggle with challenging ideas which may nevertheless be part of God's truth. This is an issue that has been widely addressed in recent years, and indeed the prevailing anti-intellectualism of the church in general has been anatomised by a number of scholars (Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (1994) in particular). But it is not going too far to suggest that one of the reasons for the lack of impact of Christian faith on young people in some parts of the church is that we have not nurtured a mature, enquiring and open mind towards questions of how we might understand the world, our culture and society, and the artefacts they have produced and are producing.

B. Substantive response

This is a good time for Christian academics to be thinking about literary studies, not only because of the issues outlined above and considered further below, but also because scholars in literary studies are increasingly interested and concerned about religion in its various forms. Roger Pooley here discusses how literature works, the return to religion in contemporary criticism, and some useful Christian work in the subject.

1. How literature works

The act of reading is an act of decoding. Until our everyday habits are disrupted, we don't realise how complex a process it is. Sitting in a tearoom in a shopping centre (not big enough to be a mall), I noticed an emergency exit with the notice 'This door is alarmed' and began to wonder why a door should be worried. Of course, I am not meant to read it that way, but I can, because the language is multivalent. It is a literary reading, if you like; if you don't you might think it paranoia, but then there has often been a close relation between literature and madness. Freud's analysis of his patients' dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams* reads like virtuoso literary criticism as much as diagnosis. Transposing

a sentence into a different context can change its meaning. This means that students of literature need to know about context – history, politics, and religion, for example. But they also have to be aware of genre, the signal a book sends out that says you have to see me as a tragedy, or a sonnet, or a biology textbook, and respond accordingly. However, even that is a choice for the reader. When *The Pilgrim's Progress* was first published in 1678, Bunyan used a quotation from Hosea on the title page ('I have used similitudes') and wrote a long verse 'Apology' which instructs the reader to read its images in a particular way. Because he says he 'fell into an allegory', it must be an allegory, and we read it as such. Yet there is no such prefatory permission in The Song of Songs in the Bible, and that has often been read as an allegory. Is that kind of reading illegitimate? No, but it is open to challenge, because the meaning and effect of any literary work (and the Bible is a literary work, though that is not all it is) is a complex negotiation between author and readers.

Generic expectation is not just a matter of finding signals and obeying the rules, though. Think of epic, among the earliest of genres (Homer, the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh*), and one of the most prestigious and ambitious. Epics are about heroes, the foundation of countries, or (like *Paradise Lost*) the foundation of the world. In our own time, the epic has retreated into the fantastic, or into irony, that characteristic contemporary (even postmodern) mode. As in Roy Fisher's 'Epic', quoted in its entirety below, the grand claims of the traditional epic hero are ripe for undermining:

> Stranger, in your own land
> how do men call you?'
> 'I will tell you. Men call me Roy
> Fisher. Women call me
> remote.'

Literary reading, then, is a high-level skill (to use the jargon of education), which responds to complex invitations to discern and play with words and meaning, and introduces its own complexities of understanding. It is much more than downloading, or accessing information. It is a human activity, too, because meaning exists in a position between speakers, writers and readers. The readers are not just individuals, alone with a book in the quiet of a study or bedroom; they are part of communities, in schools and colleges, or learned societies, or congregations, or book groups, or people who read the same book reviews. Each of those has its protocols, its way of debating, of establishing authority, and of recognising what counts as an interesting or legitimate reading. Many readers will belong to more than one of these communities. A Christian student of literature will belong to several, and may find the tensions between them difficult to negotiate. She (or, occasionally, he) will be a member of a church, which will have a particular approach to the Biblical text and to other texts of contemporary culture; and maybe a Bible study group or Christian Union which will have a similar approach but perhaps a less hierarchical, more subjective practice of reflective reading. On top of that, she will be a student in an English department, which will promote a range of approaches to reading,

but may have an individual tutor with a quite specific theoretical approach. Those approaches may conflict with what she has successfully practised at A level. Like most sophisticated readers, she will be able to switch from one to the other more or less successfully. But sometimes that switch may demand too much. Coleridge famously described the experience of poetry as 'That willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith' (*Biographia Literaria*, 1817, ch.14). That provisional granting of oneself to someone else's perceptual world is what makes reading, watching or listening an adventure in dialogue, or something unsettling and disorienting.

On the one hand, we might feel, with Luke Ferretter, that 'Most contemporary literary theories are atheistic' (*Towards a Christian Literary Theory,* 2003). The easy conclusion might be that a Christian approach needs to look back, to critics of literature from the Christian tradition like T.S. Eliot or C.S. Lewis. But that is to close off debate, and to retreat into a comfort zone. Many contemporary Christian critics, such as Valentine Cunningham in *In the Reading Gaol,* Kevin Mills in *Justifying Language* and John Schad, most recently in *Queer Fish: Christian Unreason from Darwin to Derrida,* have confronted the challenge of deconstruction with more subtlety and respect than a search and destroy mission. Equally, we need to recognise that some of the most influential philosopher-critics of the recent past have been much involved with religion, Derrida especially. Some of them, such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Paul Ricoeur, have done so from a Christian perspective that needs a bit of uncovering, but it is undoubtedly there (see, for example, Ruth Coates, *Christianity in Bakhtin*).

The theoretical conflict is serious and sometimes pressing, but there is another, week-by-week issue, which is the challenge of literary texts themselves. Here, sometimes, Christian academics and Christian students have an advantage – they recognise Biblical and religious ideas where their contemporaries don't. This may make them seem obsessive, but most of the time they are welcomed as repositories of knowledge in an era which has lost the Biblical literacy of previous generations. The fact that most of them/us don't read the Bible in the King James Version, or worship according to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, is a disadvantage in this respect, though. This is by no means confined to the explicitly Christian canonical writers of the Middle Ages or the seventeenth century. It can apply equally to *Jane Eyre,* or *Waiting for Godot,* or the stories of Flannery O'Connor.

To see that there is a Christian reference in a text is, perhaps, no more than a good edition's footnotes should give you anyway. However, when many students (as my colleagues complain) have so little in the way of intellectual furniture, ideas with which to operate, then it is a Christian student's calling to equip themselves with some decent theology. On creativity and the idea of creation, for example, read Genesis, of course, but also Colin Gunton *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (1993), and the first part of David Thistlethwaite, *The Art of God and the Religions of Art* (1998). This would give an interesting basis for looking at the poetics of creation in Wordsworth and Coleridge, for example. Coleridge in particular locates the act of imagination within theological co-ordinates.

2. The return to religion in contemporary criticism

When Stanley Fish, the influential and combative American literary critic, was asked recently what would happen to criticism now Derrida, the father of deconstruction, has died, he replied simply 'religion'. This could mean that criticism in America will go the way of presidential politics in America, but it is much more complex than that. In a way Fish was only reporting what was already happening. Derrida himself, at least since *Glas* (published in French in 1974) had confronted questions of religion with sympathy and acuity.

Stephen Greenblatt, the founder of New Historicism, one of the most influential schools of criticism practised today, has become increasingly concerned with Shakespeare's religion, in particular with his father's Catholicism. In *Hamlet in Purgatory,* and the more recent biography *Will in the World,* he has developed a picture of Shakespeare as responding creatively to the Reformation:

> Shakespeare grasped that crucial death rituals in his culture had been gutted. He may have felt this with enormous pain at his son's graveside. [Hamnet died in 1596, aged 11]. But he also believed that the theatre – and his theatrical art in particular – could tap into the great reservoir of passionate feelings that, for him and for thousands of his contemporaries, no longer had a satisfactory outlet…Shakespeare drew upon the pity, confusion and dread of death in a world of damaged rituals (the world in which most of us continue to live) because he himself experienced those same emotions at the core of his being…He responded not with prayers but with the deepest expression of his being: *Hamlet.* (321).

Now, this is not a response to Shakespeare from a Christian faith position, but it is a recognition of the importance of religion to the creation and reception of a key literary work. Specialists in seventeenth-century literature are used to sophisticated, theologically aware studies of Christian writers like Milton, Bunyan and Herbert, but, apart from Marlowe's alleged atheism, the religious dimensions of theatrical writing have been sidelined. Now, with Greenblatt's books, Richard Wilson's research on the Lancastrian Shakespeare, and Stephen Marx's more modest but in some ways more useful study, *Shakespeare and the Bible,* the emphasis is changing. It may be that, as one of Greenblatt's reviewers has noted, he needs Shakespeare to be a Catholic, and that is a fragile position. But the point I am making is different. There is a moment in academic criticism when the study of religion and its relation to literature has become more viable because those who do not necessarily share that kind of belief have recognised its importance.

We can see this in the textbooks, too. Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle's *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* is now in its third edition (2004) and is widely used and accepted in English departments. Because it does not deal with theories one by one (as does, for example, Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory,* possibly even more widely used) it has space for dealing with the familiar terms in which literature is viewed (character, laughter, war, for example) as well as the postmodern and the queer. And so, chapter 19 has ten pages on God, sandwiched between sexual difference and ideology. It

is an invigorating and revealing chapter, based round six 'edicts: 'God is an anthropomorphism', 'God is dead', 'To acknowledge the idea that God is an anthropomorphism or that he is dead is not the same as getting rid of him', 'religion is everywhere', 'literature has an evil streak', and 'literature is sacred'. Maybe for a student unsure of his or her faith, that would be threatening, but for anyone prepared to take it on, it offers a space for thinking about literature from a Christian perspective.

3. Some pointers on the relationships of Christianity and Literature.

Try the essays in *The Discerning Reader*, ed. Barratt, Pooley & Ryken (Leicester, 1995) and Michael Edwards, *Towards a Christian Poetics* (1984). For A level or book group readers, a useful book is Bridget Nichols, *Literature in Christian perspective: becoming faithful readers* (2000). There is a long Christian tradition of poetics by imaginative writers in England, from Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* to the essays of T S Eliot and W H Auden. The Inklings work is interesting, too: most useful for the Christian critic is Tolkien's work in *Tree and Leaf.* Of more realistic writers, Flannery O'Connor's essays and letters are invaluable. She offers a plausible theology of Christian realism. For reference, consult David Lyle Jeffrey, *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* and Isabel Rivers, *Classical and Christian ideas in English Renaissance Poetry.* The CD Rom *Images of Salvation in Medieval Art and Literature,* produced by the Christianity and Culture group, is attractive and valuable for students and teachers.

There are two academic journals, *Christianity and Literature* and *Literature and Theology*, which publish high-quality articles on a regular basis. Many university libraries will subscribe to one or both of these. *The Glass* comes out once or twice a year from the Christian Literary Studies Group, who also hold annual conferences (visit *www.clsg.org)*. There are some more popular American periodicals, *Books and Culture* and *The New Pantagruel,* which often have useful material on the arts, and sometimes read like a plea not to despise culture and intellect addressed to the American Christian situation. When the current Archbishop of Canterbury is a published poet, the situation in this country may be a bit different. But then think of the rubbish we tolerate as words to worship songs! (See Nick Page, *And now for a time of nonsense…why worship songs are failing the church*; and contrast the magisterial work on the English hymn tradition by J R Watson, a recently retired professor of English at Durham.)

C. Conclusion

There are no easy answers to the question of how Christians should approach literature and literary studies. Some innovative work is being done to produce resources, and new projects associated with Bible Society, Stapleford House Education Centre, the Association of Christian Teachers and Christianity and Culture are in process. Students, teachers and academics are alert to the needs. It would be good if in due course, alongside the Bible and science books, some Christianity and literature books appeared in every church library and Christian bookstall. Our reading shapes our lives.

Book Reviews

William Poole, *Milton and the Idea of the Fall*, CUP, 2005, 252pp. £48, 13:9780521847636

There is something cameo-like about William Poole's new book on the idea of the fall, which is a highly finished composition on a single, momentous subject. '[B]uilt on the ashes of a doctoral thesis' (viii), the work is exhaustively researched and written to impress; it does. The book has two aims. Yet whereas the first aim succeeds in exploring the diversity of opinion about the significance of the Fall for intellectual history, the second misfires as an examination of Milton's developing understanding of the Fall across his poetry and prose, particularly within Paradise Lost.

