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Book Reviews

John A. Shultz
Japanese Mythology: Hermeneutics on Scripture, by Jun'ichi Isomae . 371

Rick Weiss
Colonizing the Realm of Words: The Transformation of Tamil Literature in Nineteenth-Century South India, by Sascha Ebeling 373

William Shepard
Glory and Agony: Isaac's Sacrifice and National Narrative, by Yael S. Feldman 377

Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer
The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines, edited by Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti, and Henrike Lähnemann 380

Andrew Brown
From Babylon to Eternity: The Exile Remembered and Constructed in Text and Tradition, by Bob Becking, Alex Cannegieter, Wilfred van de Poll, and Anne-Mareike Wetter 388

Martin O'Kane
Imagining Jewish Art: Encounters with the Masters in Chagall, Guston, and Kitaj, by Aaron Rosen 394

Gregory W. Dawes
Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origins, by David N. Livingstone 396

Nicky Hallett
The Social Universe of the English Bible: Scripture, Society, and Culture in Early Modern England, by Naomi Tadmor 400

I. C. Hine
The King James Bible after 400 Years: Literary, Linguistic, and Cultural Influences, edited by Hannibal Hamlin and Norman W. Jones . . . 403

Crawford Gribben
Pen of Iron: American Prose and the King James Bible, by Robert Alter 409

I. C. Hine
Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611–2011, by Gordon Campbell 413

Deirdre Good
The Legacy of the King James Bible: Celebrating 400 Years of the Most Influential English Translation, by Leland Ryken 417

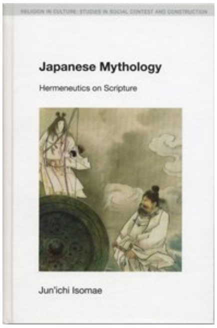
James G. Crossley
Begat: The King James Bible and the English Language, by David Crystal 420

Eric Repphun
Reel Revelations: Apocalypse and Film, edited by John Walliss and Lee Quinby 424

Alisa Hardy
Hell and its Afterlife: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, edited by Isabel Moreira and Margaret Toscano 431

Lynn Huber
Transforming Scriptures: African American Women Writers and the Bible, by Katherine Clay Bassard 438

Japanese Mythology: Hermeneutics on Scripture, by Jun'ichi Isomae, translated by Mukund Subramanian


RELIGION IN CULTURE: STUDIES IN SOCIAL CONTEST AND CONSTRUCTION
Japanese Mythology
Hermeneutics on Scripture
Jun'ichi Isomae

Nichibunken Monograph Series 10 | Religion in Culture: Studies in Social Contest and Construction | London and Oakville: Equinox, 2009 | vii + 181 pages | ISBN 978-1-8455-3183-6 (softback) £17.99

In this monograph, Jun'ichi Isomae seeks to make contributions to the field of religious studies by focusing on the manifold interpretations of two of Japan's most historically, politically, and religiously influential texts: the *Kojiki* (712 CE) and the *Nihon Shoki* (720 CE). The importance of the mythological contents of the Kiki, as the pair of texts is commonly referenced, is not merely tied to some circumstances of the distant past; its stories were presented as facts to Japanese students in history textbooks from the early modern period until the Allied occupation (see 30–31). This literature emerged from a complex nexus of tale compilations and oral traditions, and the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* share content with one another with some notable variation. Isomae demonstrates to us how notions of the origins of the Japanese people and the Japanese imperial institution were constructed based on the Kiki, which eventually attained a canonical status. These constructed origins are shown to be the product of subjective biases and the agendas of textual commentators. Striking a postmodern tone, the author convincingly shows that both the roots of the original texts and subsequent commentary on them are marked not by some discoverable thematic unity, but an undeniable plurality.

The book consists of a preface, an introduction, and six individual essays. Due in part to some repetition, the chapters can be read individually. The text has been translated from Japanese, and, perhaps following a more Japanese style, the arguments and propositions tend to be found more in the conclusion of the essays rather than upfront. For non-specialists of Japanese religion, the first chapter is likely to be of the greatest interest. In it, Isomae gives a valuable overview of the Kiki's reception through its entire history, dividing his treatment up into an examination of ancient, medieval, and modern periods. This chapter could be employed valuably for use with graduate or upper-level undergraduate students of religious studies. The second chapter impresses the point that successful mythology has discernible variants by looking carefully at the mythology surrounding the key figure of Susanowo. Continuing on in his investigation, Isomae explains that the Yamatotakeru legend is "an excellent vehicle for tracing the history of interpretation of Kiki myths" (66). He engages in this pursuit effectively in the third chapter, which offers a good set of specific examples to highlight the more overarching trends discussed in the first chapter. The fourth chapter looks at how these myths were approached in the early modern period and how the Kiki served rationalist (and by comparison non-rationalist) drives to construct a connection to a historical past (see 106). The fifth and sixth chapters are likely to be of greater interest to specialists, as they deal in great detail with how myths are employed by two individuals, Motoori Norinaga, a nationalist, and Ishimoda Shō, a Marxist.

Isomae aims to offer analytical contributions to the wider field of hermeneutics and the study of sacred writings. He states, "As we enter the twenty-first century, the theory of sacred texts has reached the point of stagnation" (6). Indeed, the author hints that new theoretical orientations may be something of an existential necessity, as such fields increasingly "fight for relevance at the modern forefront of religious studies" (6). The intention of this book is to open a "new horizon for conceiving a method for comparative religious studies" (6). It should be noted, however, that the comparisons he makes in this treatment are almost exclusively within Kiki and closely related discourse. More practically, if this treatment is to influence non-Japanologists, such readers may be well advised to familiarize themselves beforehand with the actual content and structure of the Kiki, as basic information on the texts comes only in bits and pieces over the first several chapters.

The most central line of argumentation throughout this treatment is that Kiki studies and sacred textual studies, more generally, suffer from major areas of neglect. The author posits that shortcomings are visible in a neglect of comparisons between oral traditions and written texts (6); neglect of non-canonical sacred texts, which over time have subsequently fallen out of consideration (7); and neglect of examining interpretations across historical eras (8). Isomae's pursuit of consequential neglect in Kiki studies may be seen to lose a bit of potency when one realizes that the objects of such critiques are generally not contemporary scholars of religion who ought to know better, but include eighteenth- and nineteenth-century academics and commentators whose obvious agendas have them variously labeled as evangelists, fundamentalists, nativists, and Marxists. Biases from these camps are genuinely interesting, but perhaps not particularly surprising. For example, much analysis is dedicated to the "fundamentalist/nativist" Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), but Isomae explains that Motoori's writings were considered extreme and irrational even among contemporary nativists (93). Additionally, the author's discussion of modern scholars recognizes that they have in fact employed non-canonical sources in their treatments, and thus their work seems less exemplary of approaches neglecting key evidence, which might obscure the bigger picture (see 32, 90).

In conclusion, one could say that the importance of the subject matter and the depth to which Isomae explores interpretive history make this text recommendable to scholars of religion generally and to scholars of sacred texts and Japanologists more specifically. The treatment's greatest strengths lie in the author's obvious command of the plurality of interpretations of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* over a fantastic timeline. Whether or not his treatment succeeds in producing a new horizon to enliven sacred textual studies or whether he uncovers hereto-unrecognized perpetrators of scholarly neglect is perhaps still a matter of debate. Nonetheless, it is valuable to have these essays in English, and Isomae's efforts to offer Japanese examples to inform wider theoretical perspectives on the study of mythology is highly commendable.

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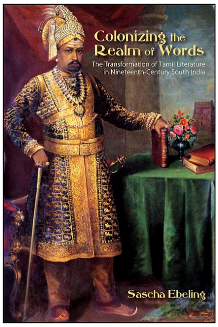
Colonizing the Realm of Words: The Transformation of Tamil Literature in Nineteenth-Century South India, by Sascha Ebeling


Colonizing the Realm of Words
The Transformation of Tamil Literature in Nineteenth-Century South India
Sascha Ebeling

SUNY series in Hindu Studies | Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010 | xxiv + 355 pages | ISBN: 978-1-4384-3199-4 (hardback) $80.00 | ISBN: 978-1-4384-3200-7 (softback) $26.95

Colonizing the Realm of Words is a major contribution to the study of Tamil literature. Rather than attempting an encyclopaedic account of Tamil literature in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Ebeling focuses on a few authors and works that epitomize significant trends and transformations in literary style and function of this period. The book is rich with detail of Tamil poetics, and the extensive translations, especially of verse, present much material to English-reading audiences for the first time.

In his introduction, Ebeling discusses the nexus of literature and colonialism, and the neglect of nineteenth-century Tamil literature by scholars. He views literature as a "contact zone," borrowing a phrase from Mary Louise Pratt. This literary contact zone was the site of the transformation of literature in imperial contexts, a process that he calls the "colonization of literature" (5–6). Ebeling goes on to give a convincing account of the neglect of nineteenth-century Tamil literature. Recent Tamil and European literary historians have agreed with colonial and missionary critics of a century earlier in considering this a "dark period" of Tamil literature, one of decadence and decline, "vulgar," "pedantic," "imitative," and "childish" (18–19). Ebeling highlights the cultural and ethical prejudices behind these characterizations, and his book is an attempt to demonstrate the value of this literature, not only for its aesthetic qualities, but also as an object of study that can add to our understanding of broader social and cultural changes.

The next two long chapters form the most impressive part of the book. These chapters detail "traditional systems of literary production" in Tamil, with attention to literary style, function, and patronage. Ebeling looks first at the biography and writings of T. Minakshisundaram Pillai, one of the preeminent Tamil poets of the second half of the nineteenth century and probably best known as the inspiring teacher of U. V. Swaminatha Iyer. Ebeling discusses the variety of poetic forms that Minakshisundaram Pillai and others of his time used, such as *yamaka*, *cilēṭai* (Sanskrit *śleṣa*), *tiripu*, and *cittirakkavi*. These tested the poet's skill in structuring verses in complex patterns of alliteration, employing puns, and devising syntax with variable word breaks and meanings. Tamil and Western commentators came to criticize these poetic forms as emphasising dazzling skill with language, or form, over edifying content. Ebeling points to a general aesthetics of nineteenth-century Tamil literature: a "concern with ornamentation or 'embellishment'" (53), and a focus on language in itself. Ebeling's knowledgeable discussion of a number of forms and genres, his translation of verse, and his discussion of monastic patronage of poets and the "economy of praise" that drove elite literary production at the time, all make this valuable material for scholars of South Asian literature.

Chapter three shifts focus from religious to courtly patronage contexts. Besides an extensive survey of poets of a few Tamil royal courts (116–32), the chapter contains long translations that display the combination of eroticism and praise in this courtly literature. Ebeling traces the language and tone of this poetry to the Nayakar courts, and theorizes that it functioned in the nineteenth century to celebrate former royal glory. Drawing from C. J. Baker, Ebeling sees these compositions as "acts of 'ritualized remembrance'" which recall "former grandeur and lost splendor" (157). The chapter ends with a fine discussion of shifting roles and opportunities afforded traditional poets, who increasingly became Tamil teachers in schools and editors of palmleaf manuscripts for publication. The final decades of the nineteenth century saw the decline of elite traditional Tamil literary practices, a shift from literary worlds that found ideals in the Tamil past to those that increasingly looked to the West for inspiration.

The final chapters look in some depth at the emergence of Tamil prose writing and Tamil novels, focusing especially on the author Mayuram Vetanayakam Pillai. The shift from verse to prose composition was, as Ebeling highlights, a momentous transformation in literary form. Additionally, elite Tamil writers, influenced by Western notions of the function of literature, began to use literature as a platform to advance social reform, not primarily as a showcase for their literary skills. The last chapter documents the rise of the Tamil novel, with attention to shifts in literary style and especially literary content, which became more didactic and less ornamental. In a final, short epilogue, Ebeling asserts that it is too early to draw general conclusions on "literature and/under colonialism" on the basis of the literary shifts in Tamil that he has so finely documented here (248). Instead, he hopes that he has made a persuasive case that nineteenth-century Tamil literature is worth further study.

I think Ebeling is being too modest here, because his book does more than just point to a valuable area of study—it is itself a significant contribution to Tamil literary studies. Through extensive translations and learned analysis, Ebeling presents the reader with unprecedented views of Tamil literature in this transformative period, situating these momentous shifts in their social and ethical contexts.

Ebeling's use of "colonization" to describe these literary transformations seems heavy-handed, however. His concern is with Tamil poets and their compositions, and the spectre of "colonialism" appears only obliquely in Western moral sensibilities, literary genres and practices, and institutions such as schools. There is no sense of coercion of Tamil poets, who are free to choose what literary forms they compose. Indeed, Ebeling remarks on the remarkable freedom of the Tamil vernacular press in this period (169).

At times I was uncomfortable with the "modern" vs. "traditional" (sometimes also "pre-modern") language and dichotomy that dominate the book's periodization of literature. This language implies a teleology of literature, where modern Western literary practices inevitably replace traditional ones. The terms draw too rigid a dichotomy between two literary worlds. Did the traditional world of Minakshisundaram Pillai really exist in the pristine purity as presented here via Swaminatha Iyer's biography of Pillai, or was this purity a nostalgic fantasy of the biographer? I suspect the latter, given that Pillai's institutional base, the Tiruvavatuturai monastery, was also supporting the activities of Arumuga Navalar, who was pioneering Tamil prose writing and Tamil publishing. The book might have benefited from more attention to writings and material that blur the boundaries between "traditional" and "modern" literary worlds. For example, there would be some genres that would not have been as radically transformed over this period, such as temple myths (*talapurāṇam*).

These criticisms took away little of my appreciation of this meticulous piece of scholarship. Ebeling demonstrates a formidable knowledge of the texts, authors, and contexts of elite Tamil literary worlds of the second half of the nineteenth century. Also impressive is his comprehensive knowledge of relevant secondary scholarly literature in Tamil and in European languages. The book gives a wonderful, detailed picture of the biographies, writings and contexts of some of the most important authors in Tamil of the nineteenth century. It documents major transformations in patronage, Tamil literary style and function, and audience. It will be of interest to scholars of Tamil studies, Indian literary studies, and colonialism and literature.

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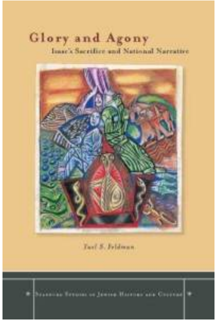
Glory and Agony: Isaac's Sacrifice and National Narrative, by Yael S. Feldman



Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture | Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010 | xviii + 422 pages | ISBN: 978-0-8047-5902-1 (hardback) $60.00

The biblical account of the near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22, known among Jews as the *Aqedah* (elsewhere often spelled *Akedah*), the binding (viz., of Isaac), has been the subject of considerable discussion, re-writing and reinterpretation over the centuries by Jews and others. This book by Yael Feldman presents a detailed, complex and sometimes provocative study of the way writers, poets, dramatists, critics, some scholars, and a few visual artists in the State of Israel during the last century have dealt with this account, paying some attention to other narratives of sacrifice such as that of Jephthah's daughter. The *Aqedah* in particular has been a major vehicle through which these writers and artists have sought to mediate between the Zionist vision and the harsh realities of war and Holocaust.

The writers and artists dealt with are almost all secular and politically left-wing. Therefore, these narratives function for them more as national narratives than as religious scripture and the author regularly speaks of the *Aqedah* as a literary "trope." A degree of sacrality still attaches to the "trope," however, much as some would like to escape this. The paradox is expressed by the poet Gouri: "We are full of religious symbols without believing in God" (248). At the same time, the trope is sufficiently free of sanctity to be able to be handled in a very wide variety of ways. Sometimes the outlines of the *Aqedah* narrative are quite recognizable, sometimes parts are omitted or changed (God and the angel rarely appear) or mixed with other tropes. Sometimes there is just a brief reference to it. Sometimes it is only implicit, to be discovered contestably by the author and other critics. Sometimes the treatment draws a positive message from the trope, often it draws an ambiguous one and sometime quite a negative one, as when the character in a novel says, "I hate our father Abraham for going to bind Isaac … I hate the God that sent him to bind" (172). Often the Freudian Oedipus complex is mapped onto the *Aqedah*, although many reject this. Christian ideas have some influence at points and the name of Søren Kierkegaard is often invoked as is that of Alexander Herzen, the Russian revolutionary. Modern writers such as Jacques Derrida are invoked by the author for comparative and explanatory purposes.

There are three major versions of the Aqedah in traditional Jewish literature: the Biblical account in which Isaac is silent; post-Biblical accounts in which Isaac accepts his fate and actively cooperates; and later medieval accounts produced in times of extreme persecution in which Isaac actually is sacrificed, made known particularly by Shalom Spiegel in *The Last Trial*. It is the second of these versions that most often underlies the accounts in this book.

The format of the book is historical. The *Aqedah* came to be the "focal" sacrificial trope (20) about 1940. In the two decades before this the self-bound Isaac appeared occasionally as a model of active self-sacrifice for the nation in contrast to the passive martyrdom of the past. A bit earlier the phrase *osher aqedah* (bliss of *Aqedah*) was coined in connection with the Jewish Legion in World War One, though it lay dormant until revived in a Passover Haggada in 1949. The author engages in some interesting literary sleuthing to trace *osher* to a term in Russian Orthodox theology that means, roughly, "spiritual struggle" (95).

During the 1940s the *Aqedah* evolved into "the core narrative of the birth of the nation" (149) and the focus was largely on the moral dilemma faced by Abraham, reflecting the agony experienced by the settlers' generation, who had to send their sons to war to gain independence. In these versions, the sons or daughters usually go willingly and the action of the "Abrahams" is reluctantly and agonizingly justified. Even the son who expresses hate for father Abraham accepts and embraces his fate (174–75). The trope could also, however, invoke the passive suffering of the Holocaust and part of its power lies in its ability to invoke both passive and active sacrifice.

From the late 1950s, there is more focus on Isaac as the sacrifice and more criticism of Abraham. Isaac is more likely to be an unwilling victim, and intergenerational conflict is more prominent. By the mid 1960s, Freudian interpretations become predominant. After 1967 there is something of a return to earlier themes along with more critical treatments. In the 1970s and 1980s there are several presentations of Abraham as a violent and destructive figure and Isaac as too passive, a tendency intensified by the Lebanon War in 1982. In that year, Yehuda Amichai, a popular poet, declared that the real hero of the *Aqedah* was the ram, here understood as the foot soldiers who bear the brunt of war. In 1983 a drawing by Menashe Kadishman, an internationally recognized artist, featured a menacing lamb with a supine

Isaac. Some writers also note the parallel between Isaac and Ishmael, who is expelled by his father. After the assassination of the prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 and the events of 9/11 in 2001, treatments of the *Aqedah* return to the theme of sacrifice, whether commending or opposing it.

