Book Reviews, *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 1, no. 1 (2011): 165–225.

Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception is an independent, open-access academic journal dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of innovative research in reception history, broadly conceived, within and across religious traditions.

www.relegere.org
ISSN 1179–7231

Book Reviews

Andrew Crome
The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought, by Eric Nelson 167

Judith E. McKinlay
In Scripture: The First Stories of Jewish Sexual Identities, by Lori Hope Lefkovitz 171

Roland Boer
Joshua in 3-D: A Commentary on Biblical Conquest and Manifest Destiny, by L. Daniel Hawk 174

George Pattison
Kierkegaard and the Bible. Tome I: The Old Testament, and *Kierkegaard and the Bible. Tome II: The New Testament*, edited by Lee C. Barrett and Jon Stewart 177

Eric Repphun
Postmodern Belief: American Literature and Religion since 1960, by Amy Hungerford 181

James G. Crossley
The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth: Christ, Scripture and the Church, edited by Adrian Pabst and Angus Paddison 188

John F. A. Sawyer
Textes sacrés et culture profane: de la révélation à la création, edited by Mélanie Adda 196

Michael Carden
Subverting Scriptures: Critical Reflections on the Use of the Bible, edited by Beth Hawkins Benedix 198

Robert J. Myles
The Bible in/and Popular Culture: A Creative Encounter, edited by Philip Culbertson and Elaine M. Wainwright 204

John F. A. Sawyer
Marthe et Marie-Madeleine: Deux modèles de dévotion et d'acceuil chrétien, edited by Bruno Phalip, Céline Perol and Pascale Quincy-Lefebvre 208

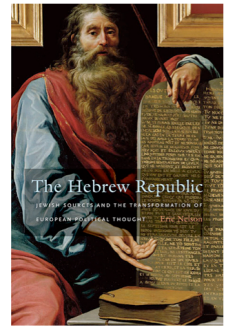
Christopher Howard
After Lives: A Guide to Heaven, Hell and Purgatory, by John Casey . 210

Steve A. Wiggins
The Lure of the Dark Side: Satan and Western Demonology in Popular Culture, edited by Christopher Partridge and Eric Christianson . . 214

Peter Matthews Wright
The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext, by Gabriel Said Reynolds . . . 219

Zahraa McDonald
Women, the Recited Qur'an, and Islamic Music in Indonesia, by Anne K. Rasmussen 224

The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought, by Eric Nelson



Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010 | 240 pages | ISBN: 978-0-674-05058-7 (hardback) $27.95 | ISBN: 978-0-674-06213-9 (paperback) $18.95

Fascinating, persuasive and genuinely original, Eric Nelson's *The Hebrew Republic* represents an important addition to debates on the origin of modern political thought. Whereas traditionally the development of contemporary political thinking has been seen as a result of a "great separation" between religion and politics, Nelson adopts a diametrically opposed view. A political position that viewed monarchy as inherently corrupt, favoured redistribution of land through agrarian laws and supported religious toleration was, he argues, the result of an increasing Hebraism and interaction with Rabbinic sources. Far from representing a symptom of secularisation, then, these forms of thought were actually symptomatic of an increasingly religious mindset: the modern political world was "called into being, not by the retreat of religious conviction, but rather by the deeply held religious belief that the creation of such a world is God's will" (5). Needless to say this is a significant claim, and to Nelson's credit it is one that he manages to substantiate throughout his impressive analysis.

Nelson has divided his study into three chapters examining (in turn) the rise of republican exclusivism, shifting attitudes towards Agrarian laws and land redistribution, and the rise of religious toleration. The first chapter thus begins with a description of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century republican writers. Nelson shows how these sources viewed republicanism as one, rather than the only, form of government available. Monarchy therefore represented a viable alternative to republicanism. In tracing a shift towards exclusivism, Nelson shows how the debate changed when rabbinic sources began to be used by writers both for and against republicanism. Rabbinic debates had centred on two seemingly contradictory texts—Deut 17:14-17, which suggested that the children of Israel would appoint a king when they reached Canaan, and 1 Sam 8, in which the Israelites asked for a king and were told that they were rejecting God in the process. Nelson argues for the particular influence of the *Devarim Rabbah*, a compendium of midrashim on Deuteronomy that argued that the Israelites were committing idolatry

by replacing God with an earthly king. Nelson persuasively shows the influence of this point of view in John Milton's thought, as Milton moved away from arguing that monarchy was one acceptable form of government amongst many, to viewing it as a form of idolatry. Nelson shows that Milton was familiar with rabbinic scholarship through a number of sources, in particular through the works of Salmasius and Schickard. Most impressive here is Nelson's reading of *Paradise Lost*. While Nelson acknowledges that in the poem Satan bases his arguments against God on the same arguments Milton used against the Stuarts, he does not believe that this represents a total shift in Milton's thought towards a position in which monarchy is seen as a form of government instituted by God. Instead he argues that Milton echoes rabbinic views in seeing God as the only true monarch, with every earthly king thus attempting to usurp true divine authority in their earthly rule. Thus in Book XII of the poem, when Nimrod is set up as the first king, Adam views the idea that a man might rule over fellow men in the same way that God rules over humanity as a monstrous abuse of power. This is a very interesting reading of the text and the discussion in general offers valuable insight into Milton's political position.

The second chapter deals with controversies surrounding the debate on the Agrarian laws. Originally implemented in republican Rome, these laws aimed for an equal distribution of public land that was often wrongfully claimed as private property by powerful individuals. For the majority of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries these laws were examined through their supposed role in the fall of the Roman republic. The laws were generally seen as being one of the major causes of political instability and eventual civil war in Rome. Here, Nelson focuses on the Dutch Hebraist Peter Cunaeus. In a 1617 study of the "republic of the Hebrews" Cunaeus took up rabbinic debates on the land laws found in the Pentateuch. Influenced particularly by Maimonides' redaction of rabbinic viewpoints in the *Mishneh Torah*, Cunaeus used Israel as the "ultimate constitutional model" (75). He argued that an agrarian law in ancient Israel, through the equal division of the land between tribes and promise of restoration of land to its original owner in the year of jubilee, was the ideal basis for a state. This position was developed by James Harrington in England during the 1650s. Harrington imposed strict limits on land ownership in his utopian *Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656), establishing the primacy of Israel's mode of government as the basis for his argument in the agrarian law's favour. This position was elaborated further in Harrington's 1659 *Art of Lawgiving* in which he argued more explicitly

that the stable commonwealth must rest on an equal distribution of property, i.e. agrarian laws. This reassessment of the Agrarian laws also led to a change of thought on the cause of republican Rome's downfall. Where the Agrarian laws had previously been interpreted through hostile critics such as Cicero, writers such as Cunaeus and Harrington turned to the more sympathetic Greek historians of Rome (such as Plutarch) to provide support for their reading of the change of government in Rome. These historians argued that it was the weakness of the Agrarian laws that damaged Rome and that the laws themselves were correct. Nelson therefore sees a turn away from Rome towards Greece in addition to the Hebraic turn that he traces here.

The final chapter is concerned with the rise of religious toleration. Here Nelson aims to argue against two widely held opinions—firstly, that toleration arose as a result of secularisation and secondly, that toleration resulted from a fundamental desire to divide church and state. Instead, Nelson sees toleration as resulting from a combination of Hebraic influences and Erastianism. While this may initially seem like a bewildering claim, the argument is in fact highly persuasive. Nelson argues that Josephus' claim that Israel was a theocracy, in that God was its civil sovereign, was central to these arguments. With God seen as civil ruler it was possible to establish the power of the state over religion, enabling Hebraists to question the utility of religious laws. The outcome of these discussions was to conclude that they were there for purely civil reasons; to preserve the status quo within the state rather than legislate against particular types of religious abuses. The survival of religious laws therefore boiled down to the question of which were vital for the state and which were matters of conscience. Eventually, Nelson argues, this led to a rapidly diminishing set of religious matters deemed worthy of consideration "until at last it was virtually empty" (91). While returning to Harrington and his rabbinic sources once again, the strongest element of this chapter is Nelson's discussion of the Hebraists Thomas Coleman, John Lightfoot and John Selden and their arguments in favour of toleration at the Westminster Assembly. Using the example of rabbis who argued that non-Jews were tolerated in Israel as long as they did not undermine the established faith, these speakers argued against the Presbyterian party for the primacy of civil authority and a wider toleration of religious difference. The discussion of Westminster is followed by a revisionist reading of Hobbes' work, claiming that Hobbes used the concept of the Hebrew republic to argue for toleration. While I did not find this entirely convincing, it was nonetheless a nuanced reading of Hobbes. Nelson closes by acknowledging a paradox in the development

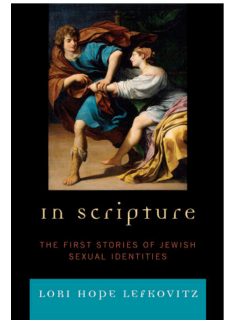
of toleration—both secular and religious roots result in "a deep ambiguity in the character of the political ideas we have inherited from this crucial period" (137).

This book is an important contribution to the literature on the development of contemporary political thought, offering a truly original and highly persuasive argument. Nelson has managed to uncover a range of original texts in Hebrew, Greek and Latin that shed important light on the understanding of such well-known figures as Milton and Harrington. The ability to offer fresh readings of texts such as *Paradise Lost* is also refreshing and adds much to his general arguments from the rabbinic sources. I have only a few minor issues with this book, most notably its length. Despite having a remarkable amount of content, at 139 pages of text I was left feeling that there was room to expand the arguments. It was unfortunate, for example, that the discussion of the Westminster Assembly did not extend to the use of Hebraic thought later in the Commonwealth period (particularly the Barebones Parliament of 1653) which might perhaps have furthered discussions of the practical political impact of Hebraism. Similarly, while Nelson is open about his refusal to address the phenomenon of philo-Semitism in this work, a discussion of the wider roots and popularity of the concept would have been welcome and added some extra background to his discussions.

Nonetheless, these are very minor quibbles. This is an important book that will be debated for some time to come. In making scholars look seriously at the role of religious (and particularly Hebraic) roots of later political theory it highlights a vital theme deserving of much further study. Certainly read alongside Achsah Guibbory's recent *Christian Identity, Jews and Israel in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), for example, it adds to a developing picture of the importance of Hebraic thought to the seventeenth-century mind.

Andrew Crome
University of Manchester

In Scripture: The First Stories of Jewish Sexual Identities, by Lori Hope Lefkovitz



Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010 | xii + 190 pages | ISBN: 978-0-7425-4704-9 (hardback) $49.95

I really delighted in this book. It deals in such clarity with complexity; it reads these ancient biblical texts and finds subtleties that I had never discovered or appreciated before, and opened a new world of meaning. And I had such pleasure in the writing itself. Yet perhaps I should qualify that statement of delight: there were interpretations and readings here that I was not always sure I wanted to accept. Once read, however, I know that I will have to take them into account whenever I read and wrestle with the texts again. As the subtitle indicates the interest lies in the matter of Jewish sexual identity. This is very much a Jewish writer's exploration, frequently referring to "Jewish gender ambiguity," as she traces the roots of contemporary stereotypes of Jewish masculinity, Jewish mothers and the Jewish-American Princess (JAP). Not all lies with the biblical authors; "social Darwinism," for example, is seen as responsible for redefining "man" as "hairy, strong, wild," so that "Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and ultimately Woody Allen … become suspect men and 'Jewish man' becomes an oxymoron" (58). At times, as a non-Jew, I felt as if I were eavesdropping upon a conversation that was not mine, although there is acknowledgement that these biblical stories speak to later Christian tradition as well as Jewish, and so many of the insights in these readings and re-readings are universally significant. And I enjoyed the humour: the comment following a discussion of how deception depends upon silences, "Leah and Jacob must have spent a very quiet first night together" (71).

What is different about this book? Lefkovitz writes that "The purpose that I imagine distinguishes the readings in this book, taken together, is the project of queering or denaturalizing sex in the very place where nature and sex were first and authoritatively invented, represented, and inscribed, at least in this branch of the cultural imagination" (5). Not surprisingly, the book begins with "Eve in the Garden of Signs," for, as she says, "a reading—that is based on a critique of identity—will necessarily discover the beginning of gender trouble in the place where sex begins, in Eden" (16). The term "gender trouble" is a reminder that for such a project theorists are needed, Judith

Butler and Sigmund Freud among them. For an underlying position taken throughout the book is that "gender identity and ethnic identity are always performative … women sometimes act as men, Hebrews double for non-Jews and vice versa … these narratives highlight the dangerously unstable borders between very old countries: man/woman; Jew/Gentile; God/human" (128).

Time and again there is "the confusion of gender categories." For what Lefkovitz reveals is a welter of ambiguity, role confusion, contradiction, border crossings and passings, with binary categories constantly playing against each other. So, for example, "Jacob, under total maternal control, first plays at being a man like Esau.… The competition between Jacob and Esau creates a dynamic by which the patriarch 'is who he is not'.… Conundrums of gender are bound up with the conceptual difficulties of identity more generally" (53). So Jewish sexual identity necessarily brings in the issue of race as well as gender, both a constant thread throughout these early narratives, and also a matter of ambiguity and confusion. Homi Bhabha's work on postcolonial mimicry has ancient roots: "Jacob mimics masculinity and power as his son Joseph and later Moses will also mimic Egyptian nobility. In these Jewish stories, drag and passing are overlapping strategies of miming power that leave a gap within the self, the very space that enables self-deception" (58).

Where is the reception interest? Midrashic readings accompany many of the biblical discussions, the rabbis exhibiting difficulties with some of the biblical attitudes. As Lefkovitz writes, "Midrash rebels against the Bible's untroubled accounts of possible mistreatment of Ishmael and Esau and goes out of its way to vilify the first-born sons in gestures that vindicate the Bible's self-serving patriarchs and their biased mothers" (91). And why was Joseph so renowned for his beauty and yet so chaste? Was he not really a man? If this bothered the rabbis, later tradition moved further to score masculinity in terms of sexual wildness as a sign of virility. Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* and Byron, Heathcliff and Rochester stand as witnesses. It was chapter 4, however, "Leah behind the Veil: Sex and Sisters from the Bible through Woody Allen" that I found most fascinating in tracing the changes introduced by later writers. Where the rabbis bond the sisters, Rachel and Leah, closer together, Thomas Mann highlights their "natural" sisterly envy. If Jacob and the sisters formed a triangular relationship, real life parallels are to be found in the biographies retelling the lives of Charles Dickens and Sigmund Freud, until finally the complexity of Woody Allen's film, *Hannah and Her Sisters*, highlighting once again the role of deception and silence in such a relationship. But, Lefkovitz notes, "the real deception is the one that the

narrative works on the viewers. From Genesis through *Hannah and Her Sisters*, women are inexplicably, but necessarily, silenced in their relationships to one another" (84). But is this really how it was? And who were the writers, who told these narratives? For, as she declares, there is another story "more rarely developed … the story beneath this story: Jacob is off-center, not so important; Leah and Rachel love each other and each other's children … and they do not worry about Jacob nearly as much as he worries about them" (84). Indeed.

As would be expected, the chapter that discusses the "Command Performances of Femininity" in "Bedrooms and Battlefields" includes consideration of art portrayals of Samson and Delilah, and Judith, in particular. Here, in the characters of Jael, Delilah, Esther and Judith, the ancestors of the JAP are found, Lefkovitz noting, however, that "this body of stories … function as inoculations against desire" (127). Stories also come with earlier traditions, with characters refashioned, yet keeping alternative aspects of their former selves alive: so Miriam, water connected in the text, is "a fluid self" (100), even perhaps a domesticated sea goddess.

I warmed to the reminder that these early narratives are timeless, that they "open an imaginative mythic space, outside of historical time. A God's-eye view is outside of time: as per the Talmudic principle that: 'there is no "late" or "early" in the Torah.' The story that we tell about the deep, dark past depends on who is holding the candle and what she is looking for" (108). Would that all Bible readers could acknowledge this.

