Book Reviews, *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 3, no. 2 (2013): 407–76.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives 3.0 License.

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

www.relegere.org
ISSN 1179–7231

Book Reviews

Deane Galbraith
The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto, by Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood 409

V. Rajesh
Ritual, Caste, and Religion in Colonial South India, edited by Michael Bergunder, Heiko Frese, and Ulrike Schröder 415

Michel Clasquin-Johnson
Romantic Dharma: The Emergence of Buddhism into Nineteenth-Century Europe, by Mark S. Lussier 420

Michel Clasquin-Johnson
The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Biography, by Donald S. Lopez . . 421

Martin O'Kane
The Book of Genesis: A Biography, by Ronald Hendel 423

Piero Capelli
Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures, by Talya Fishman 426

Jeremiah W. Cataldo
Handel's Israelite Oratorio Libretti: Sacred Drama and Biblical Exegesis, by Deborah W. Rooke 430

David W. Stowe
Psalms in the Early Modern World, edited by Linda P. Austern, Kari B. McBride, and David L. Orvis 435

Emma England
Reworking the Bible: The Literary Reception-History of Fourteen Biblical Stories, by Anthony C. Swindell 438

Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer
Politics, Religion and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England, by Elizabeth Clarke 442

Dan W. Clanton
Approaching Eden: Adam and Eve in Popular Culture, by Theresa Sanders 449

Caroline Blyth
Biblical Reception 1, edited by J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clines 453

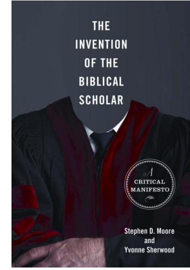
Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer
Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide, edited by Marion A. Taylor with associate editor Agnes Choi 461

Bradford A. Anderson
Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art: A Case Study in Visual Exegesis, by Natasha F.H. O'Hear 465

Robert J. Myles
The Grotesque Body in Early Christian Discourse: Hell, Scatology, and Metamorphosis, by István Czachesz 469

Roland Boer
God in Pain: Inversions of Apocalypse, by Slavoj Žižek and Boris Gunjević 473

The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto, by Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood



Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011 | xiii + 138 pages | ISBN: 978-08006-9774-7 (softback) $22.00

Stephen D. Moore and Yvonne Sherwood's *Manifesto* is a revision and expansion of three articles published in *Biblical Interpretation* in 2010. The point of departure for the articles was a joint AAR/SBL session on the "After Theory" debate—concerning the widely rumoured death of Critical Theory and postmodernism. The book shifts focus to the much broader issue of how the origins of Biblical Studies continue to determine and delimit the discipline's methodologies and concerns. In particular, the authors ask the genealogical question, "why did the 'criticism' in biblical criticism resolutely and exclusively come to take the form of *historical* criticism" (x) and, conversely, what other forms might it have taken, and, thus, might it take in the future?

In addressing these questions, Moore and Sherwood do not resort to that popular but false gospel which proclaims literary criticism as the saviour of a discipline totally corrupted by a slavish and legalistic adherence to historical criticism. They argue instead that the introduction of literary criticism into Biblical Studies, which became significant from the 1970s onwards, in fact *perpetuated* the same Enlightenment project which historical criticism had commenced. Within Biblical Studies, literary criticism was "largely dedicated to the retrieval of the Bible as a supreme work of human artistry" (xi), a goal which was not dissimilar from that of many Enlightenment *philosophes*. With this reframing of the debate between historical and literary critics—which has effectively reached a stalemate in Biblical Studies—Moore and Sherwood introduce a fresh way to view the discipline in its past incarnations and future possibilities. One of the principal future roles for Biblical Studies, they contend, should be the analysis of the discipline's own role in the development of "the Cultural Bible"—a term used by Jonathan Sheehan to refer to the Bible as it was purportedly transformed from sacred text into an object of philological, historical, archaeological, and linguistic inquiry, at the close of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Moore and Sherwood's contention is that traditional historical-critical and more recent literary approaches to the Bible should make room for self-reflexive meta-

criticism. Analysis of the emergence of early Israel or the early Church should be joined by studies of the emergence of the discipline itself and investigations of ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman culture should give way to investigations of the role of Biblical Studies in the formation of the national cultures of modern Germany and England.

This analysis of the path that Biblical Studies originally took, Moore and Sherwood propose, should be accompanied by a reconsideration of the paths which the discipline bypassed in order to get there. They argue in particular that Biblical Studies should recover the philosophical and especially ethical considerations which comprised an integral part of early modern biblical criticism before it congealed, in the late eighteenth century, into "Biblical Studies." In order to do so, the discipline should take advantage of the "turn to religion" within recent philosophy, including the topics that has again opened up, such as the human (versus the inhuman, the divine, the animal), the secular (versus the religious), and the universal (versus the particular). Biblical Studies should return philosophy's favour and *turn to philosophy*, or at least to those strands of philosophy which have recently displayed a renewed interest in "religious" questions.

The combined wit and insight of Moore and Sherwood ensures that there is seldom a dull moment in this punchy and programmatic *Manifesto*. There are more than a few incisive, if not immaculate, conceptions produced by their fertile union, and while the book, and genre of manifesto, is brief, suggestive, and inspiring of possibilities, rather than exhaustive in detail, even the most theory-averse biblical scholar should find something rewarding within its pages. Moore and Sherwood commence, in Chapter 1, "Theory and Methodolatry," with a discussion of the decline of Critical Theory in the Humanities, a decline that the authors suspect has hardly registered in the field of Biblical Studies, given its failure to make a substantial impact there in the first place: "theory in Biblical Studies is approximately the size of Tobago or the Falkland Islands" (9). Although they acknowledge that there are increasing numbers of graduate students who are "fluently bilingual" in Critical Theory and Biblical Studies, they note that Critical Theory circulates mainly outside of mainstream Biblical Studies, turning up "in the Theory-ghettos of the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting" (11). Their discussion of the central issues in the "After Theory" debate serves to highlight some of the key differences in the respective natures of Biblical and Literary Studies. For example, while in Literary Studies there was considerable resistance to the allegedly "cold-blooded" method and minutiae sometimes associated with Critical Theory, the authors argue that a substantially similar method-

ology is fetishized within Biblical Studies and its obsession with minutiae is applauded. The authors also argue that the reason "methodology has long been the *sine qua non* of Biblical Studies as an academic discipline" is it allows practitioners "to keep our discourse on the Bible from being subjective, personal, private, pietistic, pastoral, devotional, or homiletical," maintaining the facade of an academic boundary to the discipline (40). But the discipline's obsession with method makes for "a mountainous excess of dull and dreary books, essays, and articles," the content of which Moore and Sherwood parody with the exasperated voice of experience: "here, first, in numbing dry detail is my method; now watch and be amazed while I apply it woodenly to this unsuspecting biblical text" (40–41).

In Chapter 2, "The Invention of the Biblical Scholar," the authors turn to the heart of their subject matter: "the historical and cultural forces that … formed the discipline itself" (43). Moore and Sherwood document the importance, during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of the ethical questions raised by biblical texts. Biblical criticism in this period, they contend, was less interested in literary tensions than in the disjunction between morality and biblical (im)morality, and the *Manifesto* discusses representatives of this tendency, including Immanuel Kant, Pierre Bayle, Anthony Ashley-Cooper (third Earl of Shaftesbury), Thomas Chubb, and Thomas Morgan. The emergence of Biblical Studies as a distinct discipline in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they claim, saw a shift in the centre of biblical criticism from ethical to historical concerns. Where biblical immorality continued to be dealt with, it was done in a masked way, as in Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis, where the literary distinction of Yahwistic and Priestly sources enshrined the Enlightenment's ethical-religious fantasy of an originally pure, natural, and moral religion and its equally fantastic converse of a corrupt clerical sedimentation. The resulting removal of ethical and theological categories as proper matters of critical inquiry "ensured that [the biblical scholar] could be both a skeptic and a believer at one and the same time" (61). For it became not only permissible but also orthodox to criticise the historicity of the Bible; conversely, an attempt to critique the Bible's theology or ethics was seen as both academically and religiously heterodox. And so Albert Schweitzer is remembered in Biblical Studies for his critique of Jesus as a mistaken apocalyptic prophet, but not so much for the ethical implications of his work: that Jesus's moral teachings did not contain timeless principles but, due to their being founded on the mistaken belief in the imminence of the end times, are deeply problematic if not largely useless for building contemporary ethics. Moore and Sherwood acknowledge that

moral critique of the Bible has returned in the form of the politics of identity (critique from the perspective of women, blacks, subalterns, etc). But they ask whether there is room for moral critique on different grounds: intimate and personal (in a style common within non-biblical literary criticism) as well as universal (*à la* philosophy).

Chapter 3, "Onward Toward the Past," hits out at anything in Biblical Studies that is still left standing after the critical onslaught of the previous two chapters. Moore and Sherwood first attack the tendency of Biblical Studies to fragment into sub-sub-sub-specializations and its ambivalent investigation of political issues. They deflate the tendency within literary-critical currents of Biblical Studies to wax lyrical about the supposedly unsurpassed artistry of the Bible, and the related tendency in appropriations of cultural studies (and here fits reception history) to overemphasise the influence of the Bible on Western culture, viewing both as continuations of "the Enlightenment project of Biblical Studies—the mission to ensure that the Bible remains relevant to the modern age" (95). Moore and Sherwood amusingly document the banalization of Critical Theory within Biblical Studies, including the routine and naïve caricature of "postmodernism" as the discovery that the subject can have no direct and unmediated access to truth—often in ignorance of the fact that this point had been the topic of philosophical-epistemological discussions for centuries. Yet the authors save their most acerbic criticism (and that is saying something) for reader-response theory, which they contend was embraced by Biblical Studies only to the extent that it was shackled to "the discipline's inbred obsession with the historical author and the historical reader," resulting in reader-response criticism becoming, within Biblical Studies, "an exercise in historical criticism performed in a wig and dark sunglasses" (101–2). The authors then provide a series of depressing examples where theory is robbed of its critical edge, replaced by a decaffeinated theory-lite variety for use within Biblical Studies.

Chapter 3 ends with an overview of the "second wave" of theory, involving the "turn to religion" by figures such as Jacques Derrida, Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, and Slavoj Žižek. This second wave, note Moore and Sherwood, has seen the return of the "big bad old-fashioned words" such as "universalism, democracy, humanism, religion, faith, belief, Christianity, the messianic, Saint Paul, truth, justice, forgiveness, friendship, the kingdom, the neighbor, hospitality, and even, for God's sake, evil" (127). The Bible is often central to these philosophical discussions, given its status as "a key site where foundational, but unsustainable, 'modern' separations were made" in the development of such categories (128). The significance of this

philosophical turn for Biblical Studies gives rise to what is the key proposal in Moore and Sherwood's entire *Manifesto*: "By engaging anew with the formative history of our discipline, we can investigate and interrogate the process whereby critical discourse on the Bible became a means for the consolidation of certain antitheses foundational to modernity, such as religion and reason, myth and history, theology and philosophy, the cultural and the universal, modern subject and ancient object" (128).

Moore and Sherwood are surely right in maintaining that a more thorough investigation of the origins of Biblical Studies, and of its later responses to changing socio-historical contexts, is a desideratum of the discipline, a pressing requirement for a more critical appraisal of its assumptions, methodologies, lines of inquiry, framing of problems, research paradigms, and prevailing conclusions. This is not to suggest—although the *Manifesto* might imply as much in its thoroughgoing critique of every other aspect of the discipline—that we leave the study of the Bible behind in order to study the construction of Biblical Studies, as Timothy Fitzgerald and Russell McCutcheon have proposed in respect of religion and Religious Studies. If the modern study of the Bible has been implicated in nation-building, colonisation, gender-construction, political programmes, and, more generally, the development of modern culture—as indeed it has been—then there is all the more reason, not less, to radically reconsider and reframe old historical-critical questions and re-evaluate literary-critical ones. I would suggest that any investigation in Biblical Studies—whether of the origins of Israel or the Church, of New Testament responses to empire, of Paul's reconfiguration of the symbols of Judaism, or of John Milton's use of the Bible—requires a dual rather than an either-or approach. What is required is a critical attitude to biblical literature and its contexts which is *accompanied by* a self-critical attitude to the ways in which Biblical Studies has been and is carried out, and thus how it has structured and limited that biblical criticism. For, as Moore and Sherwood astutely observe, "a discipline's myth of origins powerfully predetermines its practice" (130).

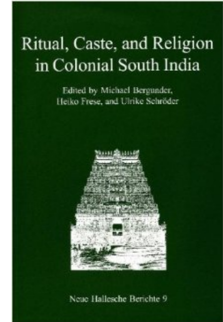
In this connection, Moore and Sherwood might have been more critical of the conclusions reached by Sheehan in *The Englightenment Bible* (Princeton University Press, 2005). For Sheehan sweeps up a great diversity of responses to the Bible during the period of the emergence of modern Biblical Studies into his overarching scheme of a transformation of the Bible from religious to cultural artefact. Yet the modern scholarly approach to the Bible was not only more complex than Sheehan describes but was also imprinted

by decidedly religious factors. The new philological and historical methods used to study the Bible introduced techniques employed in the more profane sciences; but their methods were often overtly apologetic—to affirm and buttress faith in response to the challenges of modernity. As Suzanne Marchand argues in *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), there has also been a tendency to overemphasise the influence of philosophy and secular concerns in the nineteenth century, and conversely a tendency to underemphasise the continued influence of theology and religion. Similar results are reached by Urs App in *The Birth of Orientalism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), in respect of the early Enlightenment period. The historical-critical questions which were framed at the origins of the discipline of Biblical Studies were much more religious than Sheehan allows. Because Moore and Sherwood essentially endorse Sheehan's thesis, and despite their recognition of the return to religion in other disciplines (philosophy especially), they tend to underestimate the extent to which Biblical Studies from its inception has been the practice of religion in the veil of modernity.

But in raising such issues, I am in fact beginning to take up Moore and Sherwood's challenge to reconsider the origins of Biblical Studies and affirm the legitimacy of their challenge. And I find their vision to be an exciting and important one, full of potential for the future of Biblical Studies. Moreover, a turn to the big questions—to philosophy, ethics, and religion—is a fine way to sidestep many of the current pitfalls of both historical and literary criticism. My one major reservation is that, given the increasingly conservative and evangelical nature of Biblical Studies, such a turn would inevitably result in a preponderance of trite, reactionary, and pious sermonising. Of course, it need not. Within biblical reception, a philosophical turn should require a move past the current focus on cataloguing the influence and effects of the Bible, beyond even the detailed accounts of how the Bible has been applied or used within various historical and contemporary contexts, to an adequate theorization of such phenomena which utilises and develops relevant Critical Theory in both its first and second waves alongside theoretical work produced within other academic disciplines and fields. My hope, then, is that the challenge issued by Moore and Sherwood is widely and enthusiastically taken up.