While the story of the *Aqedah* is a very male affair and most of the writers and artists dealing with it are men, the author makes sure that female voices and perspectives are heard. An interesting example is Shulamit Hareven, a peace activist. In 1970 she complained that the "Isaac generation," the children of the kibbutzim, was passive and lacking in self-confidence, hemmed in by its parents. In 1976 she argues that, although the *Aqedah* enshrines violence, it in fact represents the Jewish refusal to accept the myth of primal violence. By 1994, however, she presents it as a dangerous myth and violence as a male problem, to be countered by the efforts of women. Soon after this she became part of the Women for Peace movement.

This brief summary only begins to suggest the variety and complexity of the material covered in this book. The historical periodization is not so clear in the book as I have tried to make it here because the author regularly presents early adumbrations of later trends and later continuations of earlier trends, as well as inserting material from a different period from that being treated when in his view it illuminates the material at hand.

This book is not merely a recording of interpretations of the *Aqedah* but also represents a major interpretive effort by the author and constitutes a contribution to the process being described. Her choice of material certainly does not represent Israeli society or even Israeli literature as a whole. She sometimes indicates that authors or items discussed were little known at the time or have been largely forgotten. These items appear evidently because of the author's interpretative needs. Since she presents mainly left-wing writers, one wonders what the right wing has been thinking and writing. The author gives us an idea in her discussion of a 1992 article by Moshe Shamir, a formerly left-wing novelist who had become right wing by this time. He accepts the label of Isaac for the 1948 generation (his own) and admits that it was passive but stresses its loyalty and sense of responsibility, true to the Isaac of Jewish tradition. One wonders which was more prevalent in Israeli society at the time, this view or the left-wing view of Isaac as obsessively obedient to an obsessively belligerent father. It also should be noted that the current generation of writers appears underrepresented. Few writers born after 1940 are discussed and the period after 1995 is dealt with in summary fashion in an eight-page "Afterword."

This book is definitely an "insiders'" book, in that the author presumes considerable knowledge of the Israeli literary scene on the part of the reader. For one like me, who has considerable interest in the *Aqedah* and reasonable knowledge of Jewish and Israeli political, cultural and religious, but not literary history, it has been hard going. The author does not always give as full a description of the contents of the works discussed as I would want and will often begin a topic and then digress to another before returning to the first, something that may suit the knowledgeable reader but is confusing to the neophyte.

Anyone who knows the Israeli literary scene will find in this book an illuminating discussion of that scene and a significant contribution to it. Anyone who wants to know about the Israeli literary scene will do well to start somewhere else before undertaking this book. Anyone who is mainly interested in the *Aqedah* as a cross-cultural theme will find much of interest and value here but will have to work hard to get it.

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The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines, edited by Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti, and Henrike Lähnemann

The Sword of Judith
Judith Studies Across the Disciplines
Edited by Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann
OpenBook Publishers

Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010 | xviii + 511 pages | ISBN: 978-1-906924-16-4 (hardback) £24.95 | ISBN: 978-1-906924-15-7 (softback) £14.95 | ISBN: 978-1-906924-17-1 (e-book) £4.95

This volume is a multidisciplinary collection of essays devoted to Judith studies, based on the proceedings of "The Sword of Judith Conference" held at the New York Public Library in the spring of 2008. It is a fascinating and erudite collection of high-quality essays and it has its given place in any university library that specializes in the reception history of the Bible. The book is also nicely presented with illustrations of the pieces of art that are discussed in the various essays.

The book falls into four main parts. The first part, devoted to Introductions, contains three overarching studies. The opening essay, written by

Kevin R. Brine, explains the goals of the so-called Judith Project, an ongoing, cross-disciplinary project that seeks to foster scholarly collaboration across disciplines and national and language borders and to make knowledge freely available. It does not aim to produce a comprehensive guide to Judith studies but instead to provide a forum for specialized essays and to enable individual scholars to define their own research agenda within the broader field. Brine further provides a succinct overview of key issues in Judith studies: the narrative itself, its genre, theological outlook and *raison d'être*, its origin and textual transmission, and its place within the various and developing Jewish and Christian traditions. Brine also summarizes all the essays in the current volume.

The second article, by Deborah Levine Gera, surveys the book of Judith in Jewish traditions. Gera notes that Judith is a very Jewish heroine and that her story is presented along biblical lines. She discusses the possible Hebrew origin of the tale and the critical issues that such a supposition entails. She also notes that there is no evidence to suggest that the book was ever a candidate for inclusion into the canon of the Hebrew Bible. The reasons as to why it was not included may stem from its late date of composition (after 150 BCE), the possibility that it was originally composed in Greek in Alexandria, its lack of conformation to Jewish *halacha*, and its strong female heroine (which might have displeased the rabbis). As a result, the book did not survive in Hebrew which, in turn, rendered it virtually unknown in the Jewish communities of the first millennium. The Judith tradition resurfaced in the tenth century CE in the so-called Judith *midrashim* and became linked with the celebration of Hanukkah. Gera outlines the characteristics of the three types of Judith *midrashim*. She also comments on the Judith traditions found in two liturgical poems (*piyuttim*) for Hanukkah and their textual relationship to the Judith *midrashim*. Finally, Gera explores how, in the age of print, Moses Meldonado translated the Vulgate version of Judith (1552) at which point the book reentered the Jewish textual tradition. The essay ends with a selective bibliography to Jewish Judith studies.

The third article, by Elena Ciletti and and Henrike Lähnemann, offers a parallel overview of the reception history of book of Judith in Christian traditions. The Vulgate version remained the dominant text throughout the Patristic period and the Mediaeval Ages. The first commentary stems from Hrabanus Maurus (830s) and it influenced renderings of Judith in several languages, among them the Early Middle High German versions of Judith. Judith also survived in rewritten form in chronological accounts of world history. For example, Peter Comestor, in his *Historia Scholastica*, relocates the story to the time of the Persian ruler Cambyses. The book of Judith also features in mediaeval allegorical collections where Judith's beheading of Holofernes prefigures Mary's suppression of the devil. Ciletti and Lähnemann further survey the use of the motif of Judith in early modern Italian art and discuss Judith's importance as a prototype for Mary in art, music, and literature.

The second part contains four specialized studies on the book of Judith in Jewish traditions. Barbara Schmitz analyzes the portrayal of Holofernes. The first half of the Judith narrative portrays Holofernes as a successful commander and typical male hero while the latter half depicts him as Judith's passive victim. Judith 10:21, a turning point in the narrative, uses the Greek word κωνώπιον when describing the décor of Holofernes's tent. Schmitz looks at three Latin texts that contain the Latin equivalence *conopeum* and notes that in all texts this word is an attribute of women. Consequently, she suggests that the Greek word aims to present Holofernes as an effeminate and weakened figure. After meeting with Judith, Holofernes becomes an unmanly, indulgent drinker who lacks self-control. Based on her analysis, Schmitz argues that the book of Judith belongs within the larger context of Greek and Roman literary traditions.

Deborah Levine Gera explores select tenth-century Jewish *midrashim* on the book of Judith. She points out that these *midrashim* present the character of Judith as a more vulnerable person than what the apocryphal book does. For example, they depict Judith as a young unmarried woman rather than as a widow, and present her genealogy in a manner to lend her status rather than to stress her importance. Gera also highlights several significant changes to the storyline which together render Judith less of an independent woman. For instance, many of the *midrashim* have the city guards doubt Judith's virtue both at her exit out of and her re-entry into the city. Another change that probably betrays the rabbis' unease with an independent Judith revolves around her bath. In the apocryphal story, Judith purifies herself three times in preparation for receiving God's communication, while in many of the *midrashim* she purifies herself once in order to end her menstrual impurity. Gera also highlights the juxtaposition of the Judith story with a story about Hannah, the sister of Judah Maccabee, who refuses to agree to the decree that she, as a bride, should first have sexual intercourse with an important enemy minister. Finally, Gera discusses the many textual allusions in the *midrashim* to the Hebrew Bible. In particular, the portrayal of Judith alludes to Ehud, David, and Esther, as well as to Tamar (David's daughter), Hagar, and Delilah.

Susan Weingarten offers a preliminary translation of a hitherto unpublished Hebrew manuscript called *Megillat Yehudit.* This manuscript is the first written example of the incorporation of the Judith narrative into the Hanukkah festival. Weingarten demonstrates how this Hebrew text alludes to almost every instance of women associated with either sexual violence or seduction (e.g. Esther, Sarah, Ruth, both Tamars, Dinah, Bathsheba, Jael, Abigail, Delilah, Rahab, two anonymous prostitutes [1 Kings 3:18; 3:28], Lot's daughters, and Potiphar's wife) in the Hebrew Bible. In this manner, *Megillat Yehudit* shows Judith as a sexual being, in conscious polemic against the Christian tradition that depicts her as a chaste widow. Weingarten further highlights the role of earthly food in *Megillat Yehudit* and how food serves as a response to the Christian polemic against Jews (e.g., John 6:48–9) and the way in which Christians interpreted the manna in the wilderness account as a typology for Jesus as the heavenly manna partaken by Christians in the Eucharist. The essay ends with a translation of *Megillat Yehudit*, with footnotes listing all the allusions to the biblical intertexts.

Ruth von Bernuth and Michael Terry argue that the Yiddish translation of Judith by Shalom bar Abraham is based on the Swiss-German translation by Leo Jud, Zwingli's right-hand man. This translation precedes the Luther Bible and is a very literal translation of the Vulgate text. There are no changes on a theological level and no ideological manipulations. Bernuth and Terry maintain that the Yiddish translation borders on a transliteration of the Swiss-German translation, yet it is best seen as a proper translation in that it reworks verbal endings and whole expressions that were peculiar to Swiss-German. In a few instances, it also changes expressions that otherwise would have had Christian overtones. For example, it rendered *pfaffen* (clergy) as *rabonim* (rabbis).

The third part contains seven essays on Judith in the Christian textual tradition. Marc Mastrangelo looks at female agency in early Christian history and explores its typological use. To illustrate his case, Mastrangelo analyzes Prudentius's treatment of the Judith story in his *Psychomachia* (The Battle within the Soul), which depicts a series of combat scenes between virtues and vices. In that book, Judith represents *Pudicitia* (Chastity) who, as she kills Holofernes, defeats *Libido* (Lust). The typology transforms female weakness into spiritual strength for all Christians. It also conveys that chastity is the means by which a Christian soul can obtain purity in both body and soul which, in turn, leads to salvation.

Tracey-Anne Cooper explores the two appearances of Judith in the Old English corpus of literature: in the Nowell Codex alongside *Beowulf* and in a homily by Ælfric (both written around 1000 CE). Cooper shows that Ælfric's homily, composed against the background of the threats by the Vikings, depicts Judith as a very human and sympathetic character who, through prayer, is able to stand up against the Viking threat. For nuns, the intended audience of the homily, Judith provides a model of active resistance. In contrast, the poem in the Nowell Codex, despite its vivid battle scenes and heroic language, portrays a more passive Judith. The portrayal is influenced by the patristic interpretations of Judith, according to which she is more of an allegory of virtue than a living and breathing woman. Cooper's essay also contains a short description of the pictures of Judith in the Winchester Bible (1160–75), as well as the text and modern English translation of the two aforementioned Judith texts.

John Nassichuk discusses the content of Judith's prayer as found in two fifteenth-century French Mystery plays, *Mystères de la procession de Lille* and *Mistère du Viel Testament*. He demonstrates that while the former French text represents closely the Latin text of Judith in the Vulgate, the latter is more of a paraphrase of the Latin text. By analyzing the expressions that deviate from the Vulgate, Nassichuk shows that this paraphrase presents Judith as an important figure on par with the saints and the biblical prophets.

Kathleen M. Llewellyn discusses three renderings of the Judith story in early modern French literature: Jean Molinet, Guillaume de Saulluste Du Bartas, and Gabrielle de Coignard. Her prime interest is the ways in which the persona of Judith is transformed in the literature to fit the ideal of a Renaissance woman. In comparison with her apocryphal counterpart, Judith prays more, her virtue is stressed, her femininity is emphasized, and her deference towards men is increased, all as befitting a woman in France at this time. In the latter two works, Judith is also made into an object of beauty rather than a beautiful subject of actions.

Robert Cummings also looks at Du Bartas's portrayal of Judith but his essay focuses less on the persona of Judith and more on the notion of tyrannicide. He notes that many readers in the sixteenth century understood the Judith story as a story of rebellion against and resistance to unjust rule. It follows that killing a tyrant was considered a noble and right thing to do.

Cummings argues that Du Bartas was undoubtedly familiar with this line of thinking, yet his own rendering of the Judith narrative deviates from this tendency. Cummings further discusses the manner in which Du Bartas alludes to earlier literature and how these textual allusions turns the original apocryphal tale of tyrannicide into a celebration of the virtues of court ladies.

Henrike Lähnemann analyzes three examples, two short and one long, of anonymous *Meistersinger* stanzas from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Germany. She demonstrates that, in contrast to the apocryphal tale which portrays Judith as a woman characterized by her piety, the aforementioned three texts all describe Judith as a "cunning woman," i.e. a woman who uses her feminine cleverness and attractions to cause the downfall of men. These texts thus place the character of Holofernes in a series of men, biblical and non-biblical, that have been snared and brought down by female cunning. The appendix contains the German text and an English translation of the longer Judith-Song.

Janet Bartholomew highlights the ways in which the proto-feminist Margaret Fell, a Quaker in the seventeenth century, used the persona of Judith to support the Quaker struggle for women's rights to preach. In her book *Womens Speaking Justified*, Fell appeals to Judith's speech to the elders upon her return with Holofernes's head in order to show that God could speak through women and that even the Jewish elders accepted her preaching. In addition, Fell challenged the claim, found in much of the writing of her time, that Judith was a deceitful woman who used her beauty and wanton behaviour to snare men.

The next five articles look at Judith in the visual arts. Elizabeth Bailey argues that in the earliest version of the *Speculum Virginum* (ca 1140), a book that consists of a series of illustrations and dialogues between the male teacher Peregrinus and the female acolyte Theodora, the persona of Judith serves as a symbol of virtue. More specifically, Judith is depicted as a precursor of Mary in her humility and chastity. The book intended to be a devotional guide for unmarried women who contemplated becoming nuns, and it aimed to encourage them to model their lives after Judith, as well as after Yael and Mary.

Roger J. Crum suggests that, in Renaissance Florence under the Medici family, the character of Judith represented an ideal balance between public and private life. After her decapitation of Holofernes and her brief moment of public fame, the apocryphal narrative depicts Judith as returning quietly to her home in Bethulia and living out the rest of her life in the domestic sphere. Crum argues that, to a certain extent, the popularity of Judith and the placement of the statues of her in private places (in contrast to the positioning of the statues of David in public places) may reflect and also be influenced by the Florentine concerns about the overextension of the ruling family's private concerns into the public arena and its inappropriate fusing of the private and the public/political spheres.

Sarah Blake McHam discusses the political connotations of the character of Judith in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century. She highlights that Donatello's statue of Judith in many respects served as a symbol against tyranny. In the hands of the Republic of Florence, Judith came to personify prudence of governance and righteous rebellion against the house of Medici. In a similar manner, the preacher Savonarola referred to the character of Judith in his sermons as an ideal virtuous woman and saviour of her people. As such, she constituted an antitype of Ezekiel's harlot of Judah (Ezek 16), who for Savonarola symbolized a wayward human who denied God's supreme power.

Diane Apostolos-Cappadona analyzes the role of Judith's clothing and jewellery in sixteenth-century Italian art. She notes that the depictions of Judith's dresses are reminiscent of the way in which the ancient Greeks depicted the dresses of Athena and Artemis. Likewise, Judith's jewellery brings to mind that of the Greek goddesses, and Judith's serene face evokes that of a classical statue. In this manner, the Italian artists highlighted the military aspects of Judith's persona and emphasized her role as God's faithful female warrior.

Elena Ciletti highlights the role of Judith as a type for Mary in the counter-reformation in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On the most basic level, the Catholic Church used the book of Judith as an emblem in their fight for the canonicity of the apocrypha. The persona of Judith came to symbolize the military church and Judith's decapitation of Holofernes stood for the fight of the triumphant Catholic Church against heretics. The military and Marian symbolism was expressed in paintings from that time, the most salient example being the fresco cycle in the Palazzo Lateranense in Rome.

The last part of the volume contains six studies devoted to Judith in music and drama. Kelley Harness surveys several pieces of music about Judith, commissioned by influential women such as Archduchess Maria Magdalena of Austria and Margherita Aldobrandini Farnese, the widowed duchess of Parma and Piacenza, in seventeenth-century Italy. She analyzes how those female patrons used Judith as a symbol for female heroism and political power, combined with the contemporaneous ideals of female decorum and chastity. For these patrons, Judith personified the notion that women, when guided by God, acquired spiritual and physical strength to rule over men.

David Marsh surveys libretti written on the theme of Judith between 1675 and 1734. He looks at the drama by Federico Della Valle, the series of oratorios by Marc-Antoine Charpentier, the texts written by members of the Ottoboni family set to music by Alesandro Scarlatti, the text by Giacomo Cassetti set to music by Antonio Vivaldi, the anonymous libretto used by Francisco António de Almeida in this opera *La Giuttitta*, and finally the libretto written by Pietro Metastasio. In each case, Marsh notes the number of players, the role of the choir (whether singing the part of the Jews or the part of the Assyrians), and the interchange between the different singers.

Paolo Bernardini argues that the gradual marginalization of Judith in music from the nineteenth century was caused partly by the emerging European nationalism. As nations rather than ruling families became important, the individual Judith who fights the Assyrian without the knowledge of her people gradually became irrelevant to writers and audiences alike. In those pieces of music that still feature Judith, she is accompanied by a male warrior and backed by a strong army. In addition, she often serves as the love interest of the male warrior. In other cases, the story of Judith is rendered as a comedy with farcical elements.

Alexandre Lhâa discusses the ways in which the portrayal of Judith in the libretto of *Guiditta* (1860) by Marco Marcello has been adapted to suit the nationalistic-patriotic ideology of the Risorgimento, the politico-cultural process aiming for the construction of an Italian state (1796–1870). Lhâa argues that Judith is depicted as a woman ready to sacrifice herself for her homeland and that the Assyrians are equated with Austria, the political threat to Milan. He also shows that the libretto has a religious agenda that sees the Italian people as the new Israel and that asserts the independence of the Italian national liberation movement against Pope Pius IX. Finally, Lhâa argues that the desexualisation of Judith in the libretto reflects Marcello's own discomfort with a strong female warrior.

Jann Pasler looks at the political and religious uses of the Judith narrative in French operas after 1870. For example, while the monarchists and the republicans emphasized different aspect of Judith's character, both groups used her as a symbol of patriotism. Pasler further highlights the ways in which the musical score adds a layer of interpretation to the Judith narrative.