Poole is wholly immersed in a sense of his period and the ambit of his learning is staggering. His first chapter, broadly entitled 'The Fall', ranges as far afield as Abraham Cowley's poetry, legal remedy and horticultural manuals to demonstrate the cultural permeability of Genesis 2-3. Three interpretative models for the Fall are posited: first, man was created perfect and the fall was a cosmic catastrophe; second, man was created to fall and we should remain contentedly ignorant about the unhappy event; third, man was created imperfect, making of God a 'botching demiurge of vain prohibitions' (16). Poole assumes that the first model, which approximates the Augustinian Fall, was the dominant one for the seventeenth-century. He documents the evolution of Augustine's thought on the Fall and highlights Augustine's bifurcated concept of two falls; the first fall, occurring before the second fall at the tasting of the apple, was occluded in the wills of Adam and Eve at an indeterminate time. Augustine, according to Poole, ties himself in knots trying to fathom what the quasi-Aristotleian 'deficient cause' of Adam's evil will might be:

> Augustine courted the danger of recursion: decoupling the fall of the mind from the public transgression bereft this mental fall of any precise temporal origin, and so the advent of imperfection could be pushed back ever nearer to the point of creation itself. (51)

This interpretation of Augustine's dilemma, that imperfection resides in the incipient act of creation, smacks faintly of 'Empsonianism' and hints at a malevolent or at best a bungling God lurking in the wings. Such vexed entanglements will recur throughout.

The third chapter, which covers new ground on an early-modern spat over the existence and nature of original sin, introduces the thought of the Baptist agitator Robert Everard and the Anglican bishop-to-be Jeremy Taylor, both of whom independently refuted the existence of original sin. Taylor's demolition of a literal traducianist understanding of transmitted original sin and his working out of a salvation to fill the gap that original sin's erasure leaves offer a compelling read, especially given Taylor's putatively Anglican leanings. Taylor's 'two-facedness' reflects the chapter's overall strategy. By comparing Everard's heterodoxy on this particular point of doctrine with Taylor's own, the chapter establishes a porous membrane separating high Church dictum from controversial radicalism.

The mining of a range of heterodox falls yields many a nugget. Of Gerrard Winstanley, 'Digger' and proto-communist, much worthy scholarship has already been written, but a study on the Fall would inevitably suffer from the absence of Winstanley's political allegory. The exegeses of the German mystic Sebastian Franck, Isaac Penington the younger, William Rabisha and Isaac La Peyrere probe not only what these very different characters read out of and into Genesis 2-3, but also how they initially reached their conclusions. Two figures are particularly noteworthy: Rabisha implied that Adam's transgression actually deified man and rendered him 'like one of us'; La Peyrere's pre-Adamism argued for a people pre-existing Adam and Eve, a theory which ramified into

two falls and two types of sin.

Once the reader turns, halfway through the work, to contemporary poetic efforts on the fall, she has been dazzled, if not dizzied, by the many-tongued heterodox and 'orthodox' theories. In its depth and scope, Poole's scholarship emulates the writings of Christopher Hill and Nigel Smith, but his display of erudition can be disorienting. Perhaps such perplexity is the book's overall intent, as the work's thesis, if not its agenda, rises to meet us in the sixth chapter. The verdict that 'all Augustinian-based theories have to contain within themselves the elements of their own demise' (71) anticipates that any Augustinian-based prognosis for the state of Milton's poetry will be grim. So, too, in interpreting scripture, plastering over the gaps in meaning in Biblical narrative is 'not always a comfortable job' (96), and the organization of chapter and verse in a Biblical text is not 'secure' (97); even Biblical commentary provides a bolt-hole rather than a struggle over the content of divine disclosure (98-99). Alas, according to Poole, all the sacred truths are ruined.

Milton's *Paradise Lost* is the most celebrated poem in English on the fall of man, and we soon learn why. After Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder*, 'a dire piece' (99), is granted short shrift, there follows witty close readings of Hugo Grotius's Neo-Latin verse drama *Adamus Exul* (1601), a sorely neglected source for *Paradise Lost*, together with Samuel Pordage's *Mundorum explicatio* (1661) and Dryden's *The State of Innocence* (1677). Poole deserves congratulation for braving Pordage's baffling Behmenist theology and wrestling with this shape-shifting Vertumnus of a piece. Pordage's superficially conventional treatment of the Fall is 'peeled back to reveal something quite alien' (113): a metaphysical dualism of God and Satan, 'two atavistic opposites', who are marionettes to a 'higher supramoral being' (112). Dryden's poem is the most enlightening of the four poetic narratives covered, since it is a 'direct rewriting of a parent text' (120), Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Dryden's tagged verse, aching to the eye, reinterprets Milton's masterpiece, and exposes Dryden's professional envy. Poole's Dryden's Milton's Adam is particularly memorable, a peppy freedom-fighter and Byronic figure who sceptically 'outGods' God by poking holes in His jerry-built theodicy and 'argu[es] the angels out of Eden' (121).

And so on to the book's second part concerning Milton, which begins by systematically tracing Milton's emerging ideas about the Fall from his juvenilia to his polemical prose. Poems such as 'At a solemn musick' are given new and refreshing twists, in this case charting the progress of Milton's thought through the various redraftings of the poem available in the Trinity MS. Some of Poole's conclusions wobble: he glosses *Areopagatica*'s oft-quoted image of good and evil leaping forth out of the apple like 'two twins cleaving together' as both locating ethical awareness after the Fall and raising 'implicit questions about the precise nature of the good before it' (139). However, *Paradise Lost* resolves this problem quite squarely by distinguishing a prelapsarian state where evil is understood and 'unapprov'd' by good from a postlapsarian condition bedevilled by 'Good lost and Evil got' (5.117-9; 11.87): the good or evil medium *through which* humans grow in moral awareness is the message.

The work's Miltonic marrow occupies its final quarter. Having benefited from the intensely satisfying kaleidoscope of historical scholarship on the Fall, I found this section less satisfying. A more apt title for this janiform book might be *The Idea of the Fall and Milton*, because the exacting and impeccable survey of its first part towers over what ensues. Structurally, the book's design splits down the middle into two discrete halves. How can we be persuaded in the first part of the importance of a prior knowledge of contemporary readings of Genesis for interpreting Milton's poetry (195) and in the second be cautioned that 'Milton is in general very suspicious of all the types of thinking we earlier surveyed emanating from the "radical" milieu' (190)?

Poole's operative epithets for Milton's control of his poem are chaotic, 'shapeless and alien' (192). Milton's predicament in writing his poem is problematic, 'performing a task'…'in wandring mazes lost.' (143). The confusion of hell and chaos is presented

as the rule, not the exception, in the epic's evocation of ontological uncertainty and epistemological instability. T S Eliot famously disparaged the restless oxymorons and disconsolate amphibologies of Milton's hell, which were nevertheless conventional features in Medieval and Renaissance accounts. For Poole, Milton's monsters' ambiguities and ambivalences hijack the matter of the poem, so that their graceless condition becomes our own; their phantasmagoria embodies and reflects the readerly and writerly indeterminacy that results from reading a poem in which paradise is lost.

The study roams about Milton's cosmos for examples of semantic fumbling: in hell, the literalised allegory of Sin and Death self-destructs by 'over-actualising the process into absurdity' (154); in heaven, God's exaltation of the Son schizophrenically illustrates that 'the remedy of the Fall is also its possible cause' and manifests 'an act of pious sabotage' (162). Logically, Poole is preoccupied with happenings in Eden. Prelapsarian lapses are evidenced: discrepancies between Adam and Eve's accounts of their creation signify muddle, that all is not well in Eden; in Eve's account of her demonic dream 'at no textual point do her teeth meet the fruit […] as if Eve asleep shuns the act of the Fall' (175); an odd assertion, given Eve's statement that 'I [...] could not but taste' (5.85-6). The occurrence of Edenic sex is ambiguated on the basis of the single word 'ween' (167); Raphael's narrative becomes progressively 'less confident of communicative valence' (177), and his need to encase his narration within the vagaries of simile and metaphor becomes compromised. Poole concedes that the most cogent Milton criticism, like that of Christopher Ricks and John Leonard, takes currency out of 'the epistemological consequences of lapsarianism, registered in wordplay and the problem of naming things aright' (189), but this insight overlooks these critics' ability to balance fallen deprivations of language with the possibility of grace, a redeemed or redeemable word and world, and a certain access, however limited. The result: Poole's analyses can be as frustrating to read as the imputatively stalled mechanics of Milton's poetics and theology.

Poole darkly terms Milton's problematic 'negative accommodation', which is not to be confused with the mystics' affirmative *via negativa*. Instead, all negatively accommodated language about God 'falsif[ies] what 'really' happens with God' (189). Concomitantly, Milton's epic narrator has 'constant recourse to the harassing negative [which] shows that he is rhetorically committed to obstructing access[.]' By association, Poole favours instances of *occupatio* in the poem (163-4), which Quintilian properly styled *occultatio*, a rhetorical move whereby one utters the unutterable: stating, for example, that an egg is not a spoon, and then rhapsodizing at length on the spoon to circumvent the issue of the egg. Poole's exposition of Milton's deferred and ultimately thwarted poetics is, in its spirit of negation, one extended *occultatio*. Deprived of readerly access to the poem, we are interminably being told what Paradise Lost is not, and occasionally what it is, 'a fallen, imperfect thing' (147).

The stuff of the poem then, like the causality of its fall, 'is enshrouded in narrative circularities and rhetorical loops, and is no longer capable of strict logical analysis' (189). This obstructed access to the poem, arguably the lynchpin to Poole's thesis, stems from Satan's 'access deni'd' to Paradise (4.317). To be prohibited meaningful access is accordingly Satanic, and not human. Reading Milton scholarship by Stanley Fish, John Leonard and Michael Edwards is beneficial because such criticism accepts that Milton's reader's vision is impaired while capable of seeing through a glass darkly. Fish's readers might be, in Poole's eyes, 'robotically boring' (195), but they are neither benighted by an infinite regress of unmeaning nor bereft of interpretative tools; similarly, C A Patrides's idea of a Christian tradition may be 'a dull set of immobile dogmas, recognized by all, interesting to none' (195), but without these doctrines the reader is stymied in plotting her progress from the aporia of Milton's infernal murk to the more sublime interpretative clarity promised by grace. As Michael Edwards eloquently argues in *Towards a Christian Poetics*, we impair the rigorous ternary dialectic of fall, creation and recreation if we recognize only one element within it: 'The theology of language presents it as dialectically

charged, motivated by heaven and by hell and capable of the processes of possibility. The realizing of its potential: the renewing of language, and beyond, in acts of renaming, is the work of writers' (Edwards, 12). For better access, perhaps Poole's frustrated reader of *Paradise Lost* would be advised to knock upon heaven's gate rather than on a door east of Eden.

Russell M Hillier

Christopher Cannon, The Grounds of English Literature, OUP, 2004, xi + 237pp., £35, 0-19-927082-1

This is a book about early Middle English literature, with specific chapters on Layamon's Brut, the Ormulum, The Owl and the Nightingale, Ancrene Wisse and the Katherine group, and the early romances King Horn, Havelok the Dane, and Floris and Blancheflour. An introductory chapter proposes 'a theory of form' based on a Marxist analysis of literature as a 'commodity'. The author rightly criticises the widely-held view that this early literature is somehow defective and merely transitional and can therefore be ignored, and proposes instead that literature should be considered as a 'thing' which embodies thought:

> In relation to a set of objects sorely neglected for so long, such a theory has the advantage of assigning value to objects without recourse to their 'beauty' or 'excellence'. It is a necessary consequence of the view that form is a materialization of thought that the object then scrutinized will be valued for what it *knows*, that, as Heidegger put it in his own recourse to this theory, a made thing is a 'mode of knowing', and what is 'fixed in place in the figure' is a knowledge as unique as the object and therefore to be valued above all for its rarity. (p. 9, Cannon's italics)

This passage is finely representative of the book's overall outlook, style and procedure. The author deliberately makes barely a nod in the direction of aesthetics, and for all the intellectual rigour (in parts, at least) of the argument and the agreeable acuity of the critique of earlier scholarly views, one gets no sense that the medieval writers had any purpose in writing and that the modern reader can have any pleasure in reading their work. Indeed, since the works themselves are what 'know' or 'recognize' things about the world, there is little sense that the writers were involved, beyond Orm's obsessive scribal self-correction. Law, land and locality are among the aspects of medieval life the works tell us about, but not laughter, loyalty and love. While one can agree that these works deserve serious consideration, and should not be passed over in favour of the 'better' literature of the Chaucerian period, this reader, for one, balked at the book's relentless expository tone and the leaching of joy from the literature.