Deane Galbraith
University of Otago

Ritual, Caste, and Religion in Colonial South India, edited by Michael Bergunder, Heiko Frese, and Ulrike Schröder



Neue Hallesche Berichte 9 | Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen zu Halle, 2010 | 386 pages | ISBN: 978-3-447-06377-7 (softback) €15.80

Some years back the historian Ganapathy Subbiah in an address to the Indian History Congress titled "Daksinapatha: Where Does the Path Lead Us?" noted that historical writings which treat Tamilakam as a distinct and exceptional territory in the subcontinent owe this tendency to the writings of missionaries and philologists of the nineteenth century.[1] The volume under review, an outcome of the conference, "Ritual, Caste, and Colonial Discourse in South India," held in Heidelberg in 2008, tries to reinforce that argument by devoting overwhelming emphasis on the Tamil region. Eight out of the thirteen essays deal with "Tamil" in a colonial "South India" (two other essays on Tamil deal with colonial Southeast Asia and Jaffna) that in fact, of course, used several other languages—though Tamil along with Telugu together formed the majority language zones in the erstwhile colonial Madras Presidency. The arrangement of essays under "The Tamil context" along Saiva Siddhanta, Ritual, and Caste lines is arbitrary and clearly does no justice to any of these categories as the essays presented investigate the interplay of caste, religion and ritual in colonial south India. The essays of Andreas Nehring and Michael Bergunder focus on Saiva Siddhanta religion in colonial Tamilnadu. The former underlines the performative approach drawing from Postcolonial Studies as a useful method to understand different identity positioning in colonial South India while the latter examines the writings of Nallasvami Pillai in articulating the universal religion for Saiva Siddhanta.

Ravi Vaitheespara's essay examines the discourse on caste and ritual by Maraimalai Adigal. Drawing theoretical inspiration from Talal Asad's *Genealogies of Religion*, Vaitheespara argues that Maraimalai Adigal's deployment of Saivism and Saiva Siddhanta as a form of Tamil nationalism points

[1] Ganapathy Subbiah, "Daksinapatha: Where Does the Path Lead Us?," in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 67th session (Calicut: Indian History Congress, 2007) 1–24.

to a new understanding of Saivite practices. Straddling such works as *Tamilar Matam*, *Cativeriyarum Poli Caivarum*, *Pantaikkala-t-tamilarum ariyarum*, and *Vellalar Nakarikam*, Vaitheespara reconstructs the subversive history of caste articulated by Adigal where caste was presented as indigenous to Tamil society. However this indigenization of caste was part of Adigal's larger project of ethicizing caste in the Tamil region and subordinate to it. In the schema of forging a Tamil caste, Vellalar interest and hegemony is maintained in a pseudo-democratic spirit. For Vaitheespara the reconfiguring of caste hierarchy by Maraimalai Adigal with Vellalar at the top is a paradox especially so when Adigal remained a staunch critique of caste discrimination based on birth. Vaitheespara attempts to answer this paradox by pointing to Adigal's patrons who largely comprised Vellalars from Jaffna and Tamil diasporic community in Malaysia. While for Vaitheespara Maraimalai Adigal's project emerges in the context of opposition to "Aryan Brahman" hegemony, it is necessary also to locate the same in the context of and in relation to lower-caste articulations in Tamil society.

Peter Schalk's essay examines the role of Arumuga Navalar in sustaining the pre-colonial traditions of Saivism, especially the rituals based on Agamic texts and puranic prescriptions in the wake of Christian missionary activities in nineteenth-century Jaffna. Suggesting that Arumuga Navalar can be viewed, in Gramscian terms, as a traditional as opposed to an organic intellectual, Schalk surveys divergent images of Navalar painted by different groups of people.

The section on ritual comprises three essays. Ulrike Schröder's essay locates Robert Caldwell's missionary activities, especially his controversial work *The Tinnevelly Shanars*, in the context of reorganization of mission work in Tinnevelly and the accompanying conflicts with the local dominant castes. Republished in 1850 as part of Society for the Propagation of the Gospel's series, Missions to the Heathen, Caldwell's book is representative of missionary discourse on India especially from the perspective of an Evangelical concept of religion. Describing the religion of Shanars as "devil worship" or demonolatry quite distinct from Brahmanical Hinduism, Caldwell set the trope for the missionary agenda of conversion. The (Evangelical) theological premises of Caldwell's understanding of the religion of Shanars, as shown by Schröder, raise important questions regarding scholarly understanding of Caldwell's project especially as "missionary orientalism." Schröder calls for a careful consideration of the relationship between Evangelical conceptions of religion and Orientalism. The understanding of Caldwell's project as "mis-

sionary orientalism" by scholars working on South India may largely be due to his *A Comparative Grammar of Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* (1856), a major work on South Indian languages. Intellectual history is still its infancy in South India where scholars privilege particular works of individuals to the neglect of others.

Mary Hancock's essay deals with missionary activities of American women of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Tamilnadu between 1870 and 1920, especially through the writings of Grace Stephens, an Anglo-Indian superintendent of the mission work. She examines the ideas of domesticity and femininity in zenana mission work of the understudied American Methodists. Drawing on Colleen McDannell's *Material Christianity*, Mary Hancock focusses on material mediations in the zenana work in Madras which involved interaction between Hindu and Christian artifacts (bibles, tracts, songbooks), landscapes and buildings (domestic space, homes).

Torsten Tschacher's essay on Tamil-speaking Muslims in colonial Southeast Asia attempts to make a connection with South India where the links are rather tenuous. Therefore the essay appears an odd one in the collection.

C.J. Fuller and Haripriya Narasimhan provide an ethnographic and anthropological account of agraharams in Tamilnadu inhabited by Vattima Brahmins, and in particular Tippirajapuram. Agraharams were sites of power and exclusion exerted by Brahmins over other castes for a long period of time in the history of Tamilnad and thus stand as metaphor for their hegemony. In the wake of modernization, the political economy of Brahmins transformed from agrarian landlords of rural background to urban based professional employment. Brahmins started migrating from rural areas leaving behind their settlements like agraharams which stand today as sites of their symbolic power. Fuller and Narasimhan recount their fieldwork experience and analyze the data they gathered from Tippirajapuram. Despite histories of migration, the Vattima Brahmins retain connection with their villages precisely due to their identity being defined by their village roots. This takes the form of sponsoring temple renovation in the villages, which Fuller and Narasimhan examine in Tippirajapuram. Apart from physical movement, migration entails a gamut of attitudes and practices. The essay confirms the commonsense understanding of Tamil Brahmin migration to urban areas in the wake of modernity, but does little to examine what this migration entails given their longer histories of rural domination.

The articulation of subaltern communities through the journal *Oru Paica Tamilan* founded by Iyothee Thassar in Tamilnadu during the early twentieth

century is the subject of G. Aloysius's essay. *Tamilan* was launched by Iyothee Thassar in 1907 in the context of debate on subaltern self-identification. While *paraiyan* was a preferred category in the activism of Rettaimalai Srinivasan, Iyothee Thassar's *tamilan* opposed it in order to challenge and transcend the existential reality. The latter unpacked the category of *paraiyan*, *panchamas* as attempts at Brahminical identification of the subalterns and developed alternate identification of *tamilar*/Dravidian, *adi tamilar* and Purva Buddhists with all the positive and progressive attributes of equality, inclusion and casteless nature. This was achieved by Iyothee Thassar through his hermeneutical manoeuvers with ancient texts and traditions. While the critique and reconstruction attempted by Iyothee Thasar remained largely conceptual without any corresponding large scale political mobilization, the legacy was taken over in 1926 when *Tamilan* was re-launched. However, the changed scenario crisscrossed with several other developments in the politics of the subcontinent in general and Tamil society in particular which *Tamilan* had to contend with as far as subaltern self-identification was concerned. Aloysius elaborates on these changes from the conceptual to the concrete and demonstrates the oscillating belongings and articulations of the subalterns.

The focus on middle castes in the hierarchy of castes is taken up in A.R. Venkatachalapathy's essay "More Kshatriya than thou!" This debate over the claim to Kshatriya status was fought by the Nadar and Vanniyar castes during the early twentieth century. In response to the census operation of the colonial state and the implementation of normative Sanskritic categories in the enumeration process, Nadars and Vanniyars sought higher status by inventing their caste histories. However in the process they also contested each others' claims to Kshatriya status and this is reflected in the individual works on caste histories and the journals they founded. These two castes were physically apart yet challenged each others' claims. Delving into vernacular sources so far not consulted by scholars is a refreshing attempt by Venkatachalapathy, but an exhaustive presentation makes the main argument opaque.

The section on the Telugu context carries essays by Heiko Frese, Vakulabharanam Rajagopal, and Velcheru Narayana Rao. While Frese examines the discourses of identity in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial Andhra from Viresalingam-backed journal *Satya Samvardhani*, Rajagopal analyzes the writings of Kasibhatta Brahmayya Sastri, a traditionalist and conservative who vehemently opposed the social reforms advocated by Viresalingam. The theme of social reform dominated the pages of *Satya Samvardhani* in a subtle way based on reason and common sense. Social

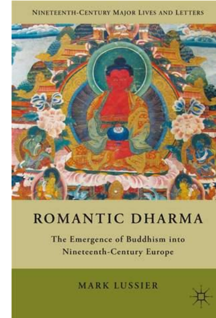
reform was advocated not always by attacking the Brahmanical religious tradition but also by creatively interpreting them for contemporary needs. In the process, the identity of Brahmin was emptied, thus opening up spaces for power struggles between discursive formations. Resisting the social reform movement, a failed case of cultural nationalism is the case of Brahmayya Sastri. In the literature of social reform movement on nineteenth-century India, Rajagopal's essay is significant, for it provides us a "counter" example of resistance to the agenda of reform. Reading Brahmayya Sastri's *Upanyasa payonidhi*, he has presented a "mentality" at work that defended Hinduism against the critics and directed the criticism at Christianity and reformist Brahmoism. This is particularly relevant in contemporary India where cultural nationalism is propagated at the expense of addressing the hierarchy and concerns of lower orders of society.

Narayana Rao's essay on multiple lives of *Sumati Satakamu* in colonial Andhra highlights the power of Orientalism and colonial knowledge-forms in understanding premodern texts and traditions. The epistemological shift in knowledge forms engendered by colonial modernity is evident from the way the concept of *niti* was understood as morals, thereby inaugurating a frantic search for appropriate traditional works to be prescribed as textbooks in schools. Narayana Rao investigates the content of *Sumati Satakamu*, probable readership, oral (Adi Sarasvati Mudranalayamu edition) and literary (C. P. Brown edition) features of the text, and debates on authorship. The argument presented is that the contemporary popular understanding of *Sumati Satakamu* as a text on morality stem from the re-working of it during the colonial period. Spelling errors like "alredy" (244) and irregularity in the spelling of names like Keshub Candra Sen (297) could have been avoided with tighter editorial work. The text of the first appendix on the debate between T. Velayuda Mudaliyar and N. Chidamabaram Iyer, on the message of Ramalinga Adigal from *The Theosophist*, hangs in the air without any relation to the essays presented in the volume.

Despite these minor errors, the volume is a useful compendium of significant scholarship on colonial South India.

V. Rajesh
Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Mohali

Romantic Dharma: The Emergence of Buddhism into Nineteenth-Century Europe, by Mark S. Lussier



Nineteenth-Century Major Lives and Letters | New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011 | xx + 231 pages | ISBN: 978-0-230-10545-4 (hardback) $90.00

The emergence of a distinctly western form of Buddhism has become somewhat of an academic cottage industry in recent decades, and tracing the origins of this new form of spirituality to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is a distinct sub-specialty. To this field comes Professor Lussier to add a new element for our consideration: What relation, if any, is there between the growing awareness of Buddhism in nineteenth-century Europe and the rise of Romanticism?

By its very nature, this must be a speculative work. Lussier does not fall into the trap of imputing to Romantic writers more knowledge of Buddhism than they are known to have possessed. He does not turn Shelley into an anonymous Shantideva, nor Blake into a British Bodhidharma. What he does illustrate is far more subtle.

For Lussier, Buddhism represents a challenge to the classical Saidian view of Orientalist hegemony. Buddhism was not merely a pawn in the Great Game of western colonial conquest: it "capably exerted a broad counterinfluence in Europe across the nineteenth century," and "unlike almost all other Eastern religions and systems of thought, Buddhism has cast long shadows across the West, even … establishing a significant presence within it" (23).

What Lussier proceeds to do with the rest of his book is not merely to describe this process, but to demonstrate it. His exposition does not follow western, Aristotelian forms of argumentation. It is built on the fluid, conditionalist thinking of Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism could have entered the western cultural consciousness at any time. As I have argued elsewhere, the geographical and cultural boundaries separating Europe and Asia were not insurmountable, not when a Buddha-rupa has been found in a Viking treasure hoard in Sweden, not when the Buddha, under the name Chagamoni Burkhan, was known from the writings of Marco Polo, not to mention venerated as a saint under the name Josaphat.

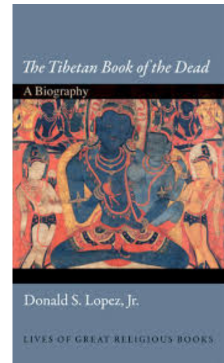
Buddhism entered the Euro-American sphere when it did because the conditions came into being that allowed it to do so. And what do we find in

Europe at precisely the same time? Romanticism. This does not imply that Romanticism "paved the way" for Buddhism (or, even less, vice versa). What Lussier shows in this book is that both Romanticism, the home-grown product, and Buddhism, the exotic import, reflected and brought about a fundamental change in the Zeitgeist. It is a perfect example of *pratityasamutpada*, conditionality rather than causality.

Much can still be said on this topic. Both Romanticism and Buddhism have their Jungian shadows, their dark sides, and these would become all too clear in the twentieth century, unfortunately not part of the scope of this particular volume or the series in which it appears. For now, it is not the content of this book that delights (although it needs to be said that the chapter on Csoma de Korös contains material that has been obscured for far too long), but the approach, the methodology. Buddhology has long endured debates over the status of the Buddhist scholar/practitioner. Here, in a different academic context, we can see the results of a Buddhist view of reality allied to thorough western scholarship. Read this book. It may just reflect the future direction of the humanities.

Michel Clasquin-Johnson
University of South Africa

The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Biography, by Donald S. Lopez



Lives of Great Religious Books | Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011 | 173 pages | ISBN: 978-0-691-13435-2 (hardback) $19.95

This volume is being published in truly august company. Its companions in the series (current and forthcoming) include the *Analects*, the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, the *Bhagavad Gita* … and what does Lopez do? He immediately sets out to demonstrate that the Tibetan Book of the Dead does not belong in this list. One can hardly phrase it better than he does himself:

> The Tibetan Book of the Dead is not really Tibetan, it is not really a book, and it is not really about death. It is about rebirth: the rebirth of souls and the rebirth of texts. Evans-Wentz's classic is not so much Tibetan as it is American, a product of Amer-

> ican spiritualism. Indeed, it might be counted among its classic texts … [it is] a remarkable case of what can happen when American Spiritualism goes abroad.

The rest of this brief and highly readable book is dedicated to explaining this apparently outrageous opening statement. The story starts with Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, in 1816. It ends in 2005, when the current Dalai Lama subtly indicates in his Introduction to the latest of many English translations that this book was never a best-seller in its native land.