He shows, for instance, how the music can enhance a given aspect of the libretto, how the choice of a mezzo-soprano to sing the role of Judith helps portray her as a mature woman capable of heroism, and how specific forms of duets between Judith and Holofernes can emphasize the dramatic tension and sexual attraction between the two characters.

In the final article, Gabrijela Mecky Zaragoza argues that some of the uses of the Judith story in the German *Volkstheater* in Austria in the nineteenth century reflect the fear towards Jewish assimilation. While many Austrians sought the Jews' conversion to Christianity, they simultaneously feared that their conversion would lead to a class of semi-assimilated Jewry that would appear German yet maintain some of their "wild" Jewishness. Zaragoza looks at two dramas. She highlights the explicit anti-Semitism of the drama *Judith und Holofernes* (1818) and the more ambiguous anti-Semitism of Johann Nestroy's play with the same name (1849). She notes that while the latter drama makes fun of Jewish stereotypes and the current Viennese Jewish population, is also advocates a new society in which the Jews can be victorious and where their enemies, the so-called "Jew-Eaters," are put in chains.

In conclusion, this is a very interesting and stimulating collection of articles that can be highly recommended.

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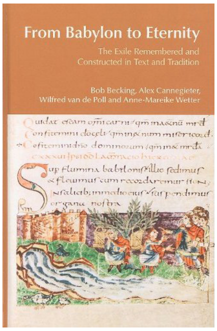
From Babylon to Eternity: The Exile Remembered and Constructed in Text and Tradition, by Bob Becking, Alex Cannegieter, Wilfred van de Poll, and Anne-Mareike Wetter


From Babylon to Eternity
The Exile Remembered and Constructed in Text and Tradition
Bob Becking, Alex Cannegieter, Wilfred van de Poll and Anne-Mareike Wetter

BibleWorld | London and Oakville: Equinox, 2009 | 120 pages | ISBN: 978-1-8455-3305-2 (hardback) £60.00 | ISBN: 978-1-8455-3306-9 (softback) £19.99

The concise *From Babylon to Eternity: The Exile Remembered and Constructed in Text and Tradition* consists of a series of four essays, one each by the four authors mentioned in the title, with a brief introduction to set out the book's program. The essays are of typical journal article length and corresponding scope, and exhibit the kind of consistency of method and direction that allows the work to read well as a unit. The volume offers a reception history of the Exile which punctuates the reported history of Judah, either implicitly or explicitly, so frequently and profoundly in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT). The book begins with Becking's essay summarizing the current picture of Judah's Exile provided by archaeology, and moves through inner-biblical reception of the Exile in Wetter's essay to the evolving reception of the Exile in post-biblical Jewish tradition in van de Poll's, before finishing with Cannegieter's sampling of Christian reception both ancient and modern.

The authors manifest the expected sensitivity to the role of the reader and reading community in the interpretation of this biblical event and seek to explore the way the Exile resonated through certain of its subsequent reading communities. As the subtitle declares, reception is a process of remembering mingled with (re)construction: "There is a constant dialogue between reality, texts interpreting and appropriating that reality, and new readers of these texts, living in a[n often very different] reality" (1). Nevertheless, this is not a theory-laden work, and the brief introduction quickly gives way to the main text, which at 103 pages is suggestive rather than comprehensive. Clear and approachable, it provides a pleasant relief for the reader who has waded painfully through weighty, obtuse theological tomes.

"In Babylon: The Exile as Historical (Re)Construction," Bob Becking critiques the traditional idea of a total Exile to Babylon that left an empty land. Taking his methodological lead from historian R. G. Collingwood, Becking asks what we know about the Exile and its historical context from historical and archaeological data.

Turning to specific forms of evidence, Becking first compares the Babylonian Chronicle's record of Nebuchadnezzar's military campaigns with the evidence of 2 Kings 24–5. Next, the Gedaliah incident (Jer 40:7–41:15) raises the question of the limited usefulness of clay seals or bullae to confirm the reality of characters appearing in HB/OT narratives of late pre-exilic Judah. Other archaeological and epigraphic evidence treated by Becking includes occupational evidence in exilic Mizpah, evidence of the early Egyptian Jewish diaspora, apparent mention of the exiled King Jehoiachin in Babylonian provision lists, and evidence found in the Murashu-archives of flourishing diaspora Jewish communities in the Persian period. Inevitably, he also treats the famous Cyrus Cylinder at some length, helpfully offering a full translation.

Becking's thrust is to "demythologize" the traditional understanding of the Exile. He seeks first of all, in Hans Barstad's train, to refute the "myth of the empty land," the idea that Judah was left vacant during the Exile, observing that the populations of Bethel and Mizpah (unlike Jerusalem) appear stable throughout this period. He secondly refutes the "myth of the mass return" of exiled Jews to Yehud at the close of the exilic period, using the evidence of substantial Persian-era diaspora Jewish populations: "The Exile should not be construed as a massive event; the descendants of the Exiled Judaeans returned in waves and many remained in Babylonia" (31). Third, he holds that the Temple was only rebuilt in the mid-fifth century BCE. Despite a definite air of historical scepticism, though, Becking is not a minimalist; he wishes to free from distortion, rather than entirely negate, the historical reality of the Exile.

Becking's article, then, functions as historiographic background for the reception-historical essays to follow. Clear and thorough, it constitutes an effective overview of the current state of play in archaeological and epigraphic evidence relating to Judah/Yehud in this period. Now, Becking's conclusions may sound familiar to anyone who has kept up with these topics, and I at times felt as if the total Exile, empty land, and *en masse* return myths functioned as a kind of straw man; does anyone beyond first-year Bible classes still think this way about the Exile? Nevertheless, for sheer clarity and completeness, this rates as a very worthy article.

Anne-Mareike Wetter's essay, "Balancing the Scales: The Construction of the Exile as Countertradition in the Bible" begins from the premise that the Exile constituted an identity crisis for Judah that "spurred the formation of a specifically Israelite tradition more than any other" and survives as "an underlying strand of consciousness that pervades all utterances about YHWH and his people" (35). After surveying the Hebrew words used in relation to the Exile in the HB/OT, Wetter proposes that stages in a national grief process manifest themselves in a certain succession of HB/OT texts, from Lamentations to relevant portions of Jeremiah and then Deuteronomy. In texts such as these, the Exile is comprehended with reference to clearly pre-existing traditions surrounding Exodus, Covenant and Promised Land.

Wetter first looks at Lamentations 2, siding with Westermann against those who would understand the bleakness of Lam 1–2, 4–5 as subservient to the relative hopefulness found in Lam 3. In Jeremiah, Wetter selects Jer 4:5–6:30, interpreting it as *ex eventu* prophecy, and finding that in contrast to Lam 2, Jeremiah emphasizes that the judgment of Exile is not total. Wetter finally treats Deut 4:25–31 and 28:15–30:20 as further retrospective "anticipations" of Exile that reveal a further development of hopeful themes: "The Moses of Deuteronomy is positive that Israel will eventually abandon the Covenant and consequently be banished from the Promised land, but he is equally certain that this is not the last word … there is the promise of return from the Exile [which] will lead Israel to a less presumptuous, but all the more genuine faith in YHWH" (54).

The value of Wetter's essay resides in her demonstration of the principle she borrows from Brueggemann: "Israel's counter-testimony has its natural habitat in Exile" (55). The crisis of the Exile necessitated a new understanding of Israel's entire spiritual tradition, and the realization that the promises of YHWH had been conditional. Her approach to the three or four chosen texts would help the Bible student turn to other HB/OT texts indebted to Judah's exilic spiritual identity crisis, such as the exilic psalms or reflections on Israel's past such as Nehemiah 9, and fruitfully explore the reappropriation of Israel's spiritual heritage in the context of that gritty present reality.

Wilfred van de Poll's chapter, "The Exile of God: The Galut in Jewish Construction," also proposes a general movement from negative to positive perceptions. Assuming the stance that the collective memory of social groups is both selective and creative, he explains the customary distinction in Jewish thought between the historical fact of Diaspora and the corresponding shared cognition of Exile in its "paradigmatic and identity-shaping function," Galut. "In this [latter] sense, the Exile has never really ended. It has become a permanent reality for every Jew. The experience of Galut has shaped and continues to shape the self-image and identity of the Jewish community vis-à-vis the gentile world surrounding it" (58–9).

The trend towards a positive interpretation of Galut begins with the Babylonian Jewish leader Saadia Gaon's explanation of the continuation of Galut in terms of Israel's partial responsibility: for some within Israel, the exile constituted punishment, while her righteous experienced Galut instead as a test of character. The twelfth-century Judah Halevi of Spain in his work *The Kuzari* interpreted the Galut more positively as Israel's vicarious trial by God on account of the sins and sorrows of the wider world. The late-medieval kabbalistic work, the *Zohar*, understands the Galut metaphysically as an alienation of God's earthly Shekhinah, or a kind of schism within the being of God. And Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534–72) viewed the Shekhinah as fragmented and dispersed through all created entities, such that, in the words of a modern scholar, "all being is in Galut" (68).

Thus van de Poll's essay offers revealing insights into specifically Jewish traditions of the medieval and Renaissance eras: clearly a period of significant development in Jewish religious philosophy. The final example, Luria's view of physical creation as inherently alienated from true existence, reveals convergence with the revived gnosticism of a figure like Jakob Böhme (c. 1575–1624), almost a contemporary of Luria, and reminds us of the potent gnosticism of the early centuries of the Christian era.

The final essay by Alex Cannegieter, "From Babylon to Eternity: Appropriation of the Babylon-Motif in Christian Homiletical Constructions," reflects more directly upon intertextual theory than the preceding essays. The outcome of thinking by scholars she cites such as Michael Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva was the realization that every text possesses "intertextuality" by virtue of intended or unintended connections with other texts, and that the definition of "text" may include cultural artifacts other than written documents. Drawing on Ellen van Wolde, Cannegieter promotes a balance between diachronic and synchronic approaches to intertextuality, retaining a place for an author's deliberate use of earlier texts.

Cannegieter then reads the Babylon motif in Revelation 17–18 as a description of contemporary Rome according to the symbolism of Judah's great exilic enemy, where Babylon the whore constitutes the polar opposite of Jerusalem the bride. This dual image was re-appropriated by Augustine in *De Civitate Dei* and *Enarratio in Psalmum CXXXVI*, for whom Jerusalem stood for the Kingdom or "City of God," and Babylon for the collected and organized sum of autonomous human endeavour. The Renaissance figure Petrarch/Petrarca (1304–74) later described the famous "Babylonian captivity of the papacy" in Avignon (1309–78) using the same symbolism. Luther's reuse of this symbolism in *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae* (1520) instead made Rome itself the Babylon that held true believers in bondage!

Cannegieter's final example consists of a sermon delivered by one Jan Egens Cannegieter on 9 May 1945, to a congregation in newly liberated Amsterdam. The mixed and turbulent feelings of a newly liberated people preparing to rebuild a devastated land are captured in his sermon on Ezra 3:12–13, showing "how an exegetical sermon can be the utmost example of intertextuality" (97). But while the four examples taken from the book of Revelation and from the works of Augustine, Petrarch, and Luther constitute four very prominent (Christian) appropriations of Babylon/Exile symbolism, this fifth example presents us with an almost unknown figure. While Alex Cannegieter knows who this Dutch preacher was who shares her surname, the reader does not and might have benefited from having the connection explained. Nevertheless, this lining up of five successive reincarnations of Babylon and its captives gives us much to ponder concerning the power of readers over a biblical text, and also the spell of a poignant biblical text over its readers.

The implicit goal of this book is uncomplicated. It is simply to apply reception-historical textual sensitivities to reuse of the biblical Exile traditions. The absence of a general agenda is reflected in the absence of a conclusion to the whole, and in the weak concluding sentence to the introduction: "We hope to have designed a fine example of the ways in which traditions go" (3). Yet I personally am attracted to this light methodological touch, which leaves the whole work balanced and approachable, and not too technical. It is not a profound addition to reception-historical theory. It is a contribution to the stock of reception-historical studies of seminal biblical texts, and an example of ways in which accounting for the reception of such key texts can be done.

Perhaps I can capture the impact of the whole work using a sentence from the first page. The very first paragraph attacks the traditional concept of a total exile of Judah following Babylonian conquest in 587/6 BCE: "Modern archaeology has revealed this version of history to be a myth" (1). The authors here appear to use "myth" in the more sweeping, popular sense, for a persuasive idea that is not true. Seeing the way the remaining essays play off Becking's, I think that in fact the statement works better if "myth" is understood in the more technical sense familiar to scholars. The point made so well by the book as a whole is not that the event of the Exile is fictional, but that it lives on beyond its historical occurrence as a potent symbol and explanatory structure that has the power to narrate experience and frame identity for subsequent reading communities. The Exile, the Babylonian captivity, and the return to Judah have proven their worth as a narratorial triptych, able to make sense of the spiritual experiences of alienation and restoration of readers from the suffering Christians of Revelation to a Dutch congregation in post-WWII Holland. It is in this special sense that the authors have indeed shown the Exile to be "myth."

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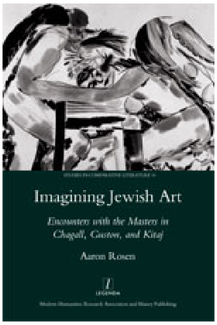

Imagining Jewish Art: Encounters with the Masters in Chagall, Guston, and Kitaj, by Aaron Rosen

Legenda Studies in Comparative Literature 16 | Oxford: Legenda, 2009 | xii + 128 pages | ISBN: 978-1-9065-4054-8 (hardback) $89.50

This book is a revision of the author's PhD thesis completed at Cambridge University under the supervision of Professor Graham Howes. After a brief introductory chapter that deals largely with theoretical and methodological issues, the author deals exclusively with three Jewish artists, Marc Chagall, Philip Guston, and R. B. Kitaj, and concludes with a short three-page summary and a most informative bibliography. The book contains fifteen black and white images and each chapter contains quite comprehensive endnotes.

In his introduction, Rosen states his aim: he is interested in how works of art might speak—sometimes quite subtly—in theological terms, both for artists as well as viewers. His focus is specifically on Jewish artists and he asks, 'how have Jewish artists responded to common artistic dilemmas and situations.... in what ways do these responses reflect artists' self-understandings as Jews?' (1). While other studies have considered how a single Jewish artist relates to one or more of their precursors, Rosen claims that his study represents the first sustained attempt to deal with the overarching problem of how Jewish artists relate to art history. He presents three case studies all from the twentieth century in order to offer a chronological spectrum: the works of Chagall from the 1930s to the 1950s, Guston from the 1960s and 1970s, and Kitaj from the 1980s to 2007. He concludes his introduction by dealing with the issues involved in trying to define what is distinctive about Jewish art; he argues that it is better to adopt a "non-definitional approach" to Jewish art and instead to explore the possibilities that art might open up for Jewish life. Rejecting any specific definition of what Jewish art is or should be, he uses insights from four different current approaches (biographical, functional, compositional, and programmatic) to explore the possibilities of Jewish art—both culturally and theologically.

When Rosen begins to discuss Chagall, the first of his three case studies, it is then that the book becomes absolutely engrossing. A discussion of several works by Chagall is contextualised within the life and times of the artist and with many illuminating quotations from the artist. The influence of both the

Old Testament and New Testament on Chagall's works is dealt with in a most engaging way and there is a special section on "development and transition in Chagall's crucifixions" (25–30). Some of this ground had already been covered by the eminent Jewish art historian Ziva Amishai-Maisels, in particular the utilization by Chagall of the crucifixion to accentuate Jewish identity of Holocaust victims and Chagall's personal identification with this theme, but Rosen adds a new dimension by exploring the persistence of the crucifixion right into his late works. Another distinctive and original aspect of Rosen's study is his argument that, in Chagall's triptych, *Resistance, Resurrection, Liberation* (1937–52), Chagall drew subtly upon the often overlooked elements of hope in Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece (1515).

Rosen's second twentieth-century artist is the abstract impressionist Philip Guston—he had changed his name from Goldstein upon his marriage. Rosen argues that "Guston's deepening sense of Jewish identity ... folds into the very structure of his late work; namely, in the artist's oft-repeated assertion in his last decade that he was attempting '*to make a Golem*'" (51). Rosen provides a very interesting summary of the meaning of "golem" in Jewish thought—the notion of amorphous unformed matter and its earthy significance for the artist. Rosen discusses in particular Guston's *Deluge II* and *The Green Rug*. He concludes by summarizing Guston's contribution: "Instead of attempting to carve for painting an original place in this chain of Jewish tradition, to posit it as a conduit of revelation, Guston's late works ultimately suggest another role for painting. Art becomes a space in which to capture the breakdown of tradition, to bind it as an afterimage before our eyes" (69–70).

Rosen's third twentieth-century artist is R. B. Kitaj. For Kitaj, "Jewish texts—and even beyond that the ways in which texts have been produced, interpreted, and collected by Jews—represent … unique resources for Jewish visual art" (77). Kitaj's works are characterized by themes and practices derived from texts. Rosen, unlike many contemporary critics, argues that Kitaj's "library" is not at all something that constrains the impact of his images, but rather on the contrary, serves to enhance them. Essentially beginning his Jewish education in his mid-forties, Kitaj travelled to Israel for the first time in 1980 and to the concentration camp at Drancy in 1987; meanwhile, ardently reading Jewish religious texts, commentaries and histories, he began to import his expanding Jewish interests into paint in the 1980s. Rosen explores in this chapter the notion that Kitaj was self-consciously creating and developing a "Diasporist" style of painting.

Rosen concludes, from his case studies of these artists, that all three draw upon Jewish concepts of family, tradition, and home as they relate to art history, but that in so doing they open up new understandings for these concepts.

This is a lively, intriguing, and well–written book which makes a really major contribution to our understanding of the distinctiveness of Jewish art in the twentieth century. It fills a serious lacuna in scholarship: while more and more volumes appear on Christian and Islamic art, few books have appeared that deal with Jewish art. Rosen, at various junctures in this book, subtly demonstrates the mutual interchanges between Christian and Jewish art and his vast and impressive knowledge of his topic is both authoritative and persuasive. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and have learned so much from it and would recommend it very highly to all those (both researchers and students) interested in the visual interpretation of Jewish life and tradition.

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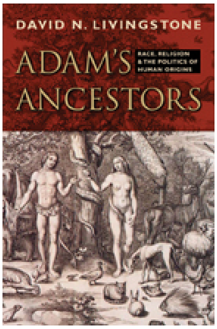
Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origins, by David N. Livingstone



Medicine, Science, and Religion in Historical Context | Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008; distributed in Australia and New Zealand by Footprint Books | 320 pages | ISBN: 978-0-8018-8813-7 (hardback) $37.00 | ISBN: 978-1-4214-0065-5 (softback) $25.00

Some years ago, I discovered that our local university library had a copy of the first edition of Isaac de la Peyrère's book *Praeadamitae* or *Men Before Adam*. When it was published in 1655, this book became something of a *cause célèbre*. A copy was burned by the public hangman in Paris and the author escaped a similar fate only by a hasty recantation. The fact that the book found its way to our library, in a country to whose recent "discovery" (from a European perspective) it alludes, is testimony to its diffusion and influence.