As Lefkovitz sums it up on the last page: "each story is fraught with anxiety and insecurity about identity, expressed through contradiction and category confusion … all power is tenuous, all love is uncertain." Yet she concludes with reference to the book of Ruth, which both "reiterates and repudiates" the "patterns of representation":

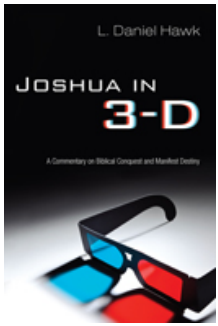
> Enemies are beloved; familiar roles are arbitrary; rivalry is absent. All that matters is elemental fertility: bread and babies.… Eden re-created in a barley field, we can return to Sinai, where Law is still given and received, without question and with imperfect understanding. Outside of time and space, between once-upon-a time, where stories invent possible worlds, and the peace at the end of time is the narrow bridge of history. It is a dangerous walk of limitless possibility. (158)

If I seem to have quoted more than I have commented, it is out of my respect for the challenges and wisdoms presented in this book. It is provocative in

the best of senses, leading us, as readers, to revisit old texts and see them as richer and more complex that we had ever understood them. For those of us for whom the Bible or Tanakh is either sacred scripture or cultural icon, this means that we now have to travel with these stories afresh, and let them question our sense of identity and our performative selves. I warmly recommend this book.

Judith E. McKinlay
University of Otago

Joshua in 3-D: A Commentary on Biblical Conquest and Manifest Destiny, by L. Daniel Hawk



Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010 | xxxii + 284 pages | ISBN: 978-1-60608-819-7 (softback) $28.00

This is a strangely encouraging yet problematic commentary on Joshua. Encouraging because it shows that someone as deeply and as openly committed to (a rather evangelical belief in) Christ can take up such a strongly left-wing political position; problematic because at a deeper level it elides the U.S. and ancient Israel yet again. After a few comments concerning the book's structure, let me say some more about each feature.

The "3-D" of the title refers not so much to those strange glasses one might receive at a theatre door in order to experience a film more intensely and "realistically" (although the word-play is obviously there), but the three dimensions of Hawk's analysis. Each chapter is structured in a three-fold fashion. The first is a close reading of the text. Not the laborious mono-method of Germanic scholarship (the text-killing process of translation, paraphrase and exegesis), but an insightful reading of Joshua as a community-based, multiply-overlaid, complex and tension-filled narrative of conquest. The second is a search for themes that connect Joshua by means of multiple threads throughout the biblical canon. It is a traditional "intertextual" reading, more in the heritage of Reformed exegesis, with its slogan that "the text interprets the text," than anything inspired by Julia Kristeva. But it yields some insightful readings, such as the one concerning the "bad girls" who keep Rahab company in Joshua 2 (32–34), or corporate punishment in Joshua 8

(93–96; although I was hoping for something on the punishment of corporations), or defining Israel (211–14).

The third dimension is an explicit effort to connect the story of Joshua with the history of the United States. One's immediate impression is that Joshua lends itself easily to such analysis, with all those troubling echoes—of persecution, wandering in the wilderness and then finding the Promised Land—that saturate the political myth of the U.S. But Hawk's agenda is more specific, tying in the story of conquest in Joshua to the less savoury aspects of the national myth of origins—where dispossession and massacre are routine almost to the point of banality. In other words, Hawk uses Joshua as a means to remind us of the myriad indigenous bodies buried in the foundations of the United States. Here we find "trajectories" such as: the doctrine of discovery; the face of the other; memorials, rituals, and nationalism; laying down the law; genocide; individuals and communities; indigenous peoples and broken treaties; God and war; Manifest Destiny; lands and homelands; retaliation and mediation; defining America and assimilating the Indian; race and miscegenation; the American dream. I have actually listed them all, not merely for the sake of some perverse desire for completeness, but because they became, in a macabre fashion, quite riveting. As I read I became ever keener to see what he would do next with this text, which had now turned upon itself (and the U.S.) as one of condemnation.

But what about my initial two points, concerning what is encouraging and problematic? First, Hawk takes what usually goes by the name of an evangelical position, or at least he opts for the most conservative scholarly position possible with these texts. So he sees Joshua as a resource for history, citing only maximalists like Iain Provan and William Dever. He wears his faith on his proverbial sleeve, asking:

> Christian reading of Joshua takes the gospel as its starting point for entering and experiencing the biblical text. Entering Joshua with Jesus prompts us to interpret what we read against the backdrop of God's saving work through Christ. How do we read Joshua, believing that God has been, is, and always will be working among humanity to bring salvation, reconciliation, justice, and peace? (xxix–xxx)

Normally that would be enough to make me thoroughly sceptical—as it did on this occasion. But then it became refreshing, not because I found myself

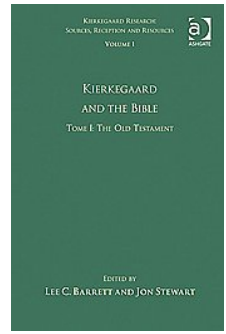
converted to an evangelical perspective, but because Hawk is being honest. Instead of pretending that he does "objective," "scientific" scholarship in his day job and then, on the side, slips away to pray fervently and occasionally preach at his local church, Hawk is not afraid to state openly how his faith influences his reading of Joshua. It became even more intriguing when Hawk's analysis revealed what can only be called a religiously left-wing perspective. All of which reinforced the sense that right-wing politics is not rusted onto Christian evangelicalism, indeed that it may well be a marriage of temporary convenience.

And yet the book is increasingly problematic at a deeper level. Let me put it this way: the structure of the commentary is thoroughly homiletical—although that is not necessarily a unique feature of this commentary: so many are written with the priest/minister/pastor in mind (often for sales reasons but also because the author is usually an erstwhile preacher). But it is more homilectical than most, moving in each chapter from detailed analysis of the text, through to connections with wider themes (often with a Christological link), to the direct application to life in the final section on U.S. history. A good sermon makes us not only see a text differently, but it also makes the familiar suddenly unfamiliar, the natural unnatural, the assumed problematic.

Hawk does all this very well—too well, in fact. What happens with the final application is that he reinforces the old narrative whereby the United States steps into the Bible and becomes Israel's closest ally, if not identical with Israel itself. Hawk does not do so in the usual triumphalist fashions, attempting to show how suffering and defeat led eventually to the founding of great God-blessed nations. No, as conquering forces Israel and thereby the U.S. become the subjects of sustained and withering criticism for the brutal dispossession of indigenous peoples. Yet it is through that very criticism, through the exposing of facile justifications for genocide, through the critical assessment of the text's own perspective on what it narrates, that the ties binding Israel and the U.S. become even stronger. At this deepest level, the book perpetuates the dominant, biblically-based and problematic political myths of both modern states.

Roland Boer
University of Newcastle

Kierkegaard and the Bible. Tome I: The Old Testament, and *Kierkegaard and the Bible. Tome II: The New Testament*, edited by Lee C. Barrett and Jon Stewart



Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources 1 | Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010 | xix + 273; xiii + 338 pages | ISBN: 978-1-4094-0285-5; 978-1-4094-0443-9 (hardback) £65.00; £70.00

According to the publishers' website "the *Kierkegaard Research* Series is a multi volume series dedicated to a systematic coverage of all aspects of Kierkegaard Studies" and "is the most important, significant and comprehensive publishing treatment in English of the work and impact of Søren Kierkegaard." It also asserts that "this series serves as both a reference work for Kierkegaard students and as a forum for new research."

Such claims invite us to judge the work by the highest possible standards and it is in relation to these that the following comments are made. The final claim is, of course, fairly unproblematic. There have been various previous attempts to create a kind of Kierkegaard Encyclopedia, notably Niels Thulstrup's *Biblioteca Kierkegaardiana*. Unfortunately, that by no means lived up to its own ambitions and, despite a number of good articles, had a somewhat desultory and arbitrary outcome. In comparison, Jon Stewart's project has a far more systematic approach and looks to provide a set of materials that will be of great value to those engaged in Kierkegaard research, who comprise a much greater number of scholars (and in a wide variety of fields) than when I was writing my PhD in the early 1980s. Even in philosophy, Kierkegaard scholars today can be found both amongst the Anglo-American and the Continental traditions. There is therefore a substantial body of readers out there for whom this project should be of interest. On the other hand, one might question whether the kind of maximum coverage at which the series aims is really achievable and whether there the intention to serve as "both a reference work for Kierkegaard students and as a forum for new research" is not attempting to mix oil and water.

Clearly the two volumes on the Bible being reviewed here make a significant contribution to an area of Kierkegaard studies that, as several contributors point out, has been notably understudied. Even theologians who have engaged with Kierkegaard have generally been more interested in the big systematic questions he raises than in his use of the Bible and, as is also pointed

out a number of times in this volume, Kierkegaard deliberately set himself against the kinds of approaches to the Bible that would become normative for modern theology. Philosophers and scholars of literature, who have mostly approached Kierkegaard from a more secular perspective, have, for obvious reasons, had no strong motivation to bother themselves with his use of this arcane set of books. The cumulative argument of these volumes, that this is seriously to neglect a major and constant element in Kierkegaard's whole way of thinking, is well made and theologians, philosophers, and literary scholars alike should pay heed.

Many of the articles are by well-established Kierkegaard scholars such as Timothy H. Polk, Joel Rasmussen, and Lee Barrett (the co-editor) himself as well as several researchers based in the Kierkegaard Research Centre in Copenhagen, and although the quality of contributions is not uniform, it is impressive enough. Cumulatively we learn a lot about the state of biblical scholarship in Kierkegaard's time and about how he used it (or ignored it). Yet there are also tensions in a number of the articles between the ambition of providing a reference work and the desire to contribute to ongoing research. This is perhaps less of an issue in essays, such as those by Iben Damgaard and Joel Rasmussen, that are expressly interpretative, but it is—perhaps unavoidably—apparent in articles such as that on Adam or Job. What one expects from a reference article is a more or less pedestrian run-through of the relevant Kierkegaard texts and of the main lines of interpretation, without the reader's judgement being bent too much in any particular direction. It is simply a presentation of materials and an overview of the state of play. In an interpretative article, however, one would allow the author the freedom not to have to mention every single Kierkegaard passage dealing with the subject in question, no matter how insignificant, but only to highlight the most important passages and to give a more profiled reading of the overall role of the given biblical text in Kierkegaard's work. Moreover, if an article is genuinely interpretative, it is much better for the reader to know that and one can then formulate a different kind of response. For example, Timothy Polk's assimilation of the Job presented in *Repetition* to the Job about whom Kierkegaard wrote an upbuilding discourse is a provocative interpretative move, albeit one for which he argues very carefully and well; but there are also counter-arguments that have been made a number of times in the secondary literature. Now whilst an interpretative piece may not be obliged to offer all the counter-arguments and can limit itself to a strong presentation of its own distinctive position, it certainly should be the task of a reference

article—but that is not what is offered here. This is fine in its own terms, and it is asking a lot of an author to have him or her cover both bases—but the reader should know to which genre the article in question belongs. The problem with the reference-article approach, on the other hand, is illustrated by the essay on the Psalms. It is perhaps almost inevitable that, having had to trawl through every reference to the relevant texts, this comes out as a rather fragmented list. Here would have been a strong case for allowing the author to make more of a few select exemplary instances.

It is not surprising that despite a noticeable Danish minority voice, the volumes have a strongly Anglophone orientation. However, most serious Kierkegaard students today will have at least German as a working academic language, and probably French. Requiring summaries of relevant secondary discussion in these languages would be a big ask of any prospective author and, in the light of comments in the preceding paragraph, could simply lead to the whole thing becoming bogged down in footnotes (several contributions are already in the grey zone here). However, one might have expected more thoroughness in the bibliographies, where it would be not unreasonable to have looked for a greater balance of English-language works and those of other major European languages (German, French, and Italian, for starters, not to mention Danish)—not least because these have often been crucial for Anglophone Kierkegaard scholars. It may be true, but I find it hard to believe that there have only been ten German-language works on Abraham worth citing. A further problem with the bibliographies is that there are many important discussions of the relevant text or topic located in works on Kierkegaard where the key reference is not apparent in the work's title. Thus, to stay with the example of Abraham (although it is not unique), students are not directed to relevant works by Geismar, Hirsch, Shestov or Wahl or other "classic" studies of Kierkegaard. Nor is Derrida's *The Gift of Death* included, despite it having been a major focus of interpretation in at least one strand of contemporary Kierkegaard-commentary. There are also other, less serious omissions, such as (with reference to Adam) John Tanner's *Anxiety in Eden*, a comparative study of Kierkegaard and Milton on the Fall. Doubtless some of these figures and works will get due attention in later volumes (the present reviewer has contributed an article on Shestov for the volume on existentialism), but that should not have precluded their also being listed here. This may, worryingly, represent a tendency in our contemporary research culture, aided and abetted by Google searches (and by time pressure on completion and publishing), namely, that students are led only to sources in which key

words appear prominently and do not pick up on arguments and discussions that can be learned about only through extensive background reading. Perhaps this would not matter quite so much, if readers were advised that the bibliographies were of a more representative rather than an exhaustive nature. Otherwise younger scholars may be led into thinking they've done all the work, when they've really scarcely begun.

A further feature rather typical of much contemporary research culture is that the contributors are mostly primarily Kierkegaard scholars (as Ashgate's blurb makes clear). In the same way, we might expect a collection on Aquinas and Modern Culture to feature more Aquinas scholars than contributors to modern culture. However, this can lead to a certain limitation, and it would have been good to have had several biblical scholars offering their take on what, if anything, a Kierkegaardian reading of the Bible can contribute today. Increasingly, the academy seems to be splintering into an infinite number of special interest groups, and we need more invitations to outsiders to offer their perspectives—although (another feature of contemporary research culture) whether they will have the time or inclination is a whole other matter.

It is hard to fault the selection of topics in the Old Testament volume, although the New Testament has at least one rather surprising omission, since there is no article on the earthly ministry of Jesus. Despite Lee Barrett's own excellent article on the crucifixion and resurrection and Jolita Pons's discussion of miracles, little is said of Kierkegaard's view of "the life of Jesus"—as found, for example, in the mini-life offered in *Judge for Yourselves*. Of course, Kierkegaard is his own worst enemy here and many readers have taken at face value the comment made in *Philosophical Fragments* that all we need to know about him is that he took the form of a slave, lived among us and died. But that was clearly not Kierkegaard's own view, and a rather interesting "Life" *could*, I think, be compiled from various sources. A further significant shortcoming is that although there is an article on James, this gives only three pages to Kierkegaard's use of what he himself called his "favourite" biblical text. This is clearly inadequate. Not only does Kierkegaard devote three of the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* to James's words about "Every good and perfect gift comes from above," but James is also present in *Works of Love*, *Purity of Heart*, and *For Self-Examination*. This is noted in the relevant article, but not much and certainly not enough is said.

Editors of volumes such as these need to be especially vigilant with articles written by non-native speakers. The opening sentence of Leo Stan's article on

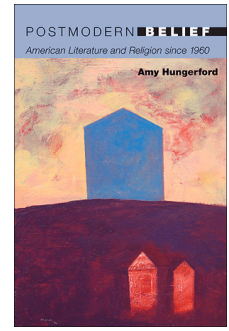
"The lily of the field" raised immediate alarm bells when he not only spoke of the "creationist assumptions of monotheistic thought" but added that "Most of Søren Kierkegaard's religious thought presupposes this creationist worldview" (55). The word *creationist* has, of course, acquired a very particular set of connotations in recent years that should not be applied to monotheism in general, certainly not to Christianity in particular, and by no means to Kierkegaard, for whom a dispute about the causal agency by which the physical universe was produced could scarcely have counted as edifying! Almost certainly, Stan did not intend us to hear such connotations and a firmer editorial hand could have averted the discomfort.

For a work that aspires to "reference" status, the indexing is far from complete, and this reviewer noted several references to his own work that didn't make it into the index. Several random follow-up searches suggested that something similar has happened in other cases, although the basis on which authors are selected or omitted is not made clear.