Cannon makes the case that tradition 'is a concept with a lot to hide', is indeed (as Raymond Williams put it) 'the most common of ... false totalities' (p. 46). But whatever the name we give to it, literature even of this kind belongs to some sort of tradition – linguistic, metrical, theological. Since Orm (Chapter 3 deals with the *Ormulum*) was writing homilies on the gospels, to translate his work without reference to theological tradition is unwise, if not tendentious. The passage, lines 18,533–54, quoted on pp. 103–4 is broadly about the Trinity, based on John 3:34. In the theological tradition, *Godess witt* should probably be translated 'God's Wisdom' rather than 'God's understanding'; *an Allmahhtig Godd* certainly does not mean 'an Almighty God' which is logical nonsense (linguistically, Middle English *an* here is 'one' rather than the indefinite article, as Cannon correctly translates it elsewhere in the same passage) as well as theologically odd; *Godess word was a soth Godd* does not mean 'God's word was a true God' for the same reason, but 'God's Word was always true God' (*a* in Old and early Middle English is usually the adverb 'always'); and *all thatt strenedd iss off Godd, / Off Godess aghenn kinde* does not mean

'all that is created by God from God's nature' but 'everything that is begotten by God from his own substance'. The point here is that though the *Ormulum* may not be firmly rooted in a vernacular literary tradition, and that the notion of tradition itself may be misused, nevertheless the poem is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition and in a theological and doctrinal understanding of the Bible passages it is using. There is a sense in which the focus of Cannon's exposition here, that the insistence on the identity of the Persons of the deity 'recognizes a difference between the ... terms' and that the statement *For Godd iss Godd* is 'nonsense', is precisely to ignore or misunderstand the tradition that God is God, is one, in three different Persons of the same substance; and the Son is 'begotten not made', both the Word and Wisdom of God. That is not to say that Orm does not make a 'chain [that] winds itself up into a self-consuming spiral' (p. 103), but rather to suggest that some aspects of that very compositional process are theological, and not to deal with that is to miss Orm's point.

In Chapter 6, on the early romances, Cannon gives attention to the description of a light which emanates from Havelok's mouth when he is asleep and to the mark of a cross on his shoulder (pp. 179–83). He tells us that Havelok 'has been marked out with a version of those "cloven tongues like as of fire" ... which indicated that Christ's apostles were inhabited by the *spiritus sanctus* at Pentecost' (p. 181). The issue here is not as clear as Cannon suggests. A light coming out of a person's mouth may have some association with the passage in Acts, where the Holy Spirit appears in the form of tongues of fire and alights upon the apostles, and then gives them the power to speak in 'tongues'. Tongues and the mouth are not implausibly to be related in association with a fiery light, but the complete lack of any indication of that relationship, or any Biblical reference or specific echo in the text (the word 'tongue', for example, is not used), makes necessary some further argument for the connection: practically every other feature of the two stories is different. As Cannon goes on to show, there are other references to mysterious lights in the romance. Here, it seems to me, a theological tradition is invoked without real consideration of its particularity because it bolsters a connection of light with the 'spiritual'.

This, finally, is the impression the book leaves one with: dense and detailed argument in some theoretical matters, but rather a rather shaky grasp of other important aspects of the culture in which this literature was written and preserved. Virtually nothing is said about the wisdom tradition in the chapter on *The Owl and the Nightingale*, and the chapter dealing with the particulars of place in *Ancrene Wisse* has some statements about the place-name Deerfold that are uninformed by toponymic scholarship (p. 143). There are few typographical or other errors: 'are a set of principles' (p. 4) should be 'is'; 'Vaughn' (p. 51 note 5, bibliography and index) should be 'Vaughan'; 'commissions' (p. 67), should perhaps be 'commissioners'; 'heard-hearted' (p. 159) should be 'hard-hearted'; 'born' (p. 186) should be 'borne'.

One of the two independent blurbs on the dust-jacket tell us that the book 'considers these early texts as a cluster of provisional points of departure for subsequent English literature', and 'discovers a way of reading these texts as "lone" objects which are nevertheless "grounded" in and by their material circumstances'. This is a precise and clear summary of the book's achievement; it is also a statement of the book's limitations, because the texts are not 'lone' and they are not simply 'objects'. Certainly the texts are grounded in their material circumstances, but they are also grounded in tradition, knowledge and pleasure – humanity more than materialism.

Paul Cavill

Christine Helmer and Christof Landmesser (eds.), ***One Scripture or Many? Canon from Biblical, Theological and Philosophical Perspectives*****, OUP, 2004, xi + 249pp., £53, 0 19 925863 5**

This is not a book that delivers on the promise of its announced framework of investigation. It is instead a somewhat uneven collection of seven essays, prefaced by an orientating though inconclusive introduction from the editors. Adding to the oddity, the first three essays occupy almost two thirds of the actual discussion, while some contributions are brief to the point of insubstantial.

Is there a thesis? A bizarre front cover illustration (is it me, or is it really a drawing of a miniature sheep on a leaf?) is said to capture the book's message: 'the unity of the canon is related to the immediacy of experience ... in which a home is momentarily found'. The introduction frames this as a 'new Biblical-theological approach to the unity of the canon', though it reads rather more like a funding proposal, lining up conceptual terms in dense array. The argument is that the unity of the canon derives from the (unifying?) history behind the text, and is in turn constituted by the believing community as it interprets that text as itself a first interpretation in the on-going work of reappropriating the formative (religious) experiences, an on-going work which one might call the 'actualization of Biblical texts'. These texts are understood as 'proposals regarding a particular religiously construed reality'. Different understandings of canon, as well as different interpretative traditions, thus represent differing construals of reality. Any unity, therefore, is going to have to be hermeneutically constituted.

Readers who find such a manifesto forbidding may not be particularly encouraged by the editors' summarising conclusion, which seems to suggest that although the book sprawls out to consider a great number of factors with regard to the unity of the canon, from functional, pragmatic, objective & subjective, transcanonical, tradition-critical and 'religious experience' viewpoints, what we have by the end is that these 'offer important considerations'. My own guess is that this elusive phrasing reflects the fact that many of the contributors come nowhere near the editors' own intended thesis, making on the whole much less grandiose claims regarding specific (and fairly unrelated) topics in the broad set of sub-disciplines in view.

Some of the staging posts on this road less travelled: the catch-all category of unity lying in pre-textual religious experience leads inexorably to Schleiermacher, the subject of Helmer's lengthy discussion of the NT canon. This is followed by Armin Lange tracing a significant shift 'from literature to scripture' with the desecration of the temple in 167BC, and the arrival of a body of 'scriptures'. There is plenty of valuable listing of evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls here, but the conclusions regarding canonical unity are meagre. The third lengthy contribution sees Benjamin Somner look at oral and written Torah, concluding that there can be, as such, no 'Jewish biblical theology' because the written texts require the on-going supplement of the tradition. He states, correctly, that this 'should come as little surprise'. A slightly more postmodern spin on a very similar topic is given by Avi Sagi, who does at least drag this opinion into the realm of the book's stated topic by saying that hermeneutical/halakhic unity in the Jewish tradition is given by people and not by God. Very short contributions from James Barr and Nicholas Wolterstorff see them both warming up on familiar themes (the nature of Biblical theology; divinely authorised discourse) for a few pages and then stopping before actually saying anything. Landmesser offers a 'semantic' perspective on the NT, finding one potential avenue of interpretative unity around ... Jesus and Christology!

There is currently a great amount of interesting discussion about the canon, and the hermeneutical constraints it might or might not afford for the task of interpreting the wide-ranging collection of 66+ scriptural books, let alone the controverted state of knowledge regarding the process of canonical compilation and closure (for a state of the art survey see Lee M McDonald and James A Sanders (eds.), *The Canon Debate*, Peabody:

Hendrickson, 2002). Sadly, none of that features here. Instead we have an attempt to find canonical unity constructed from the hermeneutical approaches of myriad readers and traditions. It all seems to be an exercise in pushing water up the hermeneutical hill. A most unsatisfactory project.

Richard Briggs

Nicholas McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion and Revolution, 1630-1660*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2003, ix + 219pp., £49, 0 19 926051 6.

This is a fascinating and important revaluation of some the figures and texts we might (still) call 'radical' in the mid-seventeenth century. 'Radical', as he points out, isn't the same as 'popular'. A figure like William Dell, intruded Master of a Cambridge college during the Interregnum, and an advocate of popular, lay ideas, is perhaps representative of the uneasy mixture of anti-clerical and even anti-intellectual ideas that came from some of the intellectual elite in the period; and yet he was an advocate of the widening of educational access at the same time. The 'ambivalence in Puritan attitudes towards reason and learning' (39) has never, I think, been as acutely analysed as here. In particular, he exposes the stereotype of the heretic as unlearned as a rhetorical strategy rather than a historically verifiable statement. So, for example, the Familists were really respectable figures in their own communities rather than mad libertines; the Levellers drew on a wide range of learning; and even the extreme Ranters like Coppe and Coppin may have been unlicensed lay preachers on the fringes of the new sects, but they had been university educated. Abiezer Coppe, for example, knew Lilly's Latin grammar well enough to parody it. The heterodox ideas of the 1640s and 50s are expressed, by and large, by those with an orthodox education.

One of the strengths of the book is the way the author finds important new material about figures who aren't exactly unknown, such as the Levellers. For example, it has long been suspected that Richard Overton, the most talented writer of the Levellers, had some connection with university theatre, not least because his wonderful *Araignment of Mr Persecution*, an anti-Presbyterian pamphlet written as a dramatic trial scene. McDowell finds new theatrical references in Overton's (heretically) mortalist pamphlet *Mans Mortalitie,* not just to the humanist comedy *Pedantius,* but to Marlowe's *Dr Faustus.* A similarly illuminating job is done on the origins of the scepticism of William Walwyn, another key Leveller thinker.

When it comes to the more extreme antinomians of the later Commonwealth period, it might seem that the model of the learned heretic might be stretched. It is, but McDowell has an interesting explanation, that they are trying to 'rupture the connection between securing formal education and social and religious hierarchy' (135). We can, of course, still observe similar tensions, despite the increasing gulf between the social and religious hierarchy, in our own churches. The tension between a university-based academic theology and an increasingly experience-based, sometimes literalist approach to scripture is there in evangelicalism as it was between Presbyterians and radicals in the 1640s and 50s. Here McDowell is resolutely historical, but his analysis of the squeeze on biblical authority is still relevant: the new Quaker movement stressed personal illumination, Spinoza stressed reason, and the Catholics fideism, a form of religious assent that by-passed reason and even personal experience for obedience. Personally inspired prophets and radical enlightenment thinkers alike have formed our approach to Scripture; and, of course, there are still those who command unwavering assent to every word. The learned, humanist approach to dissent (most notably incarnated in the figure of Milton) may still have its adherents. What is missing from McDowell's account is how it also refreshed or recast establishment thinking. However, his model has much to commend it. We may know lots of examples of youthful radicals who turned into adult conformists. We must

not forget those brought up to conform who were, unwittingly, given the tools for radical Christian thinking in the very rigour of their education – and, of course, its perceived spiritual and political inadequacies.

Roger Pooley

Mary Douglas, *Jacob's Tears: The Priestly Work of Reconciliation*, OUP, 2004, 217pp., £45, 0-19-926523-2

In this fresh, crisply argued volume Mary Douglas presents the priestly authors of Leviticus and Numbers as opponents of the policies of Ezra and his associates in post-exilic Israel. While Ezra wanted to define 'all Israel' as only Judah and wanted to force Jewish men to divorce their wives and renounce their children if the wives and children were not of the tribe of Judah, the priestly editors told the story of Israel's history in such a way as to emphasize the unity of experience of all descendants of Jacob, including the Samaritans. The priestly families had long intermarried with families from Israelite tribes beyond Judah and wanted to preserve their profound ties with all the tribes of Israel.

Devoting special attention to the structure of Numbers and Leviticus, Douglas argues that the books are organized in such a way as to heighten the priests' concerns to exclude no Israelites from Israel. Far from using impurity as a way to keep social groups in Israel separate (the usual function of impurity-concepts, according to Douglas), the priestly editors emphasized that impurity can always be removed by means of the rites prescribed by God from the very beginning of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness. Douglas details an especially interesting reinterpretation of the goat sent into the wilderness in Leviticus 16. For Douglas, the goat is not considered impure and is not sent to a demonic realm for punishment but is set free for newness of life.