La Peyrère's work is the starting point of David Livingstone's excellent discussion of this once scandalous idea: the idea that there existed human beings before the biblical figure of Adam. The story reaches from the mid-seventeenth century to the early twenty-first. There is much in this history that has remained unchanged. Livingstone shows that modern white supremacists and neo-Nazis recycle ideas about human origins that were common in the late nineteenth century, while modern theologians use the early modern idea of "men before Adam" to reconcile orthodox Christian faith with Darwinian evolutionary theory. But the pre-adamite theme has also evolved, and it is this combination of continuity and change that forms the major theme of Livingstone's work.

What strikes the reader is the diversity of the purposes which the pre-adamite idea has been made to serve. La Peyrère's aim was, broadly speaking, humanitarian. While he considered the biblical Adam and Eve to be the ancestors of only the Jewish people, he did not deny the full humanity of those who came before. But in more recent times, the pre-adamite idea has been enlisted in support of the crudest forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, with Jews being excluded from Adamic descent. Despite La Peyrère's protestations—he claimed to be saving biblical authority—his work came to be associated with infidelity and atheism. But his idea is now used by conservative Christian apologists. After all, only those who still believe that there was a historical figure of Adam are likely to be concerned about precisely whose ancestor he was.

Livingstone also highlights the hermeneutical implications of these varying treatments of the pre-adamite idea. He reminds us—although readers of *Relegere* will need no reminder—of the degree to which biblical interpretation is "shaped by the cultural conditions and political stance of commentators" (184). Using a memorable phrase, he speaks of "geographies of reading" (222). "The seventeenth-century world of the pro-Semitic La Peyrère," for example, "with its millennial hopes for the coming of a Jewish Messiah, represented a markedly different space from that of the American South in the immediate ante- and postbellum years" (222). Even within the one period of history, the pre-adamite idea could be interpreted in quite contradictory ways. It could, for example, be appealed to by *both* defenders *and* opponents of African slavery.

If the book has a weakness (it is not easy to find one), it is that it does not distinguish as clearly as it could the various positions it discusses. There are, in fact, a number of positions in this debate, which should not be confused.

First, we need to distinguish between pre-adamism and polygenism, the latter being the belief that human beings have not one, but a variety of origins. Not all pre-adamites were polygenists. As Livingstone shows, while the two were often associated, the pre-adamite story could be given a monogenist reading. It is true that La Peyrère's view was polygenist: he held that human beings had arisen from a diversity of creative acts. But as late as 1972, the conservative evangelical John Stott could affirm that "several forms of pre-Adamic 'hominid' may have existed for thousands of years" before the appearance of Adam and Eve (213). Stott's view is at least compatible with the idea that all these "hominids" had a common evolutionary origin. In other words, Adam and Eve could be the ancestors of only one group of present-day people, while forming part of the one human family tree, stretching back to a still more distant progenitor.

Secondly, we need to distinguish between Darwinism and monogenism. While Charles Darwin himself was a monogenist—holding that all human beings have a common origin—his theory of evolution by natural selection is also capable of a polygenist interpretation. Remarkably enough, Darwin's monogenism has become the conventional wisdom of our age. Geneticists claim that one can, by way of mitochondrial DNA, trace all living human beings back to a single matrilineal ancestor, who is referred to (appropriately enough) as "Eve." But as Livingstone writes, "Darwin's own writings could be read through polygenetic spectacles" (140). One could accept his theory of evolution by natural selection, while holding that present-day human beings have a diversity of origins. One could even be a Darwinian monogenist, while holding that existing human beings belong to different species; this seems to have been the position of Darwin's great defender, T. H. Huxley (188).

Thirdly, we need to recognize that there are two forms of pre-adamism, distinguished by whether or not they believe that pre-adamic peoples continue to exist. One group denies this, holding that while there were human beings (or beings very similar to human beings) before Adam, they exist no longer. A popular view has been that they were destroyed at the time of the biblical flood, along with (on one reading) those adamites who had illegitimately mixed with them (206). But a second group holds that peoples alive today are surviving descendants of pre-adamite groups. It is among this second group that the pre-adamite idea has come to have racist implications. Europeans, or (more broadly) Caucasian peoples are generally assumed to be descendants of Adam, while Africans and perhaps Asians are descendants of pre-adamic peoples, who are assumed to be of lesser status. At the extreme end of this spectrum are those racist groups who have denied humanity to African peoples altogether. As one Nashville clergyman wrote in 1867, "the negro entered the ark *only as a beast*" (193).

Finally, despite the frequent association of pre-adamic polygenism with racism, we need to distinguish between monogenism and abolitionism: the movement to emancipate African slaves. This distinction is particularly important in light of recent claims made by two of Darwin's biographers. In *Darwin's Sacred Cause* (2009), Adrian Desmond and James Moore have argued that it was a hatred of slavery that motivated Darwin's monogenetic vision of human evolutionary origins. A casual reader of their book might be left with the impression that in the slavery debate, monogenists were always on the side of the angels. It is to Livingstone's credit that he refuses so simple an equation, noting that there were polygenists who opposed slavery and monogenists who supported it. A belief in common human origins could easily go hand-in-hand with a belief that the European race was superior to others or that the most appropriate relation of African to European was that of slave to master. In any case, supporters of slavery already felt that they had Scripture on their side: "a plain, unadorned reading of the Bible seemed to sanction the slave system, and there was no need to turn to secular science or unorthodox readings of Genesis to support it" (183).

In making these distinctions, however, I am not going beyond the information that Livingstone himself provides. I am merely highlighting what is implicit in his work, which is an invaluable overview of a fascinating chapter in the history of human thought.

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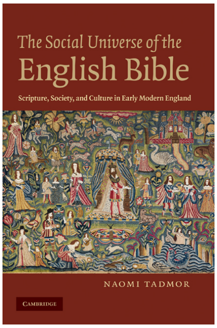
The Social Universe of the English Bible: Scripture, Society, and Culture in Early Modern England, by Naomi Tadmor


The Social Universe of the
English Bible
Scripture, Society, and Culture in Early Modern England
NAOMI TADMOR
CAMBRIDGE

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> So shall thy barnes be filled with plenty,
> and thy presses shall burst out with new
> wine. Proverbs 3:10

The years around 2011 commemorating the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible (KJB) certainly have been full of plenty. The presses have been bursting with new studies exploring the significance and impact of the "authorized" version. One might imagine the reader to be sated: "a glutton and a drunkard" (Deut 21:20). Yet—and here we leave the image for now—Naomi Tadmor's *The Social Universe of the English Bible: Scripture, Society, and Culture in Early Modern England* is new wine in a new bottle (Mark 2:22); it sparkles.

Tadmor explores the role of the English Bible in the formation of a certain kind of nationhood. In a series of insightful close readings of words and passages she reveals how the process of translation through several versions shaped an "anglicised" consciousness across a period much occupied with emphasising its own generation. In particular, she focuses on the relationship between English versions of the Bible and "the propirties of the hebrue tonge" (William Tyndale's words). Through acute philological analyses of English translations of the Hebrew Bible, Tadmor demonstrates how a contemporary "living idiom" (13) was anciently begot and future generating: "the semantic shifts and transpositions, which took place in the processes of translation, affected not just individual words but the construction of a social universe" (20).

Tadmor structures her persuasive argument around four main themes, each given a chapter, in which she argues that shifts in meaning which took place in translation "were textually telling and historically significant" (17). The first section focuses on neighbourly relationships. In it the author argues that although ideas of early modern fellowship were "anchored in the language of the Holy Scriptures" translators rendered the Hebrew *re‘a* (friend, companion, fellow man, every man) as "neighbour." The term was then employed as a "directive for social action" (26), with political consequences.

The second chapter on women and wives develops ideas from Tadmor's earlier published papers that explored the idioms of marriage exposed by early modern Bible translations.[1] Tadmor argues that these "naturalised" and "habituated" monogamous modes (53). She provides a detailed trail of the cumulative effect of "Englishing" on social regulation which, in parallel to other transformations, "served to propagate a biblically inspired doctrine of marriage" (67). Gendered formulations posited as intrinsic are, as we might anticipate, politically inspired. Essentialism is after all a social construct. If this is not exactly news, the level of detail that Tadmor provides persuades us of the extent to which linguistic tools were used to build the master's house, to give foundations to a system of patriarchal "fatherly superiority" (159).

In chapter three, Tadmor discusses the way in which early modern translation also normalised "master-servant" relationships and embedded a language of slavery and bondage found in biblical laws, proverbs and aphorisms. She claims that Latin translations had reflected notions of "un-free labour" (94). By the Middle Ages ideas of serfdom had changed; there was bondage of blood as well as tenancy. Tadmor notes that the Wyclifite rendition mistranslates *servus* for "servant." Tyndale's subsequent retention of the word had a major influence: "his Anglicised language of 'service' remained current in years to come (indeed, it is estimated that around 80 per cent of the text of the Authorised Version is still based on Tyndale)" (97). Designations of service relationships and claims that follow them were thus "successfully anchored in the Divine Word of the biblical text" (107).

Tadmor's final chapter deals with English biblical polity, the order of church and state. English Bibles, she contends, "left no room for doubt that the ancient polities of the Hebrew Old Testament were headed by 'princes' and that princely rule therefore was of an unquestionably ancient and holy provenance" (121). The consequences of such claims were played out through the formation of monarchical government and (for one ruler at least) the fatal machinations of Charles I and his contemporaries.

There were other causes and consequences to the struggle for biblical supremacy that might have featured here more strongly. These relate to internecine conflicts within the reforming churches and between other religions of the book. Tadmor mentions Luther's 1523 translation of the Pentateuch from the Hebrew original, inspired by his claim for justification by scripture (2–3). Other historians have noted that Luther's mission related to a perceived threat of Jewish scriptural scholarship, not only to interpretation of the Word but also to Christian social structures. For instance, Raphael Hallett (no known relation to this reviewer) has argued in his essay "'Vile Interpretations'" that Luther conceived "linguistic threat spreads through from the historical tradition of Jewish exegesis," a threat not just to text but to body with "Christian persona" under "social and theological *siege*."[2] Tadmor locates Luther's attempts, like those of Tyndale, in trying to release the text from "the shackles of Rome" (3). Hallett argues that, because of the rigour of their reference to the Hebrew scriptures, "For Luther, meticulous scriptural engagement with the intractable Jews is more urgent and necessary than with the deluded Catholics" (92). There were, then, several reasons for pressing translation back to the original language.

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[1] E.g., Naomi Tadmor, "Women and Wives: The Language of Marriage in Early Modern English Biblical Translations", *History Workshop Journal* 62, no. 1 (2006): 1–27.

It is here that we might wish for a more extended study, one beyond the remit Tadmor quite reasonably sets for her book. Among other things, she has raised for us intriguing issues about the role of mistranslation in what might be termed propaganda, and the ways in which claimants of biblical authority use their status to perpetuate oppression, in terms of gender, labour and other means through the early modern period and beyond. Having read Tadmor's book we might also wish to consider further implications of ways in which etymologists have elided as well as elicited meaning. It would be interesting to explore the extent of knowledge of Hebrew in early modern England, to understand how far readers would be aware, resistant, or complicit, in perpetuating error.

We might wish to examine the literary and social repercussions of linguistic twisting, some of it innocent through negligence, and some of it less so. The claims about kingship and authority in Shakespeare, for example, have themselves perpetuated mis-readings, in turn exacerbated by critical claims about early modern hierarchies. Between 1564 and 1616 some 211 editions of the Bible were produced and around 422,000 copies sold (9). While Tadmor refers several times to Shakespeare (his use of "captain" in *Henry V*, and to Brutus "made one" in matrimonial-speak with conspirators in *Julius Caesar*, 5.5.72), further studies might expose the ways in which literature has played its part in accreting tyrannies of words.

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[2] Raphael Hallett, "'Vile Interpretations' and 'Devilish Supplements': Jewish Exegesis and Linguistic Siege in Martin Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543)", in *The Religions of the Book: Christian Perceptions, 1400–1600*, ed. Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

More significant still, perhaps, Tadmor's work has implications beyond the early modern period. We might hope for further exploration of the role of language and wilful misreading by those seeking to justify more recent atrocities.

This is a fine and fruitful investigation; one ripe for development in keeping with all good studies. It provides a persuasively detailed account of how a text in transmission and transition translated its own values on to and away from ancient sources in order to foment a fresh "social universe." If "newe wine take away the heart" (Hos 4:11) this book restores it.

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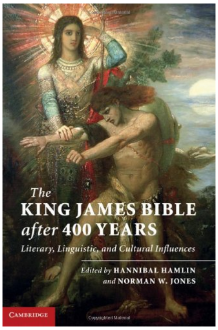
The King James Bible after 400 Years: Literary, Linguistic, and Cultural Influences, edited by Hannibal Hamlin and Norman W. Jones


The
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Edited by HANNIBAL HAMLIN
and NORMAN W. JONES
CAMBRIDGE

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In the introduction to *The King James Bible after 400 Years*, Hamlin and Jones describe it as "the most complete one-volume exploration of the King James Bible and its influence to date" (2). This assessment is further promoted by the publishers, and reasonably so; yet the end product does not quite meet the promise of its subtitle.

The book is divided into three parts, with a total of fifteen essays in addition to the introduction. Notes are provided at the end of each chapter; this being an indication of the book's dual purpose—to serve scholars (who may prefer footnotes) and a "wider audience" (2). In terms of the volume's overall coherence, the editors identify a common thread: the repeated and successful use of the King James Bible (KJB) as "an ironic vehicle for criticizing authority" (16) by those determined to resist, dissent from, or defy Church and State.

The introductory chapter sits a little awkwardly at the helm. Coverage of the KJB's origins is over-simplified at points, but generally functional, and will help the inexpert reader. However, the ensuing survey of reception contains so many examples that it becomes unwieldy, and the chapter as a whole provides limited assistance for those who wish to navigate the book's contents. A conventional summary guide to the chapters may have been more helpful.

The first section is devoted to the language of the KJB, beginning with the "King James Steamroller," Stephen Prickett's metaphor for the slow process which pressed Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic into "uniform" English, before cementing literary style. Prickett brings out the translators' successful pursuit of equivalent polyvalence with several well chosen (if somewhat derivative) examples. The "swerving" of 1 Timothy 1:6, bearing both physical and metaphorical connotations, is a case in point. The example is borrowed from Ward Allen, but alas, something has gone badly wrong with the Greek citation (δστσζησατεξ for ἀστοχήσαντες); the same example was misprinted in Prickett's *Origins of Narrative* (Cambridge University Press, 1996 (90 n. 83)), so perhaps the Press would benefit from a Greek proofreader.

With his first-class command of Hebrew, Robert Alter is more than competent to explain how its synthetic constructions, monosyllabic vocabulary, and paratactic syntax differ from idiomatic English. Alter argues that, because there was no Tyndalian version for King James' team to work with, the translators may be regarded as responsible for the felicities and flaws of Ecclesiastes's English. He finds that they captured the Hebrew's "emphatic incremental repetition" (50) but neglected "mercantile vocabulary" and introduced unnecessary and mistaken abstractions, such as "vexation of spirit" (Eccl 1:14; for which Alter proposes "herding the wind"). Despite other "stylistic pratfalls" (54), Alter's verdict is positive: the translators profoundly affected the English language, "intervening in [its] evolution" and communicating the "experience of the Bible" in a way both "indigenously English" and true to the "cadences" and "tonalities" of the original (58).

Section two focuses on history. John N. King and Aaron T. Pratt select and analyse data, mainly records in the English Short Title Catalogue, to demonstrate how the "materiality and artifactuality" of early English Bibles may shed light on their "consumption" (61, 63). They identify correlations, suggesting that combinations of typeface and format (from single-fold folio to 32mo) may reflect external circumstances such as the political status of translations, and shifts in commercial demand. The authors offer a convincing interpretation of the data, including the commercial reasoning behind simultaneous publication of multiple formats and versions by a single printer, and use diagrams to advantage to illustrate spikes in demand and the lifespan of individual versions. This is a densely factual essay, replete with observations and hypotheses which testify to the potential of this new research focus.

Gergely Juhász's essay establishes the KJB's debt to Antwerp, "the ideal place for printing clandestine English books" (102) including a 1526 Tyndale NT and Coverdale's 1535 Bible (Juhász follows Guido Latré in this regard). The continuity between these early translations and that of 1611 is illustrated with examples from Isaiah and Hebrews (there is scope for further analysis here). Juhász also draws attention to the contribution of Tyndale's contemporary, George Joye, who bequeathed several terms to the KJB. Juhász's notes are exemplary, and for those unfamiliar with Joye or the Antwerp connections, this should prove a welcome and interesting introduction.

Isabel Rivers shows how Philip Doddridge at once respected and contested the work of the 1611 translators within his *Family Expositor* (1739–56). Thus at Mark 15:28, Doddridge retained "transgressors," stating his reason as "to keep as close to our English Version of the Passage quoted, as the Greek will allow me" (i.e. the OT of the KJB—Mark is quoting Isaiah 53:12; emphasis as Doddridge); but at Luke 23:34 shifted Jesus' words to a different form of the present tense: "they know not what they *are doing*" (emphasis added), commenting that his translation gave "the *exact Import* of what Grammarians call the Present Tense" (135; emphasis changed). Rivers's careful study moves from Doddridge's close interaction with the KJB text to establish his centrality in contemporaneous Christian culture, emphasising especially his influence on John Wesley. There is ample justification for further research.

R. S. Sugirtharajah exposes the colonisation endemic in "Englishing" a West Asian text. His most prominent target, Adam Nicolson, is shown denigrating the disciples' "despicable" scholarship before heaping praise upon the highly academic fidelity of James's translators, in a particularly pernicious takeover (150ff.).[3] This essay is a devastating critique of uncritical attitudes to the KJB, drawing attention to the ways in which its "clones" damaged indigenous cultures, and bringing to light its varied appropriations as totem, tobacco wrapping, or template for the countertexts of the colonized. "The survival of the KJB," he concludes, "depends on its giving up its elitist, majestic, ceremonial, stately, celebratory, and establishment image" (160).

[3] The reference is to Nicolson's *Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the Making of the King James Bible* (London: HarperCollins, 2003), 82. The book was published in the US and in a UK reissue under the title, *God's Secretaries*, rather underlining Sugirtharajah's point.

Paul Gutjahr traces the shifting tastes of Bible consumers, and the translation strategies which produced new versions, including the late Eugene Nida's contribution—"dynamic" or "functional equivalence." A range of accessible Bibles has enabled a democratisation of the marketplace, "dethroning" the KJB. Gutjahr is quick to conflate democracy and consumerism, but there is scope for a stronger critique or questioning of the ideologies behind this development: how does the apparent preference for highly determined texts relate to other aspects of late modernity; how do modern reference Bibles compare with the annotations of Geneva, Scofield or the *Family Expositor*?