Undoubtedly, these collections of essays will be a useful addition to libraries buying works on Kierkegaard. Many individual essays are of a high standard, but whilst fulfilling the modest yet reputable task of resourcing ongoing research, it is unlikely—it is not in the nature of things—that these volumes, worthy as they are, will set the direction for that research.

George Pattison
Christ Church, Oxford

Postmodern Belief: American Literature and Religion since 1960, by Amy Hungerford



20/21 | Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010 | xxi + 194 pages | ISBN: 978-0-691-13508-3 (hardback) $65.00 | ISBN: 978-0-691-14575-4 (softback) $27.95

Perhaps the most immediately impressive thing about Amy Hungerford's *Postmodern Belief: American Literature and Religion since 1960* is its *ease*; Hungerford moves between methodologies, genres, disciplines, and decades with an admirable lack of visible effort, and, even more importantly, without drawing any undue attention to her considerable interdisciplinary chops. There is a complex—if not neces-

sarily flawless—theoretical enterprise behind Hungerford's argument that is all the more striking in that she never succumbs to the temptation to show off this complexity, or to overburden the reader with her own cleverness. Importantly for a book that is largely about literary style, her prose is equally and refreshingly free of the excesses of so much writing in confessedly "postmodern" literary criticism. Her finely tuned sentences are full of surprising turns of phrase—"continually inventive pretense" (13); "its literary density hustled offstage" (128); "the divine meaninglessness of language" (135); "evokes Job not as a verbal icon but as a guy we know from high school" (138); "the fish are flexibly miraculous" (140)—but are very rarely showy or self-conscious.

The fifth volume in Princeton's 20/21 series, Hungerford's book opens with a subtle double reversal that does far more to illuminate the book's central concerns than the book's lacklustre (and vaguely misleading) title: "This book is about belief and meaninglessness, and what it might mean to believe in meaninglessness" (xiii). Working from a detailed exploration of work by authors as diverse as the poet Allen Ginsberg, novelists like Toni Morrison and Cormac McCarthy, and academic writers from Frank Kermode to Mark C. Taylor, Hungerford argues that there has been a tendency in late twentieth-century American religiosity to imbue meaningless language, what she calls "nonsemantic" language, with religious value and at times with a religious function. Hers, then, is an argument about how literary form and style can come to carry more religious meaning than the simple content of language. For Hungerford, such nonsemantic aspects of language include "the sound or look of words, the tone and level of diction that accompanies word choices" as well as "narrative or poetic form, style, figurative language, or allusion" (xviii). Furthermore, Hungerford argues that this belief in language without meaning is a crucial site of resistance to the declining cultural power of both religion and literature. These highly varied iterations of language without meaning are, for Hungerford, nothing less than a collision of the literary and the religious: "[these] literary beliefs are ultimately best understood as a species of religious thought, and their literary practice as a species of religious practice" (xvi). From a number of different angles, Hungerford explores what turns out to be a fascinating *absence* of meaning, not a facile nihilism but rather a lack of meaning in which she finds "a whole world of belief." This is a form of belief "that does not emphasize the content of doctrine," a "belief without meaning" (xiii) that is in no way meaningless, a belief in belief itself. Her exploration of this diverse cast of writers—and her understanding of what constitutes "literature" is pleasingly broad—seeks

to demonstrate "how and why writers become invested in nonsemantic aspects of language in religious terms and how they thus make their case for literary authority and literary power after modernism" (xiii).

Though this remains largely implicit, Hungerford's argument is sociological as well as hermeneutic: "this book demonstrates how belief in the religious qualities of meaninglessness can be found among novelists, poets and critics, and among the common practices of contemporary American religion in the second half of the twentieth century and beyond" (xiv). That she meets the first of these two interrelated goals far more convincingly than the second is perhaps inevitable given that book is not, as she admits, "a sociology of literature in the period, but an account of how an important strain of American thought comes to imaginative terms with pluralism in the late twentieth century" (xvi).

The first chapter, "Believing in Literature" takes the reader back to the 1953 inaugural speech of American President Dwight Eisenhower to address the importance of what she sees as a "faith in faith," rather than a faith in any specific doctrine, in late twentieth-century American religiosity. Building on this, she offers a perceptive and engaging reading of J. D. Salinger's short 1961 novel, *Franny and Zooey*, focusing on its mannered and highly theatrical style, which becomes fraught with meaning in the context of Hungerford's larger theoretical framework and leads her to the startling but entirely plausible conclusion that "perhaps the most powerfully endorsed mode of religious art in the novel is not writing or drama but something like Vaudeville" (13).

Her standout second chapter, "Supernatural Formalism in the Sixties," manages to offer an innovative reading of the poetry of Allen Ginsberg without reducing him to a generic cipher for a simple self-determinism (as does the recent documentary film *Howl*, directed by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman) or painting a simplistic hagiography of his decade and its political activism. Ginsberg developed what Hungerford calls his "supernatural formalism" in the highly politicised context of the 1969 trial of the Chicago Seven: "the ways Ginsberg imagined his poetry as spiritual, in the context of the trial and in the years leading up to it, reveals a set of beliefs about language and the supernatural that have remarkable affinities with, and also raise a challenge to, understandings of language emanating from other sectors of American culture in the sixties" (28–29). Hungerford's analysis of Ginsberg's work and its relationship to William Burroughs' revolutionary experiments in cut-and-paste poetry manages to be informative, dense, highly readable, and subtly playful all at the same time, but what is perhaps most

striking here is her analysis of Ginsberg's public chants, and the supernatural ability—rooted in Indian religious practices—to bring about harmony that he attributed to them: "Ginsberg uses the supernatural structure of mantra to make a 'white-magic' poetry—a poetry efficacious even (or especially) in the moments where narration and traditional structures of meaning … fall away" (42). Finally, she draws a thought-provoking comparison between Ginsberg's public performance of meaningless language and the emergence of charismatic forms of Christianity, with its attendant focus on glossolalia, among the white middle classes. Following a rough chronology, her next chapter, "The Latin Mass of Language," explores the cultural impact of the move away from Latin in Catholic churches following the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) by way of a tour through the novels of Don DeLillo, who, she argues, preserves in his formalism something of the lost meaning (or lack thereof) of the Latin liturgy, embodying nothing less than a "Catholic sacramental logic" in a fictional form.

Hungerford's fourth chapter, "The Bible and Illiterature," is arguably the most interesting from the perspective of reception history, offering a detailed reading of Cormac McCarthy's searing, blood-soaked 1985 masterpiece *Blood Meridian*. The Bible is granted a further life in McCarthy not in the citation and re-use of its narratives or characters, but in his imitation of the familiar style, voice, and rhythms of the biblical text, a form of reception that allows for the Bible's status as an object of authority to be transposed onto another text. For Hungerford, the speech of the menacing, incomprehensible Judge Holden, who sits at the very heart of *Blood Meridian* in all his perverse glory, echoes "the familiar Biblical structures of scenario, simile, and rhetorical question found in the Bible's wisdom literature and in Jesus's teachings in the New Testament" (91). She details, for example, one of the Judge's parables about war, in which he concludes that war is nothing less than God. The *meaning* of the parable is not important, she argues, or is at least not *as* important as the act of trying to penetrate its meaning: "to leave the reader thus questioning is the point of the parable; it is what the parable is about" (91). Approaching the matter of the Bible and meaninglessness in another way, Hungerford also engages in a brief but illuminating discussion about the fact that the protagonist of *Blood Meridian*, known first as "the kid" then as "the man," who is illiterate, carries with him a copy of the Bible. In his inability to make the book the carrier of doctrine or meaning, Hungerford agues that the Bible, in the kid's hand, becomes more rather than less powerful, becoming "an icon of divine authority" (95). In the same

chapter, she also takes up this conjunction of style, literature, illiteracy, and authority in Toni Morrison. Like McCarthy in *Blood Meridian*, in novels like *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and *Song of Solomon* (1977), Morrison underlines the power of the Bible as a sacred object by placing it in the hands of illiterate characters. Here Hungerford finds Morrison levelling a critique of traditional processes of literary meaning-making, which is at the same time a critique of ethnicity and class in American culture: "Morrison seeks to replace white possession of the Bible, and its cultural and spiritual authority, with an authority based in the illiterate's possession of that sacred book, in the process maintaining—and, more importantly, deploying—the ultimate privilege accorded to the Bible in Western culture" (96).

In "The Literary Practice of Belief," the fifth, final, and arguably weakest of Hungerford's main chapters, she moves on to discuss how the dynamic of meaninglessness and belief plays out in "writers who are invested in particular belief" (108), examining the work of liberal Protestant novelist Marilynne Robinson and the work of Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, the best-selling authors of the Left Behind novels, which are nothing less than fictional re-readings of conservative evangelical apocalypticism. Again, it is to form that Hungerford's analysis turns, and again she draws out the ways in which Robinson's work again trades on the Bible's authority. Unlike either McCarthy or Morrison, Robinson uses the Bible to give a largely orthodox Christian gloss to novels like *Gilead* (2004) and *Home* (2008). Performing the not inconsiderable feat of taking LaHaye's and Jenkins's religious ideas seriously, she turns to Left Behind (and for the first time to popular, rather than high culture texts), offering an intriguing analysis of the ways in which silence and meaninglessness play into such didactic, openly confessional narratives whose generic core is rather different than Robinson's: "The action-adventure movie becomes a religious form in the hands of LaHaye and Jenkins because it embodies the simultaneous insistence on action and passivity that characterizes their theology of conversion" (123). In analysing this simultaneity, she makes a very trenchant and damning critique of the novel's attitude towards women and offers some very astute comments about the ultimately self-contradictory attitudes that the authors hold towards the mass media; indeed, she brings these two concerns together to reach a striking conclusion: "What is perhaps remarkable about the Left Behind series is the way fears about mind control have less to do with modern media than they do with modern gender relations, and, indeed, with the gendered aspects of the believer's relationship to the Protestant God" (129).

The book closes with a brief, elliptical conclusion, locating a fundamental "emptiness" at the heart of some of the work she has been analysing:

> Among these writers, the most frustrating (to me) uses of belief without meaning dehumanize literature, the writer, or both.… And all the while, these writers want for literature, and sometimes for themselves, what religious belief underwrites: submission on the grounds of religious feeling (McCarthy); supernatural power and wisdom (Morrison); ordinary life as sacrament (DeLillo); poetry as transformational prayer (Ginsberg); meaning so transcendent it appears as sheer radiance (Kermode). In other words, they want the fruits of religious power—or at least, they want to help us imagine compelling versions of religious power—without having to answer for the assumptions of the world, and about writing, upon which such visions are built. (133)

Given that she holds a great deal of respect for many of the works discussed here (and Left Behind seems to be the notable exception), the critical attitude she adopts here is both largely unexpected and rather more meaningful than it may have been otherwise. To articulate this critique, she offers a stark and strangely moving reading of McCarthy's 2006 bestseller *The Road*: "The novel … splits between two characters the twin engines of McCarthy's art: on the one hand, McCarthy loves … sensual, concrete words that can describe and name and build every possible thing, that can create a world out of nothingness; and on the other, he is enchanted by the transcendent, numinous space of nothingness" (135). Here also she finally explicitly addresses the postmodernity of her title, arguing astutely that "These writers balance a commitment to modernism with a response to forces within modernism—such as the difficulty of its aesthetic forms—that by century's end had come to threaten its success. They reject the most extreme stylistic obscurities of modernism, preferring as the source of prestige the obscurities of belief without content, belief in meaninglessness, belief for its own sake" (137).

She also steps outside of the analytical and addresses the ethics—or at least the social function—of literature: "The question is whether we need that religiously inflected belief in meaninglessness, or the belief in form for the sake of form, in order to believe in literature. Does literature need to be

somehow religious or to cast its power in religious terms in order to assert its value and move its readers? Is literature something to 'believe in' at all?" (137). Her answer to these questions, filtered again through McCarthy's *The Road*, remains ambivalent; however, it is impossible to escape the feeling that her answer to this question is an affirmative one. Such an apologia, subtle as it is, comes as something of a surprise at the end of this complex, provocative work: why, the astute reader might ask, does literature "need" to do anything? Here Hungerford seems to adopt an attitude towards literature that has echoes of T. S. Eliot's seminal work in the field, which makes several appearances in these pages and which insists that literature has a duty to meet certain forms of religious responsibility.

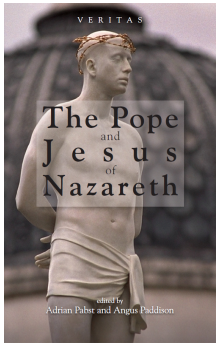
This book provides an innovative approach to both religion and literature, which has the potential for wider applicability in the field of reception history. Firstly, Hungerford's tracing of histories of influence and reception across genres, media, and disciplines, supported as it is by close readings of particular texts, provides an effective model for the study of the emergence of a "belief in meaninglessness" in the American context. It should be noted, however, that there are a great many examples of this sort of thinking—and the work of the late cultural critic and philosopher Jean Baudrillard comes immediately to mind—outside of the United States. Indeed, the elevation of non-instrumental language is an important aspect of Romantic thinking both past and present, something that again suggests a broader field of study for further studies of the conjunction of religion and meaninglessness. Secondly, Hungerford's decision to focus on form and style rather than on content allows her to point to intriguing, even counterintuitive ways in which religious and textual authority can be handed down over time and across vast gulfs of cultural forms. The chains of influence and re-iteration she traces are by no means as clear-cut and uncontroversial as a simple cataloguing of references and quotations would have been; however, this sort of bold theoretical and structural speculation is valuable in its own right, particularly in the ways in which it firmly embeds matters of reception, transmission, and transformation within the concrete realm of lived human culture.

Despite the very evident strengths of *Postmodern Belief*, it is difficult to lay to rest entirely the suspicion that Hungerford's connection of formal meaninglessness with religion is anything other than a simple assertion, not unlike the one that forms the core of Paul Schrader's classic 1972 book *Transcendental Style in Film*, with which *Postmodern Belief* shares a very strong affinity, despite the fact that Schrader is writing about film rather than about litera-

ture. Hungerford seems to recognise this, writing in her conclusion: "I aim to show what discourse—about belief and about other things—looks like when understood as religious practice; the specificity of such discourse allows us to see what sort of cultural work belief still can do" (139). Here she seems to understand her analysis more as a thought experiment than a coherent argument about a tangible aspect of lived American religion. Indeed, her analysis is far more effective as an exploration of the terrain that can be mapped when taking this particular approach to the question of religion and literature than it ever could be as a sociological argument, given how broad, and occasionally how vague the landscape she surveys truly is. Quite apart from its purely academic and theoretical merits, Hungerford has something intriguing and ultimately comforting to offer the reader, especially those dwindling numbers of serious readers of serious literature. What she offers is the exploration of a rarely glimpsed side of the ever-more-prominent and ever-more-troubling anti-intellectual tendencies in American culture. While there is very much, and very much of great value, being lost in the public repudiation of reasoned argument and the suspicion of erudition and learning in the contemporary United States, perhaps, Amy Hungerford tells us, there is also something, perhaps something of great value, to be gained.

Eric Repphun
University of Otago

The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth: Christ, Scripture and the Church, edited by Adrian Pabst and Angus Paddison



Veritas Series | London: SCM Press in association with The Centre of Theology and Philosophy, University of Nottingham, 2009 | 288 pages | ISBN: 978-0-334-04321-8 (softback) £55.00

This collection of essays is largely drawn from a conference in Nottingham on 19 and 20 June 2008 on the present Pope's much discussed book on the historical Jesus, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*.[1] The present collection, *The Pope and Jesus*

[1]Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (London: Doubleday, 2007).

of Nazareth, is a largely appreciative evaluation of what has been deemed by others (e.g. Gerd Lüdemann, Geza Vermes) to be a disappointing and naïve book with little care for any critical scholarship of the past decades.