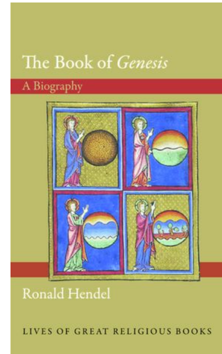
The journey in between takes us to India and Tibet, where Lopez shows how various Buddhist traditions regarding inter-life existence developed and how they were only collated into a single volume somewhere around the late seventeenth century. From there, the British occupation of Tibet in 1903 led directly to Evans-Wentz getting his hands on a copy of this rather obscure compendium of rituals and the rest, as they say, is history. From Carl Gustav Jung, through Lama Govinda, to the Beatles, the Tibetan Book of the Dead would be regarded as the central text of Tibetan Buddhism that it never actually was. Even its name was, shall we say, borrowed, from an Egyptian funerary text. The Tibetan title of the book means something quite different.

And so, the Tibetan Book of the Dead is somewhat like the Holy Roman Empire, neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire. But a sacred scripture, once established, takes on a life of its own regardless of its origins. Could we expect the book's influence to filter back into Tibetan orthodoxy, now that it is increasingly reliant on western supporters for its survival? Lopez hints at it when he writes that the Tibetan text "became a kind of colonial commodity, the raw material exported to the city of the colonizer, where it is manufactured into a product that is then sold back to the colonized at a high price. In this case, that price has included compelling Tibetan teachers, most recently the Dalai Lama himself, to comment on the text yet again" (pp). But it is not only the colonizer that it is being sold back to, then, it is also the colonized.

One presumes that the series editors might have hesitated to contract this book had they known the outcome. Let us be glad they did not, for it has given us this magnificent little piece of literary iconoclasm

Michel Clasquin-Johnson
University of South Africa

The Book of Genesis: A Biography, by Ronald Hendel



Lives of Great Religious Books | Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013 | xii + 287 pages | ISBN: 978-0-691-14012-4 (hardback) $24.95

The Book of Genesis: A Biography appears in the Princeton University Series, Lives of Great Religious Books alongside the stories of other great works such as *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (John J. Collins) and *Augustine's Confessions* (Garry Wills). This is a new series of short volumes that aims to recount the complex and fascinating histories of important religious texts from around the world.

The reason for the inclusion of Genesis in this series is flagged up right at the start on the volume's cover. During its 2,500-year life, the book of Genesis has been the keystone to almost every important claim about reality, humanity, and God in Judaism and Christianity and continues to play a central role in debates about science, politics, and human rights. Hendel aims to trace in this volume how Genesis has shaped views of reality and how changing views of reality have shaped interpretations of Genesis. Literal and figurative readings have long competed with each other. Hendel demonstrates how Luther's criticism of traditional figurative accounts of Genesis undermined the Catholic Church; how Galileo made the radical argument that the cosmology of Genesis wasn't scientific evidence; and how Spinoza made the really radical argument that the scientific method should be applied to Genesis itself. Many high points of Western thought and art have taken the form of encounters with Genesis from Paul and Augustine to Charles Darwin, Emily Dickinson, and Franz Kafka.

Hendel does not follow the standard reception-history approach in dealing with the impact of Genesis across the centuries nor does he deal with its many cultural interpretations and manifestations. Although he does deal briefly towards the end of the volume with the literature of Dickinson and Kafka, he focusses rather on the philosophical, hermeneutical, and theological aspects of the history of the book's interpretation. He focusses on the "life" of Genesis and its "afterlife," which he defines as "its original meanings and its effects on later generations." Through its transformation over time, the text takes on new layers of sense, some of which may have been unthink-

able previously. The book becomes a historical agent, which enters into new religious and political configurations.

Quite rightly Hendel states that his plotting of the biography of Genesis will emphasise certain bits and overlook others, but nevertheless has the advantage of making a coherent story that demonstrates the consistent appeal of the book (Introduction, 11). He thus structures his volume accordingly: in chapter 1 ("The Genesis of Genesis") he emphasises the figural dual reality in which this world is a flawed version of a more perfect world and Genesis is a more perfect version of a more perfect text (ch. 2: "The Rise of the Figural Sense"). The hidden world which Genesis reveals has two modalities: one is in future time at the End of Days (ch. 3: "Apocalyptic Secrets") and the other is in metaphysical space, the Higher World (ch. 4: "Platonic Worlds"). People do things with Genesis in order to influence and change reality. In the early modern period (between 1200 and 1600) people in the West began to return to a single world, in which our lives are bonded spatially by the earth and temporally by death. The foundations of the figural worlds were undermined (ch. 5: "Between the Figure and the Real") and so people began to read Genesis in its plain or realistic sense, not as a cipher about other worlds. The real world of Genesis does not map on to the modern scientific view of the world (ch. 6: "Genesis and Science"). Its philosophical concepts do not map on to modern concepts either. Yet it remains a part of our moral, religious and political lives (ch. 7: "Modern Times"). Despite the fact that it is mostly myth and legend, in modern times Genesis is still good to think about and to do things with.

Hendel stresses in several places throughout his volume that Genesis is a book that people always felt that "they could do things with." This is a really good phrase to use and sums up the range and variety of interpretative contexts that Genesis could lend itself to over the centuries. Hendel chooses a number of interpretive contexts that provide a varied and representative number of examples of the appeal of Genesis to many diverse minds. However, given his interpretative focus (which is, of course, the real appeal of the book), I found his chapter 1 to be the least interesting. Here, Hendel attempts to deal with the literary origins of the book and leans heavily on Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis (J, E, D, P) in seeking to determine the oldest part of Genesis (which he states categorically on page 15 to be the so-called Blessing of Jacob in Gen 49). I feel it would have been in more keeping with the aim of the book if he had emphasised more the literary qualities of Genesis (*à la* Robert Alter) and drew more attention to its strik-

ing and original themes rather than trying to determine its precise historical literary authorship. This would have prepared the way better for his subsequent chapters. This said, apart from chapter 1, the rest of the chapters all provide the reader with copious and detailed information about the interpretative history of the book.

In chapter 2, Hendel uses the four assumptions of traditional biblical interpretation suggested by James Kugel in *The Bible as It Was* (Harvard University Press, 1997)—that the Bible is *cryptic*, *relevant*, *perfect*, and *divine*—and claims that these four assumptions "undergird all the different forms of early biblical interpretation as well as the views of reality that came to prevail in this era." A *cryptic* text has coded or hidden meanings (for example, the life of Enoch in Gen 5:21–24) which it is the task of interpreters to uncover. By *relevant*, Hendel implies the question: how can lists of people and places in Genesis be relevant to the present? If Genesis is the *perfect* "Torah of God," then how can there be contradictions within it? Connected to all the assumptions is the global assumption that Genesis is *divine* speech—either authorised or authored by God himself.

In chapter 3, Hendel deals with apocalyptic interpretations of Genesis. "For over two thousand years," he states (64), "the life of Genesis has been shaped by the belief that it is a repository of apocalyptic secrets." Particularly interesting in this regard is his discussion of apocalyptic interpretations of the character of Adam in his section (70–78) which he entitles "The Glory of Adam" after a phrase taken from one of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In chapter 4, Hendel explores how the interpretation of Genesis has been shaped by Platonic ideas. Particularly interesting in this regard is his discussion of "the Greek Genesis" (88–90) where he draws attention to the fact that the Septuagint is not simply a Greek translation of the Hebrew of Genesis but a translation that allows Genesis to take on a "Greek colour." Since the Septuagint became the standard Scripture for Greek-speaking Jews and most Christians, including all the writers of the New Testament, Genesis described for them and their descendants a Platonic world. It was much more than a simple translation. On pages 98–102, in the same chapter, Hendel also draws attention to the attraction of Genesis in the early Christian period where the so-called Gnostic Genesis offers a "Platonizing reimagining of Genesis." There are also other outstanding and original discussions in this section of the book: for example, the intense interest in the hidden and symbolic meanings of the texts, evident in the works of Augustine which Hendel deals with in detail in chapter 5.

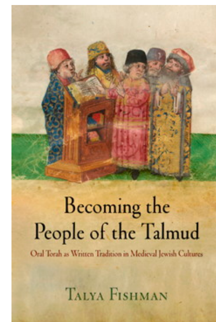
In chapter 6, Hendel introduces and summarises many of the disputes surrounding the clashes that began to emerge from the seventeenth century between scientific discoveries and literal readings of the early chapters of Genesis. For example, from page 147, Hendel presents a clear and concise overview of several of the controversies that centred around cosmology.

In chapter 7, in his chapter on modern times, Hendel focuses on slavery and emancipation. He shows how the most crucial biblical text for the pro-slavery position was the story of Noah's drunkenness in Gen 9. He offers a most interesting and detailed (and to many readers this will be totally new) discussion of this text and its importance in the context of the American civil war. Although Hendel offers a short section on the "second sex" (204–7), I would have liked to have seen a more detailed section on how feminist interpreters deal with the many texts in Genesis that portray the roles given to women in the patriarchal narratives.

To describe this book as a "short volume" is quite misleading. It contains a wealth of information, usefully structured into thematic chapters and offers the reader aspects of the interpretative history of Genesis that she or he will not find in standard biblical commentaries—or indeed in books and articles that deal with the reception history of Genesis. In addition the book will appeal to those with either a detailed or very sparse knowledge of the history of a text that clearly holds an unending fascination in every age.

Martin O'Kane
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

***Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures*, by Talya Fishman**



Jewish Culture and Contexts | Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011 | 424 pages | ISBN: 978-0-8122-4313-0 (hardback) $65.00 | ISBN: 978-0-8122-2287-6 (softback) $29.95 | ISBN: 978-0-8122-0498-8 (ebook) $29.95

When was the Babylonian Talmud first considered to be a code of applied law? What was its original Mesopotamian *Sitz im Leben*, and how did it

come to be perceived and used in the diaspora communities of North Africa and the Iberian peninsula—before Rashi and the glossators known as the Tosafists in eleventh- to thirteenth-century Northern France turned it into a canonical text for both education and adjudication?

According to Talya Fishman of the University of Pennsylvania, the key-word that helps to answer these questions is "textualization," a term that describes the "slow and unconscious" (9) process in northern Europe between the mid-eleventh and mid-twelfth centuries through which, among both Christians and Jews, the written word gradually acquired intellectual and legal prestige and came to preserve memory, a status and function previously granted primarily to transmission via spoken words and gesture. As the studies of Yaʿaqov Sussmann, Robert Brody and Nahman Danzig have shown, the Mishnah and the Babylonian Talmud were transmitted orally until the eleventh century and the end of the period of the classical Iraqi *geʾonim* (leaders of the rabbinical schools of Iraq)—as the Talmud itself puts it, "It is forbidden to put oral matters in writing" (b. *Temurah* 14a–b). This remained true despite the high degree of textualization that the multicultural society of Iraq had already reached by the tenth century. Putting the Oral Law in writing was a concession that the *geʾonim* made to the necessity of offering a guide to religious life and creating a network of patronage in the farthest reaches of the Mediterranean (ch. 1). The difference between the two Jewish subcultures of Ashkenaz and Sefarad, Fishman argues, is best explained in light of the Roman past and the diffusion and survival of its juridical culture and practices: in Sefarad (North Africa, al-Andalus and France south of the Loire), the heritage of *Latinitas* and its legal culture persisted even after the collapse of the Roman Empire in the form of a continued dependence on written documents as evidentiary and dispositive sources of legal authority (ch. 2). In France north of the Loire, the end of the Carolingian Empire brought about the end of the professional legal class, and social life was once again regulated by non-written means (ch. 3). The textualization of Jewish culture and the focus of the Jewish curriculum around the Talmud provoked considerable resistance and came to be perceived negatively not only by Christians, but even by many Jewish intellectuals, according to whom the end of unmediated master-disciple relationships and their *ethos* brought about increased ignorance of the Oral Law and its investigation (*talmud*), as individual scholars instead came to exercise their hermeneutic acumen on written texts. The textualization of the Talmud, its canonization both as a written corpus and as a central pedagogical text, and its adoption

as a normative source for applied law took place in northern France between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries through the works of Rashi and the Tosafists (ch. 4). The beginning of Christian attacks on the Talmud—first in learned works starting with Peter the Venerable (1146), then materially beginning with the Talmud Trial of Paris (1240)—can best be explained by the increasingly widespread diffusion of a standardized Talmudic text in written form. Even cultural phenomena internal to late medieval Judaism can be understood as reactions to the process of textualization: the Rhineland pietsists (*Haside Ashkenaz*) opposed textualization and privileged living over written memory, granting continuity to a cultural past that after Rashi and the Tosafists had begun to be perceived as different from the present—the same historicist attitude that starting in the fourteenth century began to characterize the thought of the early humanists (chs. 5–6)—but in doing so, they adopted the very strategies and tools of textualization that they apparently opposed, putting "old wine in new bottles."

Some of Fishman's main theses have not convinced all her reviewers. An important and lively discussion has already taken place in journals and on the Internet. Some scholars insist on dating to the beginning of the ninth century the Babylonian Talmud's acquisition of authority as a normative text among the Jews of the Islamic world (at the time, 90% of Jews worldwide); its authority, according to Haym Soloveitchik, is demonstrable from its pervasive citation in the vast corpus of gaonic responsa. In chapter 4, Fishman maintains that the Tosafists thought of the Talmud as a code of applied law (*halakhah le-maʿaseh*), and aimed to make it this by standardizing the Talmudic text and eliminating its variant readings. But according to Soloveitchik ("The People of the Book: Since When?" /*Jewish Review of Books* (2012): 14–18), when the Tosafists found themselves confronted with varying or contradictory legal opinions in a single Talmudic discussion (*sugya*), they never put forward a position as to which opinion had normative value; likewise, their supposed preoccupation with textual matters is evident in no fewer than three percent of the corpus of their glosses; and the typical readings of the so-called "Ashkenazi text" of the Talmud—which for Fishman represents the final stages of the Tosafist activity—are already attested in Yemeni manuscripts and fragments from the Cairo Genizah.

Another example of this type of discussion: Fishman (143–44) translates a passaf from the *Sefer ha-Yashar* of Rabbenu Tam in order to demonstrate that as late as the twelfth century among the rabbis of northern Europe there was no consensus surrounding the Talmud's authority in adju-

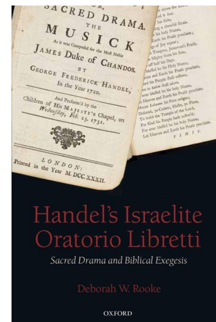
dication, and that applied law could be based either on customary law, on aggadic (narrative) traditions or on halakhic traditions from outside the Talmud. Soloveitchik countered that the quotation that Fishman brings from Rabbenu Tam elides an all-important phrase: extratalmudic legal traditions can be accepted "when they do not conflict with our Talmud" (*Sefer ha-Yashar le-Rabbenu Tam. Heleq she'elot u-tshuvot*, ed. by Sh. F. Rosenthal [Berlin: Itzkowski, 1898], 81) —the missing phrase strengthens the idea that the authority of the Talmud was already widely accepted by his day. Indeed, the central chapters of the book, from 2 through 5, suffer at times from a dearth of analysis of textual examples, with the result that at times the argument becomes somewhat abstract and difficult to follow. It would, for example, be beneficial in a subsequent edition of the book (and it certainly merits one) for the description of the activity of the Tosafists that provoked Soloveitchik's criticisms to be supported by an analysis of how they harmonized differing opinions in order to elicit applied law from specific Talmudic *sugyot*, or else of how they intervened in textual variants in order to standardize the text. Fishman's point about the Tosafists could be more clearly formulated if rendered not in terms of a specific textual activity, or of a codification and canonization of the Talmud as a manual of applied law, but in terms of a progressively broader recognition by Jews of its prestige.