The final section is considerably larger, covering the KJB's influence on literature with a multitude of case studies, both the classical core (Milton, Bunyan, Wordsworth) and texts from the twentieth century (Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, Toni Morrison, et alia). Taking snapshots of Milton's youth, middle years, and later work, Jason P. Rosenblatt shows how an early disregard for translation changed to a need to prove himself against the KJB; then as the poet matured, a combination of assertive autonomy and "exultant poetic freedom" led to the KJB's creative reintroduction (197). Analysing the annotations Milton provided to support his divergences from the KJB, Rosenblatt relies upon Brown, Driver and Briggs's Hebrew lexicon, without acknowledging the anachronism. In discussing נאות (Ps 83:12), he then judges Milton "unpersuasive" because his reading does not accord with BDB (187), foreclosing the attempt to make sense of the poet's own interpretation. (Milton's translation is odd and inappropriate, at first glance; yet most likely he is eliding roots, judging "palace" to be a becoming abode for God, possibly influenced by an assumed Greek cognate, *ναος*.) Despite some methodological limitations, the overall argument of the essay remains sound.

Discussions of seventeenth-century writers and the Bible frequently have to contend with the same question—which Bible? Hannibal Hamlin gives a convincing answer on Bunyan's behalf: the "vast majority of identifiable biblical quotations and allusions" are "decisively KJB" (212). Noting that Bunyan's spiritual autobiography shows a peculiar sense of scriptural agency, Hamlin argues that while Bunyan shared a Puritan concept of allegory with contemporaries, his own life's "progress" through (or inside) the Bible is embodied in the "scriptural intensity" of *Pilgrim's Progress* (215).

By the late eighteenth century, the KJB was the Bible; Adam Potkay's leading thesis is that the Romantic poets (Wordsworth, Shelley, Blake) transform it, using the "rhetorical sublime" (221) while overturning or reversing the text to expose "tensions or fissures" (220), an approach which Potkay terms "antithetical." There are tensions within Potkay's enterprise; for example, a stress on the deliberate ambiguity of Blake's proverbs is accompanied by claims about what Blake did or did not know, think, or mean. Still the chosen juxtapositions are productive, identifying a trend within Romantic attitudes to the Bible while allowing for the different motivations and practices of each writer.

Michael Wheeler skilfully sketches John Ruskin's career, showing how the leading intellectual's experience of the Bible may be seen as a microcosm for the broader evolution of Victorian relationships with the KJB. Where Ruskin's early writings contained numerous allusions to the KJB (and to evangelical hymnody), these were displaced by Ruskin's own studies of the Greek New Testament. Though this study diminished the KJB's authoritative reputation, appreciation for its "habitual music" did not fade. Wheeler makes his own contribution to KJB allusions (he may prefer the term AV-lusions), and picks out Ruskin's biblical commentaries as an area "ripe for research" (241).

James Wood's essay speaks more to the Bible than the specifics of the KJB. Wood characterises *To the Lighthouse* as "stealthily biblical" (253), and goes on to demonstrate how Woolf uses biblical referents (leviathan), allusions (the psalmists' "how long?"), and stylistic elements, as well as prayer book language (vouchsafe) to convey the apocalyptic atmosphere of the First World War. It is a hard case to build due to the nature of the text ("difficult, obscure, and sometimes overwrought"), but Wood rises to the occasion, giving an account of *To the Lighthouse*'s ambivalent quest that fits well with Woolf's other writings, and brings to light details hitherto overlooked.

Part of Bunyan's allusive repertoire, the Song of Solomon proves to be a recurrent intertext. This is obviously true of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, which features in both Norman Jones's and Katherine Clay Bassard's studies. For Jones ("The King James Bible as ghost in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Beloved*"), the characters' dialogue with the biblical text signifies an unexpectedly competitive possession, and implies a pre-conscious relationship with biblical language. Bassard draws out the perversity of the KJB translation "black but comely" (compare "black and beautiful"), contextualising Morrison as one of many African American writers who have worked to redefine the Bible, "de-authorizing" the racism and enslavement endorsed by "the master's unauthorized reading" (301). Bassard's piece, spanning more than two centuries, is relevant for those with literary and postcolonial interests, but should also augment reading lists for general studies of the Bible's influence (in politics, in the USA).

In a more comical reference to the Song of Solomon, Heather Walton relates how an aunt instructed Jean Rhys: "don't imagine it's about a woman" (324). Walton adopts a deliberately positive hermeneutic for her study, shaping it with a question: what did the KJB give to "women writing in the twentieth century"? In Rhys's case, the Bible came to stand over against the oppressive (purity, whites, England, cliché, wealth), not as a redemptive force but as a support for her own revolt against the status quo. Similarly, for Elizabeth Smart, a writer who "inhabited" the KJB, the Song of Solomon gave license to her own sensual approach to sexuality. Fascinatingly, Smart's source notes were excised by her publishers, thus effectively suppressing explicit biblical references; these notes remain unpublished, a gap which has contributed to the undervaluation of Smart's work (and may provide matter for further study).

At the end of the book, there are two chronologies of Bibles, one which provides a brief description of each major English translation from Wyclif to the RSV, and a second to accompany Paul Gutjahr's essay (chapter 7); the latter focuses on English Bibles from 1957 onward, providing basic bibliographic details (but no description). A select but extensive bibliography distinguishes between volumes which concern the "background, history, and reception" of the KJB and those which explore its "literary-cultural influence." The general indexing seems fair, but the index of biblical passages is badly wanting. In the first place, it picks up only specific chapter and verse references, omitting to record where a book is discussed (as with Rhys on the Song of Songs, 324), but it even fails at the narrower task: Rivers's (or Doddridge's) explicit reference to Isaiah 53:12, for example, is not listed at all. This is an obvious impediment to the volume's usefulness.

Reviewing the project as a whole, there are slight indications that the editors participate in the colonisation Sugirtharajah identified, in the suppression of James's Scottishness, for instance. However, the major disappointment is that the sections do not reflect the tripartite subtitle, particularly in terms of "cultural" influence. The introductory chapter teases the reader with references to cinema and drama, but these genres are not even touched on within the range of essays (the same might be said of art and music). A more minor frustration concerns presentation: throughout the volume, extended quotations are indicated not by indentation but by a minor adjustment in font size, making them harder to distinguish and read. Given this strange format, it is not surprising that one passage in the volume is wrongly presented as quotation (312).

Setting aside these deficiencies, the individual studies are all varied and engaging, offering unique insights into the KJB's past 400 years. This volume makes a strong case for biblical literacy amongst scholars of English literature, and illustrates the way in which literary studies can benefit from the involvement of those with biblical expertise. Individual chapters may well form part of the reading list for those taking courses in the Bible as/and literature, and the contributors identify a good number of opportunities for further research.

In the introduction, the editors share a hope that the quatercentenary is a moment of "resurrection," taking comfort in the spread of contributors ("scholars at every stage of their professional careers"). Positioned at the other the end of the volume, and reflecting specifically upon literature, Heather Walton expresses foreboding, "a disturbing sense" that—no longer part of the cultural furniture (or wallpaper)—the KJB's gifts may not be taken up by contemporary authors. The quiet openness behind her hesitant lament is more thought-provoking than many lyrical elegies voiced during 2011, and the editors' choice of this essay as the concluding note (Jones might have taken this place, chronologically) makes some amends for the volume's other infelicities.

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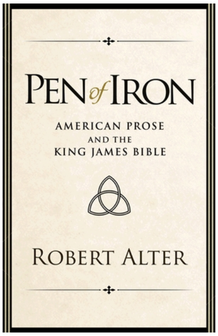
Pen of Iron: American Prose and the King James Bible, by Robert Alter

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010 | 198 pages | ISBN: 978-0-691-12881-8 (hardback) $19.95



One of the great benefits of the four hundredth anniversary of the first publication of the King James Bible (KJB) in 1611 has been the flowering of scholarship on the history and influence of that most important and enduring of English texts. Robert Alter's *Pen of Iron*, a study of the influence of the KJB on modern American prose, is part of that publishing trend, although as it is comprised of material originally delivered as the Spencer Trask Lectures at Princeton University in April 2008 it somewhat pre-dates the current publishing craze. Some of the recently published materials on the texts, contexts and cultures of the KJB have been very fine examples of scholarly analysis. This brief book, however, says very little about the biblical text itself. Its intention is to suggest some of the ways in which prose writers of the last two centuries have drawn upon the style of the KJB to articulate an essentially American literary register.

Over the last number of decades, Alter has established himself as one of our finest critics of the literary reception of biblical writing. His previous work has marked many contemporary approaches to the study of biblical texts as literature, and the study of biblical texts' influence upon literature. The burden of this book, the analysis of a biblical literary style, is particularly timely. *Pen of Iron* redresses the current critical neglect of style: in the last several decades, the study of the techniques of writing has been eclipsed by that of the ideas expressed in writing, and the analysis of ideology has supplanted the practice of close reading. As Alter puts it: "reading the untranslatable text is ultimately what departments of literary studies ought to be about, but in the peculiar atmosphere that has dominated the academy for several decades, the reverse has often taken place: the original text has been read as though it might as well have been a translation" (40). The main chapters of *Pen of Iron* therefore pursue close readings of several important American novels, including works by Herman Melville, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Saul Bellow, Marilynne Robinson, and Cormac McCarthy—alongside, ironically, close readings of selected biblical texts in translation. The chapter on Melville's *Moby-Dick* is perhaps the most convincing work in this study. "Melville's own huge and distinctively American ambition, to fuse poetry and prose, epic and tragedy and novel, led him to combine colloquial and biblical, Shakespearian and Miltonic, with the ambling language of a learned encyclopaedist thrown in for good measure" (76). In the chapter on Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* we have more obvious evidence of an author's Bible reading—Alter cites Faulkner's claim to have read through the KJB "every ten or twelve years" (78). Alter's consideration of the novel notes Faulkner's drawing upon the ambiguities of the David narrative (80), though he misses an important allusion to Melchizedek when the novel describes "a personage who in the remote Mississippi of that time must have appeared almost phoenix-like, fullsprung from no childhood, born of no woman and impervious to time and, vanished, leaving no bones nor dust anywhere" (87; the allusion is to Hebrews 7:3: "He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the

Son of God he continues a priest forever")—perhaps an instance of an overwhelming concentration on the Old Testament precluding a sensitivity to the New.

Any work on literary dependence opens itself to the danger of overreading, and *Pen of Iron* is no exception. Alter admits, for example, that "'son', of course, is one of the most common words in the English language, and so one should not automatically assume that its recurrence in *Absalom, Absalom!* owes anything to the King James Version" (102–3). But Alter goes on to read the expression "my son" in relation to similar statements by Abraham and David (104). This raises a larger issue: for all the genius of his readings, Alter does not establish the canons by which he recognises literary dependence, either to the Bible, in distinction from other works using similar vocabulary or style, or to a particular translation of the Bible, particularly the KJB. So the conclusion that *Absalom, Absalom!* "vividly demonstrates how the King James Version of the Bible, three full centuries after the Puritan founders, continued to enrich and distinguish American prose" (113) is not proven. Alter's claims with regard to Saul Bellow are perhaps more moderate: "I do not mean to claim that he was consciously imitating the Bible in this project but simply that he had internalized something of its dignified, even stark, simplicity of diction" (130). But this is simply to recognise a pattern of similarity, rather than a description of dependence.

The effect of this argument, therefore, is not always convincing. Perhaps most problematically, Alter's argument is repeatedly tempted to homogenise the style of the KJB. The text the influence of which he is tracing is rather more varied in its vocabulary and register than Alter sometimes suggests. Furthermore, Alter's argument rests on a series of contestable historical claims. The first paragraph of the first chapter is especially problematic: he claims, in the opening paragraph, that in England "the Protestant Reformation took an important step toward its consolidation in 1611 when the Bible was made fully accessible to the reading public in a translation that rapidly became canonical" (1). This is a large claim, and it does not take account of the many dozens of editions of the Geneva Bible (1560) that had been published in popular formats to huge popular success: in fact, even through the first half of the seventeenth century, it was the Geneva Bible that was most often drawn upon by canonical authors. Neither does Alter delineate the elements that made the style of the KJB so "distinctive" (1) from that of the previous English translations. This is an important consideration, given that in their preface to the new work the King James translators admitted that they were only attempting to improve an existing translation. Additionally, the translators continued to draw upon the foundational texts of the Tyndale tradition: the KJB was in many ways little more than an anthology of the best of the English translations of the previous century. Nor does Alter justify his claim—still in the opening paragraph—that "it was in America that the potential of the 1611 translation to determine the foundational language and symbolic imagery of a whole culture was most fully realized" (1). In some ways the claim is unverifiable—and the gesture, although appropriate to the lecture series in which this book originated, seems inappropriate to its final publication. But it is an important point for Alter to establish, for his readings of American prose return to his claim that "the language of the Bible remains an ineluctable framework for verbal culture in this country" (3). And yet it might be the case that Alter does not give sufficient nuance to the biblically informed culture he is describing. He notes that in its early decades "Harvard required Hebrew but not koine Greek" (2), and works from this to a larger claim that the Old Testament rather than the New Testament was the "text of reference" in the making of early America. The difficulty with this claim is that college entrants in the seventeenth century would already have been proficient in Greek. This is not to deny the importance of Old Testament narrative material in the making of the early American mind—but it does qualify the grand sweep of the argument of Alter's introduction.

But in so many ways this is a book to be welcomed. It is certainly true, as Alter observes, that "we no longer have a culture pervaded by Scripture, where Bible reading is a daily practice in parlor and in pulpit, where the active memories of ordinary people are stocked with many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of phrases and verses from the canonical texts"—though this reviewer is not as hopeful as is Robert Alter that "something of the old dynamic stubbornly persists" (180). And it is for that reason that we need critics of the calibre of Robert Alter to remind us of the mental worlds that we have lost. Popular appreciation of "America's national book" (9) may have gone the way of popular appreciation of America's monarchy, but *Pen of Iron* makes a powerful case for the preservation of the legacy of good King James.

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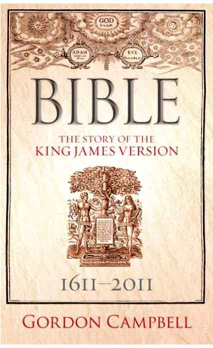
Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611–2011, by Gordon Campbell

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010 | xiii + 354 pages | ISBN: 978-0-19-955759-2 (hardback) £16.99



Professor Campbell characterises his contribution to King James Bible (KJB) studies as "an affectionate biography" (vi). The companion volume to OUP's anniversary issue of the 1611 Bible (itself edited by Campbell), this is a book intended for the general reader. It comprises an introduction and thirteen chapters, supplemented by thirty-seven black-and-white illustrations, two appendices, a bibliography and index.

The introduction includes a brilliantly compact summary of the emergence of different English Churches from the 1500s onwards (marred only by the most common of slips in reference to the "United Reform [*sic*] Church"—the correct title is of course "Reformed"). His clarification of the nuances behind "evangelical" discourse is similarly concise and helpful. Indeed, a capacity to be both succinct and precise is evident throughout the book.

Dispatching the pre-history of the English Bible in a single chapter, Campbell then gives considerable attention to the detail of production, including ideology (the reasons for its commission and the commitments of its translators), the translation process, and the physical object. The structure of chapter 2 ("The Commissioning") is well thought out, offering a commentary on the translators' principles (both Bancroft's instructions and the post facto reports of Samuel Ward to the Synod of Dort). Again, there are one or two issues that ought to have been picked up by the proofreader—a most odd reference to the practicalities of "rule 4," where surely rule 8 is intended (42), and an awkward transition that implies the inclusion of the Apocrypha was due to (rather than in spite of) Puritan objections (45), which is probably not what Campbell intended.

The third chapter is illustrated with excellent reproductions of the work-in-progress; photographs of the Bodleian's annotated Bishops' Bible support Campbell's repeated call for its unbinding (to permit further study). An entertaining pen-portrait of each Company, complemented by a more detailed appendix, underscores the erudition and superlative linguistic skills of the known translators, and the variation between the groups (perhaps one might add that it was not only learned *men* who had the Syriac New Testament in their collections—Durham Cathedral library preserves a copy that was once the property of Arbella Stuart, cousin to King James).

The chapter on translation is the first to consider the particular linguistic features of the KJB. Campbell provides insight into its relationship with both contemporaneous spoken (informal) and Shakespearean (formal) English, a comparison to which he returns when considering its eighteenth-century reception.

Chapter 5 attends to physical features of the first edition, including its sometimes surprising iconography. The New Testament title page was taken over from the 1602 Bishops' Bible, which introduced representation of the Trinity, and also included each of Israel's twelve tribes using symbols that draw on Hebrew sources (96); their origin bears further enquiry, but Campbell is incorrect in assuming that the Bishops' designer had "learned advice." Prior editions of the Geneva Bible (ca. 1599–1602) carry a very similar design, and the mirroring in the tribal icons lends support to an initial suspicion that the designer has copied these motifs (along with dove and lamb of the Trinity). A second oversight concerns the border designs; these were freshly prepared for the 1611 Bible, and pay homage to the king through an interweaving of English rose, Scots thistle, Irish harp (and French fleur-de-lys), a point which escapes Campbell.

Chapters 6–8 sketch the development of the text (approaches to editing, changes to spelling, punctuation, etc.) and its reception, century by century. Text landmarks include Cambridge University's successful challenge to Barker's bible-printing monopoly (1629), Parris and Blayney's addition of archaisms during the 1700s (ensuring every nominative plural "you" became "ye"), and the divergence of American and British KJBs by virtue of the first US attempt at standardisation (published in 1856). In terms of cultural reception, Vicesimus Knox's 1782 verdict on the "impropriety of publicly adopting a new translation of the Bible" (cited by Campbell, 146) is seen as a turning point, while the various Bible Societies contributed to its bestselling status with their mammoth distribution efforts. It would be interesting to see Campbell's assertion that the perceived poetic qualities of the KJB reflect its construction for reading aloud, when contrasted with modern texts designed for silent consumption, explored more thoroughly.

Chapter 9 is dedicated to the Cambridge Paragraph Bibles. Campbell is probably right in his assertion that the paragraphs of their title are not the strongest selling point; but his praise for the efforts of Scrivener and Norton (the latter especially) is well placed: "By the measure of textual scholarship, there are no better editions of the KJV" (177).

As colonial powers shifted across the Atlantic, argues Campbell, so did the story of the KJB (or at least its centre of gravity). In chapter 10, he constructs a narrative of US history that intertwines the rise of the conversion experience, and fundamentalist Christianity, with the influence of religion on politics, and demonstrates the significance of the KJB for both Democrat and Republican politicians.