The Foreword by John Milbank is a combination of a polemic aimed at historical critics and praise for Joseph Ratzinger's alleged brilliance in understanding Jesus. The praise is continued in the introduction by the editors who claim that Ratzinger's "intervention" is a "substantial contribution to contemporary thinking on Jesus," which may be news to those using historical-critical approaches to Jesus, but perhaps not to those, like Ratzinger, who argue for a "false divide between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith" (1). Henri-Jérôme Gagey provides a (very short) history of historical Jesus scholarship and presses the fusion between historical criticism and faith, as does Francisco Javier Martínez, the Archbishop of Granada, in an essay with the telling title of the sort becoming common among those who enjoy queering the Jesus of history/Christ of faith dichotomy, "Christ of History, Jesus of Faith." Fergus Kerr, picking up a central idea in Ratzinger's book, looks at the question of whether Jesus thought he was God and how this sort of self-awareness plays out in relation to philosophical and theological questions. Taking us much deeper into theological territory, Simon Oliver looks at Christ's descent, revelation, creation, divine sustenance, Nicholas of Cusa, and various other things only tangentially related to the historical Jesus (and bookending quotations from Ratzinger's book only emphasises how removed from the topic Oliver seems to get). Peter J. Casarella brings us back to familiar territory and shows how Ratzinger's personal search for the face of the Lord informs his analysis. Purportedly, rather than abandoning reason, this "biblical reference actually demonstrates that the theological acumen of the theologian Joseph Ratzinger has thereby reached its zenith" (83–84). In contrast to *Facebook* and other highly sophisticated instruments for social networking which permeate the lives of students, they report that in Ratzinger's work they encounter a "broad-minded compass of cross-cultural images and judicious sifting of decades of Jesus research" (92–93).

R. W. L. Moberly looks at Ratzinger's study of Deut 18:15 and 34:10 and how Christ fulfils Israel's hopes and reflects on issues surrounding Christianised readings of the Old Testament. Though not uncritical, Moberly detects an "outstanding scholarly mind" in Ratzinger's book as well as Ratzinger's "mastery of the disciplines of biblical and theological scholarship" (97). Richard B. Hays critiques Ratzinger's use of historical-critical scholarship and suggests how improvements can be made on more theologically

minded approaches to history. While hardly uncritical, Hays still thinks Ratzinger's book "demands, and repays, careful attention" (109). Markus Bockmuehl's article on the ways in which later performative exegesis and receptions can provide insights is neatly summarised in its title, "Saints' Lives as Exegesis" and is one of the more nuanced essays in the book. Like Hays, Bockmuehl is less misty-eyed about Ratzinger's use of historical Jesus scholarship and the general problems with Ratzinger's book. Olivier-Thomas Venard builds on Ratzinger's high Christological reading by arguing, with detailed exegesis, that John 1:1–18 is "extraordinarily" coherent (155) with Matt 12:46–13:58. Richard Bell uses concepts of "myth" to bring history and theology together with particular reference to the Transfiguration. Angus Paddison's essay injects more scepticism into uses of historical criticism while turning to the Church and faith to develop the role of the "implied exegete" or a "hermeneutic of discipleship."

Roland Deines provides a critique of "secular" approaches to history and to Ratzinger's book and advocates the bringing together of historical criticism and faith in New Testament scholarship, including the idea that the historical Jesus is God acting in history. Adele Reinhartz analyses the problems involved in Ratzinger's portrayal of Judaism, including his discussions with Jacob Neusner, and how Ratzinger unintentionally ends up reinforcing anti-Jewish stereotypes and supersessionism. Mona Siddiqui looks at the different Christian approaches to Jewish scriptures and the Qurʾān and the differences between Christian and Muslim conceptions of God, including Ratzinger's quest for the face of God. Finally, George Dennis O'Brien raises some critical questions concerning Ratzinger's book and even the idea that it might not be relevant for our times.

It is hoped that this reviewer is not the only one who wonders how Ratzinger's naïve and massively outdated book on the historical Jesus can too often be elevated to such a high status and how certain contributors believe that overtly reading orthodox Christian theology into the historical Jesus is somehow intellectually sophisticated, refreshing or innovative (or, indeed, accurate). The worst offender is Milbank who shows absolutely no awareness of the historical-critical scholarship he is so dedicated to undermining. We are told that the Pope is apparently convincing when he fights scholarly scepticism whose dismissal of historicity is on (unspecified) "feeble grounds." A "lack of Christian faith" has, like a moody teenager it would seem, "issues," which account for the "implausible denial of much continuity between Jesus' own teachings and later Christian belief." "Nearly all 'biblical critics'

seem constitutionally incapable" of "any objective literary reading of the New Testament" because this "objective literary reading" shows "the exact opposite—a tremendous, if complex and accelerating, *continuum*" (xxvii). More directly quoted material could be given but one result would be consistent: no scholar is mentioned as performing such purportedly bad practice.

We could defend Milbank and accept that the genre of the Foreword is not the place for detailed bibliographical referencing; although a little fidelity to what is actually happening in New Testament scholarship might be expected from a theology professor. For as it happens, plenty of New Testament scholars (rightly or wrongly) see the continuities between Jesus and what followed, not least in a time when conservative scholarship has enjoyed several years in the ascendancy. However, instead of citing external scholarship, we might instead turn to scholars in the very volume for which Milbank provides the Foreword. According to Roland Deines, with scholarly references in a footnote, "For this position he [Ratzinger] could have drawn on a number of reputable scholarly positions which acknowledge even on the basis of the Synoptics and their rigorous historical-critical evaluation that Jesus acted in such a way and with an authority that linked him very closely to God" (206). To make matters more puzzling, Milbank praises Olivier-Thomas Venard's "brilliant and refreshingly accurate exegesis in this volume—when he shows that lack of Christian faith has issued in an implausible denial of much continuity between Jesus' own teachings and later Christian belief" (xxvii). Yet Venard argues that an "early high Christology unifying diverse traditions about Jesus appears ever more plausible to historians of early Christianity" (136), hardly implying constitutional incapability. More generally, the contributions by Markus Bockmuehl and Richard Hays are perfectly aware of the historical-critical problems in the Pope's book. It is clear, then, that Milbank's polemic is empty and at times is, at least in his representation of scholarship, closer to Hal Lindsey's attack in *Late Great Planet Earth* on stupid liberal professors who do not believe in the historicity of the Daniel stories than he is to several of the contributors to this volume.[2]

[2]Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 91: "If you are a careful Bible student you know the common sport in the classroom today, especially in courses called 'The Bible as Literature,' or something similar. Teachers love to tear the Book of Daniel apart—they especially like to late-date it. Some liberal professors claim that it was written in 165 B.C., in order to discredit the supernatural element of prophecy. However, the authenticity of Daniel and its early date has been carefully defended by such scholars as Dr Merril F. Unger, Dr E. J. Young, and Sir Robert Anderson."

Maybe it is no surprise that Ratzinger's book has found enthusiastic endorsement from Denver Theological Seminary and related American conservative evangelical circles (see Bockmuehl, 121).

Ordinarily it may be unfair to dwell on the Foreword, but this book is explicitly a product of the Centre of Theology and Philosophy (ix; and the Veritas series as a whole), from where Milbank and Radical Orthodoxy cast a long shadow, and of which several contributors can count themselves as Fellows, Honorary Fellows or Members (e.g. Milbank, Pabst, Oliver, Kerr, Martínez). In contributions more closely related to the Centre and to Radical Orthodoxy at least, the prioritising, or at least open advocating, of faith-based approaches is therefore not unexpected, as we have already seen in Milbank's swipe at "lack of Christian faith." This is not a book that has too much difficulty with the circular reasoning involved in accepting truth in advance. Less polemically, Angus Paddison talks of "the conviction that the practices involved in following Jesus are inseparable from scriptural reading" and as such "disciples enjoy an interpretative privilege because they participate in the world which Scripture wills to make known.... It is not that a hermeneutic of discipleship regards itself as antithetical to the interests of the modern university. What it does do is calmly point out the hermeneutical priority and advantage of Scripture's 'implied exegete'" (176–177). It is always worth playing around with such approaches by using extremes. In what sense would Stalinists or fascists enjoy an interpretative privilege, hermeneutical priority and advantage when studying the words of the two dictators over the historically-minded critical scholar of Stalin or Hitler? What this move does—more subtly with Paddison than Milbank—is to develop the kind of Christian imperialism which is becoming so prominent in Radical Orthodoxy circles. This is notably the case with Pabst, Milbank and his protégé, the Red Tory Phillip Blond, all of whom have been producing some ill-thought-out and historically-naïve assessments of Islam while extolling the wonders of some kind of benign Christian imperialism which will help us all, Muslims included.[3] Of course, with Milbank and those he has influenced (several of whom are contributors and one a co-editor) this probably means a certain kind of Christian, hence Milbank's inaccurate attack on a

[3]L. Felipe Pondé, "Appendix: An Interview with John Milbank and Conor Cunningham," in *Belief and Metaphysics*, ed. Conor Cunningham and Peter M. Candler (London: SCM, 2007), 501–527 (505–508); Philip Blond and Adrian Pabst, "Integrating Islam into the West," *New York Times*, November 4, 2008; see also John Milbank, "Christianity, the Enlightenment and Islam," *ABC Religion and Ethics*, August 24, 2010, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2010/08/24/2991778.htm.

"lack of Christian faith" having "issues" with an "implausible denial of much continuity between Jesus' own teachings and later Christian belief." Famous scholars from Bultmann through Dunn to Allison were and are openly Christian (and the discipline is hardly dominated by atheists!); so does the more they stress discontinuity mean the less Christian they get?

An overtly Christian take on the world, typically at the expense of socio-economic explanations (at least in any serious detail), is common to both Ratzinger and Milbank/Radical Orthodoxy, despite token references. Indeed, Ratzinger's book is the book which gave us the following analysis of poverty: "The aid offered by the West to developing countries has been purely technically and materially based, and not only left God out of the picture, but has driven men away from God. And this aid … is what first turned the 'third world' into what we mean today by that term…. The issue is the primacy of God. The issue is acknowledging that he is a reality, that he is the reality without which nothing else can be good. History cannot be detached from God and then run smoothly on purely material lines."[4] Western aid has indeed been a problem, but Ratzinger's replacement model is hardly the sort of trenchant socio-economic analysis required when dealing with issues of global injustice. But then this privileging of theological and supernatural explanation is precisely the model which dominates the thinking underlying much of *The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth* and Milbank-influenced Radical Orthodoxy. Milbank, as ever, sets the tone we have seen elsewhere. He claims on behalf of Ratzinger, "So the Pope concludes that, without the hypothesis of Jesus' messianic and God-consciousness (true or deluded), the irruption of the Church into history becomes harder to explain. Furthermore, he implies, the nature of the influence exerted by Jesus and the historical effects to which he gave rise render the notion that he was deluded perhaps, as C. S. Lewis again suggested, somewhat implausible … if Jesus was deluded, there would somehow be an incongruous mismatch between such a capacity for self-deceit and the sheer grandeur and enormity of his self-presentation" (xxviii). Milbank's perpetuation of the Pope's outdated view has to ignore any number of alternative explanations of Christian origins and push the Great Man (or, indeed, God) view of history. And polemically rejecting unnamed scholarship or citing C. S. Lewis' long-outdated views on Jesus do not count.

To be fair to the editors, *The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth* does contain some dissent and difference, even if not at the level that might be expected of an underwhelming book by the Pope. In terms of religious identity issues, there

[4]Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 33–34.

are the contributions particularly relating to Judaism and Islam, the latter receiving the token amount of space Pabst and Blond would give to Muslims in a Christianised Europe.[5] It is worth pointing out that the contributions of Reinhartz and Siddiqui are the only ones lumped together in Pabst and Paddison's introduction, noting "their perspectives … as Jewish and Islamic scholars" (7). Milbank, who is rapidly turning himself into the embodiment of everything Edward Said demolished,[6] argues in one of his more moderate recent outbursts that there is still cause to be nervous because there is, apparently, "the danger of mainstream Sunni Islamic positivism and voluntarism … which arguably, perhaps, helped, by concealed influence, to corrupt later Western medieval biblical exegesis, participatory ontology, eschatology and political theory" (xxviii). Perhaps inadvertently protecting us (temporarily) from Milbank and Pabst on Islam, the Pope has more to say about Judaism, not least in his love of the work of Jacob Neusner. For those who have not read Ratzinger's book I do not think I am giving too much away when I tell you that, for all its praise, Judaism still comes out a poor second to Christianity. This point is recognised in Adele Reinhartz's contribution, where she clearly shows that discussions in the Pope's book "begin by acknowledging and voicing criticism of anti-Jewish readings of the passage at hand, but they end with a subtle, and, I believe, unintentional reinforcement of the stereotypes that underlie the anti-Jewish readings themselves" (238; cf. also Hays, 116, on Ratzinger avoiding the tricky issues of anti-Jewish readings of John's Gospel). But this sort of critique of the Pope is hardly sustained throughout *The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth* and the book would have been greatly improved if it had more ideological, cultural and historical contextualisation of the Pope's book, rather than constant theological appreciation and, at times, saccharine adoration.

It could be added that despite the Radical Orthodox influences clearly running throughout *The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth*, there are useful discussions of theology and biblical studies (including the reception of the Bible), particularly from those less associated with Radical Orthodoxy. Clearly and unsurprisingly, this book will appeal most to those of a certain pious disposition. But there remains one question this reviewer cannot shake off: why has anyone taken the Pope's book on Jesus remotely seriously? Obviously

[5]Blond and Pabst, "Integrating Islam into the West."

[6]Deane Galbraith, "John Milbank's Atavistic Orthodoxy," *Religion Bulletin*, September 6, 2010, http://www.equinoxjournals.com/blog/2010/09/john-milbanks-atavistic-orthodoxy.

the fame of the Pope plays a big part and it is obviously something to be studied as part of reception history and as such can be taken seriously as any subject. But as a work of historical criticism? Really? And, despite some of the more over-the-top claims made in *The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth*, even the blurring of the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith is hardly news in historical-critical circles, where such battles are fought endlessly. Consequently, anyone with interest in historical criticism will learn little new or, in the case of Milbank's piece, even find unhelpful information. Its main contribution to scholarship will probably be those essays engaging with the theological interpretation of scripture.

Then again we should not be too surprised that there is a general attempt to cosy up to the work of such a powerful man at the head of a powerful institution. After all, Milbank, Blond (immortalised as Mister Bollocks by the political cartoonist Steve Bell[7]) and the whole Red Tory project so intimately related to Radical Orthodoxy try to oppose neoliberalism and liberalism by presenting themselves as useful idiots for the most neoliberal government in British history, headed by the neoliberal Conservative Party in coalition with the Liberal Democrats, promoting an overtly neoliberal approach to higher education and British society in general—although Blond and Milbank somehow still seem to believe otherwise. The drive to place Radical Orthodoxy at the heart of power, whether spiritual or temporal, and no matter how misleading and disturbing this may be, is never too far from the surface in several recent manifestations of Radical Orthodoxy and their own peculiar brand of imperialism. And rather than influencing power, all this provides a convenient mask for contemporary reassertions of power. To put it mildly, neither the papacy nor the Conservative Party is without uncomfortable recent histories. Taking Ratzinger's book so seriously and generally avoiding its ideological and historical problems contributes to this masking in its own small way and provides further insight into the agenda of Radical Orthodoxy and its deluded dreams of power.

James G. Crossley
University of Sheffield

[7]Steve Bell, "'Hi! I'm Mister Cheerful! Who are you?'" *The Guardian*, October 4, 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cartoon/2010/oct/04/steve-bell-if-conservative-conference; Steve Bell, "Meet Mr Pignose," *The Guardian*, October 5, 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cartoon/2010/oct/05/steve-bell-conservative-conference.