Perhaps the most exciting part of the sustained argument of this book is Douglas's portrayal of the book of Leviticus itself, in its carefully structured totality, as a microcosm of the mountain of Sinai and of the altar in the wilderness and of the sacrifices offered on that altar. For Douglas, the point of Leviticus is a joyful affirmation that God loves sinners and actively removes their sin, assuring that no one (even a Samaritan) should be seen as automatically impure or permanently excluded from God's love and eternal presence.

Crerar Douglas

Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*, SPCK, 2004, 236 pp., £14.99, 0 281 05720 6

It seems a reasonable assumption that readers of *The Glass* will evince more than a passing interest in both the theatre and Christian life and witness in the modern world. Samuel Wells, a parish priest in Cambridge and prolific author in the field of Christian ethics, has brought both spheres of interest together in a most stimulating and timely book.

This book is divided into three parts, described as ploughing, planting and reaping. Part 1, 'Ploughing', consists of four chapters which prepare the soil of the author's method by examining other ethical approaches and proposing of his own preferred model. In so doing he surveys the various (inadequate) ways in which the church throughout history has sought to make ethical choices. This has changed according to contingent circumstances but all developments are grist to his ethical mill, as they constitute the rich tapestry of available experience within church history – both the 'successes' and the 'failures'. Above all ethical thinking and practice must be profoundly theological and have its key location in the life and practices of the Church. As Wells says, 'The sacred community is the touchstone of virtue' (p. 37). The theology and values of the church

are to be rigorously applied as a critique to the values of the world. At the heart of the church's thinking is a narrative and that narrative is neither epic nor lyric, but dramatic. Here Wells draws upon the now familiar notion of God's dealings with humanity as a Shakespearean-style five act play. Wells's own version of this constitutes a development of other models by seeing the five acts as creation/fall, Israel, Jesus, the Church and, finally, the end/*eschaton*. Each of these acts contains both glory and horror. It is vital for the Church to understand that it is situated in time between the third and fifth acts. It is not engaged in a one act drama where all meanings must be revealed in that act. The decisive actions have already happened (in Act Three) and there is more to come (Act Five). Chapter 4 develops this conceit by introducing Wells's proposition that Christian ethics may be pursued in a manner not unlike that of improvisation in drama. Drawing especially upon the work of Keith Johnstone (*Impro: Improvisation in the Theatre*, London, 1981 and *Impro for Storytellers*, London, 1991), Ronald James and Peter Williams (*A Guide to Improvisation: A Handbook for Teachers,* Banbury, 1980), Viola Spolin (*Improvisation for the Theatre: A Handbook of Teaching and directing Techniques*, London, 1973) and Anthony Frost and Ralph Yarrow (*Improvisation in Drama,* Basingstoke, 1990), Wells explores each of six practices found in the field of theatrical improvisation and seeks to use them as a new way of conceptualising the activity of the Church in ethical discussion.

The above six practices constitute Part 2 of the book, 'Planting'. They are: forming habits, assessing status, accepting and blocking, questioning givens, incorporating gifts and reincorporating the lost. According to Wells, to be able to improvise successfully the actor must acquire right habits of mind, automatic responses to situations in much the same way as the church must be trained in certain basic assumptions and habits. The principal agent in shaping the Church's corporate mind is worship. It is in worship, especially at the Eucharist, that the Church learns its corporate nature, and its very identity and values. Regular Eucharistic worship shapes the character and very nature of the people both individually and corporately. In addition the Church must learn about status relationships if it is to participate successfully in the world's ethical discussions. This is not to do with moral categories, but simply with 'getting one's way' (p. 99). Thirdly, the Church, like the improvising actor, must learn about 'blocking and accepting' the proposals made to it by the surrounding culture. Indeed it is frequently more a matter of what Wells terms 'overaccepting', namely accepting the agenda given but slotting it into the much broader drama of Church history including an appreciation of the Creation/Fall matrix of Act One, the completed work of Jesus in Act Three and the consummation to come in Act Five. On top of this the Church questions the 'givens' of any ethical debate. For the church the only 'given' is the overall drama of the Church's narrative. Everything else is potentially seen is 'gift' and can be transformed and made into part of the continuing story of God's dealings with his world. Even aspects of the drama which might seem irrecoverably lost can be reincorporated into the narrative, and ultimately redeemed for God's purposes.

Part 3, 'Reaping', applies Wells's method to four controversial ethical discussions: that of human evil, specifically that of Chile under the Pinochet regime, that of flawed creation, in the shape of two mothers coping with severely handicapped children, human cloning and the issue of genetic modification of food. Space does not permit any thoroughgoing interaction with Wells's discussion of these ethical dilemmas. Not every skill described in Part 2 is applicable in each chapter of Part 3, but enough is essayed to demonstrate that Wells's adaptation of dramatic improvisation is a most stimulating approach to some intractably difficult dilemmas facing the Church and society at large today.

In his epilogue Wells comes clean. There is actually very little that is methodologically new in his proposal. In fact, were it new, he would probably be highly suspicious of it. All he is doing, under a new guise, is calling the church back to resources which it seems to have mislaid in recent times – habits of mind, the narrative and traditions of the church

seem to be chief amongst them. One feature which may disappoint readers of *The Glass* is Wells's reluctance to accord Holy Scripture the central position of authority which it surely demands. Early on (p. 35) the 'reflection on and study of sacred texts' is apparently discarded as representing a 'universal approach' to ethical dialogue. Many readers will be troubled to find our main access to the mind of God apparently marginalised in this way. They should not, however, be too alarmed as Scripture is clearly a major contributor to establishing the habits of the Church in Wells's proposal. Neither should this detract from a most stimulating and informative read, which ought to appeal particularly to those who respond positively to a narrative and to a dramatic mode of discourse.

Robert Willoughby

Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets*, OUP, 2004, 334pp., £14, pbk., ISBN:0-19-926915-7

There is much meat in Professor Ricks' book; too much at times, and some of it hard to digest. He labours hard showing us how lines from one source have influenced a later poet – sometimes lifted straight from one poet to another. Some of these allusions are helpful to understand better the work of a poet; others are simply of passing interest. But, alas, whole sections of his book are written in a style so cumbersome, so fractured with interpolations and whimsy, that at times I had difficulty teasing out what he was trying to say.

There is no doubting his erudition and great scholarship, but he expresses himself too often in periphrasis; in danger of contradicting himself at times in the process. Compare his style with that of T S Eliot in the following extract, which he quotes in the introduction to his work and unwittingly gives us an example of how critical writing should be done:

> One of the surest tests [of a good poet] is the way in which a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different .… And a good poet will usually borrow from authors remote in time, or alien in language, or diverse in interest. *(Philip Massinger, 1920)*

This Eliot at his best, lucid, concise, informative. By contrast here is a paragraph from Professor Hicks' 'Prefatory Note' to his book:

The second part [of the book] consists of half a dozen pieces that have some relation to allusion. The one on plagiarism takes plagiarism to be allusion's contrary (the alluder hopes that the reader will recognise something, the plagiarist that the reader will not). That on metaphor is germane to allusion, in that allusion is one form that metaphor may take (as the illuminating perception of similitude in dissimilitude, and as a relation between two things that then creates a new imaginative entity). The essay on loneliness has its bearing on allusion in that one thing allusion provides and calls upon is company (the society of dead poets being a living resource in its company). The piece on A E Housman considers a particular cluster in one of his poems, alluding to a prejudicial prose tradition. The case of Yvor Winters is that of a poet-critic whose poems are unremittingly allusive but whose intransigent criticism can find no place for allusion. Finally, the poetic art of David Ferry may recall to us the ways in which translation constitutes one of the highest forms that allusion can take.

Having taken his clumsy style on board, however, scholars of Dryden, Pope, Burns, Wordsworth, Byron, Keats and Tennyson will undoubtedly find much of interest in the way Professor Ricks shows how these poets often allude to earlier poets. In doing so, he also demonstrates how those allusions enhance the work of the later poets. He covers the work of Burns especially well and the debt he owes to earlier poets like Shakespeare, and

in the process reveals that Burns was a more accomplished poet than we are sometimes led to believe. No simple ploughman poet here but a scholar.

The five essays in the second part of the book suffer also from his style. He covers the subject of plagiarism with Casaubon-like pedantry. Every aspect of plagiarism is commented on; sometimes wittily, but all too often he lapses into verbosity. For example, take these adjoining paragraphs:

> The consequence of an investigative determination that 'denaturalises the distinction between imitation and plagiarism' is that the prefix 'de-' becomes a virus, working to demean and to degrade moral thought. That no moral position is natural does not of itself entail that moral positions are nothing but the insistences of power. Moral agreements, though not natural, may be valuable, indispensable, worthy of the respect they have earned. That plagiarism may be valuably seen under the aspect of politics, and that politics may in turn be valuably seen under the aspect of power at the time, need not and should not issue in the denial that plagiarism asks to be seen too under the aspect of ethics. The extirpation of ethical or moral considerations by political history is a sad loss, to political history among other needful things.

This long-winded paragraph is followed immediately by:

> Plagiarism is a dishonesty. This can be swept to one side, leaving not the dishonest but the culturally conditioned and exclusively power-ruled illegitimate. Or it can be swept to the other side, leaving not the dishonest but – assimilating plagiarism now to copyright – the illegal.

Heavy going, indeed, in an essay which is almost legalistic in style.

In 'The Pursuit of Metaphor', Ricks scurries from one aspect of metaphor to another so fast it's difficult to follow his train of thought. And in his essay, 'Loneliness and Poetry', he goes to great lengths to find poetry in e e cummings' work when frankly I'm unimpressed – both by the poet and his critic. Ricks makes the claim that cummings' style of verse, in the example he gives, is not meant to be read aloud. Is there such a thing as poetry written *not* to be read aloud? It would be rather like looking at an orchestral script and not hearing the music being played. All right for Beethoven but not for us lesser mortals. But Professor Ricks thinks there is a case for unread poetry and gives this line of cummings as his example:

l(a
le
af
fa
ll
s)
one
l
iness

Hicks says 'it is there to be seen but not heard, to be apprehended but (crucially) not listened to.' Cummings is undoubtedly clever, but is he writing poetry? More importantly is he writing the music of poetry? Ricks thinks he is and goes to great lengths to prove it.

He is more convincing when he analyses other poems on loneliness, notably Wordsworth's 'To Daffodils' and I responded much more to his essay, 'A E Housman and "the colour of his hair"'. It is a sympathetic and perceptive essay on homophobia, using Housman's poem railing against Oscar Wilde's imprisonment, together with his sonnet XLIV from 'A Shropshire Lad'. In this essay Ricks puts forward a powerful case

for genetic homosexuality, i.e. we cannot be other than what we were created. He extends this into the realms of Christology. Could Judas, Christ's betrayer, being a faithful Jew, have changed his nature? More importantly, what did God's plan in Christ owe to Judas's flawed nature? By implication, how do homosexuals fit into God's divine plan for men and women made in His image?

The last two essays are commentaries on the works of Yvor Winters and David Ferry, a poet-translator, whose translations give Ricks the opportunity to examine translation poetry in some detail and show its place in mainstream English poetry.

As a sixth-former in the late 1940s, and later as an undergraduate, I was able to read and learn from critics like G Wilson Knight, I A Richards, Edwin Muir, C S Lewis, Bonamy Dobrée and J R RTolkien. I wonder how many sixth-formers and undergraduates could tackle a critic like Christopher Ricks today? Yet that age-group desperately needs catering for if high standards of English teaching and writing are to be maintained. (And it's significant that several of those critics mentioned above were poets and writers in their own right.)

If we can no longer provide critics who appeal to readers outside post-graduate university Eng. Lit. departments, we are failing the very people who are the future generation of teachers of English to all levels, the very people whose calling it is to stimulate a love of English language and literature and writing in the young.

John Waddington-Feather

Peter France and William St Clair (eds.), *Mapping Lives: The Uses of Biography*, OUP, 2004, 360 pp., £18.99 p.b., 0-19-726318-6

Mapping Lives is an anthology of essays of uneven quality that attempts to give theoretical rigour to biography. The anthology traces classical lives to modern European lives, with an emphasis on the past 200 years. Although thought-provoking, the anthology falters by ignoring some contemporary scholarship that views as discredited the psychoanalytic approach that is lauded throughout parts of the book. Edited by Peter France of the University of Edinburgh and William St Clair of Trinity College, Cambridge, the book was published in 2002 by The British Academy. The anthology squeezes its 18 essayists into fewer than 325 pages. *Mapping Lives* hardly deals with biography as practised in the United States, where the immigrant tradition brings together varied European strands of biography.