No "biography" of the KJB would be complete without an appearance from its descendants, including the Revised Version. Campbell attributes the RV's popular failure to a lack of scholarly agreement over the Greek texts; though Westcott and Hort's championship of the Sinaiticus-Vatican manuscripts is now accepted, it was controversial in the late 1800s, and John William Burgon performed an excellent character assassination grounded in his own support of the Textus Receptus.

Much of twentieth-century reception is occupied by the contest between those who conserve prophetic and doctrinal readings, and others willing to separate the text from its traditional baggage. Against this somewhat pessimistic backdrop, Campbell highlights the surprising ecumenical coalitions which accompanied new Bible versions.

Considering other twentieth-century treatments of the KJB, Campbell seems to misread T. S. Eliot's critique of others' praise for "the Bible as literature." Eliot's point is not that its literariness is God-given, but that its primary cultural status "as the report of the Word of God" accounts for its "literary *influence*" (Eliot's 1935 essay on "Religion and Literature," cited by Campbell, 255; emphasis changed). The KJB could not have become the apex of the literary standards it helped shape, had it not been influential for non-literary reasons. There are other occasions where one might quarrel with Campbell's reading of case studies, but given the brevity necessitated by the book's format this is perhaps unfair.

Campbell's survey of the KJB's position today (chapter 13) is less substantial than the other chapters, and the closing section is lumbered with that slightly anecdotal quality which often plagues attempts at near-contemporary history. Moreover, there are hints of a romantic allegiance in his conclusion, that this is "the Bible of the heart" (275); perhaps our observer is not wholly disinterested.

Reviewing the work in full: in terms of presentation, the illustrations are consistently excellent, but the explanation often precedes the view, such that a simple "see overleaf" would be beneficial. Indeed, internal cross-referencing is curiously absent from the first several chapters, with the exception of King-James-Only-ism which repeatedly rears its head in anticipation of the final chapter. This points to a deeper issue in the context of an academic review: for those biblical scholars who have been invited to speak beyond their expertise in this special anniversary year, *Bible* has doubtless been a handy point of reference; and those with considerable expertise in the field will surely have had no difficulty debating the finer points of Campbell's interpretations; but for those now engaged in an academic study, the absence of footnotes and other critical apparatus render Campbell's work largely impotent. This is in spite of the thorough and extensive bibliography (a list by chapter or theme may have been more accessible).

Campbell purposefully restricts his sphere of reference to "England and the United States" (6), an understandable decision given the need to impose some limits upon the project. However, it is indicative of a larger disappointment: the KJB was commissioned by a Scotsman and is owned by English-speakers across the globe; *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611–2011* is one man's Anglocentric account of 400 years. In 2011, might we not expect greater attention to the marginalised others? In fact, there is surprisingly little beyond the confines of the commonplace where the KJB's reception is concerned—its standing as the exemplar of English literature and language, and its influence on US politics. (By way of an exception, it is good to see the Scofield Reference Bible placed under the spotlight in chapter 12, given the ongoing cultural impact of Scofield's eschatological readings.) There is not much that is new.

All this is perhaps an unnecessary detraction; what Campbell aims to do, he does, and what he does, he does decently well. A mastery of the English language is evident throughout; describing the "doctrine of the [KJB's] verbal inspiration" as a nineteenth-century "shibboleth" (66) is a particularly fine case in point. One suspects that such flourishes come naturally for Campbell, though there is a concurrent risk that his vocabulary will prove too great a challenge for the less intellectual reader. Nonetheless, the combination of such verve with occasional first-person intrusions (the style hints at his talent for public-speaking) creates a book full of authorial character. The result is genuinely entertaining as well as informative. With individual chapters sufficiently self-contained to allow the reader to dip in and out, this is, in short, an excellent book for the coffee table, though not the best tool for the study.

Of course, any scholar choosing to explore the phenomena of this 400th anniversary (and there is work to be done) may well include this volume as an object for analysis.

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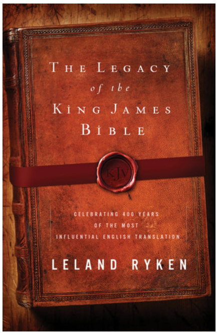
The Legacy of the King James Bible: Celebrating 400 Years of the Most Influential English Translation, by Leland Ryken



Wheaton: Crossway, 2011 | 265 pages | ISBN: 978-1-4335-1388-6 (softback) $15.99

The reference librarian of our new seminary library, Mary Robison, searched WorldCat and OCLC for books about the King James Bible (KJB) written in English between 2009 and 2011, and found that thirty-six are listed. Of those, six were published in 2011 and eight in 2010. This is one of the 2011 books, by Wheaton College English Professor Leland Ryken. It is an encomium to the 1611 King James translation. He says that the KJB is "demonstrably the greatest English Bible ever." He grew up listening to it. As a child he heard readings from the KJB at every meal and twice a day on Sundays. He writes this book to tell the story of what it is and how it has influenced the English-speaking world.

Professor Ryken calls the translators of the KJB "the best of the best" (53) and their work "the most accurate bible that had appeared" (62). But what does "most accurate" mean? We might agree that the KJB evidences superior literary qualities and that it has had "unparalleled influence in the English-speaking world" (98). However, as Ryken acknowledges, the KJB is based on manuscripts scholars today know to be inferior. But he calls the KJB superior because it is better than several modern translations adopting the principle of dynamic equivalence. So "most accurate" does not mean "based on the best manuscripts" but is the result of comparing the KJB to some modern translations based on dynamic equivalence. To call the KJB "most accurate" by comparison with several modern translations that employ a different philosophy of translation seems odd if not disingenuous. It is like trying to use a barometer to measure volume. Why not compare the KJB to more formal modern translations such as those of Everett Fox for the Hebrew Bible, or Robert Alter for the Psalms? Here I note that Ryken never uses the (gender-neutral) New Revised Standard Version, so the reservoir of translations from which the book draws is restricted for reasons that are not explained. The New Revised Standard Version is mentioned only to be dismissed, since its adherence to the KJB is "halfhearted" (73). Only the New King James, the Revised Standard Version, and the English Standard Version stand in the KJB tradition. Ryken's book is written for people who share his opinion about the New Revised Standard Version.

What might "accurate" mean in general? Does it mean faithful reproduction of the Greek and Hebrew language of the source text? Or does it mean faithful rendition of the source text so as to be understood by modern readers? Ryken seems to favor a more literal or word-for word rendering of the source texts in majestic prose. A paraphrase translation of the KJB, or one of formal equivalence, or one of dynamic equivalence could each justifiably be called accurate, even if each had a different understanding of the word "accurate" based on method or usage. All translations have strengths and weaknesses. In 2003 the scholar David Daniell, an expert on the Bible translator William Tyndale, asserted that the Geneva Bible is superior to the KJB: "The replacement from 1611 of the remarkable, accurate, informative, forward-looking Geneva Bible even at the time of its greatest growth and power with the backward looking, increasingly Latinist, often baldly unhelpful KJB is one of the tragedies of our culture." Ryken does not assess the Geneva Bible; he simply describes it as "a great forerunner to the King James" to which "it eventually gave way." It is not just that the KJB relies on inferior manuscripts (13–14, 64–66): it is that scholars today have many more manuscripts and they are much older. And the alternative to the KJB is not several modern translations employing principles of dynamic equivalence, but rather a balanced assessment of modern translations using varying principles of translation together with (reconstructed) Hebrew and Greek texts.

Ryken's book is divided into four parts: 1) The KJB in its own day, 2) the KJB in history, 3) the KJB as a literary masterpiece, and 4) the literary influence of the KJB. It is safe to say that the second half of the book is more reliable than the first given the author's expertise in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature. Thus, readers may encounter strange statements about the text of the Bible here and there: "The prologue to John's gospel echoes a famous hymn to Zeus that the ancient Greeks had sung to

Zeus for centuries by the time John wrote it" (154). Ryken states that Tyndale "died a martyr for translating the Bible" (24). While many people share this opinion, it seems untrue. Transcripts from Tyndale's trial indicate that he was arrested on the grounds of his Lutheran heresy.

In his professional element for the second half of the book, Ryken's examination of the literary influence of the KJB is interesting. But it is one-dimensional: the influence from the KJB to the artist is stated flatly. For instance, Ryken argues that the point of departure for George Herbert's poem "Love iii" (186–7) "was almost certainly Luke 12:37." Others observe that Herbert may be equally, if not more influenced by the temptation scene in Milton's *Paradise Regained*, book 2 in which Satan entices Jesus three times to an extravagant if decadent banquet through an invitation "to sit and eat" (2.336, 368, 377), echoed and transformed by Herbert in the poem's last line: "So I did sit and eat."

In the same vein, it is not always apparent if the stream of KJB references are directly attributable to the KJB or simply evidence of the power of the translation. For example, most modern English phrases that sound as if they might be from the KJB do not originate in the KJB at all but are found in Tyndale or the Bishops' Bible of 1568 or Wycliffe's translation or one of the other major versions of the sixteenth century. A few phrases, however, like "how are the mighty fallen," "the root of the matter," and "a thorn in the flesh" are directly attributable to the KJB.

What the KJB did was put before the English-speaking world pithy biblical phrases that were adopted by public discourse to the extent that they pass into contemporary expression. We cannot say that such phrases as "to everything there is a season" and "my brother's keeper" are directly attributable to the KJB wherever they occur. They are simply part of public discourse.

In exploring the afterlife of the KJB, why not consider more wide-ranging connections and associations between for example the KJB and other religious texts such as the Bhagavad-Gita? The Gita, written in Sanskrit, is part of the writings of Hinduism written somewhere between the fourth-fifth centuries BCE and the third century CE. The received version is 700 verses in 18 chapters composed in a beautiful language with its own cadences. British scholars in India first translated the Gita in 1785. In 1962, the Penguin Classic Edition of the Gita published in English by Juan Mascaro, was deeply influenced by the shape and forms of the KJB, e.g., Gita 11:36, "I will be glad and rejoice in thee, I will sing praise to thy name, I will be glad in God most High." Compare Psalm 9:2 with the same phrases.

The book has a few typographical errors: "And a man shall be [add: as] an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest" (96; Isaiah 32:2); "holy men [add: of God] spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (112; 2 Peter 1:21); "whist [should be: wist] ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (113; Luke 2:49); the citation of Luke 12:37 (187) has too many commas. Finally, in a book that praises the KJB, why not cite the text using the text's own distinction between italics and roman type?

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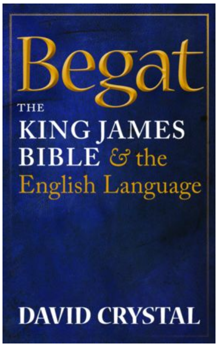
Begat: The King James Bible and the English Language, by David Crystal



Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010 | vii + 327 pages | ISBN: 978-0-19-958585-4 (hardback) £14.99 | ISBN: 978-0-19-969518-8 (softback) £8.99

A common—and valid—criticism of the reception history of the Bible is that, too often, papers at conferences are little more than a cataloguing of where this or that biblical verse or topic occurs with little concern for cultural, ideological, historical, etc. concerns. If cataloguing did have a place it might be argued that it would be as a resource for future work on a given area of biblical reception. This is precisely where David Crystal's exceptionally helpful *Begat* comes into its own. Rather than focusing on the origins and production of the King James Bible (KJB), Crystal takes us through a wide range of famous phrases from the KJB (or King James–sounding phrases) and their receptions in low and high culture. We therefore get chapters on "Let there be light," "My brother's keeper," "Begat," "Bread alone," "Heal thyself," and so on. Crystal does attempt to count the number of King James Bible expressions which have had "a permanent influence on the development of the English language" (2). This is not an easy task given the problems involved in establishing whether expressions come from the KJB or a relevant other Bible. Crystal also sets this up as a plot surprise in his first of two prologues to be revealed in the Epilogue; so in the spirit of things, there will be no spoilers here.

The faux exasperation (read: "aren't I clever!") expressed by certain reviewers of *Begat* at recollecting "more important" (read: higher culture) references than Crystal completely misses the point. For example, Christopher Hirst, writing in *The Independent* (London), argued,

> Some of Crystal's omissions are baffling. We learn that "my brother's keeper" (Genesis 4:9) was a pilot episode of *Miami Vice* but not that it was used for the autobiography of Stanislaus Joyce (brother of James). Crystal's exploration of "kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:5) cites a *Guardian* football report but not the Samuel Beckett collection *More Pricks than Kicks*.[4]

But choosing examples Hirst would prefer over ones actually given in *Begat*, whether because they sound more intellectual or because they are associated with figures deemed culturally more important, would in some ways undermine Crystal's very argument on the perpetuation and survival of the various idioms from the KJB throughout the English-speaking world (certainly in the West). Crystal argues that idioms are adapted, often with comical intent, with all sorts of unexpected language play (e.g., "Am I my brothel's keeper?" 27), which is central to his analysis of the extent to which these idioms have "permeated genres of modern spoken or written English" (261), such as e.g., marketing, journalism, sport, theatre, punk music, computing. Likewise, one of the key reasons (e.g., 261) for survival of idioms (and not necessarily in the same form found in the KJB) is a range of phonetic properties, such as iambic rhythms (e.g., "*how the mighty have fallen*!" 75) and rhyme, or indeed words which lend themselves to rhyme and thus adaptation (e.g., "grave" as in "From the cradle to the grave," 85). It is not, therefore, "baffling" why Crystal chooses the kinds of examples he does: he has not written a book about how English is written and spoken in intellectual or polite circles alone (still, sadly, too often the assumption of many academics and intellectuals today, in my experience).

But while the KJB and its reception (linguistically accurate or otherwise) have shaped a number of well known English idioms, there are a number of King James–sounding idioms which have come from other influential Bibles since eclipsed (e.g., Wycliffe, Tyndale) but effectively colonised by the KJB in its reception. Crystal simultaneously points out that there is little evidence for lexical innovation and assumptions about grammatical innovation need proper studies. In this sense, the KJB is little more than a book of witty or useful idioms and, in this sense, may not be quite the influential book as is commonly suggested. Crystal's book is, therefore, something more than simply a resource for the reception of idioms from the KJB: underpinning the book are ideas about the "hows" and "whys" of the reception and, as this seems so culturally widespread in the English language, there is, again, no reason to resort to making sure everyone knows the reviewer knows about Beckett and Joyce's brother.

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[4] Christopher Hirst, "Begat, by David Crystal", *The Independent*, 30th September 2011, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/begat-by-david-crystal-2362935.html.

A dominant and important result from the analysis of this collection of idioms is that "the items discussed in this book are not quotations: they are everyday expressions used by speakers and writers of modern English, most of whom will have no religious motivation for their use" (257). This decaffeinating of the Bible, or removing anything deemed too "religious," is one of the ways in which the Bible continues to survive in Western cultural contexts striving to come to terms with secularism, nationalism, and global capitalism.[5] The KJB is no longer the powerful book of the Crown or the British Empire but increasingly tied in with what Yvonne Sherwood called the "Liberal Bible," i.e., a dominant Western interpretation of the Bible as supporting democracy, freedom, rights, etc., but now increasingly used in a vague manner so as to be a dog whistle to the believer without putting off those more nervous about things "religious." This is the Bible, then, deprived of its problematic pre-modern otherness. No Gentile dogs, no burning in the time to come, no strange purity laws, no genocide and so on. This Bible, like the construction of "religion" more generally, has to be made palatable for liberal democratic ideals and thus anything too problematically "religious" must go. And it is the KJB which is most embedded in many world cultures using the English language, and in English-speaking Western cultures where the Bible has a nervy relationship with the political elite.

Some fairly typical examples from the British press which invariably use the KJB might include "love thy neighbour" or "render unto Caesar." For instance, Dominic Lawson claimed (somehow) that the present Pope is "apolitical" and "has no interest in inserting the Catholic Church into the political process." This is because the Pope inherited his world view from Jesus, who declared, as Lawson summarises, "that the temporal and spiritual worlds should be entirely separate." And what precisely did Jesus declare? Only one of the more favoured quotations from the Bible, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's"![6] Also in the context of Benedict XVI's visit to the UK in 2010, the *Daily Mail* quotes the Catholic MP Mark Pritchard as saying "The Catholic Church is an imperfect institution but it is amazing the BBC has found nothing positive to say about a church whose key message is to love thy neighbour including feeding the poor and helping the homeless" (cf. *Begat*, 191-92).[7] Of course, transubstantiation, sin, salvation, sacraments, anti-contraception, and so on might alternatively be thought of as central to perceptions of Catholic history but that is not the point: once in the contemporary political arena and needed to be seen as acceptable, 2000 years of history is easily boiled down to "love thy neighbour." There are plenty more examples to be discussed another time but, for now, we might add that, in its own imitable way, this is the sort of thing that is going on in Crystal's fantastic collection of ironic, punning, clever, but ultimately harmless examples (and it is no surprise the KJB has found a friend in marketing and we might note the use of the language of *born again* among politicians to refer to contemporary political affiliations [212]).

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[5] I am alluding to Slavoj Žižek, e.g., *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 96: "On today's market, we find a series of products deprived of their malignant property: coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol."

In other words, a non-threatening Bible survives in dominant political discourses because it is the best way it can, without being thrown out. In its Golden Age, the KJB was the Bible of Empire; it now serves a new master which does not go to Church quite as much as its predecessors: liberal parliamentary democracy of "late" capitalism. And if it knows what's good for it, the KJB had presumably better keep on behaving as the cute little wisecracking kid with a heart it has become.

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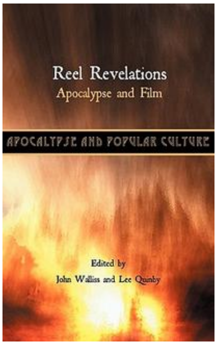
[6] Dominic Lawson, "Pope Benedict … an apology", *The Independent*, 21st September 2010, http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/dominic-lawson/dominic-lawson-pope-benedict-an-apology-2084788.html.

[7] Steve Doughty, "Pope faces atheist hate campaign in UK after top German aide says: 'When you land at Heathrow you think you're in a Third World country'", *Daily Mail* (16th September 2010), http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1312285/POPES-UK-VISIT-Benedict-XVI-faces-atheist-hate-campaign.html.