Textes sacrés et culture profane: de la révélation à la création, edited by Mélanie Adda

Recherches en littérature et spiritualité, ed., Gérard Nauroy; Vol. 17 | Berne: Peter Lang, 2010 | xiv + 321 pages | ISBN: 978-3-0343-0316-3 (softback) €54.10

This collection of fascinating and immensely scholarly papers was first delivered at a colloquium for young researchers at the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art in the Sorbonne in January 2008. Thanks to imaginative editing on the part of Mélanie Adda, lecturer in Comparative Literature at the Sorbonne, the ten papers, revised in the light of "les riches débats" that followed their original delivery, are arranged in three sections in such way as to create a coherent monograph, despite the huge diversity of the material covered. The papers are arranged in order of the proximity of their topic to the original sacred text, from relatively close interpretations to more complex and distant relationships, and seek to contribute to the ongoing discussion of two overarching concerns: what exactly do we mean by a "sacred text" and what happens when sacred texts interact with secular cultures. The considerable achievements of this interdisciplinary project are commended in a friendly preface by François Bœspflug, Professor of the History of Religions at Strasburg, who chaired one of the sessions at the original colloquium.

After an introduction in which the editor summarizes the papers and explains the structure and rationale of the volume, the first part, entitled "Textes sacrés et Traditions," looks at four examples in which the route from the biblical text to its reception is fairly straightforward and direct, though often involving interesting elaborations and transformations. A mediaeval French translation of the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, preserved in three manuscripts of the Bible, prompts discussion of the canonicity or "sacredness" of the original Latin text and of the effect of translating it into the vernacular for the laity (Lydie Lansard). The next paper suggests that Philo saw himself as a divinely inspired successor to Moses, like Aaron, as interpreter of God's word, and that consequently his works may be considered in a sense sacred texts on a par with the Hebrew Bible and the LXX (Géraldine Hertz). A short study of the crucial role played by the Bible in the works of Paul Claudel (1868–1955), not only in his poetry and other writings but also within the commentaries (which account for half his published works), plays down the differences between the Bible and the exegetical works it in-

spires, since in both, poetry, theology and science are three facets of the same experience of God (Alexandre Solignac). By contrast, a study of twelfth- and thirteenth-century illuminated manuscripts of Zacharie de Besançon's *In unum ex quattuor*, an influential exegetical work on the Gospels, concludes that in this case the art-work is ornamental and functional and acquires none of the sacredness of the Biblical text it illustrates (Frédéric Tixier).

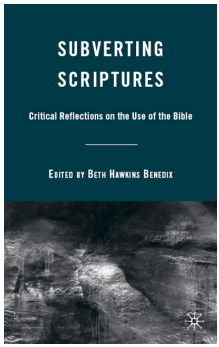
In the second part, entitled "Contournements et dètournements du texte sacré," there are three contrasting illustrations of how the text can be distorted or misappropriated. A close reading of Descartes' *Le Monde* demonstrates how he interprets Genesis in such a way as to find truth there complementary to Cartesian philosophy, not opposed to it (Delphine Bellis). The other two papers in this part examine St Augustine's polemical use of the Bible in his anti-pelagian treatise *Contra Iulianum* (Mickaël Ribreau), and political propaganda in fifteenth-century biblical frescoes on the walls of the Palazzo Trinci in Foligno (Jean-Baptiste Delzant). The third part is entitled 'Textes sacrés, textes profanes' and deals with the complex relationship between sacred texts and secular literature in three very different examples. The first examines the process whereby the popular mediaeval motif of Christ's Descent into Hell, ultimately derived from the Bible (e.g. Eph 4:8ff; 1 Pet 3:18ff) and then elaborately dramatized in the apocryphal *Acts of Pilate* and *Gospel of Nicodemus*, was reused in mediaeval works of secular fiction such as Robert de Boron's *Merlin* (Irène Fabry-Tehranchi). The editor's own contribution to the collection discusses the literary function of biblical names in the novels of Albert Cohen (1895–1981) (Mélanie Adda), and the last paper examines the notion of sacred text in Chinese tradition with reference to the *Analects* of Confucius and their translation into other languages (Nicolas Idier).

Few readers, particularly biblical scholars like the present reviewer, will have expertise in all or indeed any of the disciplines represented so impressively here—Philo, Patristics, Mediaeval Art, Mediaeval Literature, Descartes, Modern French Literature and Chinese. But two features of the volume suggest that it should reach a wide readership beyond the specialists' own universe of discourse. On the one hand, the authors have clearly gone to great trouble to make their writing intelligible to the non-expert, both by avoiding technical jargon and by filling in relevant background details where necessary. On the other hand, the Bible is the starting point for most of the discussion, or at any rate plays a significant role in all the papers, even the final one, and this means that anyone with an interest in the Bible and its afterlife—and that accounts for an ever-increasing number of readers, will find

this remarkable monograph a source of enjoyment, useful information and enlightenment. Like the *Dictionnaire de la Bible dans la Littérature française* by Claudia Jullien (2003), this is an invaluable way into French reception criticism for biblical scholars, even though the word Bible is missing from the title and there is no index of biblical references.

John F. A. Sawyer
Perugia

Subverting Scriptures: Critical Reflections on the Use of the Bible, edited by Beth Hawkins Benedix



New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 | x + 245 pages | ISBN: 978-0-230-61069-9 (hardback) $85.00

In this book, Beth Hawkins Benedix has brought together a diverse collection of essays which examine ways in which biblical texts are appropriated, transformed and "subverted" in contemporary cultures, most prominently, and unsurprisingly given its provenance, the modern United States. As a southern hemisphere reader, I was struck by how unselfconsciously this collection proclaims its U.S. provenance. The opening sentence cites Jacques Berlinerblau naively declaring "The Bible is back!" (from his book on the use of biblical texts in U.S. presidential politics)—as if it ever really went away—to launch into a short survey of Obama's use of biblical references in his campaign discourse. I will have more to say towards the end of my review about this U.S., and might I say U.S. Protestant, provenance and how it has, ironically, subverted these scholarly approaches seeking to subvert its biblical frame.

Beth Hawkins Benedix is associate professor of Religious Studies and Literature at De Pauw University and her acknowledgements include her students from her course on biblical literature from which the "spark of inspiration for this collection came" (ix). The anthology consists of eleven chapters divided into four sections, together with an introduction. The book also includes a short subject index (which includes biblical texts) but no single bibliography. Instead, bibliographies are provided at the end of each essay together with references in endnotes. I prefer footnotes and in-text refer-

encing as much less disruptive to reading as opposed to endnotes, especially when, as in this case, placed at the end of each chapter. Nevertheless, I found myself thoroughly engaged in the material of each essay (effectively ignoring most of the endnotes).

Taken as a whole the essays explore a diverse range of literary and religious writers and the ways they re-write and deploy the biblical literature in their work. As Benedix points out in her Introduction, the essays' authors ask "what are these writers *doing* [*sic*] when they point to the Bible in their work" and what "is the relationship … between biblical text and political message for these writers" (2). She continues that there are two main tendencies amongst these writers, one which regards the biblical texts more positively as a resource for critique, "guidance and instruction" while the other "tends to look at the Bible with suspicion and distrust, seeing in it the seeds for widespread injustice" (ibid.). Both tendencies share the perspective that the world is damaged and in need of repair. How scripture is regarded then is determined by whether scripture is deployed as a tool for subversion or as an object, itself, of subversion. Invariably, the one will involve the other, especially in the latter instance where subverting the authoritative scripture paradoxically both unleashes subversive dimensions within scripture and reinscribes scripture's authoritative status within society and culture.

The first section, "Setting the Stage: What is Subversive Scripture?," consists of two essays addressing precisely these questions of rewriting scripture and scriptural subversions (while at the same time underscoring the U.S. provenance of the anthology). Jay Twomey's study, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Road to Damascus: Piety and Subversion in Johnny Cash's *Man in White*," explores the way even pious rewriting of scripture will be subversive despite the author's intent. This novel of the life of St Paul recasts Paul's heavenly ascents within the universe as understood by the science of Cash's twentieth-century world. As Twomey describes it, Cash gives a profoundly modern cosmic dimension to Paul's visions. Indeed, such re-telling, re-appropriation of scriptures is essential for them to maintain their standing in the face of cultural change. Cash's treatment is congruent with the dynamics of these scriptures themselves but the paradox is that he subverts the worldview of the religious system, conservative evangelical Protestantism, of which he is both a part and striving to advance. Cash is quintessentially a product of American culture and so too is creation science, born from that same conservative evangelical Protestant matrix that Cash so piously under-

mined. Creation science combines biblical literalism with the authority of modern science to argue the inerrancy, and hence the literal normativity, of the text. In "Refuse, Realism, Retelling: Literal and Literary Reconstructions of Noah's Ark," Lesleigh Cushing Stahlberg explores such literal rewritings of the Flood stories in creation science discourse and compares and contrasts them with more literary re-imaginings of Noah and his Ark. Both groups share a concern with shit. With so many animals on board how did Noah and his family deal with all that shit? Creationists develop elaborate techniques of scatological engineering to buttress the literal veracity of the story. The four literary writers (three of whom are from outside the U.S.) examined by Stahlberg use scatology to (playfully) engage with the story to deconstruct and critique it.

The two essays of the second section, "Between Speech and Silence," address both the challenge to scripture posed by the Holocaust and the way scripture has been deployed in response to that catastrophe. John K. Roth, "Face to Face: Biblical Traces in the Philosophy of Elie Wiesel," engages with the biblical dynamics haunting the work of Elie Wiesel. Wiesel uses scripture not so much to challenge the Holocaust but to protest the inadequacy of scripture to account for it. Does this inadequacy disclose a failure within the divine itself and how does one respond to it, be one Jewish (Wiesel) or Christian (Roth)? But Roth goes too far in claiming not just Wiesel, but scripture and Judaism and even "God" as "Protestant" (57), betraying again the U.S. (imperialist) provenance of the anthology. More satisfying was John Felstiner's study of the poetry of Paul Celan, "Mother Tongue, Holy Tongue: On Translating and not Translating Paul Celan." I found Felstiner's discussion of Celan's (post-Holocaust) German-language poetry and his deployment of Hebrew therein (and the issues of translation it raises), enriching, provocative and haunting.

As its title, "Revolution, Rebellion, Liberation," suggests, the third section addresses more overtly political concerns. Qiuyi Tan's essay, "Textual Hijacks: Between the Book of Isaiah and *The Handmaid's Tale*," juxtaposes Margaret Atwood's novel of a rigorous biblically-based theocracy in the (post-) United States with the book of Isaiah, bringing together dystopia and utopia to explore their intertextual connections. Against a nightmare world of gender and political oppression, Atwood offers "the anti-fundamentalist act of interpretation" that celebrates the text's "unsettling indeterminacy" and heartening "capacity to generate a multiplicity of meanings" (105). The issues of utopia, community, identity and liberation are addressed in Anna Hart-

nell's discussion of the use of Exodus themes in Toni Morrison's novel *Paradise* ("Exodus and Redemption in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*: A Magical Encounter with the Bible"). *Paradise* is set in the fictional African-American town of Ruby founded following the Exoduster movement of African Americans from the south in 1879. Ruby's founders are rejected by both black and white communities because of their exceptionally dark complexions but ironically Ruby comes to "embody a disturbing mirror image of white supremacy" and the novel "charts an Exodus narrative that finds itself on a circuitous pathway back to Egypt" (111). Ellin Jimmerson's essay, "'In The Beginning—Big Bang': The Issue of Violence in Ernesto Cardenal's *Cosmic Canticle*," takes us outside of U.S. concerns to explore the poetry of Ernesto Cardenal, Roman Catholic priest and culture minister in the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. Cardenal's massive poetic work, *Cosmic Canticle*, uses the opening of Genesis to blur the line between violence and non-violence to instead develop "a distinction between two fundamentally different kinds of violence" (128). One is "ordained by capitalism … and deals in death and division" while the other is "God-ordained, procreative, evolutionary and revolutionary and will culminate in holistic communion" (144).

The four essays in the final section, "Exposing the Will to Power," explore the claim to power both within and built upon biblical texts, not least through the canonical process. In "Babel Revisited: Kafka and Pinter Critique the Covenant," Beth Hawkins Benedix imagines "Kafka alongside Pinter, privy to the same political landscape and equally disturbed by the toxicity of the religious rhetoric" (152). Both Kafka and Pinter take seriously the power inherent in stories which can be considerably greater than if their authority were based in an external reality somewhere and not imagination. I really enjoyed this essay and the insights (revelations?) Benedix drew from the juxtaposition of these two writers with each other and with the biblical narratives. The interplay of Exodus and Egypt resumes with Ranen Omer-Sherman ("Masters, Slaves, and the Implacable Deity of the Wilderness in Simone Zelitch's *Moses in Sinai*") in his reading of Simone Zelitch's novel, *Moses in Sinai*, her "*Last Temptation of Christ* for Jews" (178). In her novel, Zelitch utilizes the interplay of "obedience and authority as embodied by Moses' austere faith and Korah's humanistic rebellion" (178, cf. Numbers 16) to address the contradictions within humanitarian political movements and the building of just societies "without the 'slaves' (oppressed) becoming the masters or oppressors" (178). Omer-Sherman observes that these issues have been thrown into stark relief for Jews everywhere, with the cre-

ation of the Zionist state of Israel (itself a kind of Ruby writ large). Being reconciled to divine absence is a recurring theme in all the Jewish contributions to *Subverting Scriptures*. Quite the opposite is the case in W. David Hall's study of the Rapture culture of U.S.-based Protestantism and the execrable novels of the Left Behind series ("The Modern Day Followers of the Lamb: The Rhetoric of Suffering and the Politics of Identity in the Left Behind series"). These novels help shape a communal identity based on both victimhood and schadenfreude through a literary vision of the "imminent, physical, and violent wrath of God" (211) striking the perceived enemies of dispensationalist Christians, the others outside their world/faithview. I have only read bits of these novels myself but have studied this (to me, bizarre) form of Christianity for some time. While I agree with Hall that "demonizing dispensationalist Christians as dangerous fanatics" (214) is a dangerous path to tread, that they "are much more like the normal run of American" and other "citizens than some might like to admit," I was surprised by how kind Hall was in his reading of the Left Behind world. His was in striking contrast to that of Fred Clark, a progressive, nondispensationalist evangelical Christian, who has run a weekly series on his blog (http://slacktivist.typepad.com/slacktivist/left_behind/) for some eight years now in which he progressively reads and deconstructs a portion of the Left Behind novels and films. I am also concerned that Hall seems to have given up on any role for biblical scholars in countering the Left Behind culture. The power and claim of these books relies on a biblical (and theological) illiteracy that scholarship should seek to redress.