Richard Holmes is the first Professor of Biographical Studies at the University of East Anglia. Holmes recommends that students study several biographies of the same person written by biographers from different epochs as a way of overcoming parochialism. Holmes also suggests a canon of 25 biographies from the 300 years of the English tradition ending in 1970.

Sergei Averintsev, of the universities of Moscow and Vienna, questions the chronological approach of some contemporary biographies. The Roman biographer Suetonius organized his lives '*per species* point by point, according to logical criteria' (*Life of Augustus*, 9). Averintsev's essay is nicely balanced by Mark Kinkead-Weekes, of the University of Kent at Canterbury. He makes a compelling case for using a birth-to-death chronology. Kinkead-Weekes fears that those who think they succeed in organizing a life according to a theme are often imposing their preconceptions on it. Thus John Paul Sartre imposed a crudely Marxist-psychoanalytical pattern upon the empirical data of Gustave Flaubert's life.

A chapter 'Biography and Autobiography in the Italian Renaissance' by Martin McLaughlin, is illuminating. McLaughlin, of Magdalen College, Oxford, traces the influence of classical models including Plutarch, Suetonius, and the late Antique Lives of the Poets in influencing Italian biography, both religious and secular. 'Suetonius'

Augustus has emerged as a particularly influential source.…Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers*, translated into Latin….around 1432 is also influential.' (p. 64).

Petrarch's autobiographical dialogue the *Secretum* (c. 1347-53.) '… mainly derives from Augustine's own *Confessions*, which is also the narrative rejection of pagan culture' (p. 56). 'Of course, the *Secretum* is not an autobiography proper: the overarching Christian framework means that character traits are considered not in secular terms but through the grid of the seven deadly sins, and there is no consideration of the development of a personality and no narrative of a life' (p. 57).

Petrarch's disciple Giovanni Conversini in the late 1390s wrote *Rationarium vite* ('an account book of my life', p. 60). 'The overall confessional tone of the work derives from Augustine's work: like the saint, Giovanni's losing of the right path was the cause of his conversion.' (p. 61.) After about 1400, Italian biography takes a secular turn with the notable exception of Cellini in his *Vita* (1558-66), which 'also reveals a debt to Augustine's autobiography (and perhaps also to Boethius)' (p. 65).

As for marketing *Mapping Lives*, the only English writer whose face appears on the cover is Virginia Woolf, whose portrait overlaps an engraving of German poets Goethe and Schiller. Virginia Woolf's father, Sir Leslie Stephen, wrote some 400 entries in the 1890 *Dictionary of National Biography*. His daughter wrote the 1939 essay 'The Art of Biography' and innovated both fictional and nonfictional biographies of her own. Woolf's methods are both questioned and praised by Miranda Seymour, biographer, novelist, critic, and educator. Seymour, however, implies that she is uncomfortable with Lytton Strachey's tampering with the minor details of biographies: 'What mattered was that saying so fitted the version of the story that was being presented. This is very close to saying, "Well, if it didn't happen, it should have"' (p. 263).

William St Clair is illuminating on the way primary sources may be misinterpreted. St Clair is a biographer of Romantic period writer William Godwin and demonstrates why Godwin should be viewed as an unusually rich source.

The anthology also includes an essay by Avril Pyman of the University of Durham on the Russian Formalists, with a gripping account of a trilogy of novels by Yury Tynyanov. His trilogy included a biographical novel on the poet Aleksandr Pushkin, even though Tynyanov had been among the Formalists who had rejected the biographical approach to literature.

A tributary that flowed into biography in France was eulogies by the Académie Francaise, a group of moulders of culture eulogizing other moulders of culture and science – so writes Peter France, an editor of the anthology and professor at the University of Edinburgh. The Académie did not permit a woman to join its ranks until 1980 with the election of Marguerite Yourcenar (p. 87). Despite the limitations of these eulogies, Peter France finds them to be helpful examples of concise, elegant lives that include value judgments.

As for Germanic biographies, Roger Paulin of the University of Cambridge finds a tendency to cultural myth making in some. The classicist poet Goethe, for example, wrote a biography of the art historian Winckelman to elevate him into the nation's cultural canon. Goethe imposes abstract categories on a mass of biographical detail that does not include a single date. Goethe assumes that Winckelman's work as an art historian is sufficient to reveal his life (p. 111).

Another essay includes accounts of how the Higher Criticism from Germany of the four canonical gospels had a role in persuading the English novelist Marian Evans and the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge that the accounts of the gospels cannot be considered divinely inspired. This is asserted in an essay by Elinor S Shaffer of the University of London, who writes as if Higher Criticism has established that the gospel accounts reflect mere parochialism, limitations of thought in Palestine during the time of Caesar Augustus and subsequent decades. Shaffer doesn't explain whether Coleridge thought the theological scepticism he expressed in his *Confessions* was consistent with the Anglican

creed that he held at the end of his life. Another weakness in Shaffer's account is that she attempts to discuss the morality of Goethe's works without mentioning his *Faust*.

It is unfortunate that the editors did not bring Shaffer into dialogue with another essayist in the anthology, Sergei S Averintsev. He implies that modernists have understated the case when they assert that the four gospels cannot be considered standard biography. There is a non-Western enigma at the heart of the gospel accounts of Christ, Averintsev asserts.

'His "character", his "ethos," are mysteries not to be in any definitive way elucidated by psychological, characterological reasoning, but to be again and again demonstrated through the paradoxes of Christian theology and even more through the Christian practice of "following" Christ. (c.f. 1 Cor. 11:1) …' (pp. 29-30).

Stephen Blair

Wesley A. Kort, *C.S.Lewis Then and Now*, OUP, 2001, 194pp., £12.50, pb., 0-19-517663-4 (also hb).

Wesley Kort is Professor of Religion at Duke University, North Carolina. However, he has written on literature, as in his more recent *Place and Space in Modern Fiction* (2004), as well as a number of earlier books. His specific interest, however, seems to be in Cultural Studies, and this is where this book should be categorised. As such, it may be of limited interest to readers of *The Glass*, since he fails to deal with the state of modern literary studies, even though he claims at the beginning that Lewis would probably find himself more at home in American Literary Studies today than in the mid 20th century British ones he actually found himself in. Nor does Kort use Lewis's own fiction extensively or systematically. And, of course, Kort addresses an American audience.
Having said that, the book must be seen as a real effort to 'update' Lewis, and see how his work can be made to speak into today's cultural scene. I think Kort makes his American scenario sufficiently vague to make much of his effort applicable more broadly. The strength of the book is its belief that Lewis has still as much to say today as ever; its weakness is the hypothetical nature of some of this re-statement, to the extent that we are never quite sure whether this is what Lewis would have said, or what Kort is saying off his own bat, but claiming Lewis's authority to say it. This for me produced a sense of vagueness and ambiguity about Kort's writing that is in direct contrast to Lewis's own clarity and logic.

The seven chapters have interesting headings, and they strike us as being resonant of Lewis. The first is 'Retrieval'. For Kort this is retrieving Lewis *for* modern American students specifically and *from* sectional interests (read, American evangelicals). Personally, I have not found the takeover of Lewis by American evangelicals quite as widespread as he fears, having conducted a well-attended midweek course in Lewis's fiction at an American Episcopalian church in the last few months, a course which I certainly would not have been able to teach in any of the evangelical churches I know there. Kort's impetus to write, however, came from the large number of Duke University students who asked him to teach just such a course.

Other chapters are entitled 'Re-enchantment' (the loss of wonder in modern secularism); 'Houses'; 'Culture' and 'Character'. In these chapters Kort did do one thing for me: help me understand just why Lewis wrote the books he did – for there is an underlying pattern especially in the apologetic books. I found the chapter on 'Houses' best: Kort clearly has developed his own interest in the language of space, as his most recent book suggests, and expounds Lewis well here, especially *Perelandra*.

The last two chapters are entitled 'Pleasure', dealing specifically with Lewis's concepts of joy and desire, and more generally with his life-embracing outlook; and 'Celebration'.

I found this last chapter the most stimulating, strongly disagreeing with some of it; agreeing just as strongly with other parts. Kort reads Lewis's theology of the atonement as liberally as he can, and his analogies are as weak as liberal analogies of the atonement usually are. On the other hand, he sees celebration as pastoral, a genre that Lewis returns to again and again, and which we, in our spirituality of epic conflict, often forget. I have to admit I struggle with the celebrations at the end of *Prince Caspian* and *Perelandra,* even of *The Last Battle*, yet can see that this is my problem rather than Lewis's. Kort's exegesis is convincing and a good note on which to finish the book.

David Barratt

Colin Duriez, *J.R.R.Tolkien and C.S.Lewis: The Story of a Friendship*, Sutton Publishing, 2005, 242pp., pb., £8.99, 0 7509 3542 1

Male friendship, or the lack of it, has become a persistent topic in the new literature of Male Spirituality that has emanated from the USA over the last decade. Various reasons have been adduced for the inability of the modern male (Christian and non-Christian) to bond deeply in committed and intimate friendships, particularly with other men. Various workshops, retreats, books and conferences have been organized to help men rediscover male relationships. In the UK the matter seems to be more fraught, the debate over permissible levels of homosexuality and an aggressive gay agenda seem to keep heads down beneath a protective parapet. That at least was the distinct impression I gained when I recently proposed a booklet on Male Spirituality to Grove Books, and was instantly repulsed.

So when I saw the subtitle of Colin Duriez's new book, my interest was keen. I had long been aware of C S Lewis's tremendous capacity for friendship (and faithful correspondence) in reading his letters to Arthur Greeves in *They Stand Together* (1979), written over the period of later adolescence and his adult life (1914-1963). (It is interesting that other people kept Lewis's letters; he never kept theirs). Obviously, his friendship with J R R Tolkien is better known, being much more influential in its literary productivity, as described by Humphrey Carpenter's *The Inklings* (1978) among others. Colin reworks a good deal of this biographical material, though managing to add some new material (at least new for me). He aims at a less literary and possibly more American readership than most Inklings scholarship does, and so is more 'popular' in tone.

What emerges for me is an account of the parallel lives of Lewis and Tolkien. This is how Colin constructs his book: a slice of Tolkien's life put against a similar slice of Lewis's, progressing in more or less chronological order, with a few excursions for Charles Williams and others. And indeed, there are significant parallels: lonely and disorientated boyhoods; few friends; early interest in language and mythologies; World War I experiences; scholarships to Oxford; early academic success, and so on. The biggest early differences were Tolkien's steadfast Catholicism and an early love for a woman, later his wife, as against Lewis's atheism and his singleness (apart from his relationship with that *Ersatz* mother figure, Mrs Moore).

But parallel lines do not necessarily meet. We are interested in the meeting and whether the quality of the meeting can give us insights into the 'loss' of male Christian friendships I mentioned earlier. Obviously, as literary scholars (for whom the book is not written) we also want to know how that meeting may have created or modified the literary output of the two friends, and whether their influence would have been as great had they never met. Colin deals well with this latter concern, showing, for example Tolkien's influence in bringing Lewis to faith; and Lewis's consistent encouragement to Tolkien to go on writing *The Silmarillion*, and to seek publication for *The Hobbit*. He also deals with Tolkien's dislike of Lewis's popular theology and his unhappiness with the *Narnia* books, though never quite making it clear what the basis of this dislike was.

Clearly, as Colin shows yet once again, The Inklings in its heyday was a creative crucible of the highest order.

When it comes to the more personal nature of their friendship, Colin is more limited. We need some sort of grammar of friendship, some taxonomy, and such is not available. All that we have is Lewis's own taxonomy of *The Four Loves* (1960), the chapter on 'friendship' being largely based on Lewis's experiences of The Inklings, i.e. friendship as an intensely masculine, cerebral group meeting within the context of a largely male institution, inclined to chauvinism, snobbery and cliquishness. Half the chapter indeed is devoted to these latter dangers. Colin uses this taxonomy to characterize the two men's friendship, especially their appreciation for each other; their sense of being two chosen out from the rest to believe in the mythopoeic power of fantasy, and the strength of primitive languages to reveal such ; and to stand against modernity in general, and scientific reductionism in particular. Lewis praises this form of love, his examples being exactly the typical Inkling scenarios, sitting round a fire in a small group, quaffing beer and smoking pipes, talking sense, nonsense, and bawdy in a free slightly anarchic fellowship of equals.