Fishman's book nonetheless has the great merit of having abundantly illuminated one of the main contradictions animating the evolution of Jewish culture (and Jewish communities) between late antiquity and the end of the Middle Ages: the tension between the traditional commitment to avoid putting legal matters into writing and the actual diffusion and centrality of written legal texts. She also highlights (though without always getting to the bottom of the problem) numerous parallels between Jewish conceptions of law and the innovations that were taking place in the Islamic and Latin Christian worlds. The salient and innovative feature of the book, as Joseph Shatzmiller has observed (H-Judaic, October 2011), is the comparison of orality and textuality among Jews with the same phenomena among Christians and Muslims (via, for example, the now classic studies of Michael Clanchy, Mary Carruthers, and Brian Stock); in this sense, the book is ground-breaking, and has opened the way for further research. Fishman has daringly attempted to overcome long-entrenched scholarly schemata in search of a more dynamic vision and of a new and more capacious paradigm that unites rabbinic erudition with cultural history. The vision of the Tosafists as *lomde Torah lishma*, "learners of Torah for its own

sake," whose dialectic was not connected to the search for applied law, is a perfectly valid one, but only as far as it goes; Fishman instead brings the Tosafists into a broader historical framework as markers of cultural change.

I must conclude with some observations on the decline of the art of the academic book. The publisher does not appear to have devoted adequate editorial attention to the volume: the transliteration from Hebrew is inconsistent (*ʾalef* and *ʿayin* are not generally distinguished from one another; *dagesh forte* is almost never rendered); there are errors and inconsistencies not only in the transcription of Greek and Latin words (*pieta* for *pietas* [116]; *redivivus* for *redivivi* [133]; *deuteroses* for *deuteroseis* [169]), but in the spelling of words in French and German (*Universitat* for *Universität* [106]; *de rigeur* for *de rigueur* [109]) and even in English (*propadeutic* [153]; *indispensible* [175]), not to mention errors in punctuation (R, instead of R. for "rabbi"). Fortunately, the book's contents are well worth the $65 the press charges for the hardcover edition.

Piero Capelli
Ca' Foscari University of Venice



Handel's Israelite Oratorio Libretti: Sacred Drama and Biblical Exegesis, by Deborah W. Rooke

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012 | xxii + 256 pages | ISBN: 978-0-19-927928-9 (hardback) £79.00

I had already appreciated Handel from an aesthetic point of view: a fireplace, a glass of wine, and Handel passionately composing oratorios upon my music player. Each crescendo pushing and pulling at my dependence upon the melodic line. A moment of loss here. A moment of gain there. Disappointment. Release. There was much to appreciate and enjoy. Yet in my reverie, I risked overlooking something important. Deborah Rooke's *Handel's Israelite Oratorio Libretti* fixed that by emphasizing a dimension of Handel's work that I had until recently neglected. The father of what is now the conservative Christian majestic choral rapture, Rooke explains, not only employed librettists who were biblical exegetes—how well versed is a different discussion—but was himself

a practicing biblical revisionist. In that spirit, Rooke's work moves under the direction of two "motifs" pushing, pulling, and finally embracing like melodies in a contrapuntal fugue: (1) an exegetical analysis of the biblical narrative, and (2) an analysis of how Handel and his changing chorus of librettists nuanced prevailing interpretations of biblical stories for current social-political sensitivities or expectations. Did Yahweh love Israel? Then, so the prevailing thought in eighteenth-century Britain went, he must also love the British monarchy and the Protestant Established Church's separation from the Holy See. Rational? Well, what is "rational," anyway?

In "To Laugh or Not to Laugh: the Question of Esther" (ch. 1), Rooke explores the symbolic transition of Esther, from Bible to oratorio, "from comedy through tragedy to national and royal propaganda" (31). This transition was eased by Jean Racine, whose play *Esther* dealt with many of the themes Handel wished to address (2). Consequently, Handel's version of Esther was freed from its biblical constraints (Racine took a number of liberties; 7–8) to be molded into a symbol fitting for the eighteenth-century London monarchy. The theme of God's salvation of the Jews in Esther takes on symbolically, for both Racine and Handel, various deliverances of the British people, including the deliverance of the British Protestant Established Church from popish extermination (24).

In 1733, Handel capitalized on the success of *Esther* by producing and performing two more oratorios, these in conjunction with the librettist Samuel Humphreys. The first was an adaption of Esther for the public stage. The second pursued the figure, and symbolic value, of *Deborah*, and this occupies the focus of Rooke's second chapter ("A Gender Agenda: Deborah in Holy Writ and Handel"). *Deborah* was, as Rooke interprets from the evidence, intended as flattery for the London royals (33). For note, "The assumption, then, is that in his libretto—with Handel's approval—Samuel Humphreys manipulated the biblical material on Deborah in order to convey a strong and positive political message about both Britain and its queen as the upholders of true religion" (35). The story of Deborah, Rooke argues, can be interpreted as a commentary on not only the waywardness of Israel—or, symbolically the divinely "favored" people—but also on the failings of men; certainly a theme that would have pleased Queen Caroline (52)!

The third chapter, "Jezebel, Joash, and Jesus Christ: *Aspects of* Athalia," analyzes Handel's (and Humphrey's) focus on the theme of a strong-willed woman. In this case, and in contrast to *Esther* and *Deborah*, *Athalia* emphasizes the role of the feminine anti-hero and the downfall of Athalia's reign

(53). The choice of subject, as Rooke notes was intriguing because the story of Athalia had symbolic associations with a recent political past that saw the Jacobians at odds with the Hanoverians, the latter with which Handel was aligned (54–55). In the end, however, Rooke can only speculate as to Handel's reasoning for an oratorio on Athalia: "it is possible that this ambiguity was deliberate, enabling Handel to produce an oratorio that would satisfy the potentially hostile High Church and Jacobite factions in Oxford without being disloyal to his Hanoverian benefactors" (73).

Chapter 4 ("Saul: Tragedy, Treachery, and Theology") identifies a shift in Handel's focus from the feminine subject to the masculine one with Saul, the subject of an oratorio produced in collaboration with Charles Jennens in 1738. This collaboration was the first among several that would include works such as *Messiah* (1741), *Belshazzar* (1744), and 1738's *Israel in Egypt* (74). Christian messianism, as a particular focus within an exploration of divine kingship, occupied a significant emphasis in this libretto (86). But note also, "Despite the oratorio being entitled *Saul*, the content of the libretto indicates that Jennens is not interested purely in Saul, but in Saul vis-à-vis David" (86–87), which may have symbolized the deposing of James II in 1688 and the installation of the Hanoverians instead of the Catholic Stuarts (96). Consequently, the libretto transforms Saul from a tragic figure into a wicked man who embodies evil in his pursuit of David (97).

"From Wild Man to War Hero: *The Story of* Samson" (ch. 5) continues to focus on the theme of the tortured male figure in Handel's works. Handel's oratorio on Samson, Rooke points out, was an adaption of John Milton's *Samson Agonistes* (98), and was prepared by Newburgh Hamiloton (111–20). There is a clear development, concludes Rooke, from the biblical portrayal of the character to Milton's to Hamilton and Handel's Samson. Moreover, "[Hamilton's] portrayal embodies the characteristically British ideals of resistance to tyranny and defeat of idolatrous (Catholic) religion" (120).

Chapter 6 ("Joseph: Saint or Sinner?") investigates the reaction to Apostolo Zeno's libretto *Guiseppe* in the composition of *Joseph and His Brethren*. With *Joseph*, Handel, after a disagreement with Charles Jennens over the setting for *Messiah*, chose to work with librettist James Miller (121). Rooke investigates the cultural perceptions of Joseph during the eighteenth century and the influence of Zeno's libretto *Guiseppe* with its positive emphasis upon Joseph and its defense of Joseph's integrity (144). It was in defense of that integrity that Miller chose to portray Joseph as an unambitious character who persevered through his experiences by depending upon the Divine (143).

Handel's oratorio *Judas Macchabeaus* took a more overt political turn than his previous works, and it is this to which Rook dedicates her seventh chapter. This oratorio, explains Rooke, was completed in the wake of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745–46 as a compliment to William, Duke of Cumberland, who saw the rebellion put to rest (145). Handel worked with Thomas Morell on this libretto because of Jennens's sensitive political position (146). By drawing parallels between the Maccabean revolt, Handel and Jennens emphasized in their oratorio divine legitimation of the anti-Jacobite campaign, which sought to protect the interests of the Established Church (164–165).

"Solomon and His Women: A Handelian Triptych" (ch. 8) explores how the 1748 oratorio *Solomon* adapted the biblical text to celebrate King George II's reign and the "blessedness of the status quo that has been arrived at by defeating the Jacobite threat to the English throne" (167). That, as Rooke points out, however, was but the framework for a complex analysis of gender roles and privilege–a woman's role, according to the oratorio, was to reflect well upon and complement men. "Solomon's women reflect his glory; and in so doing, allow Solomon to reflect an equally glorious image of His Royal Highness King George II" (183).

Chapter 9 explores the 1749 oratorio *Susanna*, which Rooke argues should be seen as a complement to *Solomon*. Some of the liberties taken in this oratorio included a transformation of Susanna from being a passive figure (as she is portrayed in the biblical text) to an active one. According to Rooke, however, this may have been due more to utility than to any celebration of an active, liberated woman (cf. 193). An oratorio about Susanna, after all, needed its main character to speak and act. In fact, the oratorio emphasizes Susanna as an "example par excellence of wifely virtue" (206).

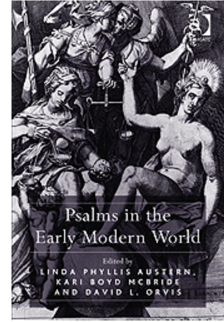
Rooke's final chapter, "Sex and Death, or, the Death of Sex: The Fate of Jephthah's Daughter," focuses on Handel's final oratorio, *Jephthah*. For this oratorio, Handel collaborated once again with Morell. Completed in 1751, and less firmly anchored to any political context than previous oratorios, this oratorio focused on Jephthah's internal deliberations about the vow he made to Yahweh to sacrifice his daughter; Jephthah is portrayed as being inspired by and acting under the approval of Yahweh. His daughter's death, then, was a celebration of celibacy. Or, as Rooke puts it, "There is … movement from death as sex, through death as transcending sex, to the death of sex that signifies the death of death; and with that movement, the heathenish, death-dealing deity of the Old Testament story is transformed into the life-giving God of eighteenth-century orthodox Christianity" (226).

Rooke's narrative strategy is very much like a contrapuntal work: with each chapter, she explores the biblical contexts of the biblical characters in question before investigating how they were (re)interpreted as eighteenth-century cultural and political symbols portraying the struggles of the British monarchy and the Established Church. Throughout her work, I found myself disagreeing with little. In fact, I found myself repeating frequently "aha!" after a given explanation of the unique context that provided the social-political framework for a specific oratorio. As a reader, I found it quite intriguing to see that Handel took liberties with religious interpretation for the sake of political flattery—a different side to the composer often played in Christian churches here in the U.S.

All said, Deborah Rooke offers us an important work on the role that musical composition, as cultural production, can play in supporting or challenging the boundaries of biblical interpretation. For anyone interested in Handel or in classical music generally and biblical interpretation, this book should be on her bookshelf. This book offers a playful exposition of not only Handel's Israelite oratorio libretti but also of his, and his librettists', personal motivations in pleasing the established political power and the divine favor for the Established Church. And in this, Rooke's conclusion is apt, "[a study of this nature] challenges modern readers to consider their own relationship with sacred texts such as the Bible, and to be aware of how their own appropriation of such texts is just as culturally conditioned as that of Handel's librettists" (228). Toward that end, something I as a reader would have liked to have seen is a stronger application of prevailing critical, interpretive methods within the sections dealing with the biblical narratives themselves. Doing so would have clarified some of the interpretive directions toward and from the biblical passages taken by the librettists, as well as more clearly connected Rooke's two narrative strands or "motifs" applied throughout her work. To be fair, Rooke cites her necessary scholars here, but too often her discussion in this sections tended toward a superficial and abbreviated summary rather than a detailed analysis. But that said, Rooke's work has only increased my appreciation and understanding of Handel. I am still sitting by the fire, glass of wine in hand, and listening to the rapturous seduction of Handel's oeuvre.

Jeremiah W. Cataldo
Grand Valley State University

Psalms in the Early Modern World, edited by Linda P. Austern, Kari B. McBride, and David L. Orvis



Burlington: Ashgate, 2011 | xxiii + 385 pages | ISBN: 978-1-4094-2282-2 (hardback) £65.00

Psalms in the Early Modern World makes a strong and persuasive argument that no text offers a better lens than the Biblical Psalter into the circulation of religious beliefs, political ideas, and musical practices of the Atlantic world during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. "Arguably the most influential biblical book of the early modern period," the editors assert, "the Psalms traveled throughout Europe and across the Atlantic, reappearing in religious and secular works by groups who derided or simply disregarded one another. That they were reinterpreted and rewritten to accommodate such vastly different worldviews suggests not only that the Psalms formed the heart of both public and private devotions for Jews and Christians of all denominations, but also that they played a central role in mediating cultural and political conflicts" (33).

Part 1, "Communities of Worship," explores the role psalms played in fostering and maintaining faith communities amid the harrowing circumstances of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Richard Freedman focuses on how French composer Simon Goulart in his *Cinquante pseaumes* deployed *contrafacta* (substituting French psalm translations for the worldly texts set by composers like Orlando di Lasso), which recast worship for Calvinist Huguenots. "Just as many of these believers were obligated to seek refuge in places like London, La Rochelle, or Geneva, and to inscribe spiritual meanings in their new physical surroundings," he writes, "they also sought spiritual refuge in the metaphorical spaces of beloved secular music by Lasso and other masters of the day." (52) Roger Bray focuses on the obverse phenomenon, William Byrd's settings of metrical psalms for fellow Catholics in England in the late sixteenth century, an era when religious recusants like Edmund Campion were being executed. A third chapter, by Linda P. Austern, highlights the ways in which psalm-singing allowed Anglican women of diverse social backgrounds to escape gender constraints imposed by men and local parish churches. "Women from all social strata and a range of religious and

political affiliations from the late sixteenth century to the Restoration clearly had access to a variety of musical settings of psalms, as well as to a range of instruments and training with which to enhance them," she concludes (114). A fourth essay, by Joanne van ver Woude, explores the production of the *Bay Psalm Book*, the first English-language book published in North America, as an act of colonial self-fashioning, charting a middle way between the dominance of Sternhold and Hopkins and the more musically refined Ainsworth Psalter carried to New England by the Pilgrims. "As a text of immigration," van der Woude asserts, "the psalter constitutes the Puritans' first conscious self-articulation within the transcultural structure of British imperialism" (134).