Reel Revelations: Apocalypse and Film, edited by John Walliss and Lee Quinby



Apocalypse and Popular Culture 1 | The Bible in the Modern World 31 | Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010 | viii + 179 pages | ISBN: 978-1-907534-08-9 (hardback) £50.00

There are a number of superb essays in *Reel Revelations: Apocalypse and Film*, a short collection on the intersection of the biblical book of Revelation and contemporary film, which might leave the reader to wonder why the collection as a whole comes across as being rather underwhelming. In the final analysis, this is a distinctly uneven anthology in which the more rigorous and challenging work is sadly overshadowed by the presence of the weaker contributions. There is a wearying sameness to some of these essays, particularly when they are placed alongside the volumes of work done on religion and film in recent years. Does the world really need any more academic discussion about religious syncretism in *The Matrix*, especially as there are far more complex and socially relevant apocalyptic films—Alfonso Cuaron's 2005 masterpiece *Children of Men* comes to mind immediately—that have received very little serious scholarly attention? This sameness is even more apparent in the volume's overreliance on a small store of secondary sources, most notably the work of Conrad Ostwalt, who appears in six of the volume's nine essays. Why have these scholars collectively ignored classical works in the field—like Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*, which makes only sporadic appearances—as well as more sophisticated recent work, like S. Brent Plate's work on cinematic and religious world-building, particularly given that the necessary corollary of the destruction of Revelation is the building of a new, redeemed world?

The editors, John Walliss and Lee Quinby, open the volume with a brief introduction, which effectively underlines the multiple functions of Revelation in the twenty-first century West:

> a surprising number of apocalyptic films from the past twenty-five years stay remarkably close to the traditional designation of apocalypse as a revelation about the future. Furthermore, many of them explicitly quote or use imagery from the Book of Revelation, as well as its Old Testament antecedents in Daniel,

> Ezekiel and Isaiah.… In so doing, some use the apocalyptic vision of Revelation to criticize certain social practices and power structures. Others do so in order to explore alternatives to the traditional apocalyptic paradigm and still others to rewrite it for a world already transformed, either through innovations in technology or post-apocalyptic wreckage. (2)

It is worth noting that most of the best essays in the collection focus on the ways in which contemporary apocalyptic films—whether they are horror, thriller, science fiction, or otherwise—often very subtly work to challenge or undermine social and religious absolutes, many of them inherited from the biblical Revelation.

In the excellent first chapter, "Apocalyptic Images and Prophetic Function in Zombie Films," Kim Paffenroth uses the zombie films of George Romero to bring out this capacity of end-times narratives to make trenchant social criticisms. Romero, with a keen cinematic eye and a thorough knowledge of recent American history, she argues, rails in his films against secular sins such as capitalism gone rampant, with its "crass and cannibalistic consumption" (21), and the persistent injustices of racism and nationalism. She calls 1978's *Dawn of the Dead*, set largely in a suburban shopping mall (and arguably Romero's finest moment as a filmmaker), "one of the saddest and most damning critiques of consumerism imaginable" (18). She takes her analysis a step further and argues that the zombie as re-imagined by Romero in his classic 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead* is an ideal metaphorical construct for making such criticisms:

> The particularly horrible addition made by Romero is that zombies partially eat their victims. This not only enables the filmmaker or author to create scenes of grotesque cannibalism and dismemberment, but it also raises the symbolic stakes of the zombie. Unlike the seductive vampire, who bites his/her victim on the neck in a very sexualized gesture, the zombie tears other people limb from limb and flings their intestines into a steaming pile on the ground. There is nothing attractive or sensual about a zombie attack—it is animalistic and sickening. But since zombies look exactly like living human beings, their cannibalism also brings out the image of humanity preying on itself—the self-destructive and sadistic elements of all people,

> which have been seen on killing fields all across the "real" world even without a zombie virus to excuse the behaviour. (8)

In his relentless attack on the wrongs of the contemporary United States, Romero is, Paffenroth concludes, in his way very like the Hebrew Bible's Jeremiah. In his detailed depictions of hell (this time on earth), he is also, she argues, a bit like Dante.

Lee Quinby's second chapter, "*Southland Tales*, The Film of Revelation: Richard Kelly's Satire of American Apocalypse," is far and away the collection's high point, and not merely because it makes repeated and serious use of the phrase "new pimp messiah" (42). Quinby provides an incisive analysis of a film that actively resists any sort of systematisation, and one that requires an intrepid embrace of all of its revelatory strangeness. On Quinby's reading, *Southland Tales* is a "creative appropriation" of Revelation in a distinctly contemporary, and distinctly American, idiom; the film is

> by turns sophisticated and naïve, almost always confusing, often hilarious, and a genuinely weird mix of cosmic time rifts, music videos, and conspiracies run amok.... And yet, despite (and as I will argue because of) its cinematic chaos, *Southland Tales* deserves serious attention precisely because of the way the book of Revelation is deployed throughout. Kelly's unique blend of scriptural fidelity and secular focus provides an intriguing depiction of cultural and personal trauma stemming from uncomfortably familiar forms of calamity that have debilitated both the United States and its citizenry since 9/11.... To put this in terms of Kelly's vision, America is a traumatized society undergoing a split so deep that reality itself has been split asunder. (27–8)

He also takes a brief foray into the film's failure, both commercially and critically, and finds a fault line running through contemporary American culture: "what most blocked its reception was also its greatest insight—the use of the book of Revelation as the key text to comprehending that, as a society, America is mired in apocalyptic belief, perceiving itself as both victim and victor in a dynamic bent on destruction" (30).

The next chapter, Frances Flannery's "Post-modern Apocalypse and Terrorism in Joss Whedon's *Serenity*" is an ideal complement to Quinby's, despite the fact that Joss Whedon's film is a far simpler and less divisive text than

Kelly's, in that both challenge the absolutism of Revelation. Instead, they use such absolutes as a way to criticise religious and political fundamentalisms: "Joss Whedon's *Serenity* deconstructs the apocalypse.... It invites audience members who shun fundamentalism as well as those who reject the tradition of violent apocalypse to consider a new, ambiguous vision of the rupture and repair of history" (44). Finding parallels between *Serenity*'s abused psychic River Tam and John of Patmos, the chapter draws out the revelations contained within the diegetic world of the film—chiefly, that the interstellar empire of the Alliance, not unlike many terrestrial empires throughout history, is responsible for creating its own worst enemy.

After the collection's strong opening, the next essay, Jon R. Stone's "Apocalyptic Fiction: Revelatory Elements within Post-war American Films" comes disappointingly close to being a mere catalogue of recent revelatory and apocalyptic films. After some helpful comments about a genre he calls "apocalyptic fiction," Stone asserts that these films reveal, "a culture on the brink of nuclear, environmental, technological, and biological destruction" (61). This is doubtlessly true, but one is forced to wonder what Stone adds to the larger discourse with the frankly pedestrian (not to mention very badly dated) insights he draws from this looming brink, including that "the 'silver screen' fulfils two purposes: it is at once a medium that displays images of interest and concern to the audience and at the same time a mirror that reflects back upon its viewers" (59).

Quite on the other hand, Mary Ann Beavis's "Pseudapocrypha: Invented Scripture in Apocalyptic Horror Films" is a fascinating addition to the collection and an interesting challenge to reception history in that it deals with the ways filmmakers have employed apocryphal religious texts in creating imaginaries of the end times. She examines 1 and 2 Enoch and the popular reception of both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi library in order to refine the relevant genre categories and problematise any simplistic understanding of apocalyptic films. Beavis shows, in ways that some of the other authors in *Reel Revelations* do not, an appreciation for the complexity of reception within apocalyptic films—"As with many scriptures, canonical and otherwise, there are many intertextual resonances between these apocalyptic horror movies" (84)—making for vastly complicated chains of reference, reception, and re-reading.

John Walliss, venturing refreshingly far from the Hollywood mainstream in his "Celling the End Times: The Contours of Contemporary Rapture Films," explores the neglected area of films made by and for evangelical Christians in the United States. After tracing the pre-history of the current glut of films as far back as 1941's *The Rapture*, Walliss summarises the uses these films serve for evangelical audiences, which are not as straightforward as they might seem:

> the films utilize and adapt apocalyptic texts to convey a series of messages about a variety of religious and geopolitical issues that exercise their producers and audience, ranging from fears of a one-world global order and a resurgence of "old Europe," questions about the nature and certainty of salvation, an ambivalence towards technology and the mass media, and last but no means least, beliefs about the nature of "true Christianity" and the place of evangelical Christians in the contemporary world … The films thus, in a manner akin to science fiction, allow both their producers and audiences to explore their present concerns and issues by projecting them into a near future where they will all be brought into stark relief. (92–3)

These films, Walliss points out, are nothing if not American, and they address specifically American evangelical fears of a resurgent Europe, the rise of the New Age, and many of the other bogeymen adopted by Evangelical Christians and more lately by Tea Party Republicans, all informed by the persecution complex that sees conservative Christians in even conservative, Christian contexts like the contemporary United States driven by a self-understanding of Christians as an embattled minority culture (all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding). Indeed, Walliss argues that it is from this tension that films like *Left Behind* and *The Omega Code* draw their considerable power: "rapture films are as much concerned with reinforcing and redefining the beliefs of their viewers, as they are with winning new souls. In particular, the portrayal of born again conversions may … serve to reinforce viewers' convictions that they are themselves indeed saved" (106).

"Sanctifying Empire: The Hopeful Paradox of Apocalypsia," by Richard Walsh, takes the collection further into political territory, offering further depth to Walliss's exploration of the evangelical Rapture film by demonstrating the ways in which even "secularised" apocalyptic films can serve to reinforce and justify conservative and even imperial politics. Walsh's reading moves in two directions at once, focusing equally on Revelation and on Peter Hyams's 1999 "unremarkable, boilerplate" film, *End of Days*. Walsh's conclusions about the "surreptitious sanctification of empire which occurs in both Revelation and *End of Days*" (112) are challenging and compellingly argued:

> Apocalyptic is essentially covenant maintenance in what is perceived as a hostile world. It reflects the purity regulations of a closed, traditional society. It is the ancient equivalent of a Patriot Act.... Neither the film nor Revelation is a helpful site to address the problem of violence. Both avoid the issue. *End of Days* avoids it by withdrawing into subjective depths, which disregard the inherent messiness and violence of social-political reality, and Revelation avoids it by withdrawing in order to await God's violence on its behalf. Both leave the world mired in violence. (129–30)

After Walliss's and Walsh's erudite discussions of the role of Revelation in the justification of empire, *Reel Revelations* would have been a far stronger collection if had ended at page 139, given that the weaknesses of the final two essays in the collection go some way towards obscuring the genuine insight and challenging conclusions of what came before. The failure of the penultimate essay, Greg Garrett's "'I Saw One Like a Son of Man': The Eschatological Savior in Contemporary Film," is merely that it is bland and adds little to the larger discussion. Here the seasoned reader can be forgiven for skipping quickly over yet another discussion of saviour figures (adding "eschatological" doesn't really add anything new), again seen through the lens of Ostwalt's *Secular Steeples*. The chapter presents a rather obvious analysis of rather obvious films and comes, not surprisingly, to rather obvious conclusions about how eschatological saviours, like *The Matrix*'s Neo and the Terminator franchise's John Connor, achieve lasting popularity because they serve a social need or speak to current cultural concerns.

The final essay, Elizabeth Rosen's "'More than meets the eye': Apocalypse Transformed in Transformers," far and away the weakest single chapter, ends the collection with a very T. S. Eliot-esque whimper. Its more serious failings point to the dangers inherent in doing this sort of work in a haphazard fashion. Though Rosen is to be commended for discussing a film that many critics in the academy would choose to dismiss, this does not excuse the fact that the idiosyncratic reading she offers of Michael Bay's *Transformers*is one that we can only label as an "aberrant decoding," to borrow a phrase from Umberto Eco. Rosen's choice to discuss the film within the context of the "postmodern refusal of absolutes" is deeply troubling, given the borderline fascist and determinedly racist and misogynist character of not only the Transformers series, but all of Bay's films. Even allowing for the open nature of all texts, there is really no way to argue seriously that *Transformers* deals in postmodern ambiguities. There is perhaps no filmmaker working today, in the mainstream or even in the evangelical sub-culture, who creates moral universes as starkly polarised as the "stunningly, even viciously untalented" Michael Bay (to borrow an apt description from *The New Yorker*'s David Denby).[8]

To say that Bay is instead deeply implicated in American imperialism is not a mere assertion or an aesthetic judgement, particularly given the generally spectacular grosses Bay's films tend to generate in international markets; Bay's films, including *Transformers*, are invariably made with the full cooperation of the American military, and thus by definition must serve its interests. The Pentagon's stated criteria for offering military assistance to a film production—access to military property, equipment, and personnel—include that the film "helps military recruiting and retention" and offers "feasible" and "authentic" portrays of the armed forces; however, this authenticity is highly selective. Phil Strub, the long-time head of the Pentagon's film liaison office, once stated unequivocally that "any film that portrays the military as negative is not realistic to us."[9] Thus, Bay's apologia for American militarism is caught up directly with the pursuit of empire. *Transformers*, in fact, would make an ideal film for the analyses of John Walliss or Richard Walsh, both of whom pay appropriate attention to Revelation's importance in the legitimisation and justification of empire.

That Rosen connects the film in her closing section with raising a world of children who are "less likely to be dogmatic" (172), is particularly troubling, given that Bay's aestheticisation and even sanctification of empire works directly towards promoting a seductively lovely world which respects *only* political and economic dogmata. Rosen's reading of the film is inadequate to the complexity of the matter at hand. Even worse, her analysis ultimately obscures rather than illuminates the film's imperial ambitions and thus works directly against her own stated purpose. If we are to understand the trajectory and influence of Revelation in the world today, especially considering the increasingly imperial ambitions of the United States, where so many of the most influential readings of the apocalypse are produced, we need to be serious-minded and politically astute, like Richard Walsh, Kim Paffenroth, Lee Quinby, and John Walliss elsewhere in this volume.

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[8] David Denby, "The Current Cinema—Tommy Guns and Toys: 'Public Enemies' and 'Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen'", *The New Yorker*, and 136th July 2009, 93.

[9] Cited in David L. Robb, *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004), 51, 18.

Rosen's final plea, for readings of Revelation that can lead to a more just world, brings to light a tension that underlies much of *Reel Revelations*, though rarely as explicitly as it is found here. Is it in the remit of biblical scholarship to find ways to redeem the most difficult of the New Testament texts by offering positive readings of it? Surely not. The task of biblical scholarship—and of reception history more generally—is to explore the trajectory Revelations has taken over the last two millennia, not to guide it to specified ends. When Richard Walsh, for example, argues convincingly that both Revelation and Hollywood blockbuster films leave the world mired in violence, it is time for lesser critics to take note; serious times with serious problems demand serious criticism. Nothing less will suffice.

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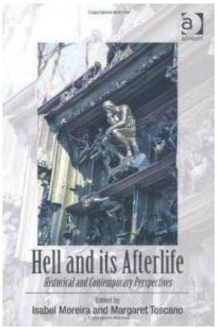
Hell and its Afterlife: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, edited by Isabel Moreira and Margaret Toscano



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In 2006, an international conference was held at the University of Utah, for the purpose of analyzing both ancient and modern understandings of hell and how those perceptions have developed over time. *Hell and its Afterlife* is made up of selected articles presented at this conference. It is divided into two parts and ordered chronologically. In addition, several of the papers build thematically upon each other, adding an even greater significance to the research as a whole.

Part I of the collection, "The Tradition of Hell in the Old World," begins with Margaret Toscano's "Love is Hell: Torment, Sex, and Redemption in the Cupid and Psyche Myth." Toscano analyzes the Cupid and Psyche tale found in Apuleius's second-century work *Metamorphoses* and these figures' incorporation on various sculptural works, focusing primarily on the early third-century Endymion Sarcophagus. She expertly demonstrates how their story exemplifies the polar concepts of union and separation and death and rebirth. According to Toscano, "the childlike depictions of Amor and Psyche in visual monuments correspond to the allegorical interpretation of Apuleius' story: the soul's movement from base love to celestial love, from earth to heaven" (22). Her love becomes celestial upon seeing Cupid for the first time, and moves from earthly to heavenly when Jupiter makes her immortal. Although Psyche is not often listed among other, more famous, katabatic figures such as Orpheus, Aeneas, and Persephone, Toscano stresses the overall importance of Psyche's story and the significance of the appearance of Cupid and Psyche on sculptural art such as sarcophagi. Toscano emphasizes, "Psyche becomes the bride of death, undergoes numerous trials and much suffering to reemerge from the underworld, giving hope for immortality to those who saw her image on funerary relief sculptures" (25–26).

Jeffrey A. Trumbower's "Early Visions of Hell as a Place of Education and Conversion," reflects upon 1 Peter 4:6. One of the main sources for contention among early Christians regarding the permanence of hell was Christ's decent after his crucifixion. According to Trumbower, "In the Christian imagination, the death and resurrection of Jesus were the decisive cosmic events.... The question naturally arose of what he did there, and the answers given usually involve some sort of cosmic victory over death, the devil, or Hades personified. This also meant liberation for at least some of the dead, and the various Christian authors understood in different ways precisely who it was who was liberated" (30). Jesus's journey to hell helped to remedy a lingering question, namely, were the God-fearing prophets from the Old Testament consigned to suffer in hell eternally? Trumbower discusses a variety of sources dating through the sixth century whose authors struggled to interpret the purpose of Jesus's journey to hell. Ultimately, Trumbower concludes, early Christian communities sought to highlight the power of divine justice, reaching even those souls who had been sentenced to hell with the hope that eventually all would be found righteous in the eyes of God and be allowed entrance into heaven.

Isabel Moreira's "Plucking Sinners Out of Hell: Saint Martin of Tours' Resurrection Miracle" thematically builds upon the two previous chapters. Moreira focuses on the evolution of the "Christian tradition that resisted the finality of hell," an idea, she argues, as being grounded in "Christ's resurrection as a rebellion against death itself" (41). Moreira concentrates on Saint Martin of Tours, who as a Christ-like hero descended to hell in order to rescue a young man. In order to demonstrate how changing beliefs affected subsequent versions of this miracle, Moreira compares various retellings of the legend, including Sulpicius Severus's biography of Saint Martin and Gregory of Tours's *De Virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi*. Through a thorough comparison, Moreira is able to demonstrate how the story of Saint Martin's resurrection of the catechumen evolved, corresponding to the expressed orthodoxy of the Church.

Alan E. Bernstein's "Named Others and Named Places: Stigmatization in the Early Medieval Afterlife" sets out "to examine the use of hell to stigmatize individuals and groups in early medieval Western Europe" (53). Bernstein sets out to show that, in narratives pertaining to hell, groups are identified by their wrongdoings more often than are individuals. According to Bernstein, there is little evidence of named individuals in these texts. In the second part, he is able to clearly show the frequency with which groups are named. He focuses on the stigmatization of groups by their association "with symbols of evil from the Apocalypse" (65). Such a distinction is found in the New Testament, and, as evidenced by Bernstein, prolific throughout the early medieval period. Bernstein is able to demonstrate how "hell stigmatizes targeted 'others' in at least four ways: by their origins, according to their deeds, by religious dissent, and by destiny" (69).