Ironically, biblical illiteracy is thrown into stark relief in the final essay, Shaul Magid's "Subversion as Return: Scripture, Dissent, and Renewal in Contemporary Judaism." Magid wants to examine the way the Bible and "its tentacles, now in their third millennium of maturation, both contribute to and impede our ability to rethink Judaism in the next century" (217). Crucial for Magid is the question of canon (and it was gratifying, at first, to see Magid referring to "Bibles" and not just Bible); he revisits the Hebrew canon "as a text born of dissent and subversion" (218), a consciously rabbinic project. Crucial for his argument is to compare the plurality of canons, of canonisation processes in Judaism and Christianity after the destruction of the Temple. He takes as his point of contrast the endpoint of the Hebrew Bible at 2 Chronicles 36:23 to show that "Judaism is a religion in waiting" (220). He then turns to Christianity and the canonization of the Old Testament, writing: "The Christian canonizers had something different

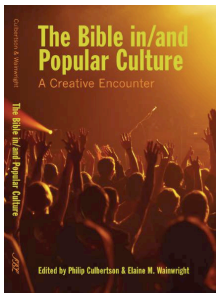
in mind when they concluded the Hebrew Bible, their 'Old Testament' with the prophetic words of the prophet Malachi" (220). This statement is wrong on two counts. Firstly, the ancient Christian canonisers took as their Old Testament the Greek Bible (LXX) not the Hebrew Bible. Secondly, the ancient Christian canonisers did not end their Old Testament with Malachi. One of the oldest Christian Bibles, Codex Vaticanus, ends its Old Testament with Daniel (which is also the last book of the Orthodox Bible). The oldest Christian Bible, Codex Sinaiticus, places Malachi as part of the Twelve at the *start* of its prophetic corpus, which presumably ended with Daniel (both Daniel and Ezekiel are missing) but then follows its prophets with the four books of Maccabees. Codex Alexandrinus ends its Old Testament with Sirach, the prophets and four books of Maccabees forming the centre of its Old Testament instead. Augustine understood the order of the prophets as The Twelve, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel (*De doctrina christiana* 2.13). Malachi's position concluding (only) one contemporary Old Testament canon is due to the history of the shaping of the Latin Bible in the medieval West and then the Reformation. The Reformers took the Jewish Hebrew Bible as their Old Testament and banished the other texts of the Latin Old Testament (which ends with 1–2 Maccabees and remains in the Roman Catholic canon today) to the Apocrypha, which in the nineteenth century disappeared from printed Protestant Bibles due to evangelical pressure. Malachi's canonical position then is almost accidental and is a feature of Evangelical Protestant Bibles only. I strongly agree with Magid on the need to recognize canonical plurality as a means of renewing and rethinking biblical religions today (and I would remind him that the *Talmud Bavli* records an alternative Hebrew Bible in the order of its prophets and the inclusion of Sirach, while the Ethiopian Jews had a Bible of their own, different to the rabbinic canon). However, Magid has fallen for a cultural/canonical sleight of hand. He falsely assumes that there has only ever been one Christian canon and that the canon of U.S. evangelical Protestantism is it. It is not, of course; it is but (a most recent) one of several Christian canons extant and over time. But it so strongly shapes U.S. culture to the point that it can even subvert the historical perspectives of scholars from other faiths. Ironically, while wanting to address broader Jewish concerns, Magid's essay most clearly (and unconsciously) of all reveals the American provenance of this anthology.

If I sound too critical let me say that there is much in this anthology to delight a wide readership, not least biblical scholars and other academics. I would use it in a range of courses in biblical studies, especially those examin-

ing relationships of scripture with literature and culture. It can also be used more broadly in general literary and cultural studies, too (not least because of Felstiner's and Benedix's essays). Because it has a large number of Jewish contributors, it is likewise a valuable resource for Jewish Studies courses. Finally, because its U.S. provenance is both unconscious and yet disclosed, this book should prove a valuable resource for studies of U.S. literature, culture and politics.

Michael Carden
Brisbane

The Bible in/and Popular Culture: A Creative Encounter, edited by Philip Culbertson and Elaine M. Wainwright



Semeia Studies, 65 | Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010 | x + 210 pages | ISBN: 978-1-58983-493-4 (softback) $26.95

For the vast majority of those living in secular societies, popular cultural texts are perhaps the primary means of engagement with biblical characters, themes, and stories. Popular culture thus exerts a significant influence over the Bible's interpretation and authority, and so should be taken seriously as a space of critical enquiry.

Appearing under the Semeia Series of the Society of Biblical Literature, *The Bible in/and Popular Culture*, edited by Philip Culbertson and Elaine M. Wainwright, contains a number of essays concerned with both the interpretation of the Bible in popular culture and the relationship between the Bible and popular culture. The volume seeks to read the Bible outside of organised religion, in order to see what happens when the biblical text and its reception is analysed as a cultural product. What is the intention and effect of using biblical texts beyond their traditional religious boundaries?

The book consists of thirteen contributions: eleven essays and two responses. While the subject matter is not entirely new terrain, the volume attempts to go beyond some of the more dominant media previously studied (such as film and art) to analyze a wider range of media within popular culture, including television, popular music, and comic books/graphic novels. The collection also does well to avoid a North American (and/or Hollywood) cultural bias by including a global group of contributors and addressing popular cultural texts from other parts of the world.

In her introduction, Wainwright notes that, until now, there has been no systematic study of the interrelationship between the Bible and popular culture to construct general theoretical frameworks. While this volume itself does not seek to provide a single comprehensive theoretical framework, the individual essays rely on a range of theorists of biblical hermeneutics and popular culture to demonstrate the multiple ways that such a topic can be approached. Wainwright observes that a single framework may not be possible given that "the media are too diverse and the possible approaches are too numerous to try to engage the topic within a single framework" (8). Because of this diversity of both content and approach, in what follows I provide an outline of the individual essays, making the occasional critical remark, before summing up to consider how the collection functions as a whole.

To begin, Michael J. Gilmour provides "Some Novel Remarks about Popular Culture and Religion" with regards to Salman Rushdie and the adaptation of sacred texts. Gilmour employs intertextuality and postcolonial theory to explore how the biblical character of Satan appears in both Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* before examining the sociopolitical function of Rushdie's work. The essay lucidly introduces the concepts of intertextuality and reception history and offers a frame for the subsequent contributions.

The next three essays also investigate the appearance of major biblical characters in the world of popular culture. Mark McEntire, in "*Red Dirt God*: Divine Silence and the Search for Transcendent Beauty in the Music of Emmylou Harris," compares the characterization of God in the Hebrew Bible with some examples from contemporary music. McEntire observes that the Hebrew Bible gradually leads its readers to a veiled construction of God, one who is silent, elusive, and non-interventionist. This, McEntire convincingly argues, is the God we find in Harris' album *Red Dirt God*. Similarly, in "Here, There, and Everywhere: Images of Jesus in American Popular Culture," Dan W. Clanton analyzes the multifarious image of Jesus in American popular culture through the lens of reception history. He covers a wide range of media to suggest that Jesus, in many ways, is a blank slate upon which people (believers and non-believers) can project their ideas. The essay astutely demonstrates how as culture changes, different interpretations of scripture are able to emerge.

Philip Culbertson's essay "'Tis a Pity She's (Still) a Whore: Popular Music's Ambivalent Resistance to the Reclamation of Mary Magdalene," assesses the reception of the biblical character using Freud and Jung. Culbertson

starts with an anecdote of how many of his students resisted the idea that, according to the New Testament, Mary Magdalene was not a prostitute. The students, he suggests, have something to gain by not changing their mind upon encountering new evidence. Culbertson demonstrates through songs about Mary Magdalene how popular culture has ingrained a particular interpretation of Magdalene that has become more authoritative than the canonical texts themselves. It would have been interesting to see Culbertson engage with Avaren Ipsen's recent book *Sex Working and the Bible*, in which she argues that the liberationist and feminist attempts to "redeem" Mary Magdalene (the hermeneutical standpoint which Culbertson adopts) are often exclusive of, and perpetuate violence towards, sex workers. Is the concern to reclaim Mary Magdalene's "original" desexualized image really out of respect for the biblical text, or is it grounded in a particular framework of human sexuality that regards prostitution as deviant?

The next cluster of essays fixate on the sociopolitical dimensions of the use of biblical themes in popular culture. Jim Perkinson's "Spittin', Cursin', and Outin': Hip-Hop Apocalypse in the Imperial Necropolis" is written to a beat echoing the hip-hop genre and attempts to explore the spaces in between hip-hop music and the Bible. Perkinson illustrates in both the style and content of his essay how music, poetry, and rhythm reveal biblical themes in a way better able to inspire cultural and political change. Similarly, in "The Bible and Reggae: Liberation or Subjugation?" Noel Leo Erskine observes how the Bible has been used in the Jamaican context as both a tool for subjugation by the colonial elites and as a source for liberation, for instance, in Bob Marley's reggae. Marley employed biblical themes and symbols to awaken Jamaica's poor to their situation of oppression. A slightly different approach is found in Tex Sample's "'Help me make it through the night': Narrating Class and Country Music in the Theology of Paul." Sample uses the reception of two of Kris Kristofferson's songs within their context of the working class in America to form a lens for reading Paul's theology (with a focus on Galatians). Sample draws on Bakhtin and de Certeau to suggest that the music's popularity is the result of its embedded practices of resistance, something also found in Paul's vision of freedom in Christ.

Roland Boer's essay, "Jesus of the Moon: Nick Cave's Christology," contains some important methodological considerations for biblical scholars engaging with popular culture, through both his innovative use of critical theory and his overall approach. Boer insightfully remarks that when analyzing music we cannot just focus on the lyrics (which text-based critics like biblical

scholars are prone to do), but must, in fact, come to terms with the whole aesthetic experience. Boer then examines Nick Cave's Christology through the lens of three categories: volume and noise, sex and seduction, and heresy. Boer argues that Cave's turn to quieter music relates to his turn to Jesus and that his Christology is heretical and unique.

Popular culture is adept at critiquing traditional Western constructions of God, a recurring theme the remaining essays all pick up on in various ways. Terry Ray Clark, for instance, tackles "Prophetic Voices in Graphic Novels" by placing the apocalyptic rhetoric of *Kingdom Come* and *Watchmen* in dialogue with Conrad Ostwalt's theory of secularization and sacred texts. Ostwalt suggests that contemporary biblical scholarship has devalued the more metaphorical and mythical effects of biblical narratives in addressing questions of ultimate human concern. Clark contends that the graphic novels in question critique the view of a controlling, distant, and violent God. Steve Taylor's essay also shows how popular cultural texts can challenge conventional constructions of God and Western theology. Taylor employs the biblical scholar Gerald West's hermeneutic of "reading otherwise" (that is, with ordinary or non-scholarly readers) to make sense of the portrayal of the Bible and its themes and characters in the New Zealand animated series *bro'Town*. Taylor writes that *bro'Town* uses the Bible in a way that satirizes traditional Pacific Island migrant interpretations in order to critique this way of reading. At the same time, however, the God of *bro'Town* is an Islander wearing a lavalava, challenging racial norms. The Pacific reimaging of God and Jesus is a means of reclaiming their use for contemporary Pacific communities. The closing frame is an essay by Tina Pippin entitled "Daemons and Angels: The End of the World according to Philip Pullman," in which she focuses primarily on the death of God in Pullman's trilogy, His Dark Materials. Pippin takes the theme of the apocalyptic through a number of texts and refractions, for instance within the works of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkein, and then relates the apocalyptic imagination to the empire of the contemporary United States. Pippin's essay is also concerned with the construction of God but in a world where God has dissipated into nothingness.

The collection concludes with two quite different responses that assess both the scope (and limitations) of the volume and its advances in discussions of the Bible in/and popular culture. The first response, co-authored by Laura Copier, Jaap Kooijman, and Caroline Vander Stichele, notes the focus on individual texts of the Bible rather than the Bible as a whole. They also point out the broadness of the concept of popular culture, which blurs

between information and entertainment, politics and meaning-making. Alternatively, Erin Runions' response asks how the essays function in terms of cultural change and the ways in which popular cultural texts cross canonical and literary boundaries. What are the political-ideological impacts of both the use and interpretation of biblical themes and texts within popular culture? Runions also writes that the implicit argument of these essays is that popular culture is more than simply entertainment, but that it "engages philosophical, theological, and political concerns in its own rewriting of scripture" (201).

As a whole, it is difficult to determine whether the collection has significantly advanced our understanding of the Bible and popular culture nexus in a single direction or created more questions that remain unanswered. What the term "popular culture" is thought to encompass remains ambiguous. The focus on cultural texts, for instance, means that other areas of popular culture, for example the secular observance of religious holidays or sport as religion, are overlooked. Regardless, the individual essays show a variety of ways in which scholars might approach the relationship between the Bible and popular cultural texts and the fruits of using an interdisciplinary and eclectic methodological base. The volume also demonstrates the importance of biblical scholarship not confining itself to just questions of the past, but, in fact, taking note of the significant ways in which the Bible affects and is affected by wider culture and a complex history of popular interpretation.

Robert J. Myles
University of Auckland

Marthe et Marie-Madeleine: Deux modèles de dévotion et d'acceuil chrétien, edited by Bruno Phalip, Céline Perol and Pascale Quincy-Lefebvre

Histoires croisées | Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2009 | 105 pages | ISBN: 978-2-84516-396-6 (ebook) €9.01

Under the direction of three scholars working in different fields, Contemporary History, Mediaeval History and the History of Art respectively, this

attractive on-line monograph looks at the many ways in which the images of Martha and Mary Magdalene (identified from ancient times with Lazarus' other sister) have been interpreted down the ages. Céline Perol's introduction sets the scene by tracing the parallel development of the two images, both symbols of hospitality, which was such an important part of mediaeval culture. She notes in particular the prominence given to Mary despite her well-known failings as a host in the original story, and the rather different traditions that grew up around Martha, including her encounter with Tarrasque, the mythical dragon, in Provence. Chapter 1 continues the introduction in a way with a beautifully illustrated survey of mediaeval sculptures, stained glass windows, wall-paintings and book illustrations from the Auvergne, mostly showing Mary Magdalene, but concluding with several striking portrayals of Martha, albeit in the shadow of her sister (Anne Courtillé).

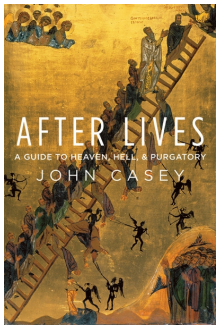
In a study of the Benedictine abbey church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine at Vézelay, Bruno Phalip discusses the apparent mismatch between the role of the Church as an important pilgrimage centre, housing important relics of Mary Magdalene, and her absence from the church's twelfth-century iconography. Next, Annie Regond examines sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French and Italian paintings of Jesus' visit to Martha and Mary at Bethany, the Resurrection of Lazarus, and Martha's Reproaches of Mary or the Conversion of Mary Magdalene, including works by Giorgio Vasari, Tintoretto, Il Guercino, Caravaggio and Orazio Gentileschi. Catherine Cardinal considers La Madeleine as a figure of vanity and a model convert in the works of Charles Le Brun, Charles Thorin, Francois Lombard and other seventeenth-century French painters, and provides a useful inventory of the Saint's attributes, her expressions and gestures, objects signifying the vanity of worldly pleasures and the passage of time, instruments of penitence and symbols of mysticism and sanctity. Francesca Fabbri's carefully argued essay on baroque paintings of Martha and Mary shows how closely these reflect the theology and religious attitudes of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation periods. In an intriguing chapter which takes as its starting-point the anthropologist Jean-Pierre Albert's *Le sang et le ciel: les saints mystiques dans le monde chrétien* (Paris: Aubier, 1997), Nicolas Adell-Gombert examines the tradition in French folklore that the two sisters are sterile: Martha the older sister, identified since Ambrose with the haemorrhaging woman (Mark 5:21–34), had no choice; while Mary Magdalene after her conversion voluntarily chose a life of chastity although retaining her role as spiritual mother to young converts.

The final chapter by Pascale Quincy-Lefebvre considers how perceptions of Mary Magdalene are expressed in Christian forms of hospitality in the context of establishments founded in the 19th century by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Charité du Bon Pasteur d'Anjou, to provide refuge for penitent women, known as "madeleines," and then in their responses to the spread of Marxism in the 1950s and the impact of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

Despite the variety of material covered in this rich little interdisciplinary volume and its multiple authorship, there is a remarkable thematic unity about it. The original biblical texts about the two sisters and their house in Bethany are never totally lost sight of, and perhaps rather unexpectedly, the result is a kind of biblical commentary that has more to say on the dynamics of the story as it has evolved down the centuries, than many a more conventional commentary. It is to be hoped that it will reach students of the Bible as much as students of art history, anthropology and the other disciplines so well represented in this valuable resource.

John F. A. Sawyer
Perugia

After Lives: A Guide to Heaven, Hell and Purgatory, by John Casey



Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 | xii + 468 pages | ISBN: 978-0-1950-9295-0 (hardback) $35.00

Delayed in my task of reading Cambridge scholar John Casey's *After Lives*, I must confess that I was not very pleased about bringing it on a recent Australian conference-cum-summer holiday. After all, summer holidays are for celebrating life, while the subject of this book dwells on what comes after our earthly celebrations expire. Packing my shorts and sandals, I was also somewhat disconcerted by the commanding size of the hardcover edition; checking in at just over 450 pages, *After Lives* considerably cut into my precious carry-on limit. Nevertheless, my apprehensions about the book and its subject were dispelled once I dug into Casey's stylishly written, highly erudite and engaging tome. In fact, slipping into a routine in Australia, I found

myself eager to sit down with *After Lives* over a coffee and croissant after an invigorating morning swim at the beach. This is an obvious credit to Casey's talent for seamlessly blending serious classical scholarship with potent irony and humour on what tends to be a rather grave subject.