Part 2, "Contested Grounds of Authority," offer three case studies of how interpreters drew on the Psalms to adjudicate disputes about scriptural exegesis, proper penance, and the nature of monarchic rule. Jamie H. Ferguson challenges the claim that Miles Coverdale's use of biblical paraphrase rather than Latin translation in his groundbreaking psalter reflected his ignorance of Latin; rather, "his use of a paraphrase for his first Psalter and his series of Psalters taken as a group suggest, despite Protestant promotion of the unique authority of *sola scriptura*, that such claims can only ever be plural and complex" (154). Clare Costley King'oo shows how Sir Thomas Wyatt's posthumously published translations of penitential psalms were released by Edwardian reformers to buttress their campaign against traditional doctrines about penance. "The first evangelicals might have rejected penance as a sacrament," King'oo concludes, "but, as the Edwardian edition of Wyatt's paraphrase reveals, that made it all the more important for them to develop a model of what … 'ryghtfull penitence' should be" (174). James F. Melvin's essay pivots to Catholic Spain, where Juan de Avila's *Audi, filia* deployed verses from Ps 44 to construct a model of "nuptial spirituality" that, while underscoring the importance of a spiritual director, allowed devout believers, especially women, to carve out some minimal space beyond the grip of clerical hegemony. Carol V. Kaske investigates a more overt use of the Royal Psalms to buttress monarchic authority: Edmund Spenser's tracing in *The Shepheardes Calendar* and *Faerie Queene* of the Tudor line back to King David. "In political terms, by portraying Elisabeth through Una as both Sapience and the True Church, Spencer vigorously supports her claim to be supreme governor of the English Church," she writes. "Through all his Christological rhetoric, he gives back to her in myth, mysticism, and allegory that likeness to Christ as the head of the church which she modestly refused in reality" (215).

Several fundamental questions animate Part 3, "Psalmic Voice(s)": "First, whose voice do we hear in the Psalms? Is it God's? David's? The poet's? And second, what is the origin of their power? Is it the text itself? The music that accompanied it? The commingling of the two?" (31) Tracing the reception history of psalm translations produced by Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, Margaret P. Hannay demonstrates how these texts straddled the line between literature and liturgy. "Devout readers could sing her *rime royal* rendition of Psalm 51, utilize her *Psalmes* for spiritual instruction, or even use them to replace the Coverdale Psalms for worship in Morning and Evening Prayer" (233). Just as Mary Sidney collaborated with her brother Philip on psalm translations, Elisabeth Sophie's partnership with her brother Louis Chéron was even more extraordinary: a Catholic, Elisabeth was responsible for the French and Latin translations while her Huguenot brother produced the illustrations. Shifting from the visual to the sonic, Don Harrán examines early modern debates over the power of the psalms by focusing on the theorizing of seventeenth-century composer Angelo Berardi. Oscillating between the rival theories of *musica practica* (the music itself) and *music speculativa* (its extramusical associations), Berardi simultaneously attributed "the effect of metrical psalms on the auditor as residing in the construction of the instrument" as well as "to the various emanations in theosophical Kabbalah" (32).

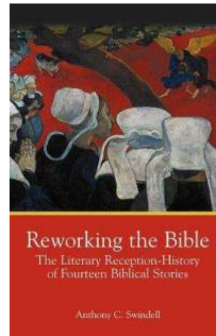
The book's final section, "Generic Innovation," is also the shortest, with just two chapters. Penny Granger reconstructs the world of the English N-Town Play of the mid-fifteenth through sixteenth centuries—"a cycle of plays telling the scriptural story from creation to doom, on to which have been grafted two passion plays and two hagiographical plays about the Virgin Mary" (300). Spectators were exposed to both psalm translations and also demonstrations through the character of the Virgin Mary of how such psalms might serve as prayer aids. "Not just the Archangel Gabriel but the Psalter itself gives the Virgin the authority to issue a three-dimensional invitation to the audience to pick up the book, emulate her learning and join her in her devotions, and stay faithful to her son in death" (314). Returning to the transatlantic exchange discussed in van der Woude's chapter, John F. Schwaller offers a fascinating reading of sixteenth-century missionary to New Spain Fr. Bernardino de Sahagún's *Psalmodia christiana*. Realizing the limitations of catechisms and confessional guides, he injected Christian beliefs into traditional Nahuatl art forms like song. "In the *Psalmodia* one can see the vestiges of the pre-Columbian verse forms upon which the new Chris-

tian songs were built," Schwaller concludes. "Yet one can also appreciate the Christian models upon which Sahagún also drew in creating his work" (332).

Although the editors' Introduction makes a valiant effort to sketch out an overarching framework for the collection, this is not the sort of book from which a reader easily extracts a unifying thread, other than that the reception history of the Hebrew Psalter during pivotal centuries in the development of the modern West was extremely active and complex. Readers interested in an even more broadly defined assessment of the Psalter's reception history, this one spanning millennia, might want to consult the new collection edited by Susan Gillingham, *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms: Conflict and Convergence*, just out from Oxford University Press.

David W. Stowe
Michigan State University

Reworking the Bible: The Literary Reception-History of Fourteen Biblical Stories, by Anthony C. Swindell



Bible in the Modern World 30 | Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010 | xi + 342 pages | ISBN: 978-1-907534-01-0 (hardback) £55.00

"This book sets out to explore the literary reception-history of fourteen biblical stories in the light of recent approaches to the question of the rewriting of literary texts" (1). With this statement, Anthony C. Swindell begins his presentation of over two hundred literary allusions and recreations of Eden, Noah, Jacob and Esau, Moses, Joshua and Rahab, Samson, Nebuchadnezzar, Susanna and the Elders, Esther, Christ, Salome, Lazarus, the Prodigal Son, and the Descent into Hell. Knowledge of the biblical texts is assumed and the reworkings are explored for their own merit rather than as a commentary on the biblical stories.

Before discussing the reworkings, the first chapter, "Literary Reworkings in Perspective," introduces relevant terminology, taken almost exclusively from Gerard Genette's *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (University of Nebraska Press, 1997 [1982]). Swindell uses Genette's "hypertext" for the reworking and "pretext" for the biblical story, instead of Genette's

"hypotext" (2). Other appropriated terms include "metatext," "proleptic," "analeptic," as well as Bakhtin's "chronotope" (2–4). In the chapter, there is also a discussion of "sacred aura," which the author claims is inherited by hypertexts like Milton's *Paradise Lost* but not by defiant reworkings, including "sacrilegious texts of religious parody" (5). His argument highlights the subjectivity of the concept of sacred aura and tensions between the reader, text, and author. Subjectivity is present for all readers, which for Swindell means thinking of "the Bible as a source of continuing wisdom about the human situation"; wisdom that may be nuanced or refocused by modern criticism with the study of hypertexts adding an "extra dimension" (9).

Each of chapters 2–15 discusses the hypertexts of one of the pretexts, with the hypertexts appearing in broadly chronological order within each chapter. Rather than review the vast volume of information Swindell offers, I focus on the third chapter, "Noah and the Serio-Comical Flood" as a representative example (38–63). Although seemingly discussing hypertexts of "Noah's flood" (38), the description of chapter 3's pretext as "Genesis 6–9" conflates the Nephilim (6:1–4) and the curse of Canaan (9:20–29) with the flood story. While the flood narrative can include all of these, the three elements are treated differently between reworkings, but this is not made clear.

The first hypertexts of "Noah's flood" are the "Early Variants," including *4 Maccabees*, *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, and material from Qumran. The Middle English *Cursor Mundi* works as a transition to the "Medieval Noah," which focuses on English mystery plays. Swindell notes the flexibility of the reworkings with regard to the speaking parts, the narrative devices, motifs, and interpretation of elements such as Noah's sacrifice. After a diversion into Chaucer, Swindell progresses to the seventeenth century including Michael Drayton's 1630 poem *Noahs Floud* and Edward Ecclestone's 1679 play, *Noah's Flood or the Great Deluge*. Swindell notes that the play "reflects the concerns of its era, recovering from the English Civil War and much preoccupied with issues of public order and propriety" (47–48). This analysis is not expanded upon, leaving the reader to return to the lengthy description of the play in order to draw out her own interpretations.

The chronological approach continues with the nineteenth century and Charles Dickens's allusions to the flood in *Bleak House* (1852), *Little Dorrit* (1857), and *Great Expectations* (1861). The discussion of Machado de Assis's short story of 1878, "In the Ark: Three Unpublished Chapters of Genesis" provides an example of how Swindell uses more of Genette's terminology. Assis's story is written in a series of "verses," in which the brothers discuss

who will own what land after they disembark the ark. When they disagree a fight breaks out. It is a humorous story because despite predicting that the ark will land on "a mountain" the brothers are fighting over hypothetical space. Without explaining why, Swindell describes the reworking as an "aprocryphal elliptical and proleptical expansion of the pretext" (49). This seems to be because "Chapter A begins as the Flood is receding and Noah and his family are preparing to disembark from the Ark" (49). While the reworking could be considered an elliptical continuation because it fills an elliptical gap in the flood story, it is not a proleptic continuation or expansion because it does not continue beyond Gen 9. Rather it is, as Swindell later describes, a scene accentuation and segmentary expansion (290). He also classifies the hypertext as a "murderous continuation" because the extension largely negates "the hopeful tone of the pretext" (49; cf. Genette, *Palimpsests*, 196–200). This classification, however, requires an agreement that the pretext has a hopeful tone. If the flood narrative includes the curse of Canaan, as Swindell implies elsewhere, then the flood narrative is not entirely hopeful and de Assis's reworking is not a clear negation of the pretext.

The chapter continues with the opening years of the twentieth century, specifically W.B. Yeats's play *The Player Queen* (1922) and André Obey's play *Noah* (1929). Swindell progresses through the interwar years with a discussion of C. Day-Lewis's drama *Noah and the Waters* (1936) and H.G. Wells's *All Aboard for Ararat* (1940). The former "was written at the height of the author's enthusiasm for the Communist Party" (51). This is a typical example of the wealth of information in the book opening interesting avenues for further exploration.

The following nine pages (53–61) take the reader through to 2009 (Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*), covering about thirteen reworkings, each treated individually. One of these is Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1985). It is given the subheading "Mrs Noah Again" because it "restores Mrs Noah to prominence" (56). Except, there is no Mrs Noah, rather she is called Mrs Noyes and her husband is Dr Noyes. The novel gives a "hard-bitten account of Mrs Noah's relentless struggle to mitigate the brutal outworking of Dr Noye's worship" (56). The description fails to convey that Mrs Noah and Dr Noyes are married and that Dr Noyes is the novel's Noah. Swindell's summary does not do justice to the novel as a complex reworking of the flood story. This hypertext includes Dr Noyes (Noah) raping his daughter-in-law Emma with a unicorn horn while it is still attached to a living unicorn. Emma is the wife of the blue-skinned Japeth, whom she mar-

ried when she was eleven. Findley's novel also includes the character "Jaweh" and a cross-dressing "Lucifer" who disguises himself as "Lucy" and marries Ham. All of these elements of the reworking are ignored.

The chapter concludes with a Summary of the retellings discussed. It ends with a paragraph noting how the flood is "obviously related to concerns about the stability of the cognitive and emotional world(s) which the many authors and their readers share, since the sea is such a universal symbol of jeopardy" (62–63).

Following the fourteen chapters on specific biblical narratives, there are two further chapters which return to a theoretical discussion. Chapter 16, "Narrative Upheavals (Categories and Classifications)," sorts the hypertexts according to Genette's classifications. Titles, character names, parody, amplification, transfocalization and a range of other concepts are utilized; although it would have been helpful if Swindell had explained how he understood Genette's terminology and justified his classification of the reworkings. Swindell creates an additional classification: "fantastic excursions." These hypertexts "expand upon the pretext in ways which transgress the spatio-temporal limits which are observed by most of the other works considered in this study" (296). It is a valuable idea and worthy of expanding. It offers a way for hypertexts with a fantastic setting or tone to have a sacred aura because these reworkings "take the reader to some transcendent space" (301).

The final chapter (17), "Towards Diegetic Outer Space," acts as a conclusion summarizing the diegetic content and chronotopes of the pretext's hypertexts. The use of narratological terminology throughout the book demonstrates the complexities in dealing with reworkings of biblical narratives. Swindell is not always clear or consistent in his use of terminology, which can hinder understanding of his interpretations. However, his use of "hypertext" and "pretext" is used with greater consistency and therefore clarity.

The "literary reworkings" were selected by Swindell because, he claims, "they represent significant departures from or developments of the original material. The emphasis is on exceptional variants, on quirkiness, and on texts generated at moments of great cultural change or upheaval" (2). It is not always clear, however, why reworkings were selected under these criteria. Furthermore, while the variety of material discussed is impressive (including novels, short stories, children's books, plays, opera, and films), it may have been more effective if a more focused selection had been made thereby leaving extra space for in-depth discussion.

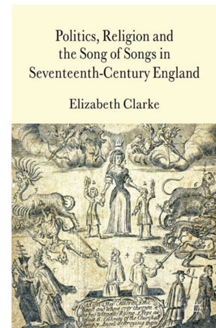
The book could have been more closely edited. Jeanette Winterson has

been renamed Genette Winterson (112). Michael Drayton's *Noahs Floud* (43) is also named *Noah's Floud* (44) and *Noahs Floude* (304). In the Introduction, chapters 16 and 17 are referred to as 15 and 16 (10). Also, it would be helpful to have a subject index so the reader could look specifically for modes, genres, and themes. This would make it easier to work with the greatest strength of the book: the diversity of material it covers.

Reworking the Bible offers a mid-way option between short entries in encyclopedias and dictionaries, and book-length discussions of single biblical narratives. The broad scope of the literature discussed makes it a useful reference guide likely to offer something new to most readers. It could be a useful addition to teaching the Bible and Literature for diverse audiences. Anthony C. Swindell's book is especially useful for the non-specialist interested in how the Bible has been appropriated in society and how literature is influenced by the Bible. Finally, researchers in (literary) reception history could use the work to further their exploration of academic approaches and terminology.

Emma England
Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis
University of Amsterdam

Politics, Religion and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England, by Elizabeth Clarke



Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011 | 256 pages | ISBN: 978-0-333-71411-9 (hardback) $75.00

The task of reviewing this book is daunting. My hesitation stems from the fact that I am most likely not the intended reader of the book. I am a biblical scholar interested in the ways in which the Hebrew Bible has been interpreted throughout the ages. This book, however, is less about how the Song of Songs (henceforth Song) has been *interpreted*; rather its focus is on how it has been used. Elizabeth Clarke seeks to explore "the application of the Song of Songs to English political life in the seventeenth century" (12). The word order in the title hints at this goal: the author is more interested in politics and religion than in the Song. Clarke's book is well-researched and can definitely be recommended to the

historian and the scholar of English literature. Yet, due to no fault of Clarke, the average biblical scholar will find reading this book to be hard work.

What makes this book difficult for the aforementioned biblical scholar is the sheer amount of knowledge that the reader is expected to be familiar with. I consider myself to have a rudimentary understanding of the key issues in seventeenth-century England, yet I struggled to keep the Presbyterians, the non-conformists, the Independents, and the Purists apart, and I need to confess that my grasp of Arminianism and its doctrines is vague. Further, the reader is supposed to be able to place the events in England against their European background without further ado. For instance, Clarke never refers outright to the Thirty Years' War, even though it is crucial for understanding the discussion of the events in England in the 1620s and 1630s. Another potential problem is the amount of detail in Clarke's book. Details are what give backbone to a scholarly book, yet for a non-historian, the many details are somewhat overwhelming. Finally, as a non-expert of English literature, at times I found the structure of the individual chapters confusing. Clarke frequently moves from discussing one author to discussing the next and then back again to the first one. Given my lack of familiarity with most of these authors, I often struggled to keep to the main thread of the argument.