The delineation of friendship then is within a closed circle. Colin has no other paradigms of friendship available by which to measure or translate this model into more universal terms. Clearly it is not a model that really works for us. The question, 'Does friendship necessarily have to be single-sex?' is more urgent now. Whilst Lewis suggests it doesn't, his general drift is that in fact the other sex is more likely to sabotage it than enhance it. It is significant that Lewis rarely if ever visited the Tolkien family – he was not a 'family friend' – Tolkien had to go out to Lewis, Mrs Tolkien apparently resigned to being a University widow; and Lewis was very secretive about his relationship with Joy. Indeed, after Joy arrived, the men's friendship became somewhat distant.

But more fundamentally, we look for the spiritual nature of the friendship. There are no letters extant, and the minutes kept of the Inklings meetings are no help. It would appear the friendship was extravert, performative and celebratory, non-judgemental, humorous and witty, unselfconsciously male. This is certainly not the type of male bonding desiderated in the Male Spirituality books I have read. Can such friendship be an exemplum at all, or is it just one of those creative moments which the Lord chooses to give to certain individuals in order for them to achieve His purposes? At the end of Colin's book, I am still asking this.

David Barratt

Majorcan Orchard

A meditation

The orchard still defines the wooded hill
Between the boxed concrete villas.
The ranked trees luxuriate in their space
Among the emerald grass,
Wait the wild flowers and the belled sheep.
They speak the edgy language of the island
To their persisting mirror images
Abandoned on the flinty ground that is my walk.
Still all line up, terraces and walls in place.
The sound of the mourning dove and the pipe
Of the shepherd boy haunts your heart, and mine.
I found the invisible sheep flocked
Over the nether side in the remaining farm,
        Where deer wait among their trees and flowers
To venison ceramic tiles in concrete death.
There is no tide enough
To wash the isles of happiness clean.

Outnumbered by the island's pines
        The orchard trees define the hill.
Persistence of old love blossoms still
And fruits, leaving no almond shells.
Is the heart so divided between desire
And secrecy that no good fruit will grow?
Beyond the orchard, across the *autovia*,
Gaps in the hills give sight to mountains
That wait for me to climb
Their gendered impassivity.
I motor the north road,
Stand on cliffs that beetle to the sea,
Thrilled by the canvassed splendour
Of the Archduke's passion.
From offshore depths the sand is dredged
That covers now the ploughed
Beach outside my window. Unusual snow
Settles
Over your silence.

Past Arta, other olives
Margin the mountain terraces.
They heft branchy age as we zigzag
Up past the way I know.

In the wayside *finca*
My daughter tastes *ierbas*; caged
Partridges await their fate.
With the crowded city just an hour away,
How can such dividedness be truth?
We make the castellated ruins,
Looming discarded integrity,
But fail the summit as time runs out
And energy.
But the vistas …
Centripetal, the Lord's *miradors.*
Eyes of faith whole the wall,
Sheep bells and the shepherd's call.

David Barratt

D Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England*, Oxford University Press, 2005, 397pp., £60, ISBN 0199245754

This fascinating and erudite study traces the evolution of the 'evangelical conversion narrative' as a genre, from its initial emergence in early modern England, to its later efflorescence, or absence, in cultures as geographically remote as Sierra Leone, New Jersey and Tahiti. Hindmarsh suggests that unlike many of their modernist contemporaries, who were avidly engaged in a process of self-construction, which has been discredited as solipsistic and naïve by many today; those women and men who wrote evangelical conversion narratives from the mid-seventeenth century onwards gave expression to an identity that was received in community, as much as it was actively created by an individual. '[T]he evangelical conversion narrative represents an alternative version of modern self-identity, one that overlaps in some ways with the modern autobiographical identity, but one that also qualifies the notion of self-fashioning.' (p. 6)

He begins by sketching the interdisciplinary methodology that informs his reading of the historical definition and development of the genre. The key terms are narrative, identity, conversion and gospel. It is through his use of gospel that Hindmarsh introduces the centrality of the New Testament writings in understanding the topos of conversion that he traces, this provides the basic theological dimension to his methodology. However, the nature of the conversion narrative as it is exemplified in Scripture remains largely unexplored throughout the book.

Instead, Hindmarsh builds upon his definition of key terms with a brief analysis of the relationship between spiritual autobiography and Christian tradition – and concludes that the sudden burgeoning of spiritual autobiographies in seventeenth and eighteenth-century England resulted from the nexus of two necessary historical developments: 'the Renaissance made people more aware of themselves as individuals, and the church made them more aware of themselves as sinners' (p. 32). It is in this fraught space between the disintegration of corporate Christendom and the 'leading edge of modernity' (p. 32) that the evangelical conversion narrative came into its own.

The historical breadth and detail of Hindmarsh's subsequent chapters is wide-ranging and impressive. He explores the introspective piety of the Puritans, and the way in which this acted as a catalyst for the initial development of the genre in England under the Commonwealth and, of course, across the Atlantic in New England. Central to this was the Golden Chain developed by William Perkins, which provided a morphology of conversion, enabling individuals to map their interior spiritual development according to a distinctive and carefully detailed narrative trajectory. This interiority was similarly fostered by the publication of works of pastoral theology like Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory*, offering advice, and encouraging self-examination in a manner that comprehensively incorporated every aspect of daily life. Indeed, Baxter's own *Reliquiae Baxterianae* was a model of the genre. Hindmarsh also situates the emergence of the genre in its social context, noting that alongside diaries, the requirement of the gathered churches that candidates for baptism and membership provide an oral narrative of their conversion experience, was also an important catalyst in the development of the genre – ensuring that it became a truly popular form, embracing both poor and rich, the well-educated and the illiterate.

Despite its increasing prevalence, however, 'a special motive to publish spiritual autobiography was required' (p. 60) – particularly if one lacked social standing. Hindmarsh suggests that it was the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth-century, which embraced the entire North Atlantic region, that both revived the form and rendered the genre a truly popular mode of self-narration.

Hindmarsh goes on to trace the link between the particular theologies characteristic of various splinter groups and nascent denominations that emerged during the Evangelical Awakening, and the ways in which these subtly shaped and inflected the narrative form

that spiritual autobiography took within different communities. He considers the early Methodists first, outlining the structure of journals produced by prominent leaders such as George Whitefield and John Wesley, their affinity with contemporary travel literature, and the way in which they provided a model that shaped the conversion narratives of Methodist laypeople. He quotes Jonathan Edwards, who observed the significant influence that leaders' journals exercised upon the laity at an unconscious level: 'A scheme of what is necessary … has a vast (though to many a very insensible) influence in forming persons' notions of the steps and method of their own experiences.… [W]hat they have experienced is insensibly strained to bring all into an exact conformity to the scheme that is established' (p. 160).

The influence of leaders remains significant in the other evangelical sub-cultures that Hindmarsh examines. However, the Moravians replaced the Methodist emphasis on 'soul-distress under the preaching of the law' with 'the ideal of self-abandonment and childlike trust in the love of the bleeding Saviour' (p. 163). There is a less agonistic approach to conversion, a stronger emphasis on contemplation of Christ and recognition of the 'liturgical rhythms of [Moravian] common life' (p. 192). The final community Hindmarsh analyses is Cambuslang in Scotland, which had a strongly Calvinist heritage. Here, the context is unique, in that the local Presbyterian minister, William McCulloch requested spiritual narratives from converts of the revival – so, along with 'a well-established tradition of biblical literacy, orthodox Calvinism, and communal piety, including disciplined presbyteral oversight' (p. 196), these conversion accounts are implicitly structured by the questions McCulloch asked – attempting to 'aid…spiritual discernment and direction' (p. 198).

Despite the subtle differences between the spiritual autobiographies that emerged from these communities, which illustrate the powerful link between theological convictions and literary form, Hindmarsh argues that they can all be classified under the common generic rubric of the Evangelical conversion narrative – as 'distinctive changes rung on a still recognizable theme' (p. 286). He establishes this methodologically by comparing the lives of early Methodist preachers and the Olney autobiographers – John Newton, William Cowper and Thomas Scott. One of the most delightful aspects of Hindmarsh's work is the way in which individual stories, carefully analysed, are woven into the broader thread of the argument.

Hindmarsh concludes by stepping outside the Western European framework – viewing it from the perspective of 'the other' – in this case nineteenth-century Sierra Leone and evangelical missions in the South Pacific. This relativises the particular mode of conversion experience enshrined in the genre under consideration – illustrating that it 'owed something to an individuation of conscience and consciousness that appears characteristic of early modern Europe' (p. 340). However, in a characteristically attenuated fashion, he balances this with James Lackington's narrative of 'unconversion.' Through this final case-study Hindmarsh shows that the evangelical conversion narrative cannot simply be coopted into a grand-narrative of the development of the modern self, for they always end in 'the rejection of any essentialist notion of the self…shudder[ing] back from the brink and repos[ing] in…the community of faith and the self-transcending word of the gospel' (p. 349).

Alison Searle

Alister McGrath *Creation*, SPCK, 2004, 87 pp., £10.99, 0 281 05592 0

Alister McGrath, Oxford professor of historical theology, is an uncommonly prolific writer who is equally at home in academic, popular and semi-popular writing. He is, moreover, at home in the worlds of science, apologetics, the arts and psychology. A polymath indeed! The beautifully produced and illustrated volume under consideration is one of his

slimmer outpourings, engaged, as he is, in an extended multi-volume examination of what he terms 'scientific theology'. Indeed this book could seem like something approaching an off-cut from the carpenter's bench. That would be somewhat unfair. This volume is more of a beautiful shaped miniature, offering spirituality from a mind that is deeply enriched by other resources than the merely intellectual and erudite. There are, in fact, to be six off-cuts/miniatures in a series entitled *The Truth and the Christian Imagination*.

Creation is divided into seven chapters each dealing with separate aspects of the subject – encountering creation, tending the creation, a spirituality of creation, the parables of creation, the Lord of creation, the places of humanity in creation and the ruin and restoration of humanity. Each chapter is brought into focus by the judicious choice of a significant work of art, which brings to life the perspective of the chapter. In order, these paintings or etchings are by Blake, Bruegel/Rubens, Rubens again, van Gogh, Juan de Flandes, Michelangelo and Bruegel the Elder. An eclectic selection of poets and creative minds such as those of Herbert, Donne, Milton, Shelley, Hopkins, Wren, Newton, Dostoevsky, Dorothy Sayers and C S Lewis, are liberally drawn upon. All is in the service of 'the discipleship of the mind', an exciting concept with a long heritage going back right to the dominical command to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind' (Matthew 22:34-37). It goes beyond the realm of mere ideas to the use of both words and images to foster a deeper apprehension of the context in which the truths of the gospel are set.

Fundamental to this series is the understanding that if our good God created our universe, then something of his beauty and wisdom is reflected in what he created, and in what his faithful people have created in their turn. McGrath roots his comments in the Genesis accounts of creation and in the subsequent reflections of the Old Testament writings, Jesus himself and Christian theologians. He proceeds by discussion of Scripture and theological teaching and close reading of both the paintings and writings of the creative writers mentioned above. Each of the seven chapters ends with a brief prayer: the study and meditation is intended to climax in worship.

What we have here is not a work of Christian aesthetics, nor even a thoroughgoing appreciation or elucidation of any of the works mentioned, though there is a fair bit of this. It is one writer's attempt to encourage the faithful to engage more broadly with the artistic resources available to unfetter the creative imagination as they worship the one true and living God. It will be noticed that McGrath draws only on non-contemporary art. The present reviewer could wish only two further things of this rather lovely book. First that it were longer. And second, that it drew also on more recent art and poetry despite the fact that their status as works of genius might be less secure than that of the old masters.

Robert Willoughby

Craig Bartholomew, C Stephen Evans, Mary Healy, Murray Rae [eds.] ***Behind the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation Volume 4*** **of the** ***Scripture and Hermeneutics Series*** **Paternoster and Zondervan, 2003, 553pp., £24.99, ISBN 031023414X (UK)**

The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series results from annual seminars of world-class evangelical scholars working in disciplines relating to Biblical studies in a partnership with the University of Gloucestershire and the Bible Society. Previous volumes have examined the renewal of Biblical criticism [1]; language and Biblical interpretation [2]; the use of the Bible ethically and politically [3]; Biblical theology and interpretation [5]; and, just published, *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation* [6]. Two more will follow. *Behind the Text* considers how faith and history relate, focusing on the records, variously interpreted, of God's acting in the world before and after the incarnation. This is an attempt at fresh thinking on how we can read the Bible today.