You'll notice I began with a personal anecdote. Some people don't like this approach for reasons usually related to the question, "who cares about you?" Regardless of where you stand on this issue, you should know that, throughout the book, Casey sprinkles personal reflections on his own engagement in the subject at hand, which was shaped early in his life by his education with "the Irish Christian Brothers in an austere, puritanical, Augustinian version of Catholicism" (2). Considering this fact, as I made my way through the seventeen thematically and roughly chronologically arranged chapters, Casey's own biography and personal interests indeed appear to play a significant part in guiding this "guide." This is not only demonstrated by his heavy focus on early Christianity, Augustine and Calvin, but also by Casey's taste for high literature, especially Joyce and Dante (both manage to make their way into nearly every chapter). In fact, the book opens with a prologue entitled "Stephen Dedalus's Hell" and concludes with an epilogue further discussing Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*. Given Casey's penchant for Joyce and Dante, along with his own strict Irish Catholic education, his choice and emphasis of material and his own biography do not appear mere coincidence.

The reader should also know that *After Lives* is more a work of literary scholarship than social science. Casey makes this point explicitly in the opening chapter when he states, "I shall be keeping my distance from religious anthropology"—his reason being that he is "concerned only with those beliefs in post-mortem existence that be thought to have something to say to each other, that can enter into a debate, be seen as part of a tradition" (19). Taking a genealogical approach, Casey sets his sights on "ideas of afterlife in cultures that have produced works of art, literature, and religious speculation, works that resonate both one with another and with later literary or philosophical traditions" (19). Casey sums up the subjects covered in the seventeen chapters, which are divided into three sections (Hell, Purgatory, Heaven), as including:

> the Egyptian pyramid and Coffin texts and the *Book of the Dead*, the epic of *Gilgamesh*, the book of Job and other texts from the Hebrew Bible, Greek and Latin texts, including those of Plato

> and the mystery (Orphic) religions, the Christian scriptures, the apocryphal New Testament, the writings of the fathers, such as Tertullian, Lactantius, Origen, Augustine, Irenaeus; Dante, as well as some classic Christian writers on the afterlife in the Catholic and Protestant traditions; doubters, heretics, spiritualists, moderns. (19)

While the chapters flow essentially in this order, in places there is substantial jumping back and forth between epochs and thinkers (again, Dante and Joyce pop up everywhere). Asserting that "in thinking about after lives one is free to choose one's narrative" (19), Casey's book sometimes appears as a literary bricolage in which he could not resist inserting certain lengthy quotes from his favourite classical passages (often his own translations) or lines of English verse—whether they are relevant or not. On a single page—page 66 for instance—we encounter T. S. Eliot, Virgil, Plato, the Stoics and Orphics and of course, Dante. Or in a section on Lucretius on page 85, Casey inserts a ten-line stanza from Spinoza, followed shortly by five lines of verse from Thomas Gray. We are not four lines into Horace when Casey cites two English poets and seven lines from a poem by Herrick (a poet you may or may not know; I didn't) called "Corinna's going a-Maying." Call me old-fashioned, but shouldn't a section on Horace begin with Horace? While much of Casey's vast corpora of literary quotes are interesting, somewhat connected and/or beautiful in their own right, I sometimes found them to be unnecessary detours that disrupted the book's narrative thrust.

Initially, Casey's encyclopaedic approach appears to presuppose a great deal of background knowledge on the reader's part, who, if they are anything like me, has ashamedly only browsed Dante and been twice defeated by *Ulysses*. Despite his eclecticism and propensity for diversion, however, Casey is a masterful writer with a remarkable ability to lucidly synthesize vast portions of western literature, all of which are turned into a lively and ultimately pleasurable read. Moreover, in its grand scope, *After Lives* delves into much more than just the title suggests. In the course of reading, we receive a refresher course in the moral philosophies and virtues which grounded the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece, as well the Catholic Reformation, the Renaissance and the development of western spiritualism. From Aristotle's civic ethics to Egyptian celebrations of life and Dante's writings on the three realms, death comes to be viewed in a dialectical relationship with life. Casey shows how a culture's conception of the afterlife and attitude

towards death sheds much light on its relationship to and affirmation of life. For example, he describes how the Greeks possessed a "heroic culture" which celebrated life and hated death. Unlike many early cultures that feared death (mainly out of the threat of vengeful ancestral spirits), for the Greeks, death was not so much a scary affair as a boring one in which all earthly pleasures would be deprived (70). Egyptians and Mesopotamians were similarly life-affirming cultures who also shared a dim, but not necessarily fearful, view of the afterlife. Transitioning from these ancient civilizations, chapters five through nine on early Christian conceptions of hell, predestination and purgatory are particularly illuminating in that we see the development of very different ideas concerning life and death in the West.

In surveying various conceptions of what lies beyond life, Casey also considers the rhetoric behind them. For instance, we hear Socrates put forth, "If it is unconsciousness like a sleep in which the sleeper does not even dream, death would be a wonderful gain" (15). My personal favourite came from the later Epicurean philosopher, Lucretius, who offers a simple yet profound moral and psychological argument against the fear of dying: "Why be horrified at the infinity of time ahead of us when we will not exist, when we have no horror at the eons before we came into existence?" (83). *After Lives* is peppered with many such small but profound pieces of wisdom from the philosophers and poets, which will speak differently to different readers.

Again, let me restate that Casey sticks strictly to the classics and we hear little to nothing about folk beliefs and practices. A great strength of the book is Casey's capacity for clearly showing the contingency and evolution of beliefs surrounding the afterlife. Comparing Dante and Virgil, he writes, "Dante's damned souls … their grief and rage are very different from the melancholy sadness with which the shades of the pagan underworld recognize their fate"; and further, "The essential difference is that the sadness of Virgil's shades is directed at the universal human lot" (68). Casey then connects both Dante and Virgil to their Greek roots in Homer's Odyssey, specifically to the passage in which Odysseus visits the gates of the underworld (*nekuia*). This genealogical approach indeed serves in guiding the reader through the foundations and evolution of Greco-Roman thought on death and the afterlife and how they influenced western conceptions over the centuries.

Certain sections of *After Lives* may appeal to different readers based on their particular interests and areas of expertise. That said, because Casey intends to guide us through a historical discourse of ideas regarding post-mortem existence, it is beneficial to read the book in the order it is laid out

(though one could still learn a great deal from dabbling). *After Lives* does an impressive job of situating conceptions of the afterlife in the context of western intellectual history. Here I must emphasize the almost exclusively Western and heavily Christian focus of the book. While Casey includes sections on Egypt, Mesopotamia and Islam, these are quite minor and appear somewhat disjointed. For these reasons, *After Lives* is definitely *a* guide—and a good one at that—but is probably not *the* guide to the afterlife. Recommended for upper-level undergraduate and graduate students and lecturers from across the humanities and social sciences or the general reader.

Christopher Howard
Massey University

The Lure of the Dark Side: Satan and Western Demonology in Popular Culture, edited by Christopher Partridge and Eric Christianson

London: Equinox, 2009 | 228 pages | ISBN: 978-1-845-53309-0 (hardback) £60.00 | ISBN: 978-1-845-53310-6 (softback) £16.99

The study of the sinister side of religion in contemporary culture is frequently relegated to popularizing treatments that seldom take such religious expressions at face value. The current volume is a welcome corrective to this overly simplistic understanding of the dark side spawned by an unbalanced dualism as it developed in, particularly, Christianity. Partridge and Christianson, both known for their work on religion and culture, open this volume with an informative introduction that begins with a brief review of the belief in demons and the demonic in Western culture. Even this cursory treatment offers insight into how Christianity came to regard the resurrection of Christ as an essential aspect of the defeat of evil rather than simply the hope of new life. The early biblical origins of the satan and demons (*nephilim*) are traced, demonstrating that these stock figures simply did not appear in their most recognisable garb in the Hebrew Bible. Apocalyptic sensitivities and the literal demonization of feminine power, characteristic of the emerging Christian movement, led to the popular perception of demons and devil.

Each of the essays in the collection is then introduced. The essays are divided into three partially overlapping media: music, film, and literature.

The premiere essays, "Satanism and Popular Music" by Asbjørn Dyrendal, and "Between Hymn and Horror Film: How do we Listen to the Cradle of Filth?" by Peter Mercer-Taylor, confront the issue of the connection between black metal and Satanism. A sub-genre of death metal particularly popular in Norway, black metal projects a self-professed Satanic outlook. An unexpected irony appears as Dyrendal weighs this claim against the outlook and philosophy of Anton LeVey's Church of Satan. Satanic rhetoric and lyrics of bands such as Venom and Mayhem project an image of Satanism that turns out to be at odds with LeVey's "official" version of the religion. Inspired by horror-style demonology rather than a real-life Satanism, black metal bands construct a fictional realm of a literal personification of Satan that many Satanists do not accept.

This idea is confirmed by Mercer-Taylor's sympathetic consideration of the British black metal band, Cradle of Filth. Mercer-Taylor begins his musicological analysis by noting that musical affronts to social conventions are taken seriously in a way that cinematic ones are not. People understand that cinema conveys fiction while music is a tap into the raw emotion of the writer/performer's experience. Thus religious believers often find hymns to be strong expressions of their own belief systems; religious movies seldom display similar power. Focusing specifically on Cradle of Filth's satanic anthem "From the Cradle to Enslave," Mercer-Taylor demonstrates how both the lyrics and musical structure move from an anti-hymn to a more theatrical, quasi-cinematic portrayal of a world coming to its end. Interestingly, the outlook is not far removed from a typical Christian view. What Mercer-Taylor suggests, in a way that corresponds with Dyrendal's analysis, is that when black metal attempts to be the music of the horror genre it loses its credibility. Horror as a literary and cinematic genre requires suspense and lengthy development, something that is difficult to achieve in the medium of conventional albums and their length limitations.

Anthony B. Pinn's provocative essay, "When Demons Come Calling: Dealing with the Devil and Paradigms of Life in African American Music," takes the reader from spirituals to blues, rap and hip-hop. Pinn argues that belief in the reality of the struggle between good and evil, whether or not a literal Satan is accepted, defines much of African-American music. Focusing on the traditions of Robert Johnson as a test-case (and moving on to Scarface and Snoop Dogg) Pinn makes a strong case for social inequality being

at the heart of this perceived struggle. His conclusion is seconded by Charlie Blake's "Dark Theology: Dissident Commerce, Gothic Capitalism and the Spirit of Rock 'n' Roll." Blake approaches the subject principally through the work of Jacques Derrida and Georges Bataille. "Gothic capitalism" is Blake's conceptualization of post-industrial, or modern, capitalism, which, in its unparalleled ability to betray the realizations and hopes of many artists, rewards those who succeed, paradoxically, with capital. This divide between the desolation of reality (reminiscent of Peter Ackroyd's styling of British sensitivities in *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination*) and the functionalism of economics leads rock and roll into an ethos of demonic despair that may be glimpsed from Robert Johnson down through the relatively mainstream heavy metal groups into the more pointed expressions in death and black metal. It is the failure of capitalism to live up to its promises that creates the Gothic sensitivities of many rock artists.

The second set of essays shifts focus to cinema. "'Speak of the Devil': The Portrayal of Satan in the Christ Film," by biblical scholar William R. Telford, concentrates on the genre of Christ movies. "Christ movies" are essentially big-screen renditions of the Gospels, and, for Telford's purposes, films that also feature the Devil. To begin his analysis, which pays special attention to intertextuality, Telford sketches a brief history of how the Devil emerges and is portrayed in art and literature. Had the book been more expansive, a fuller treatment of this theme would have added to the overall utility of such a study. Telford narrows down the set of movies that show Satan interacting with Christ in Cecil B. DeMille's *The King of Kings* (1927), George Stevens' *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), and Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). Considering both cinematographic and intertextual issues, Telford notes that with the exception of *The Passion*, these films at least imply the diabolic as a psychological rather than a metaphysical struggle. This may not have been the intention of the directors or screenwriters, but the suggestion is clearly present. This tellingly fits the cultural Zeitgeist in which the films were produced. Telford also offers a filmography of other movies featuring the Devil. One omission I immediately noted was Alan Parker's 1987 *Angel Heart*, one of the more disturbing members of the genre. The Devil has such staying power in the movies, however, that a comprehensive filmography would require a book of its own.

Titus Hjelm's "Celluloid Vampires, Scientization, and the Decline of Religion" is a fascinating analysis of the changing standards of vampires in

movies. The classic Hollywood vampire of the early twentieth century was a manifestation of spiritual evil whereas more modern vampires are often explained scientifically by genetic mutations or viruses. Comparing classic Hammer Studio vampire movies with the Blade and Underworld series, Hjelm argues that the "migration of the vampire soul" (118) follows the decline in religious belief in society. The vital role of blood and the means of destroying vampires reflect this shift. If caught in a dark, Transylvanian street it is better to have a gun with ultraviolet bullets than to go armed with a crucifix. Recent developments further confirm Hjelm's thesis: Justin Cronin's new novel *The Passage* features viral vampires and word is out that Tim Burton is working on a *Dark Shadows* movie to be released next year. It will be worth observing how the conflicted soul of Barnabas Collins will fit into this mix of modern vampires.

The essay "A Man of Wealth and Taste: The Strange Career of Hannibal Lecter" by Brian Baker begins *in medias res* for neophyte Thomas Harris readers. Hannibal Lecter is, of course, a household name. Those who have not read the novels or seen the movies will need to accept uncritically what Baker propounds, although his thesis is intriguing. Building on the Romantic ideal, based on the analysis of Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a heroic rebel, Baker sees in Lecter an embodiment of this ideal. Lecter, a polished serial killer with style and taste, finds an analogue not only in Satan but also the Romantic portrayals of Prometheus. Baker suggests that through the series of Lecter novels Hannibal moves "from monstrous Other to Romantic satanic hero" (132). The essay focuses more on the novels than on the movies, but it offers an interesting path to the American Film Institute's number one movie villain.

In "Demons of the New Polytheism," George Aichele's contribution, the demonic is meant in its classical form as the proliferation of divine beings. Aichele, taking Jack Miles' *God: An Autobiography* as a starting point, demonstrates the fractious nature of the biblical God. This, he suggests, is symptomatic of the newly emerging polytheism. In a postmodern culture, the popular media offers a plethora of deities. This can be seen in the writings of William Gibson, Neil Gaiman, James Morrow, China Miéville, and even J. R. R. Tolkien. Taking *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as illustrative, Aichele supports his thesis with the heavily populated spiritual world of vampire slayers in both the movie and television series. The direction that this indicates is a society moving away from a theological paranoia to a schizophrenia, sympathetically explained, as old explanations simply do not fit modern constructs.

This new polytheism, filled with its own "demons" is a semiotic wonderland populated with a variety of gods. Aichele suggests that Christianity, with its ready-made Trinity, might find the first steps forward a little easier than might otherwise be anticipated.

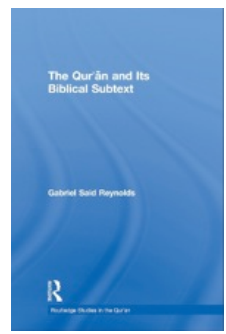
Larry J. Kreitzer concludes the film section with "Scriptural Dimensions of Evil: Biblical Text as Timepiece, Talisman, and Tattoo." In this somewhat playful piece, Kreitzer analyzes five "Revelation" movies that employ eschatology (timepiece), protective defenses against evil (talisman), and some form of the mark of the beast (tattoo). The films he analyzes are Richard Donner's *The Omen* (1976), Carl Schultz's *The Seventh Sign* (1988), Gregory Widen's *The Prophecy* (1995), Peter Hyams's *End of Days* (1999), and Stuart Urban's *Revelation* (2001). Each film utilizes some or all of the three interpretive elements, but each does so in an idiosyncratic way. Overall, Kreitzer finds Revelation films to be more complex than usually credited, although they differ considerably in how they make use of the Bible.