To make this book more accessible to a less specialized audience who are interested in the use (and misuse) of the Bible throughout the ages, it would have been useful if the book had included a short introduction to the various Protestant groups on the British Isles in the seventeenth century and how they differed from and related to each other. It would also have been helpful to have at least a rudimentary discussion of the key political and religious matters that lead up to the English Civil War.

Speaking as a biblical scholar, I had looked forward to more in-depth discussions regarding the hermeneutical principles and manners of exegesis of the actual biblical text. Clarke provides ample textual examples from literary works which reuse the themes and metaphors found in the Song, but never really offers anything akin to in-depth analyses of the hermeneutical principles and/or the theological constraints behind these usages. It could be that the extant textual evidence does not allow for such discussions, yet this purported lack in itself would have been interesting to know more about.

The following review is written from the perspective of a biblical scholar. I will try to do justice to Clarke's intent, yet I will inevitably highlight those areas in the book that captured my attention (and inadvertently also reveal my own shortcomings in other areas). In short, I cannot evaluate Clarke's

discussions of the politics of the English Civil War, the ins and outs of the debate within the Anglican Church, and the merits of the different examples of English literature.

Clarke's book is organized roughly chronologically. Clarke sets out to explore the significance of Song for mainstream (here defined as the spirituality common primarily to the aristocracy and the gentry) readers in seventeenth-century England (and Scotland).

The Introduction discusses very briefly how the Song has been interpreted in Christian traditions. The Song was never read as a collection of texts about human, heterosexual love. Instead, it was assumed, *a priori*, that it was an allegory about God and his church, or God and the individual Christian soul. Clarke highlights how the biblical book was adopted by the authors of the Reformation and made to speak about the Protestant struggle against Catholicism. The woman in the Song becomes a type for the Bride in Revelation (which, in turn, draws on the sexual and marital metaphors in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., Hos 1–3), and she is pitted against the Whore (also from Revelation) who represents the Pope and/or Antichrist. This interpretative tendency continued, yet also metamorphosed, as time went on. The Song came to be a book about "us" and "them," i.e., who is within the church and who is "the Other."

The first chapter, named "Royal Brides and National Identity," looks at the use of the Song in the years 1603–25. At this time, the Bride in the Song was commonly understood to represent the Reformed Church of England, joined with Christ by the spiritual bonds of matrimony. Protestant England was clearly a nation favoured by God, as evident by the failure of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605. Clarke discusses that both vicars (e.g., Thomas Jackson) and authors (e.g., Joseph Hall) used select passages and metaphors from the Song in their own preaching and/or writing. In particular, the Song was often employed as part of Protestant propaganda in favour of Henry Frederick, the Prince of Wales, who aspired to lead a Protestant alliance in Europe against the Catholic forces. The Song was likewise employed in support of the princess Elizabeth, who later married Frederick V, the Elector Palatine and eventually became queen of Bohemia.

Clarke then explores—in more detail—the ways in which George Gifford, John Donne, and Robert Aylett made use of the Song in their writings. These three men, each in their own manner, emphasized the total depravity of the human soul. As a result of Calvinist doctrine in which Christ does all the work of election, justification, and sanctification, they furthermore

described the Bride as completely passive. As the inevitable result, the love imagery of the Song is transformed into a relationship between two utterly unequal partners. The imagery in Song 5:2 where the beloved is knocking becomes a figure for Christ's actions on behalf of his followers. While Gifford's sermons emphasize Christ's gentleness, Donne's poetry transforms the image into one of brute force (Holy Sonnet 10). As the human soul is wholly corrupt, Christ cannot "seduce" it. Instead, he has to employ force. The sexual language of Song allows Donne to expand the image of gendered violence further. The sexual language is, after all, merely the vehicle of the metaphor, not its tenor.

At one point, the polemical use of Song was widened to incorporate not only Catholics but also other Protestant (and even other Reform) movements. For example, Clarke shows that the royal chaplain William Loe employed the images and wordings of the Song in his polemic against Arminianism. In contrast to Calvinists, Arminians believed that humankind was not irredeemably sinful, that God's election was dependent on his foreknowledge, and that Jesus died for all and thus salvation is freely available to all. The Calvinist conflict with the Arminians reached a peak when William Laud, future Archbishop of Canterbury, was made a bishop of St David's (Wales) in 1621. He was firmly supported by Charles I, and later beheaded during the Civil War.

After the death of the crown prince Henry, Charles became the new Prince of Wales. His father James I sought to stay out of the growing conflict between Protestants and Catholics in continental Europe, which soon escalated into the Thirty Years' War. James I's peace-keeping strategies involved trying to marry his son to the Spanish (and thus Catholic) Infanta. According to Clarke, this strategy causes anew the Song to be employed polemically against the Catholics. In parallel, other poets, for instance George Wither, published lyric verse lauding the princess Elizabeth as a new Queen Elizabeth I who would rally to the defence of true Protestantism.

In the second chapter, titled "*The Mysticall Marrage*, Martyrology and Arminianism, 1625–40," Clarke outlines the different moves, for and against Catholics and Arminians, by authors and clergy of the time, and how the image of the Bride was used to denote the "true" church, while "the little foxes" (Song 2:15) came to convey her enemies. Clarke notes how Donne's use of the Song in his sermons and poems flouts the conventions of the day. For instance, Donne endeavoured to detach the imagery of the mystical marriage between Christ and his Bride from the conflict between Catholics and

Protestants. This move was probably triggered by Charles I's marriage to the Catholic Henrietta Maria. Donne's message was that even the Catholic Church can be a true Bride of Christ.

Clarke also looks at the work by Francis Rous called *The Mysticall Marrage*, which conceptualizes the entire Gospel in terms of the marriage between Christ and the Christian soul. His work articulates many of the tenets of Calvinistic theology, against those of Arminianism. Clarke shows that Rous used the sexual terminology of Song to convey the relationship between God and the Christian soul, and that he described the pending marriage between the two in the language of romance.

In parallel, Clarke demonstrates that the concept of the mystical marriage came to be used for martyrdom. The death of a martyr was equated with the consummation of the mystical marriage. The Christian, awaiting death as a martyr, looked forward to the ultimate joining with Christ at death. Later on, the same rhetoric of martyrdom was employed by Henry Burton, John Bastwick, and William Prynne (three prominent Puritan opponents of the church policy of the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud) to describe their suffering and persecution. Although the three men were imprisoned and their ears were cut off, none of them was actually martyred. Clarke argues that, through their writings, the Song came to be understood as a text which preached independence from earthly authorities.

The third chapter, named "Emblematic Marriage at the 1630s Court," looks at how the Song was used in the court circles of Charles I and Henrietta Maria. For obvious reasons, the Puritan doctrine of the mystical marriage was not the dominant mood in which they read the Song. Instead, the Catholic queen propagated her own kind of piety, centred on portraying the monarchs as model figures of Christian devotion. One source of influence was Henry Hawkins and his book *Partheneia Sacra* which links the Virgin to a garden. The enclosed Garden of the Song (e.g., 4:12) was understood as an emblem of the Virgin herself, and the idea of beauty, expressed in the Song 4:7, was applied to the Virgin.

Clarke contrasts Hawkins's so-called Emblems with (the royalist) Francis Quarles's book *Booke of Emblemes*. While the Catholic Hawkins treated the Song as a complex sign system around the Virgin Mary, that needed to be decoded, the language of Protestant Quarles is significantly more straightforward as he describes the sexual acts between the Divine husband and his earthly Bride. According to Clarke, Quarles was allowed to be that explicit, given that everybody knew that only emotions, not physical bodies, were in-

volved in the love-making. This may in fact have been the reason for Quarles's popularity. In his writings, the sensuality of the visual image remains and serves to remind the reader of the beauty and complexity of the Song.

The fourth chapter, called "From Annotations to Commentary: New Spectacles on the Song of Songs," looks at the use of the Song in the Commonwealth of England (1649–60). This time period saw the dawn of an overall increase in Bible reading, as well as the composition of several commentaries on the Song. The increasing fractioning within the Church led to an increased number of interpretations. As a result of Laud's loss of power in 1640 and his subsequent death in 1645, books such as the Geneva Bible with the accompanying Geneva Notes which had hitherto been banned were allowed again. Rather than reinstating the Notes, however, the Committee for Religion commissioned ten scholars to write a new set of Annotations to go with the Authorized Version of James I. The Annotations to the Song agree with the allegorical approach, and state that the text speaks of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Clarke discusses the characteristics of the Annotations to Song 1:1-5 which make clear that Christ and the Church are betrothed but the marriage is yet to be consummated, and she compares them with the earlier Geneva Notes. Likewise, Clarke notes that the Geneva Notes and the Annotations alike endeavoured to extract the doctrine of Grace from Song 5:1-7. Further, Song 5:6 is understood to speak of the important Calvinist doctrine of the juxtaposition of God's absence and presence. The interpretation of the watchmen in Song 5:7 is also significant. While the same figures in Song 3:3 are neutral figures, the watchmen in 5:7 are false teachers, i.e., Catholics.

Clarke then discusses how the commentaries by Thomas Brightman and Nathanael Homes treat the Song as a religious-political allegory which predicts the future of the church. Clarke finally explores the interpretation of the Song in the commentaries by the two Presbyterian scholars Matthew Poole and Matthew Henry. In particular, she notes how Henry's commentary from 1711 meant the end of political interpretations of the Song, as well as of the typical Presbyterian understanding of it as a love song between Christ and the individual soul. Instead, the book speaks about the spiritual transactions between God and his church.

In the fifth chapter, "The Seventeenth-Century Woman Writer and the Bride," Clarke looks at how the Song influenced and inspired women to become writers. Clarke notes, however, that only few became poets and writers of fiction. Instead, most women tended to write spiritual journals which

narrated the author's spiritual life and her devotion for Christ. For example, Anne Wenn kept such a journal, as did Elizabeth Turner and Julia Palmer. They used frequently the language of the Song to describe their relationship with God. The medium of a journal enabled a woman to write without publishing, something which was considered to be inappropriate for women to do. It was private writing and only published after its author's death. For many of these women, Christ replaced their husbands as the object of devotion. In their relationship with him, they could explore their feelings which often were denied them in their earthly marriages.

In other cases, select women saw themselves as prophets. Anna Trapnel, for example, used the Song to validate her own writings. Employing the language of the Song, she depicted herself as having the same role as the Bride. Other women, like the anonymous author "Eliza," called her poems her "babes," i.e., the offspring of her marriage with Christ. In a few cases, female authors also employed the Song to oppose male authority. Notably, Anna Wentworth used her perceived position as the Bride to resist her husband and the leaders of the Baptist church.

The sixth chapter, titled "Politics, Metaphor and the Song of Songs in the 1670s," looks at ways in which Anglican clergy, committed to the Restoration of the Church of England, related to the aforementioned kinds of political readings of the Song. They regarded the reading of the Song as an account of Christ's love for the individual Christian to be erroneous, and they objected to what they considered to be unbridled metaphorical readings of the book. Clarke focuses her attention on the clergyman William Sherlock's critique of the treaties on the Song by John Owen (Independent) and Thomas Watson (Presbyterian). Both men had been respected figures in 1657 during the Commonwealth, and their treatment of the Song had been much in line with the Reformed tradition. During the Restoration, the two men fared less well. Clarke outlines the content of their treaties, how Sherlock attacked their treatment of biblical metaphors and the doctrine of the mystical marriage of every true believer with Christ, and how Watson and Owen, as well as other authors such as Robert Ferguson, responded to Sherlock's critique.

The Epilogue discusses how the Song plays an important role in the allegories by Benjamin Keach. In particular, Clarke notes how Keach refers to the abundant care of Christ for his spiritual Bride as he takes upon himself all her debts and incurs the penalties himself. Kerch continues to draw on the Song in his major work *The Glorious Lover*, as he speaks of the Bride in terms of a romantic heroine.

Clarke ends her book with the reflection that Anglican interpretations of the Song had changed a great deal over the seventeenth century. At the end of the century, the Song was no longer a significant factor in the construction of the self or of the enemy. She suggests that this change walked hand-in-hand with the increased religious and political stability in England.

Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer
University of Aberdeen

Approaching Eden: Adam and Eve in Popular Culture, by Theresa Sanders

Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009 | xi + 245 pages | ISBN: 978-0-7425-6333-9 (hardback) $37.50

Interest in how the Bible has been received in various contexts and genres has spiked in the past few years, giving rise to several excellent monographs, edited works, and even an entire commentary series (the Blackwell Bible Commentary) devoted to examining these "receptions." In this intriguing work, Theresa Sanders focuses on one specific biblical text, Gen 2–3, and tracks how its ideas, implications, and inferences have been enacted, engaged, and examined by a range of readers and media within "popular culture."

Due to the sheer scope of such a project, Sanders wisely limits her inquiry to "both widely distributed and widely recognized" examples of "popular culture" in the "past hundred years" that make a "recognizable reference" to Gen 2–3 (vii–x). In her first chapter, she tries to makes clear what seems to be the main point of the book, noting, "the cultural memory of the story [in Genesis] frequently differs—sometimes quite dramatically—from the story as it is found in the Bible" (2). Also, the goal of the book is stated obviously on pages 9–10: "This book hopes to make sense of this bewildering array [of later references to Gen 2–3] by giving background about the history of Jewish and Christian interpretations of the story, and then by showing how these interpretations find new life in popular culture."

Sanders introduces the reader to a range of critical issues in the study of Genesis, including whether it can/should be read as (a) history or myth; (b) a divinely-revealed or historically-contextualized document; (c) one story or

two; (d) the product of more than one author/source; and (e) a text that is fundamentally about the past, present, future, or all three. In doing so, she notes several times that how one answers these questions is not as important as being aware of the reasons behind various answers, as well as the implication(s) of those answers (15, 17, and 27). While this whirlwind tour of critical scholarship on Genesis is not likely to nourish the seasoned scholar, it does inculcate the neophyte with enough of an academic context to understand the claims in the remainder of the text.

In her third chapter, Sanders begins her discussion of popular-cultural renderings of Gen 2–3 by examining "issues of sex and gender," with the goal of "showing how they are influenced by the story of Adam and Eve and how they manifest themselves in popular culture" (33). To this end, she begins with a brief yet helpful section on sex and gender (33–35), prior to formulating several basic questions on page 35. This organizational clarity could be helpful, although the six issues that she addresses in the remainder of the chapter are not obviously tied to the way in which she states these questions. Also, as I will note later, this seeming organizational clarity is not thoroughgoing in the book. Nonetheless, her approach in this chapter is paradigmatic for what follows. For example, in her section titled "You're Evil Like Eve," Sanders begins with the oft-heard assumption that since Eve was evil, all subsequent women are evil as well. After addressing the biblical text briefly, she moves on to consider the survival of this trope in western art before examining three specific films in more depth, including *The Lady Eve*, *All About Eve*, and *Second Time Lucky*. Her analyses of these films are, by necessity, cursory, but certainly detailed enough to make her point, i.e., "The spare description of these acts in [Gen 3:6] has been elaborated upon and embellished by commentators, artists, and poets in ways that perhaps tell us more about the interpreters than it does about the story itself" (44).