The longest section of the book addresses the question: are the texts of the Old and New Testaments 'the word of the Lord' or has modern critical scholarship changed their status? In interpreting them, should we look 'behind, in front of, or through the text'? Looking *behind* would involve stripping away any supposed human distortion in reporting events, looking *in front*, seeing only the narrative structure. Both of these would sever the unity of word and deed, whereas looking *through* the text to come into contact with the historical event would take the human input seriously for the sake of the revelation of God in Christ.

Roman Catholic exegesis accepts the historical-critical looking behind method, while officially acknowledging that freeing Biblical exegesis from arbitrary presuppositions biased against the Christian faith remains an important and unfinished work. There's a question of whether the historical veracity of the texts is vital, or whether the source of their authority stems from their introducing us to Jesus as Lord and Christ. If they do that, perhaps veracity doesn't matter? Can we harmonize different historical perspectives without loss? How do faith and history relate? History and narrative are considered, with reference to Paul Ricoeur. We are cautioned against undervaluing the reliability of testimony, and of overvaluing archaeological findings. A problem for evangelisation is the 'scandal of particularity'and of contingency, which puts absolute certainty out of range. The relationship between the relatively neglected doctrine of creation and the purposes of God in human history is discussed from several angles. Epic and Biblical masterplots thrive in many cultures and encapsulate an overall meaning of a culture's history. Those in the Old and New Testaments are journeys to promised lands and new beginnings. In the interim the movements from bondage to freedom, exile to pilgrimage provide sustaining hope.

The final chapter is a challenge 'to inhabit the great story, not sealed off from the world, but as a house through whose windows we look out on to the world', and to consider how we can attract people into a Biblical worldview again. Time and space fail me to tell of half the wise insights in this book. It is an outstanding achievement because of the interactive scholarship and the extensive reference to specialist journals in several languages. There are fresh ideas consonant with the authority of Scripture. Bartholomew's Introduction provides a helpful guide to the main thrust of each distinctive viewpoint. Three degrees of headings are helpfully spread out over five pages. The nineteen contributors' publications and posts are listed. There are separate Scripture, names and subject indexes.

Margaret Helps

Philip Law (ed) *Testament: The Bible Odyssey*. London, Continum, 2005, 659 pp., pb., £9.99, 0-8264-7734-8.

This morning the *Today* programme on Radio 4 featured an attempt at a one hundred minute read of the whole Bible content. *The 100-Minute Bible* is now available to all of us time-strapped punters (ISBN 0955132401). To top this another contributor attempted a ten minute, then a seven minute hop through the Bible. Eventually, indeed, e-mails were raining in on the programme suggesting a range of summings up of the Bible's basic message in a sentence, an epigram, a handful of words. One is tempted to wonder if Edvard Munch might simply have screamed, Leonardo smiled enigmatically. What do you think?

Well this is all slightly misleading since Philip Law's *Testament* can hardly claim to be a 'Reduced Bible' or even semi-skimmed when it weighs in at over six hundred pages. Nor can it claim to be a new translation. The text is actually that of the Revised English Bible of 1989. Nor, strictly-speaking is it an attempt at a 'Chronological Bible' though a basic chronology is adhered to and the Books of Chronicles are woven into the basic

narrative of Kings and the Gospels are drawn upon eclectically and harmonistically to provide a 'Life of Jesus'.

So what on earth is going on here? Law's book comes to us armed with a formidable battery of recommendations on cover and inside pages. These recommendations come from senior professors of Biblical studies (e.g. John Barton) and literary studies (e.g. Harold Bloom), the chief rabbi, professional writers (e.g. Piers Paul Read) and broadcasters (e.g. Jeremy Vine), Roman Catholic cardinals and church leaders (e.g. Michael Green) and journalists (e.g. Phyllis Tickle). Even actors and celebrities (e.g. Wendy Craig). Half a dozen consultant editors from Biblical and religious studies faculties are mentioned. Faced with such recommendations one feels a measure of anxiety at writing a review, especially if one's first and last reaction has been 'What's the point'? One also wonders what the purpose of such recommendations is. So let's begin with the positives.

This is indeed a beautifully produced book. Black leather covers concealing double columns on flimsy india paper are out. Good paper, clean typeface, good binding are in. A colourful if rather forbidding cover illustration of Michaelangelo's Sistine God caught in the very act of creating the sun and moon recalls Kitchener's urgent call at the time of the First World War. Perhaps the message is 'Join up and read this!' And that's an order. Perhaps people need God's Word packaged in a new format to make them more likely to approach it. The *Odyssey* of the title certainly encourages one to believe that what you are about begin bears at least some relationship to Homer's ripping yarn. You could be embarking upon *Middlemarch* or *Bleak House* in one of the attractively packaged paperbacks accompanying a TV adaptation. How many people buy these volumes only to find that the original Eliot or Dickens aren't quite what they expected?

And now the misgivings. First, despite the attractive presentation this is essentially a word-fest. No problem with this essentially but the illustrations here are limited to a handful of nowadays somewhat hackneyed and gothic-gloomy engravings from Gustav Doré fronting each of the five parts. Were there no other works of art which could have illuminated the text? Perhaps cost precluded this. Second, the appearance of chronology is illusory. Whilst the broad outline is clear, it inevitably breaks down at such points as the history of Israel's kings, the narrative of Jesus' life and the account of the life of the early church and its letter writers. Third, the attempt at harmonisation and chronology actually hinders what may now be recognised to be the crucial element in understanding the Bible, namely discerning the various genres. The purpose and genre of Chronicles differs significantly from that of Kings and each of the Gospels has a carefully nuanced interpretation of the Jesus-story to propose. Fourth, who decides what to leave out? To omit Matthew's genealogy is understandable but, of course, slightly skews Matthew's story. It is what the writer chose to begin with, after all. Do we have any chance at all of understanding and appreciating 1 Corinthians from the potted representation of chapters 1-2, 13 and 15? Perhaps a generation which grew up with greatest hits, Classic FM and downloads thinks it can arrive at real understanding by sampling the bits and pieces assembled by a third party. Fifth, if this is an attempt to make the Bible accessible to the uncommitted, with its lack of chapter and verse, and omission of the boring bits, it fails. I simply can't imagine such a person reaching for this and getting beyond a few pages. Exactly who is the target readership?

My recommendation to Christians? Get a decent, attractive and modern Bible (there are lots of them) and settle down to give it the time and attention that good literature requires. Abbreviations and tinkerings are both misleading and unnecessary.

Robert Willoughby

Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, 252pp., £45.00, 0 521 83758 8

Erica Longfellow's *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* is situated within a broad range of critical approaches and assumptions. The multiplicity of varying purposes to which she inclines reflects the multi-layered complexities that currently face the scholarly community of early modern women's writing. The school has been recently celebrating the 'achievements' of the last twenty years but also evaluating the progress. In addressing the ambiguities in feminist literary scholarship, which has 'yet to decide between the goals of historicizing our own feminism and recovering the history of early modern women, or to grapple with the fact that these goals may be mutually exclusive (pp.4,5),' Longfellow posits a series of goalposts by which her own contribution to the field must be judged. Aiming to subvert the simplified distinctions of 'gendered' genre dichotomies, between 'public' and 'private' modes of communication, between print and manuscript distinctions, she attempts to further move the field away from the oppression of 'separate spheres' ideology in English literary history. Longfellow argues that by following the metaphor of mystical marriage, a united strand of analysis can be discerned through the disparate modes of biographical, bibliographical and literary historical enquiry (p.11). This is because it is, she claims, a bi-gendered (both male and female) and deliberately religious mode of inquiry. We must test Longfellow according to her own preferred tools of assessment and ask whether her pursuit of this metaphor in her chosen body of literature draw us closer to an historical understanding of these women and 'religious writing' of the time. In her own words, is it suitably historically nuanced to achieve these all-important criteria?

'Blockish Adams,' the first chapter, offers Longfellow an opportunity to engage with a wide span of scholarship relating to the 'divine mystery' of mystical marriage, particularly as it was interpreted through key biblical texts (Ephesians 5, Hosea 1-3, passages in Ezekiel, 1 Corinthians 7, Revelation 22, and most obviously the Song of Songs), and as it intersected with the wider biblical hermeneutical dispute over gender equality. The analysis covers seventeenth-century religious writings by men (including commentaries, sermons, translations and verse paraphrases derived especially from the earlier commentaries of Origen of Alexandria, St Bernard of Clairvaux and Cranmer), medieval female scholarship (the thirteenth-century Beguine holy women), Jewish exegesis, and modern feminist biblical theology. Three puritan readings of mystical marriage are analysed: William Gouge's *Of domesticall duties* (1622), Richard Sibbes' sermons, and Francis Rous' *The mysticall marriage* (1635). Longfellow is primarily interested in pursuing the relationship between such works and their use of imaginative language in devotional writing (as orthodox texts) and women's writing.

Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve deus rex judaeorum* (1611) is positioned as a passion narrative that is concerned with 'vindicating women's virtue and questioning contemporary constructions of gender (p.59),' but which is not exceptional. It portrays the suffering Christ as a model of ungendered virtue, and is assessed next to the poetic subject as it was used by male and female writers in its contemporary setting, yet in a way which challenged models of manhood and authority. Longfellow importantly advances a model in which women's writing is no longer analysed exclusively against what remains by other women, or composed in opposition to men, but against the broader tradition of writing in particular styles, in collaboration, and with respect to 'reading' histories.

Modern proto-feminist ideals are (more than) occasionally imposed upon the writings of early modern women and it is from the perspective of this potential difficulty that Longfellow addresses Lady Anne Southwell's case: she wrote radical verse on subjects of gender politics and took the inconsistencies of gender idealization to their logical extremes. In her religious verse, however, she remained biblically orthodox and appears to have welcomed scribal corrections from her husband. Southwell's use of apparent

Pauline inconsistencies on gender and traditional authoritative sources (the Bible and contemporary marriage commentaries) is noted as being among the most 'sophisticated' negotiations by women of her period in critiquing gender stereotypes. In her creation story she parodies conventional tropes usually used against women in literature (such as caricature and suspect reasoning) and thus participates in a theorizing of gender assumed to belong only to modern critics.

Longfellow's application of *Eliza's babes* (1652) demonstrates how a distinctly malleable anonymous text can serve many purposes. The unknown woman writer ('Eliza') is shown to be creating a new paradigm of 'public' and 'private' that qualified entry into print and advocated a radical theology of marriage. Liam Semler's opinion (Semler is responsible for the majority of *Eliza* scholarship to date) that 'Eliza' was on the radical end of the religious spectrum because of her evident familiarity with nonconformist theology is dismissed, and instead Longfellow desires to show that the Caroline period holds many examples of 'frequent parallels of doctrine among seemingly opposing factions' (citing Richard Sibbes as one of the best examples). 'Eliza' represented, allegedly, 'confused, post-1649 royalism.' Some aspects of the argument could be flawed; self-conscious modelling of the text upon George Herbert in no way concludes 'moderate Protestant royalism' (he was widely read for both lyric and devotional purposes by all denominations) and her use of Nigel Smith's comments upon the fashionable use of Herbert's lyrics in the 'godly parish' appears misplaced: Longfellow suggests that Eliza's imitation of Herbert's format, the combining of courtly and sacred, the simplicity of the word and the outward show of ceremony fosters a 'middle way' inclination; Smith's intention (in *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660* (1994), p.266), however, is to show that this was evidence of *The Temple*'s flexibility cross-denominationally.

Eliza's treatment of the mystical marriage metaphor submits gender distinctions to apocalyptic anticipation. It also challenges the supremacy of human marriage, in that to be jointly promised and true to both an earthly husband and to Christ is impossible, and results in unfaithfulness to either or both. The balance between these is demonstrated by Eliza's opinion that it is only possible to be physically devoted to her husband while spiritually and emotionally devoted to her lover Saviour. While it is pointed out that such an opinion ran starkly contrary to 'all Puritan literature on marriage of the time,' Eliza does not necessarily purport an heretical position, but premises her message on the extremities of the logic that an early modern wife was duty-bound to Christ ahead of her husband, and in this she could find a degree of freedom. There is a puzzling interchange of terms such as 'true Christian', 'pious', 'Protestant' and 'Puritan' in this chapter which lacks the attention to theological detail of the other chapters. While arguing against the alleged 'Puritanism' of the unknown author, and that the writer modelled piety on the ideal religious subject of the 'middle-way' poets, her conclusion that the poems and meditations contribute to a vital political debate of the 1650s, 'how a Puritan person could also be a pious citizen,' is for the same reasons confusing. The vagueness is, of course, largely due to the anonymity of the writer, but one wonders whether the clarification of this case is entirely necessary to Longfellow's overall argument and use of the text.