The final two essays focus on literature. Beginning with the nineteenth-century work of James Hogg, Crawford Gribben ("James Hogg and the Demonology of Scottish Writing") explores how Calvinism and the demonic played into the imagination of writers in Scotland. Starting with Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), Gribben explores the use of demonic doppelgangers, the Devil himself, and the conventions of demons in Hogg's work. To solidify his observations, Gribben continues his study into the work of Robert Louis Stevenson (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*), and Iain Banks (*The Wasp Factory*). The progression shows a tendency toward internalizing evil rather than finding a demonic reality in the larger physical world. This internalizing of evil is related to the belief, demonstrated in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels, that evil is good gone bad. The final essay in the book, "Voldemort, Death Eaters, Dementors, and the Dark Arts: A Contemporary Theology of Spiritual Perversion in the Harry Potter Stories," by Colin Duriez, returns to the Scottish realm in a contemporary setting. J. K. Rowling spent many of her formative years in Scotland and some of the same sensitivities concerning the origin of evil cited by Gribben appear in the Harry Potter series. Duriez, in surveying the struggle of good-versus-evil in the Potter stories, notes that Rowling shows a Christian-Augustinian concept of evil as perverted good, rather than a Manichean, Gnostic concept of evil as an independent realm. Along the way Duriez considers Rowling's view of magic and compares it favourably with the views of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien.

Like any collection of essays, this book offers multiple points of view and varying degrees of depth. It is, however, an excellent example of what might be garnered from biblical and other religious scholars maintaining dialogue with popular culture. Far too often academic scholars, no matter how secular, become cloistered in academe, only to miss what their fellow citizens are saying, in media with much wider circulation, about the demonic (or just plain religious) world. This is an important book that is unashamed to ask what musicians, movie-makers, and novelists are saying about the demonic and how their views affect religious outlooks. As a relatively new field of serious research, such studies should be welcomed by anyone interested in contemporary religious thought. The one resource that might have been useful in analyzing horror films, which is regrettably absent from the bibliography, is Douglas E. Cowan's *Sacred Terror: Religion and Horror on the Silver Screen* (2008). This is a second example demonstrating the close connection of religion and horror. Taken together these two contemporary studies offer fascinating insights into the popular hunger for religiously oriented evils that continue to haunt society.

Steve A. Wiggins
New Brunswick

The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext, by Gabriel Said Reynolds



Routledge Studies in the Qur'ān | New York: Routledge, 2010 | xii + 304 pages | ISBN: 978-0-415-77893-0 (hardback) £80.00

When the words *Qur'ān* and *reception history* are combined in the same sentence, the subject is typically *tafsir*, i.e., the body of commentary literature on the Qur'ān produced by Muslim intellectuals in many parts of the world from, roughly, the eighth century of the Common Era to the present. In the work of scholars such as Gabriel Said Reynolds (and, in the interest of full disclosure, the author of this review), *tafsir* represents only one dimension of the Qur'ān's relationship to reception history—and a fairly obvious dimension at that. Less obvious at the present moment in the scholarly study of the Qur'ān is the sense in which the Qur'ān must *itself* be viewed as a signifi-

cant link in the reception history of the products and processes of the Near Eastern religious imagination. Indeed, close reading of the Qurʾān in light of what Reynolds has chosen to call its "biblical subtext" shows that it is fully cognizant of a broad spectrum of the traditions that descended, as it were, from oral circulation to literary expression throughout the Ancient to Late Ancient Eastern Mediterranean and Red Sea Basin.

Even when reduced to writing, the textual remains of these traditions long resisted static codification. Texts inspire continual conversations; such conversations provoke, in turn, creative scribal redaction and revision. Canonicity comes late to this process and, even when it arrives, is not necessarily quick to preserve the text in amber. The will-to-power that privileges a particular iteration of a text and proclaims it authentic and immutable presupposes social institutions that stand to benefit from controlling textual interpretation. The first step in asserting such control is to authorize a particular version of a text—indeed, the very wording of a particular version—and, thereby, place limits upon its potential to evolve. Well before the rise of Islam in the seventh century of the Common Era, sectarian elites among Christians and Jews had established institutions to promulgate scriptural canons and enforce their textual boundaries. But what fell outside the bounds that they had themselves prescribed was, by definition, beyond their control. Moreover, what fell within canonical boundaries could only be controlled insofar as those textual borders could be effectively policed.

When Muhammad began his prophetic career, modern notions of intellectual property had not been invented and, as biblical scholars such as Michael Fishbane, Benjamin Sommers, and Richard Hays have shown persuasively, Near Eastern prophets could not be expected to heed claims to canonical jurisdiction anyway: through various modes of rhetorical appropriation, they freely trespassed the bounds of the texts which inspired them to declaim their messages. Indeed, one could justifiably regard such trespassing as the exercise of prophetic prerogative. As viewed by Reynolds and like-minded scholars, the Qurʾān is both heir to this prerogative and evidence that Muhammad (whether understood as God's Messenger by believers or the Qurʾān's author by skeptics) was an active practitioner of well-established prophetic arts.

Among these arts is the homily, and it is the homiletic voice of the Qurʾān that Reynolds's study recovers for the reader in what is a work of thorough, even-handed, and consummate scholarship. I choose the word "recovers" in this context quite deliberately; for a reading of the Qurʾān informed by the

principles of rhetorical criticism exposes its homiletic voice as a matter of course. But the Qurʾān is rarely read by scholars in this manner. Indeed, the Qurʾān is rarely read by scholars at all without constant recourse to *tafsir*, or the commentary tradition. Consequently, the text is read through the eyes of medieval Muslim intellectuals who were the pillars of social institutions that stood to benefit from limits placed upon the ways in which the text could be allowed to mean: as Reynolds puts it in the book's third chapter, *tafsir* was the literary genre which Muslims employed "to claim the Qurʾān as their own" (201).

Reynolds does not wait until the third chapter, however, to express his frustration with the prevailing methods of the field; instead, he opens the book with a chapter entitled "The crisis of Qurʾān." What he describes in this chapter is not, in my view, a crisis but something more akin to intellectual inertia brought about by deep confusion. The confusion lies in scholarly attachment to a form of circular reasoning whereby post-Qurʾānic literary sources that purport to interpret the Qurʾān by reference to events alleged to have occurred in the life of Muhammad (the *sira* literature) are relied upon to establish a chronological order for chapters or sections or individual verses of the Qurʾān itself. On the surface, such a method appears to be perfectly reasonable, particularly in light of the scarcity of evidence for the Prophet's life in the pages of the Qurʾān combined with the lack of contemporaneous evidentiary attestation of the Prophet's life from sources independent of the primitive Muslim community. The reasonableness of this approach diminishes, however, when, upon close inspection of the *sira* literature, one discovers that it was generated by a desire on the part of Muslims to find traces of the life of the Prophet in the holy book. To then rely upon such literature to supply the missing information introduces a fatal circularity to this approach. The *sira* literature is best understood as an admission on the part of the post-Prophetic community that the Qurʾān tells us very little about Muhammad.

Unwilling to ride the Qurʾān-*sira*/*tafsir*-Qurʾān merry-go-round, and following in the footsteps of John Wansbrough, Reynolds claims that his enterprise is not historical but literary. We shall return to the merits of this distinction at the close of this review.

The real meat of the book is chapter two: "Qurʾānic Case Studies." There are thirteen case studies in all and in each and every study Reynolds displays his prodigious linguistic skills (he appears to be perfectly at ease in at least six classical and four modern languages) and broad knowledge of the litera-

ture which has preserved versions of the traditions that the homiletic Qurʾān chooses for its "lectionary." And "lectionary" is really what Reynolds intends by the phrase "biblical subtext." He does not mean a text from the Bible that the Qurʾānic homilist wishes to conceal from his audience but, rather, a variety of texts drawn from traditional biblical or para-biblical materials with which the Qurʾānic homilist expects his audience to be familiar. Consequently, the Qurʾān is not troubled to repeat its subject texts verbatim but merely alludes to them in the course of delivering new "readings." The burden of the Qurʾān's homiletic readings is prophetic in the sense that they admonish the listener to conform to divine expectations of righteousness and to be assured that God will punish the wicked.

Each case study is composed of three main sections: (1) the Qurʾānic account of the tradition in question—presumably culled from the "lectionary" which the Qurʾānic homilist shared with his audience, (2) the difficulties which several classical commentators encountered when they attempted to explain the Qurʾānic account without reference to the Qurʾānic homilist's "lectionary," and (3) Reynolds's reclamation of the specific text to which the Qurʾānic account arguably alludes. By means of this textual salvage operation, Reynolds demonstrates in convincing fashion how access to the Qurʾānic homilist's "lectionary" dispels the classical commentators' confusions. In addition, it undermines the cogency of accusations that have persisted in Orientalist circles for centuries that the Qurʾān is itself confused about aspects of biblical tradition (see, e.g., case study nine on the nativity of the mother of Jesus). It is not the Qurʾānic homilist that is confused but those Orientalists who, like the authors of classical *tafsir*, lacked access to the "lectionary" that the Qurʾānic homilist shared with its original audience.

Any reference to the Qurʾān's original audience raises the vexed question of a literary versus an historical approach to the holy book. Despite Professor Reynolds's protests that his study is a "purely" literary (i.e., non-historical) exercise, no adequate literary approach to the Qurʾān or any document preserved from the past can avoid broaching historical implications. Textual meaning is context-dependent and every text inhabits multiple contexts at once: the original context to which its rhetoric is pitched and the contexts of any of its subsequent readers. At the very least, *The Qurʾān and Its Biblical Subtext* deals a fatal blow to the traditional narrative of Islamic origins. That narrative, produced by Muslim intellectuals over a two- to three-century period following the death of the Prophet Muhammad, depicts the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula as a cultural backwater and its inhabitants as a

primitive people enshrouded in ignorance, hopelessly devoted to pagan practices and shrines. Ignorance, pagan practices and shrines were undoubtedly present, but, as Reynolds's "non-historical" approach to the Qurʾān demonstrates most admirably, the latter two faced stiff competition from a wide variety of indigenous and imported religious innovations, including several versions of Christianity and Judaism, as well as Iranian Gnostic and prophetic traditions.

Technical quarrels aside, Professor Reynolds's book is a triumph of meticulous scholarship. It is an irresistible force on a collision course with what has been, heretofore, an immovable object: the scholarly default mode of interpreting the Qurʾān through medieval *tafsir*. Indeed, with this book, Gabriel Said Reynolds debuts as a major figure in the future of Qurʾānic studies and, ironically perhaps, in the future of *tafsir*. In light of Reynolds's work, it is difficult to imagine how interpreters of the Qurʾān—whether Muslim or non-Muslim—might justify continued reliance upon the medieval commentary tradition to discover what the Qurʾān may have meant to its original audience. Had the medieval commentators possessed the tools of literary-historical excavation later invented by modern scholars of literature (and skillfully employed by Professor Reynolds), would they not have used them? Reynolds has laid the foundation for a *tafsir* of the future—if only future *mufassirun* can overcome centuries of scholarly inertia to embrace his methods.

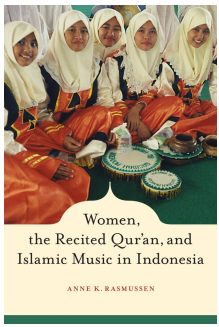
As for Medievalists who may fear that Reynolds's scholarship will consign the great commentaries of the classical period to the ash-heap of history, I would suggest that they have mistaken the true value of that magnificent body of literature: for without it, scholars would be completely in the dark as to what the Qurʾān meant to its medieval audience. Re-discovering that audience through classical *tafsir* is the task to which Medievalists should apply their considerable talents—and not continue to expect medieval literature to provide insights into the early Islamic movement that it is in no position to deliver.

In closing, I would respectfully disagree with Professor Reynolds's assertion that the present state of Qurʾānic Studies is one of "crisis." Such a judgment is, regrettably, premature. May his book precipitate such a crisis, and may that crisis catapult the study of the Qurʾān into the twenty-first century.

Peter Matthews Wright
Colorado College

Women, the Recited Qur'an, and Islamic Music in Indonesia, by Anne K. Rasmussen

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010 | xx + 312 pages | ISBN: 978-0-520-25548-7 (hardback) $65.00 | ISBN: 978-0-520-25549-4 (softback) $29.95



This book considers *a* component—the teaching, learning and reciting of the Qur'ān—of *a* religion—Islam—in *a* country—Indonesia—in great detail, depth and with great distinction. Rasmussen considers, and demonstrates with a comparison to opera (25), the recitation together with related aspects—teaching and learning thereof—to be a humanly-generated musical art. The main contribution of Rasmussen's text is no doubt in relation to musicology, and its value in determining what the author terms "soundscapes," that is, sound as information and hearing as knowing (212). For the author, understanding soundscapes adds an important and vital dimension to our appreciation of the way in which humans mediate religious symbols.

The book could not focus on musicology related to the recitation of the Qur'ān without touching, significantly, on the study of religion in contemporary society. Accordingly, the book highlights many of the dimensions and fissures addressed by the study of religion. The main aspects here are the nature, construction and reconstruction of authority over foundational texts. The question of how authority over foundational texts intersects with past and existing geopolitical power structures, ethnicity and gender becomes a central aspect of Rasmussen's work.

Those interested in women, Islam, music and Indonesia will find the book invaluable as well as interesting. Those partial to one or a combination of the issues on which she concentrates would also not be sorry to pick the book up. While the book focuses, specifically, on how Muslim women in Indonesia contribute—through teaching, learning and reciting—to the presence of the oral Qur'ān in Indonesian society, the book also comments on features of Indonesia's politics and economics. In other words the book's scope far outweighs its specific focus.

Rasmussen's book forms part of an overwhelming body of literature on forms of Islam which are central to contemporary geopolitics. Rasmussen's study is however not intended, directly, to lead this debate in a particular direction. What she does, because of a long-standing relationship to her research site and rigorous ethnographic research, is add richness and complexity

to debates surrounding the place of Islam and Islamic cultures in contemporary social research. She comments, notably, on notions of global and local, traditional and modern, and how these issues emerge, not without tension, in her study of religion and music with respect to women in Indonesia. For example Rasmussen argues that traditional modes of Islamic practice in Indonesia present women with greater opportunity to engage religious symbols and activities in public than do modern modes.

As with any text about women and Islam, the book must comment on the place of Muslim women in relation to power. Rasmussen notes the distinction made between feminism and "Islamic womanism," the latter determined to reconstruct foundational texts without the overlay of patriarchal power structures. In other words, womanists are determined that Islam is for women as much as it is for men, and that there is no reason to change it. One merely has to locate where men have interpreted foundational texts to their advantage. Rasmussen suggests that womanists have already unearthed sufficient evidence to illustrate that this is possible. Furthermore, she postulates that the main protagonist in her study, a female reciter of the Qurʾān, embodies a non-patriarchal reading of the Qurʾān.

Less engagingly but importantly, the book points out the lack, despite recent exceptions, of attention to Indonesian Islam as a vernacular of the practices of this religion in favour of Middle Eastern Islam. For example, Islam spread to South Africa via Indonesia and Dutch colonisation of the region and not from the Arabian Peninsula. The text, refreshingly, does not proceed to admonish and present caveats related to Islam and things Islamic or the practices of Muslims. Rather the text demonstrates what passionate, meticulous and serious research can mean for understanding society—anywhere—in meaningful ways. Rasmussen demonstrates perfectly her expertise in this field, no doubt gained from serious study over an extended period.

If forced to critique this text it would have to be on the level of technical aspects with respect to music for those coming to the book from other fields. In the same breath, however, one does not need to "get it"—that is, the technical aspects of music—to fully grasp the argument Rasmussen makes or the importance her work has for coming to grips with the Qurʾān as the primary foundational text of Islam.

Zahraa McDonald
University of Johannesburg