Megan C. Armstrong's "A Franciscan Kind of Hell" discusses French Franciscan sermons (with the exception of Diego de la Vega and Francesco Panigarola) during the time of the Wars of Religion and slightly after (1580–1620), focusing primarily on Sunday sermons and those delivered during Lent, in order to "evaluate the pervasiveness of the fearful hell at a critical historical juncture" (76). In analyzing these sermons, Armstrong highlights the lack of "fire and brimstone" preaching that have long characterized Franciscan preaching. Despite the tension of the period, the tone of these sermons was one of love and forgiveness. Armstrong is able to conclude that, within the literature examined, "hell functioned primarily to highlight the loving nature of God, and the critical role of the Christian body in salvation … the redeemable nature of humankind" (82–83). Instead of highlighting a sinner's punishments to be suffered eternally in hell, these sermons "focus on the nature and effects of sin upon the living Christian" (84).

The final paper of this first half is Peter Marshall's "Catholic and Protestant Hells in Later Reformation England," which discusses the weight of the

Protestant movement on the theological debates concerning hell, utilizing English sources dating from 1570–1640. According to Marshall, "Hell was not, formally and prescriptively, an object of religious disputation. Neither the existence nor the essential function of hell was ever at issue between Catholic and Protestant theologians" (91). While the first half of the paper demonstrates a shared understanding of the existence of hell between the two faiths, the second half analyzes the literal versus allegorical understanding of hell-fire and the exact geographical location of hell, the main sources for theological disputes.

Part II, "The Reception of Hell in Modern Times and Contemporary Dialogue" begins with "Devils Conquering the Conquered: Changing Visions of Hell in Spanish America," by Fernando Cervantes. Cervantes focuses on Columbus' journey to the new world and the Christian explorers and missionaries that followed. He poignantly declares, "the fear of hell that helped to fill the churches in the past has helped to empty them in the present … the discovery of America … was a central and, in the end, quite determining contributor to the decline of the traditional notion of hell" (103). Cervantes provides a very interesting analysis of the attempted syncretism that took place among the people of Spanish America. In addition, he discusses some of the issues that arose when trying to overlay the new theology onto the old. For instance, Mictlan, the name of the Nahuatl underworld, was thought to have resembled the Old Testament Sheol more closely than the New Testament and other, later, concepts of hell, in that most of those that died descended directly to Mictlan. Therefore, according to Cervantes, the mendicant friars found it "very difficult to explain why it was so important to avoid it" (109).

Henry Ansgar Kelly's "Hell with Purgatory and Two Limbos: The Geography and Theology of the Underworld" is an examination of the historical development of Thomas Aquinas's theology of the four prospective levels of hell, and, more specifically, how these concepts developed. He begins first with the Old Testament concept of the underworld, Sheol, its transformation into Hades, and the changes that occurred in this place's identity. Kelly also discusses the etymological changes from the Hebrew Sheol to Hades/hell in the Greek and inferno in the Latin Vulgate. From there, he moves to discuss the division of hell, as a place, into different levels. He focuses on Peter Lombard's two-part division of "the bosom of Abraham" and Thomas Aquinas' division of hell into four distinct regions. The section concludes with Pope Innocent IV's papal recognition of purgatory (1254), ecumenical assertions, regarding the purgation of sin, at Lyons (1274) and Florence (1439), and the existence of purgatory during the Protestant Reformation. One of the most interesting aspects of Kelly's paper is his concluding discussion of modern-day papal pronouncements regarding unbaptized babies and the International Theological Commission during the pontificate of Pope John Paul and his predecessor Benedict XVI. According to Kelly, "in recent times the idea of situating hell, purgatory, and the two limbos underground seems to have faded, along with all ideas of spatial location, in favor of purely spiritual states" (132).

John Sanders's "Hell Yes! Hell No! Evangelical Debates on Eternal Punishment," an analysis of modern-day evangelical debates about hell, is paired nicely with Kelly's research. According to Sanders, evangelicals "who see themselves as guardians of orthodoxy decry views that encroach upon what they take to be the clear teaching of the Bible" (137). Sanders discusses the nature of hell and what evangelicals believe its population to be. He describes various debates within the evangelical community, and clearly defines the arguments of both sides of several theological assertions. For instance, Sanders discusses the belief in "eternal conscious punishment," literal versus symbolic flames, mental versus physical suffering, and the degree to which one is made to suffer in hell. He also considers the theory of "conditional immortality" which refers to the continued existence of these sinners to ensure their continued suffering. The second half of the essay is devoted to the population and the redemptive nature of hell, that it is possible for some, or all, the individuals condemned there to be saved through postmortem acceptance in the gospel. The author also discusses restrictivism, salvation that is available only to those that accept/have faith in Jesus Christ. According to Sanders, restrictivism is considered "the most common view among evangelicals" (149). On the other side of the debate is inclusivism, the "second most common view" which argues that there are opportunities for individuals to have faith in God who would otherwise not hear and thereby accept the gospel.

Brian D. Birch's "Turning the Devils Out of Doors: Mormonism and the Concept of Hell" highlights Mormon beliefs about hell. Birch begins by discerning eternal punishment and everlasting punishment, which, according to Joseph Smith, "refer, not to the duration of suffering, but to the source" (155). A vision of Smith's, based on 1 Corinthians 15:40–1 and similar to that of Emanuel Swedenborg, describes three different states of perfection, that a Mormon strives to achieve. He touches on the mental suffering of Mormons over literal, physical torment in hell and of the possibility of inclusivism (at least in the case of Smith's brother Alvin). Birch also discusses the Mormon understanding of Christ's descent into hell, which differs from previously discussed interpretations. Mormons believe that messengers were sent on Christ's behalf to "serve as missionaries among the wicked and unevangelized dead" (159). Birch concludes by touching briefly on the debates relating to universalism and a soul's "eternal progression … to advance from one glory to another" (162).

Vincent J. Cheng's "James Joyce and the (Modernist) Hellmouth" and Gambera's article that follows both examine literary uses of hell imagery. Cheng sets out to explore James Joyce's religious upbringing as a fundamental contributor to "the development of his innovative modernist prose styles" (168). After examining several examples, Cheng applies his thesis to Father Arnall's sermons in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and illustrates how Joyce makes "the material presence of hell suffocatingly and sensually real" (171). However, when describing influences other than Joyce's Irish Catholic upbringing, Cheng seems to imply that little is original to Joyce: "based on the model of *The Spiritual Exercise* … passages lifted from a devotional text, *L'Inferno aperto* … Joyce borrowed heavily from Pinamonti, lifting entire passages … Joyce borrowed not only from Pinamonti but from an entire Roman Catholic tradition" (172). Overall, by highlighting Joyce's heavy borrowing, Cheng detracts from the impact of his thesis.

Disa Gambera's "Sin City: Urban Damnation in Dante, Blake, T. S. Eliot, and James Thomson" discusses literature that illustrates Dante's modeling of the *Inferno* as a city. Disa examines William Blake's *London*, James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*, and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and the particular ways in which these authors "superimpose images of hell on the recognizable contours of London … they use infernal images to emphasize the irredeemable nature of the modern industrialized city" (175–6). Gambera argues "that what draws these later poets to Dante is his depiction of hell as an actual city and of damnation as an authentically urban experience" (176). Gambera also briefly mention Sandow Birk's artistic representations of Dante's *Divine Comedy* (who himself was inspired by Gustave Doré's engravings). After describing the ways in which Dante's Inferno reminds the reader of city life, Gambera touches on Blake's and Thomson's poems and their portrayal of London, demonstrating how in each the speakers move through the streets of London, in contrast to Dante, who is in isolation, speaking to no one. The same is true for the speaker in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land.*

Charles W. King's "What If It's Just Good Business? Hell, Business Models, and the Dilution of Justice in Mike Carey's *Lucifer*" is a very interesting chapter on a piece of pop culture that, I believe, has received little attention in the field. *Lucifer*, a comic book written by Mike Carey and illustrated by Peter Gross, was published by DC/Vertigo in 2000–2006. King highlights the ways in which Carey sought to diverge from normal representations of both the devil and of hell. Carey achieved this by "eliminating the clear-cut opposition of good and evil or even the possible existence of moral absolutes such as good or evil" (194). According to King, Carey's "conception of hell draws not on Judeo-Christian ethics, but, rather, on modern American fears of bureaucracies and corporate indifference" (198). King's article provides an interesting commentary, not only on Carey's modeling of hell to be like modern-day corporations, but also of the corporate agenda that lies behind the creation of comic books.

Sharon Lee Swenson's "Guardian Demons in *Hellboy*: Hybridity in Contemporary American Horror Films" begins first with a brief description of the entire film. From there Swenson discusses the attraction of horror films, such as *Hellboy*. She believes that horror films are used by "individuals and culture to simultaneously express and deny these negative emotions, without them fully reaching consciousness" (208). While Swenson's paper is very technical in its analysis of the film's incorporation of hybridity, liminality, and uncannyness it provides an interesting perspective concerning the need for a new, hybrid, hero. Swenson concludes by utilizing four scenes to show "how these concepts are achieved cinematically" (212). Swenson's and King's chapters, which present contemporary understandings and conceptualizations of hell and it usefulness in a secular society, provide an interesting commentary on such perceptions.

The collection ends with Rachel Falconer's "Hell in our Time: Dantean Descent and the Twenty-first Century 'War on Terror.'" Falconer's paper analyzes the use of ancient descriptions about hell to interpret hellish, modern-day terrorist attacks. According to Falconer, "the concept of hell shapes and informs the way in which we experience actual events in the world today" (217). She examines the bombing of the London Underground on July 7, 2005 and the bombing of Lebanon by Israel in the summer of 2006 and how the British press reported on these events. What is so very interesting about this paper is the way in which these two events, separated by time and place were, as described by Falconer, "storied as journeys to hell and back" (219).

She does a splendid job of highlighting the extent to which narratives of hell have been grafted onto our interpretations of horrific disasters. For Falconer, “hell is as potent as ever in the secular West, even if it is no longer regarded as a theological truth” (236).

The overall collection’s usefulness to ongoing theological debates surrounding the development of ancient perceptions of hell is clear in each of the chapters included. In addition, the political and societal implications discussed herein are valuable for further study. While the entire collection would be of interest to a scholar studying the general theme, the individual chapters would be of particular interest to researchers seeking a closer examination of specific topics, as each chapter provides well-written footnotes highlighting experts and allows for easy access to additional research.

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Transforming Scriptures: African American Women Writers and the Bible, by Katherine Clay Bassard

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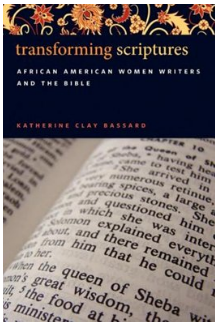

Transforming Scriptures: African American Women Writers and the Bible by Katherine Clay Bassard, a Professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University, leads its reader into thinking about the nature of scripture and the practices of interpretation by engaging a wide range of theoretical material and offering a close analysis of specific literary examples. The volume is deceptively thin, as the writing is thick with detail and insight. Structurally, *Transforming Scriptures* is divided into two parts, “Troubling Hermeneutics” and “Transforming Scriptures.” As the title suggests, the first section introduces some of the hermeneutical impulses and questions Bassard will highlight in her readings of specific interpreters, as well as illuminating some of the historical context for African-American biblical interpretation in general. In the second section, Bassard describes biblical interpretation in a range of literary works, including poetry, fiction, written prayers and spiritual narratives, by six, very different African American women writers. In so doing Bassard offers, as she notes, the "first sustained treatment of the use of the Bible by African American women" (1).

In the opening chapter, Bassard proposes that African American women read *through* the curse of the biblical texts, a reading perpetuated through Euro-American domination and slavery. She explains that this is a triple curse, the curse of being a fallen human (the curse of Adam), the curse of childbirth (the curse of Eve) and the curse of slavery (the curse of Ham) (15). In spite of this curse, Bassard asserts that African American women interpreters transform the text into a blessing. The notion of blessing employed by Bassard is complex and should not be understood as black women's attempts at simply redeeming the text, or finding in the Scriptures a "good book" as described by Allan Dwight Callahan. Rather, Bassard uses "blessing" to describe the ways in which African American women authors expose the text's curse, while fashioning from the text new meanings. She explains, that this involves "redirecting the curse into the desired blessing" (17). In the literary writings of African American women, this "blessing" takes three, often overlapping, forms. Some blessings are matriarchal, as certain images and tropes speak to and are appropriated by black women over time. She notes, in particular, the images of Balaam's talking ass, which is appropriated by Jarena Lee and Zora Neale Hurston. Sometimes the blessing or interpretation is priestly: "utterance that foregrounds black women's texts as interpretive and intercessory" (18). Finally, there are prophetic blessings, in which women contest the textual perspectives on power.

Bassard contextualizes African American women's readings of the Bible in relation to pro-slavery biblical interpretation of the nineteenth century in her second chapter, which is the most historically oriented of the book. Pro-slavery interpretation, she notes, has often been characterized in terms of literalism. This characterization often results in a dichotomy in which pro-slavery interpretations are understood as reading the text as authoritative, and liberation readings are associated with "decentered biblical authority" (29). In contrast, Bassard argues that pro-slavery readings of the Bible typically reflect prior assumptions about the inferiority of blacks and are not literal readings of the text. She compares this to the hermeneutical assumptions shaping other interpretations of the Bible, including Thomas Jefferson's Bible and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *Woman's Bible*. Nineteenth-century African American hermeneutics responds by de-authorizing the readings of the pro-slavery interpreters, which Bassard calls "the 'unscripturing' of the slavemaster's canon" (37). Black women's unscripturing of pro-slavery interpretation is often both literal and literary in character. Drawing upon Hans Frei, Bassard uses "literal" to describe the Bible's narrativity, especially the authority of the "base-line narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus" (42). This literal/ literary narrative serves as the ground from which African American women interpreters refute pro-slavery readings of the Bible, which they do primarily through literary constructions (e.g. poetry, fiction, narrative).

In chapters three through six, Bassard turns her gaze to a number of specific authors to highlight the different ways these women engage the biblical texts. She begins with abolitionist and feminist Maria W. Stewart, the first "American-born woman to deliver a public address to a mixed-gender audience" (52). While Stewart has often been discussed primarily as a political writer, Bassard argues for approaching Stewart as a religious writer, suggesting that Stewart's *Meditations* (1832) should be understood as central to her written corpus. Bassard characterizes *Meditations*, a series of twenty-one short writings, as an example of "sampling" scripture. In her prayers and meditations, Stewart re-voices scripture, drawing upon multiple texts and weaving the texts' language and images together into something new. Bassard explains, "I am suggesting, then, that there is a kind of logic to Stewart's patchwork, a stitching together that goes beyond 'proof-texting' as Stewart links scriptures that are tonally resonant with each other around certain themes" (61). The complexity of Stewart's appropriation of biblical texts and images prompts Bassard to include a very helpful appendix categorizing the multiple allusions and references in the lines of the author's work.

While Hannah Crafts's *Bondwoman's Narrative*, discussed in chapter four, raises a number of questions about identity and authorship, given the uncertainty over Hannah Crafts's true identity, Bassard stresses the continuity between this narrative and the biblical interpretations of other African American literary authors. Crafts, in particular, demonstrates the practice of African American sermonizing, as she "takes a text" at the beginning of each chapter, using the text as both an opportunity for illustration and exposition. This type of sermonizing, as the title of Bassard's chapter "Hannah's Craft" suggests, is literary and full of nuance. Bassard reveals how Crafts's narrative redeploys the narratives of the Bible, such as the stories of the Shulamite in Song of Songs, Esther, and the Queen of Sheba, to challenge racial ideologies and gender expectations. Particularly provocative is the way in which, as Bassard explains, Crafts conflates these different biblical characters and uses them to allude to the theme of racial passing (73).

Chapter five of *Transforming Scripture* examines Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859). Bassard describes the novel as a "Genesis" story in American literature, since it is one of the first novels written by an African American woman and it also echoes Genesis's fall imagery and the Joseph cycle. By evoking the Joseph cycle in describing the life of Frado, the female protagonist of the novel, Wilson demonstrates the way some African American women authors identify with biblical characters and narratives across genders (83). Bassard also highlights the complex ways in which Wilson engages questions of race, as Frado's mother, a white woman involved with a series of black men, comes to stand for "the black mother" (90). Bassard compares this to the theme of reversal found in biblical traditions.

In the final chapter, Bassard moves from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, as she discusses novels by Sherley Anne Williams and Toni Morrison. She explains that these two contemporary authors relate to the "tradition of black women's Biblicism from the nineteenth century through their extension of the Shulamite trope " (94). This recalls Bassard's earlier description of the matriarchal blessing in which images and texts become part of the conversation held by black women authors over time. Unlike the other authors who engage Song of Songs (e.g. Crafts), these contemporary authors embrace the eroticism of the text. Williams and Morrison also embrace the image of the Shulamite as a way of transforming the "curse" of being a female slave (especially vis-à-vis *partus sequitur ventrem*—the law that determined a person's status based upon the status of the mother) into the blessing of being an active subject (101–4). In *Dessa Rose* (1987), Williams portrays Dessa, an escaped slave woman and mother, as one who challenges traditional understandings of black women's sexuality, by naming her desire and choosing her own partner. In this way, Dessa embodies the Shulamite. In Morrison's novels, Bassard argues, the Song of Songs serves as a poetic "urtext" as Morrison explores the "eruption of black women's erotic desire… and the co-optation of that desire within the structure of power" (104).

Transforming Scriptures has many things to commend it, as it pushes the reader to think about the myriad ways literary writers engage and employ scripture. Bassard converses with a range of theorists, helping her reader to draw connections between her work and the perspectives of others. The work also challenges any notion that there is a singular way in which African American women interpreters approach the text. The range of interpreters engaged by Bassard demonstrates vividly the complex nature of African American women's writing in general and of African American women's biblical interpretation in particular. The breadth of Bassard's presentation means, however, that in some instances she gives the reader only a taste of how some of these prolific women engage scripture. While the treatment of Stewart and Crafts is detailed, Morrison's body of work is discussed in broad strokes. While this provides a glimpse of how Morrison engages Song of Songs, it is not necessarily a full analysis. This should not be understood as a denigration of Bassard's work, but it is an acknowledgement that *this* reader believes she could have learned even more from Bassard's engagement with Morrison's work.

Another strength of *Transforming Scriptures* is its engagement with a wide range of literary theorists and scholars of biblical hermeneutics. In the first chapters, we have a contribution to the ever-evolving vocabulary for discussing the complexity of interpretation. Bassard introduces the language of blessing and curse and outlines different types of blessing vis-à-vis African American women's interpretation. These categories are thought-provoking and will likely be employed by subsequent scholars. Bassard refers to these categories in the second half of the book, although not in a pedantic way. She does not try to fit these authors into her earlier categories, but allows the reader to think about the possible connections. In light of this, the work is probably best suited for scholars and those willing to draw their own connections as they read. In other words, Bassard does not underestimate her audience, just as she does not underestimate the women whose work she explores.

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