The experience of the prophetess Anna Trapnel, who refused to stand up to speak, further places in the balance the need to analyse her message (filtered through her position of alleged 'vessel' of the Spirit and the evidence of private devotion) alongside her motives. The result is an exploitation of the connections between private prayer and public worship, bypassing the difficulties of reconciling contradictory Pauline instructions. A kind of 'privacy' is asserted that holds regardless of who may witness the revelation; Longfellow describes this as a 'liminal space' of allowing a public face on a woman's personal relationship with God, found in the metaphor of mystical marriage. In essence, it is defended by implicating attacks on the authenticity of Trapnel's visions and prophecies with an attack on Christ himself.

In the final chapter, the extremely learned Lucy Hutchinson provides for Longfellow

a compelling example of the 'seeming conundrum' of a woman writer conforming to conventional models of wifely inferiority and submission but simultaneously developing an outspoken voice. She does this through using a theology of transcendence (displaying apocalyptic hope for both her husband and the republic, examining issues such as bodily perfection in resurrection) in her writing and through presenting her own hypothesis of public/private writing. While much has been examined in terms of her use of conventional Christian terminology for political ends, by extension there is also significant literary gain. Longfellow contends that Hutchinson's writing (particularly *Order and disorder* and the elegies on the life of her husband) has been underserviced by modern scholarship (citing Christopher Hill and N H Keeble as examples) which has fettered it to definitions of femininity. It is, she argues, beyond any categorization of private and public, and is driven by a paradigm of conscience.

'Mystical marriage', as a metaphor, encompassed both human marriage and divine love, and could thus transcend gendered fetters of 'acceptable' literary readings and expression: 'it gave them the ability to walk and the liberty to speak.' The women of Longfellow's choice are described as being of sufficient devoutness in belief to be placed 'in a bind' by the Pauline teachings on the roles of women and wives. The propagator of this 'bind' is oversimplified in the critical foreground as 'patriarchal Christianity', and Galatians 3:28 is cited multiple times as a fundamental incompatibility. 'Mystical marriage' was their way of negotiating the 'paradox' between Christ's teachings of being 'lights' to the world and Paul's restrictions upon women to be silent.

Occasionally Longfellow's definitions of seventeenth-century theological standpoints become hazy. There is a substantial footnote which deals with the complexity of using a term such as 'Puritan', given its pejorative origins, but it's use, and the alternative 'godly' need further clarification. While the masterly opinion of Patrick Collinson is quoted at length, Longfellow does not register that Collinson's use of the term is consistently lower case. She also classifies 'zealous Calvinist Protestants' as 'Puritan' (p.19, n.3), but elsewhere does not include 'radical Protestant' among their number (pp.2,3). Foremostly, such a discussion (as is footnoted on p.19) warrants earlier attention, especially in the introduction where such terms are first used. Secondarily, the use of a persistently capitalised 'Puritan' implies that there was a distinct, defined movement with agreed agendas (in this case with relation to theological interpretations of mystical marriage). 'Puritan male theologians' are frequently cited as a common body of scholarship: on the subject of mystical marriage their writings univocally exemplify 'little in common with human marriage,' dislocating the metaphorical from the literal, the divine from the human, and the standards for Christ (husband) and the Church or soul (wife), from the standards for a human husband and wife within the household. However where the women analysed are concerned, the term 'Puritan' takes on more fluid characteristics, and on the whole they rather escape any. While the male theologians are accorded definite boundaries, while the women of the study are given much more room to move; to 'define' a woman would be to put her back in the box from which she has been freed by the struggles of modern feminist scholars.

It is from the platform of the sacrificial love of Christ serving as a model of gendered behaviour that was not oppressive to women that Longfellow analyses the way these early modern women writers were able to integrate literary authority with contemporary religious debates on the nature of human relationships, both with God and with one another. In their writings Christian commitment and duty transcended the duties of gender, and their deeply personal relationship with Christ was used as a tool of authorization for literary agency for political and social commentary. 'Private' piety can thus work to legitimate 'public' speech. Longfellow concludes the chapter on Hutchinson with an appeal to discard the overlong-held categories of 'public' and 'private' which confuse our attempts to be historically resonant with the period. This is ultimately only possible by investment in the implicit religiosity of the material: 'Where duty to God is

concerned, distinctions between public and private, and the way those categories may or may not be gendered, collapse into the higher order of conscience (p208).' Longfellow impressively demonstrates the way in which women made a literary mark without needing to overtly defy accepted norms of behaviour. For too long the canon of early modern women's writing has tended towards works which seek a 'radical' hearing; the women discussed in *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* show how the often maligned aspect of the 'religious' in women's writing provided a space in which literary authority could be – and was – claimed without need for overt defiance. Through examining the theology of marriage relationships, and the parallel relationships between Christ, his Church and its members, these women variously demonstrated that it was possible for women to claim legitimate voices without necessarily openly subverting scriptural (or indeed behavioural) imperatives.

Longfellow's conclusion suggests that her purpose has been more bifocal than initially suggested; she envisions for her book an audience that extends beyond those interested in early modern women's writing alone but that will perhaps also reach the ears of New Testament hermeneutical scholars. Her message takes on an element of timelessness: just as these early modern women frequently based argument upon their hope in 'eschatological equality' and applied it in their 'search for the liberating elements of scripture (p.213),' so the mode of argumentation applies to modern feminist theologians: '…the attempt to define what it is to be female and a disciple of Christ is as crucial to feminists seeking to reform modern Christianity as it was to [these] early modern women who sought a voice for their religious experiences. A brief survey of their modern feminist counterparts reveals surprising parallels between early modern women's use of scripture and modern feminist Biblical criticism (pp.212-3).' Yet the interpretive contrast is still persisted with, in that while texts such as Galatians 3:28 provide modern feminists with a scriptural imperative from which to challenge 'oppressive hierarchical traditions,' their early modern counterparts utilized them in their context to demonstrate that living out a duty to Christ was exempt from gendered terminology. The final appeal to the notice of modern biblical scholars is made: 'These women deserve to be heard, and reading them alters not only our perceptions of early modern history but our perceptions of Biblical criticism (p.216).' Longfellow makes a valid point: it is a great shame that these early modern women are not more widely read. The point is made that women's intellectual work has an uncanny ability of being frequently forgotten from generation to generation. I would add that for those of us interested in discerning a scripturally sound theology of gender, these women (and others) should be given more recognition as our hermeneutical forebears.

Johanna I. Harris

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* is jointly published by Lion Hudson and Kregel Publications (ISBN 0-8254-2017-2).

Dr Leslie Baynes is Assistant Professor of New Testament at Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri, USA. She is currently revising a dissertation about the heavenly book motif for publication.

Stephen Blair teaches literature in English at a Thomist college in Argentina, where he also attends a Protestant Spanish-language church. He has worked as a journalist and book reviewer, and has published poems in various literary journals.

Richard Briggs is tutor in Old Testament and Hermeneutics at Cranmer Hall in St. John's College, Durham. He has written widely on Biblical interpretation, including *Reading the Bible Wisely* (SPCK, 2003), and is currently working on a hermeneutical analysis of 'theological interpretation'.

Paul Cavill published *Maxims in Old English Poetry* and *Anglo-Saxon Christianity*, both in 1999, and *Vikings: Fear and Faith in Anglo-Saxon England* and *A Treasury of Anglo-Saxon England*, both in 2001. He teaches at the University of Nottingham, and is a committee member and former CLSG Secretary.

Dr Crerar Douglas has taught religious studies at California State University, Northridge since 1971. He is not related to the author he reviews. See also *www.crerardouglas.com.*

Barry Gritt, who lives in Kent, describes himself as a Christian poet. He has an MA and at one time studied under John Schad, Professor of Modern Literature at Loughborough University. His poem (p. 27) 'is about the Northern Ireland troubles and is narrated by the devil. … In a cult painting the man depicted upholding the devil's throne [is] the then Prince of Wales.'

Johanna Harris is a postgraduate in English at Somerville College, University of Oxford. She is writing her DPhil on the letters of Lady Brilliana Harley (c.1600-1643) in the context of epistolary convention and early modern women's writing, and is interested more broadly in seventeenth-century religious (especially puritan) literature, and issues of genre and writing. She has most recently presented papers at the international conferences 'Still Kissing the Rod? Early Modern Women's Writing in 2005' (Oxford, July 2005) and the Modern Languages Association (Washington DC, December 2005).

Before her retirement **Margaret Helps** was Head of the English Department at Hereford Sixth Form College.

Russell M Hillier is attempting to unpick the Gordian knot of his doctoral studies in divinity at Selwyn College, Cambridge. He is specializing in the works of John Milton and is interested in the confluence of Jewish and Christian theology with literature in all its forms.

Dr Kevin Mills is lecturer in English Literature at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. His teaching and research interests focus on the Victorian era. He has published essays on a range of writers from the period including Darwin, Christina Rossetti and Florence Nightingale. A book on Victorian literature and the Apocalypse (Bucknell University Press) is nearing completion.

Walter Nash is Emeritus Professor of Modern English Language at Nottingham University. He has authored several collections of poems, including *The Spirit Soars*, and numerous books and articles on language and rhetoric. More information and a bibliography will be found on *http://www.humboldt.edu/~des11/nash/nash.html* He is editor of *Pilgrimages: An Anthology of Christian Verse*, due in 2006 from Feather Books.

Dr Alison Searle (née O'Harae), recently completed a PhD at the University of Sydney, Australia, on Biblical views of the imagination. She has a Leverhulme Trust post-doctoral position at Queen Mary, University of London in 2006, researching Baxter's letters.

Dr Roger Pooley's publications include *English Prose of the Seventeenth Century* . He is co-editor of *The Discerning Reader*, Apollos, 1995, and is currently working on a new edition of *Pilgrim's Progress*. He is Director of Programmes in English at Keele University and a former Chair of the CLSG.

The Revd John Waddington-Feather is a retired schoolmaster, author and honorary prison chaplain. His children's novel, *Quill's Adventures in Grozzieland*, was nominated for the Carnegie Medal in 1989, and his verse-play, *Garlic Lane,* won the Burton Award in 1999. In 2002 he was awarded the American DeWitt Romig Prize for his poetry. He co-directs the imprint Feather Books and edits *The Poetry Church* poetry quarterly. He was the first chairman of the J B Priestley Society and is now a vice-president. In 1985 he was elected Fellow of the RSA.

Robert Willoughby, a modern languages graduate and member of the CLSG Committee, teaches New Testament at the London School of Theology. He combines a commitment to Scripture with a love for all kinds of literature.

News and Notes

Support the CLSG

We have no other source of funds than members' subscriptions. Forms to begin or renew membership (£15 p.a., concessions £10) are available on *www.clsg.org*, or from the Editor by post, or email. A secure credit card subscription payment can be made online – see 'Join/Subscribe' on the website. Members' mailings include *The Glass*.

Contribute

Members don't need to wait to be asked! Offers for reviews and articles are welcome. Contributions for *The Glass* should be sent to the Editor, Roger Kojecký, at 10 Dene Road, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2AA, preferably by email to *editor@clsg.org*. The optimum length for articles is 5,000 words. There is no style sheet for *The Glass*, but contributors are asked to study the form, e.g. for endnotes, in the most recent issue to hand.

Submit soft copy as an email attachment in a file format accessible to Windows PCs. Preferred formats are Microsoft® Word for Windows (versions to 2000), Rich Text Format (RTF) or PDF.

Keep in touch

Members, and others who are interested, are invited to join the email list and receive occasional information about events and activities, on- and off-line, relating to Christianity and literature. The list can also be used for ideas and news. There is no charge for membership of the e-list. Email the editor if you would like to join. A leaflet 'Introducing the CLSG' is available from the Editor.

Autum conference 2006

Attend, or offer to read a paper at the autumn conference at Oxford on Saturday, 11 November. This year's conference, 'Prophetic Voices', will look at literary aspects of prophecy. Offers of papers are invited by 31 March 2006. See the CLSG website *www.clsg.org* for more information.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to David Thistlethwaite for help with the copy editing of this issue.