The remainder of the chapters follows much the same pattern, i.e., a focus on one specific issue, the identification of several key questions/points about that issue, and an examination of the way(s) in which specific popular cultural examples interpret the Genesis story regarding those questions/points. For example, in her fourth chapter ("Fig Leaves"), her discussion centers on the issues of sex, marriage, and same-sex relations, and she marshals numerous examples from the history of scriptural interpretation and film to assess how these issues have been treated.

Chapters 5 and 6 are of a piece, as they both examine the ways in which the "curses," or punishments of Adam and Eve respectively have been under-

stood by later interpreters. In the former chapter, Sanders scrutinizes Gen 2:17, i.e., "the relation between Adam's disobedience and death … to see how religious traditions regarding this 'curse' have shaped popular culture" (91). In what follows, she posits four different interpretations of 2:17 from both scholars and popular culture, before concluding with an examination of how "popular culture warns against the quest for immortality" (107). The "curse" that Sanders examines in chapter 6 has to do with menstruation, childbirth, and virginity. This chapter is noteworthy for its extended treatment of Mary as an "antidote" of sorts to the activity and inheritance of Eve (118–27).

In chapter 7, Sanders shifts her focus to the impact Gen 2–3 has had on modern scientific understandings of our history as a species, focusing specifically on evolutionary theory and containing a particularly helpful rumination on the 1960 film *Inherit the Wind*. The remainder of this chapter examines creationism, Intelligent Design, the 2004 trial in Dover, PA, an episode from the seventeenth season of *The Simpsons*, and The Creation Museum in Kentucky. In analyzing these topics, Sanders covers a large amount of territory admirably and accessibly. Her eighth chapter—which focuses on nudity, simplicity, and innocence (55)—addresses topics ranging from a distrust of technology, religious nudism, vegetarianism, and ecological issues related to animals and land.

Sanders's last two chapters, much like chapters 5 and 6, hang together nicely, examining as they do utopian movements and interpretations of Genesis found in science fiction. Chapter 9 spends several pages discussing specific utopian groups in North America prior to returning to popular culture products such as Lois Lowry's *The Giver* and Gary Ross's film *Pleasantville*. The tenth chapter, not surprisingly, begins with a consideration of an episode from *Star Trek: The Original Series* before probing such varied examples as *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*, Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, and the Pixar film *Wall-E*. At the end of this chapter, Sanders provides a brief conclusion to the entire book (210–12).

Even though I found Sanders's work to be well-researched and accessible, I was puzzled and, at times, troubled by several issues. First, even though her book is focused on "popular culture," she spends less than two pages defining that term in her Preface, and, more troublingly, allows her discussion of its definition to be introduced and framed by Wikipedia. Given the proliferative plurality and multiple manifestations of popular culture, a more serious discussion would have been more useful. Along with this definitional difficulty, I was disappointed by the lack of a standard organization in the sense

that there was a great variance amongst her chapters regarding the presence of a clear thesis, goal(s), and/or conclusion(s). To be sure, some chapters include a clear thesis and/or goal (chapters 3, 5, and 8), and some contain clear conclusions (chapters 2, 4, 8, and 10). However, more uniformity in the organization of the chapters would increase the accessibility or obviousness of her discussions, especially to lay readers in an educational setting. Third, like many scholars who engage popular culture, Sanders includes a multitude of examples. Sometimes these connections are not only on-point, but historically illuminating (not to mention entertaining), such as her discussion of the 1937 radio play in which Mae West voiced the character of Eve (64–70). Sometimes, though, the connections between issues in the biblical text and the examples from popular culture she examines seem to me to be only tangentially related. This was especially obvious in chapter 5, in which *Eve's Bayou*, *Young Adam*, and *Death Becomes Her* simply did not have enough points of contact in my opinion to be included as examples worthy of discussion under a separate subheading.

Fourth, I was puzzled at what, exactly, is the point of the book. That is, Sanders states several times what she sees as "the purpose of the book," e.g., "to give readers some insight into the history of interpretations of the Genesis story and to enable them to make sense of the bewildering array of allusions to it" (211). So, is her purpose simply informative, rather than argumentative? Is there no central claim behind the book as a whole? She remarks at the end of chapter 2 that, "This book does not seek to persuade readers to one position or the other on any of the issues discussed above. Instead, it lays out the options and, more importantly, shows exactly what is at stake in each" (30). Again, if Sanders's goal is simply to catalog various examples of how popular culture has adapted or alluded to Gen 2–3, then what is the significance of her contribution? In asking this question, I do not mean to imply that Sanders's work has no merit; it obviously does. What I mean is that Sanders needed to make the significance of her work much clearer to the reader by buttressing statements about the "purpose" of the book with (a) how her analysis fulfills that purpose; (b) how it advances our understanding of Gen 2–3; and (c) how it contributes to an increased understanding of the reciprocal relationship between Bible and popular culture. In my opinion, her work accomplishes all three of these goals, but it does not state this accomplishment clearly or specifically.

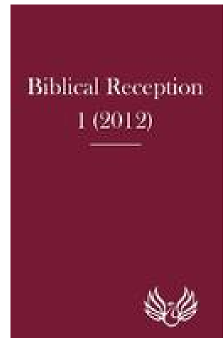
Finally, the issue of significance is tied to a fifth and final issue, viz., is Sanders performing a "History of Interpretation" or a "Reception History"

analysis? That is, is she concerned with how key scriptural interpreters, like Paul or Augustine, have understood Gen 2–3? Or, does her analysis examine broader targets such as television, film, and popular fiction? Does she address the impact texts like Gen 2–3 have had on various groups or ideologies, or is she more interested in identifying specific themes and tracking how they develop in time? I ask these questions because Sanders does not, and this seeming unawareness of these important distinctions hampers her ability to situate her work within a tradition of inquiry (such as the Blackwell Bible Commentary series I mention above). Having said this, my feeling is that Sanders would identify readily with a Reception History emphasis, especially given her claim that "Whether we believe that Genesis describes what really happened a long time ago, or that it is a myth expressing a religious worldview, the story and our interpretations of it tell us how we think life 'ought' to be" (90). This concern with the impact of Gen 2–3, how it affects flesh-and-blood readers and their beliefs and actions, accords nicely with the emphases of Reception History.

In sum, Sanders's work is often fascinating and always suggestive in how it illuminates the connections between Gen 2–3 and popular cultural products. And if I cannot unreservedly recommend it for the reasons listed above, I will certainly return to it often and look forward to her future work.

Dan W. Clanton
Doane College

Biblical Reception 1, edited by J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clines



Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012 | xviii + 422 pages | ISBN: 978-1-907534-70-6 (hardback) £80.00

In her introduction to George Aichele's edited volume *Culture, Entertainment and the Bible* (Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), Athalya Brenner described the Bible as "an elitist object—produced, consumed, transmitted and studied by elites" (11). Traditionally, argues Brenner, biblical scholars have striven to sustain a "legacy of secrecy" around both the biblical text and its interpretation, reluctant to share their knowledge with in-

terested readers who exist outside the hallowed grounds of the Academy (11). However, she warns, such a move will ultimately prove self-destructive, serving only to maintain biblical studies as an exclusive discipline that captures the interest of an ever-dwindling scholarly group. Agreeing with Brenner's words here, I often wonder how likeminded biblical scholars might address this situation, liberating biblical studies from the chilly and unwelcoming corridors of the Academy, offering instead new possibilities of interpretation that are accessible to all readers of the biblical traditions.

One possible solution to this question is offered up within the delicious new annual by Sheffield Phoenix Press, *Biblical Reception*, edited by J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clines. This annual strongly embodies Brenner's suggestion, in the essay cited above, that the study of the Bible in conversation with its innumerable cultural representations and receptions can introduce relevant modes of engagement and enjoyment in this discipline, offering the biblical reader (both academic and non-academic) an accessible, creative, and meaningful way to approach these ancient texts (11–12). As the annual's editorial preface notes, while biblical reception history has yet to become a dominant presence in lecture theatres and conference rooms, it is an increasingly popular methodological approach for both scholars and students, its strength lying in the way that it contemporizes and contextualizes the biblical traditions, inviting reflection on their significance within the cultural contexts of everyday life. Maintaining that the academic study of this interpretive methodology has, to date, had "no formal avenue of regular publication," the editors of the annual seek to fill this perceived gap, providing scholarly research that explores the use of the Bible within literature, music, the visual arts, and culture; in other words, "the use of the Bible outside the field of academia" (ix).

This first volume of the annual is divided into six sections, each of which offers one or more essays on biblical engagement with the arts, theory, and culture. In the first section, "Art," we are treated to five essays that explore the visual representations of particular biblical scenes or characters. Each of these essays utilizes one or more artistic works as an alternative tool for biblical interpretation, exploring the exegetical potential that art can have for bringing meaning to even the most well-scrutinized biblical texts. Thus, in her essay "Spot the Difference: Young Men, Angels and the Risen Christ at the Empty Tomb," Christine E. Joynes investigates the meaning of the seldom considered wingless angels in early Christian art depicting the empty tomb narratives, using this artistic convention to unpick the textual ambiguity of

angelic identification in the interpretive traditions of Mark 16:5. Focusing on early Christian ivories, she considers the ability of these artworks to inspire the viewer's contemplation of the relationship between earthly and heavenly realms and of theological issues surrounding this biblical text and beyond.

Continuing this focus on early Christian art, Mark Finney's essay "Jesus in Visual Imagination: The Art of Invention" considers the "changing face of Christ" (21) within artistic imagery during the period 200–700 CE. Finney explores the socio-political, cultural, and imperial influences that shaped the portrayal of Christ in a way that had profound effects on later Western art. Scrutinizing textual and archaeological evidence to glean clues pertaining to Jesus's physical appearance, he considers the symbolic and aesthetic qualities of Jesus's portrayals in Roman and early Byzantine art and iconography, suggesting that these images encapsulate a strong relationship between Christianity and imperial government, which affirmed the divinity and imperial majesty of both emperors and the saviour Christ.

Attending to later art works, Laura Greig Krauss and Sara Kipfer both consider artistic representations of texts from the Hebrew Bible. In her essay "Restoring Hagar: Rembrandt van Rijn's Painting *Abraham Dismissing Hagar and Ishmael* in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London," Krauss focuses on a painting by Rembrandt, which she argues ought to be understood as a depiction of Abraham's dismissal of Hagar in Gen 21. Seeking "interpretive keys" to Rembrandt's "innovative hermeneutic" of the biblical text (65), she leads the reader through careful analyses of both the biblical text and Rembrandt's multi-religious context of seventeenth-century Amsterdam, arguing that the painting displays Rembrandt's own unique re-reading of the biblical narrative in light of his theological predilections, which were firmly rooted in his socio-religious milieu.

While other essays in this section of the annual focus solely on visual art works, Ela Nutu's essay "Salomé in Text and Performance: The Bible, Wilde and Strauss" looks beyond the canvas to consider the representations of Salomé found in art, literature, and opera from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Investigating the "metamorphoses" (44) between the biblical text and its literary and artistic afterlives, Nutu traces the development of Salomé as iconographic and literary character throughout this *fin de siècle* period within seminal works such as Oscar Wilde's play *Salomé*, Richard Strauss's opera of the same name, and various captivating portrayals from artists such as Aubrey Beardsley and Gustave Moreau. Along the way, we are invited to consider the transformation of this biblical figure from a

rather monochrome maiden into a vivid, bejewelled, and sexually decadent icon of exquisite depravity. Nutu's essay thus effectively highlights the potency and staying power of certain biblical characters' afterlives.

Moving into the "Film" section of the annual, two essays are offered which both, in different ways, reflect upon the engagement between contemporary film and biblical themes and characters. In her essay "The Cinematic Afterlives of Jesus, the Messiah," Vivienne Westbrook explores the complexities of the "cinematic Jesus" (111), arguing that, despite efforts to elide the sacredness and secularity of Jesus in some recent cinematic works, filmic images of the crucified body of Jesus cannot but position his character within a sacred realm, thereby elevating him beyond other more secular film heroes. Meanwhile, looking beyond cinema that explicitly retells New Testament traditions, Jayhoon Yang revisits the popular parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), reading this parable in light of the Korean film *Secret Sunshine*. While the film does not make explicit reference to the parable, such a reading strategy, suggests Yang, offers unconventional yet viable insights into this account, focusing as it does on the oft-neglected theme of the father's persistent love for both his sons. These two essays sit nicely together in this section, their different methodological tactics presenting two alternative, and equally fruitful, approaches to studying the Bible in/and film.

The next genre of cultural texts we encounter in the annual is music. Within this section, three essays are provided which each explore music as an interpretive medium for approaching biblical traditions. In her essay "Moses and the Exodus in Italian Opera," Helen Leneman considers the lyric power of Giacomo Orefice's opera *Il Mosè* (1905). Through her intricate explication of its musical and textual landscapes, Leneman vividly depicts this opera's dramatic interaction with the biblical Mosaic traditions, noting the ways that both Orefice's melodies and lyrics add new depths of meaning to this ancient story. In particular, Leneman's examination of Miriam's characterization in the opera offers a welcome affirmation of the way that cultural afterlives of biblical women have the potential to bring much needed depth and energy to their characters, breathing into them a new and vivifying significance.

In a similar vein to Leneman, Siobhán Dowling Long's essay "The Sacrifice of Isaac: Tales of Heroism and Murder in Two Compositions by Benjamin Britten" likewise considers ways in which musical retellings of a biblical tradition can serve as a valuable interpretive lens (or amplifier) through which to see (and hear) the biblical text anew. Focusing on two compositions by Britten, both based around the Sacrifice of Isaac tradition (Genesis 22), Long,

like Leneman, presents a fascinating analysis of music's ability—through its lyrics and its sounds—to reflect upon and add new insights to oft-told biblical traditions. This topic is again taken up by William Goodman in the final essay of this section, "Nothing Compares: Sinéad O'Connor's *Theology*." Goodman examines some of O'Connor's song lyrics from her 2007 album *Theology*, which she has adapted from Hebrew biblical psalms and poetry. Focusing on both her lyrics and musical delivery, he carefully compares each biblical passage with its "afterlife" in the album, drawing upon O'Connor's own religious and personal background to understand her use of biblical material as a medium for expressing concerns about love, justice, relationships, and faith. Taken together, these three essays demonstrate very effectively the potential power of music to explore and elucidate the biblical traditions through a medium that extends beyond the written word.

In the next section, "Literature," we are treated to four essays which all consider different strategies for using literary works and theories as hermeneutical tools within biblical interpretation. Richard Briggs's wonderful discussion, "Reading Daniel as Children's Literature," invites us to consider the interpretive advantages of reading the book of Daniel 1–7 as a story for children; such a strategy, he argues convincingly, brings new insights and understandings to this ancient text that can be too often overlooked by cynical adult eyes.

Following this, Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher and Lina Sjöberg both take intertextual approaches to the biblical narratives, each of their essays offering up different potentialities that can arise from reading biblical texts alongside other, more contemporary material. In her essay "Ruth: Images of an Unfulfillable Longing," Gillmayr-Bucher examines the various engagements of twentieth-century German poetry with the book of Ruth, observing that these poems focus upon particular themes within this biblical narrative to reflect upon contemporary political and social contexts. Meanwhile, Laura Sjöberg demonstrates beautifully the way in which secular literature can function as a source of interpretive inspiration, offering new insights into biblical narratives. Focusing on the Sodom and Gomorrah tradition (Gen 18:16–19:29), she uses a story by Swedish author Torgny Lindgren as a hermeneutical lens through which to reconsider the salty fate of Lot's wife. Sjöberg describes her method of reading here as a "trialogue" (271)—the reader in conversation with both the biblical text and the cultural text (be it literature, art, film, etc.) in order to discover fresh layers of meaning within the words, ambiguities, and gaps so often found within Bible stories.

Finishing off this section, and tying together some of the themes addressed in the previous three essays, Anthony Swindell considers "Mapping the Afterlife of Biblical Stories." Swindell discusses three recent works on the literary reception of biblical traditions, arguing that they affirm the cumulative quality of reception history traditions, which can serve as a "vehicle through which an ancient sacred text orientates itself towards the future" (281). This, suggests Swindell, contributes to a "dialogical process" (281) that offers a valuable alternative to more abstract discourses of theological or philosophical reflection.

Our foray into different genres of cultural texts takes a brief rest at this point in the annual to introduce an essay on "Theory" within the field of reception history. Brennan W. Breed's intriguingly titled piece "Nomadology of the Bible: A Processual Approach to Biblical Reception History" considers the theoretical underpinnings of biblical reception history. Arguing that scholarly attempts to distinguish "original" biblical texts from their numerous "receptions" are misguided, Breed suggests instead that it is more fruitful to consider the Bible not as a static object but as a "continuous process," which can move nomadically between and around different cultural contexts and which has the potential to manifest multiple, multifaceted meanings and significances. Compared to a "sedentary approach" to biblical reception history, which organizes biblical reception studies around a particular external category (e.g., Christian studies, medieval studies, Bible in film, etc), Breed argues that a nomadic method uses only "imminent criteria" to delineate the parameters for a specific piece of biblical reception history, thus allowing these parameters to be more porous and fluid than would otherwise be possible. This is an interesting theoretical approach to biblical reception studies and worth reflecting upon, particularly given its place within this annual whose format (dividing essays into sections according to artistic genre) appears to follow the "sedentary" organizational approach of which Breed is critical. As an effective theoretical reflection, however, the essay may have had more impact had it provided a more detailed example of the nomadic approach in action, thereby granting readers a helpful and informative comparison to the sedentary stance.

Resuming our journey through genres of biblical engagement, we then come to the final part of the annual—"Culture." The five essays in this section all engage in some way with cultural responses to or (mis)appropriations of the biblical text within a range of socio-cultural contexts. Thus, in Katie B. Edwards's fascinating study of the "Sporting Messiah" phenomenon, we

are treated to a rich gallery of Jesus and Christ imagery that has been used in sports advertising and imagery. Here, sporting figures such as Wayne Rooney and David Beckham are presented in Christ-like messianic poses that, according to Edwards, serve to affirm their status within contemporary culture as god-like male warriors on a mission to bring salvation to the nation. These images are both fascinating and at times disconcerting; certainly, they have not been without their critics and opponents, particularly from within religious establishments that take exception to the trivializing of imagery that they argue carries such heavy theological and sacred weight. And yet, what is equally if not more perturbing is, as Edwards notes, the power of these images to communicate and reaffirm prevailing cultural ideologies that tie together particular brands of masculinity, nationalism, and militarism.

Another essay in this section that explores explicit biblical appropriation within cultural and public life is Amy C. Cottrill's "'Pray for Obama: Psalm 109:8': A Reception Critical Approach to the Violence of the Psalms." Cottrill examines those American anti-Obama bumper stickers whose outwardly benign slogans encourage the use of Ps 109:8 as a "prayer for Obama": "May his days be few in number, may another take his office." As a study in biblical reception, she argues, these expressions of "violent prayer" (367) within public political discourse provide a valuable means of focalizing vocabularies of violence—both tragic and comedic—within biblical texts such as Pss 109 and 137. This is particularly important, she stresses, given that the psalmists' violent voices are often ignored or inadequately addressed within conventional Psalms scholarship. Cottrill's essay provides a textual analysis of these two psalms, using as her hermeneutical foreground the socio-political undercurrents made visible in these infamous (and insidious) bumper stickers.

Continuing with this socio-political focus in biblical reception, Yairah Amit's fascinating essay "The Study of the Hebrew Bible in Israeli Education" traces the development of Biblical Studies as a curricular subject area within Israeli Education. Amit's diachronic approach follows the cultural political trajectories that have seen state school-based biblical studies deteriorate in both quantity and quality to the point that it has become "a subject scorned" (396) within the education system, which then has repercussions on wider cultural conceptualizations of biblical significance. This, Amit suggests, raises a number of cultural and religious questions, not least of all the assonance/dissonance between Jewish and Israeli identities and the shaky future of biblical engagement, biblical literacy, and the perceived relevance of the biblical traditions within state education and wider secular Israeli culture.

Amit's exploration of cultural engagements with the Bible within a particular geographical and historical milieu is likewise addressed in Kevin M. McGeough's essay "Negotiating the Real and the Hyperreal: Nineteenth-Century Experiences of the Bible in the Context of Ancient Near Eastern Discoveries." Using nineteenth-century British culture as a case study, McGeough traces the influences of colonial encounters with Near Eastern archaeology and the Victorian visual arts on popular biblical reception. His discussion of the Victorian fascination with scholarly and artistic orientalism draws into play ideations of biblical historicity at this time and the ways in which these were intricately connected to the growing interest in and prominence of Near Eastern archaeology, which, through its own cultural reception, served to "bring the Bible out of the realm of myth and into the realm of history" (401).

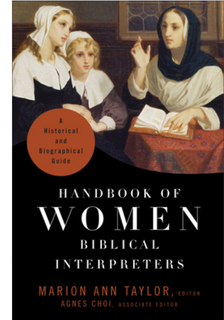
The fifth essay within this section of the annual by Amanda Dillon takes a step away from surveying biblical reception within a particular historical or political context to examine and take to task a relatively new paradigm of biblical reception—Manga Bibles. Utilizing a feminist critical hermeneutic, Dillon compares four recently published English-language Manga Bibles and their representation of female characters in the book of Judges. Throughout her discussion, she demonstrates the propensity of this hugely popular yet notoriously sexist comic book genre to re-inscribe the androcentric biases given voice within this biblical text; female characters are either elided completely or reduced to predictable stereotypes of feminine vulnerability, weakness, or duplicity, while episodes of male violence are essentially ignored. Dillon's essay is a valuable addition to the annual, in its affirmation of the comic book genre as a new and important addition to biblical reception studies. I was curious, however, about the editorial decision to include it in the "Culture" section of the annual rather than in the section focusing on literature. Perhaps this reflects the still highly contested definition of "literature" within literary and cultural studies. To my mind, though, this engaging essay would fit comfortably in either category.

Overall, this annual was a treat to read, packed as it was with fascinating, innovative, and inspiring examples of the sheer potential of biblical reception studies. For scholars, it provides just a glimpse of the innumerable and rich possibilities that engagement between biblical texts and their multifaceted afterlives can bring to the discipline of biblical studies. For students and interested readers of the biblical traditions, it will also serve as an inspirational springboard, capturing attention and inviting participation in a broad and

vibrant dialogue that can be encountered well beyond the confines of the traditional Biblical Studies Academy. And therein, I believe, lies its greatest strength.

Caroline Blyth
University of Auckland

Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide, edited by Marion A. Taylor with associate editor Agnes Choi



Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012 | 608 pages | ISBN: 978-0-80103-3568 (hardback) $44.99 | ISBN: 978-1-44123-8672 (ebook) $44.99

This is a truly fascinating volume. Handbooks are seldom enticing enough to be read from cover to cover; this one is an exception. It held my attention from the very first page and, as I turned the final page, I realized what a *tour de force* the book constitutes. Some of its articles astonished me: why did I not know of this woman and her accomplishments? Most of the articles humbled me: these women interpreters had been through so much hardship, faced so much opposition, and yet persevered. From Anne Askew who was imprisoned, tortured, and burned at the stake for her interpretations, to Margaret Dunlop Gibson and Agnes Smith Lewis who, despite their hard work and their brilliance, were never able to obtain permanent teaching posts.

It is always a daunting task to review a collection of articles. The present volume is no exception, containing 180 relatively short entries. I have therefore chosen not to offer any detailed discussion of single entries. Rather I shall summarize my impression of the volume as a whole.

The Introduction lists the criteria upon which the selection of the entries was based. Taylor has sought to highlight women whose interpretations were (1) influential, (2) distinctive, or (3) representative of the type of interpretations offered by women of a certain historical period or geographical area. Taylor further emphasizes that even though many of the listed interpreters read the biblical texts through the lens of their experiences as women, such a focus did not constitute a criterion for inclusion in the *Handbook*.

Several of the featured women interpreted the Bible "like a man" and a few even consciously objected to feminist readings. Finally, an interpreter had to be deceased in order to be given an entry. This last criterion meant that a number of influential twentieth-century women interpreters had to be left out.

The Introduction further offers a good general discussion of the shared and diverse backgrounds and achievement of the selected women interpreters. Taylor comments on their varied backgrounds, the different ways in which they obtained their learning and had access to academic and theological resources, their diverse motivations for studying the Bible, and also the large range of intended audiences for which they wrote. The Introduction also explores the ways in which the interpreters justified their work as Bible interpreters. Taylor notes that in many cases, the women drew on their own personal religious beliefs or the expressed theology of their religious affiliation to authorize their teaching. Often their belief of having been divinely inspired and called to their task lent affirmation to their writings.

Taylor also highlights that many women Bible interpreters centred their expositions and interpretations on certain key texts. First, she observes that Genesis (especially Gen 1–3), Song of Songs, the Psalter, the Gospels, the Epistles (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:18–19; 1 Tim 2:11–15; 5:14; 1 Pet 3:1–7; especially the texts which speak about women's role in the family and in the congregation), and Revelation are (unduly) well represented in their writings. Few women wrote systematic commentaries to any given book. Rather they refer to key passages in order to bolster a particular argument or theological point. Secondly, Taylor notices a strong interest in the female biblical characters and their fates. Women interpreters referred to narratives about Dinah and Tamar in order to condemn sexual violence against women, and they appealed to the leadership of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Esther in order to show that God did not find it displeasing that women act as political and religious leaders.

Taylor also draws attention to the social consciousness which appears to have been a driving force behind many women interpreters and which shines through their written works. They interpreted the Bible so as to make a point in the contemporaneous political debate, be that the abolishment of slavery, social equality, education reform, or women's suffrage. Their interest in the Bible was seldom motivated by the pursuit of academic knowledge; instead it was often generated by their desire and also their expectation that the Bible would speak to their immediate situations.

After reading the individual entries, I concur with Taylor's evaluation of the selected material and her summary of the findings.

The *Handbook* lists the interpreters in alphabetical order. The individual entries range from 2–5 pages, depending on and also reflecting their importance and impact, as well as our knowledge of and access to their writings. The entries are penned by a large number of contributors. Any one contributor has often written no more than one entry.

All the entries begin with a brief background description in order to place the interpreter in her social and religious location. This decision is symptomatic of the *Handbook* at large, because one of the key impressions that a reader gets from reading the *Handbook* is how much a person's personal and social circumstances influenced her decision and her ability to interpret the Bible. After that follows an overview of the interpreter's writing and a discussion of recurrent or dominant themes therein. In this overview, the contributor further highlights where and to what extent the interpreter focused on matters relating to women, either in the Bible or in her contemporaneous society. For instance, is her interpretation centred on passages in the Bible which deal with regulations regarding women, does it focus on biblical female characters, and/or does it deal with passages which are commonly used in political and religious discourse aimed at determining (and often curtailing) a woman's rights and responsibilities in society and in organized forms of religion? Most entries end with comments on the interpreter's legacy and the ways in which her interpretations have influenced later interpreters. Each entry also contains a select bibliography listing the interpreter's writing (often in English translation if the original is in another language) and key secondary literature.

After having read the *Handbook* in its entirety, it is near impossible to draw out any observations that relate to all the different interpreters. As discussed in the Introduction, the chosen women interpreters came from all social locations of society, they were single/married/widowed, some were childless while others had multiple children, etc. Yet, a few shared traits shine through the otherwise astonishing diversity. First and rather obviously, a Bible interpreter needs to be literate. This inevitably means that the majority of the listed interpreters came from the middle and upper classes. Secondly, fatherly support plays a key role in the development of a Bible interpreter. Women with an educated and supporting father are well represented among women interpreters. A budding Bible interpreter needs to have access to books and learning, as well as sufficient time to devote to them. Thirdly,

personal suffering has an impact upon a person's decision to interpret the Bible. Many women sought and found comfort in the Bible because of personal misfortune and tragedy. A disproportionately high number of the listed Bible interpreters experienced the death of close family members (parents, husbands, children), and many suffered from ill health. Fourthly, the ability and interest in language study was a contributing factor to an interpreter's success. Quite a few women realized the importance of reading the Bible in the original languages. They offered new translations, based on the Hebrew or Greek text, of key passages as a way of combating gender-bias in the then existing translations.

My one point of concern with the *Handbook* is linked with its professed scope. Taylor states in the Introduction that she "attempted to be inclusive in terms of religious, cultural, racial, and geographical diversity" (6), yet she also notes that women from Western Europe dominate in the centuries leading up to and including the Reformation. After that, British and North American women stand in the foreground.

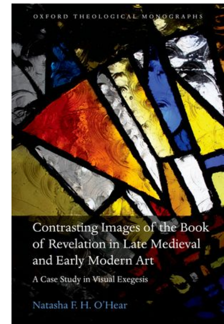
While I agree with the first part of this statement, I am less convinced by the second part. This *Handbook* is very much an English-language endeavour. Although key continental European women interpreters are represented, they are primarily from the Mediaeval Ages. Reading the *Handbook* can thus give the (incorrect) impression that from the Reformation and onwards, continental European women ceased to interpret the Bible. This English-language focus is felt in more than one area. First, a quick glance through the list of contributors reveals that most of them, with a few notable exceptions, received their PhD from and/or teach at institutes of higher education in North America and in the United Kingdom. Secondly, a high number of the entries deal with interpreters writing in English. These two observations go hand-in-hand. I suspect that had the editors sought out contributors working at continental European universities, there would also have been more entries devoted to non-English-speaking women interpreters.

Speaking as a Swede, it would for instance have been interesting to have an entry on Queen Kristina of Sweden (1626–1689), alongside that of Queen Elizabeth I of England. The former wrote both an auto-biography and multiple letters, expounding on her understanding of God and the societal roles of women of power. It should be said, however, that Queen Kristina's religious writings seldom refer to specific *Bible* verses, an aspect which might disqualify her as a Bible interpreter. A Swedish woman that definitely would qualify as a woman Bible interpreter, however, is Lina Sandell Berg (1832–1903), the

daughter of a Lutheran minister, who wrote more than 600 hymns. Notably, she used gendered female language to describe God's care for humanity (e.g., the original text of the song "Blott en dag"). Yet a third Swede that might have had a given place in a more internationally oriented handbook is the author Sara Lidman (1923–2004) whose five-volume book series *Jernbaneeposet* offers an innovative reading of the Sara-Hagar-Abraham narrative in Genesis. I am certain that a contemporary Dutch biblical scholar, or a Polish or a Greek one, would be able to come up with three equally influential women Bible interpreters from their countries, who lived during the last 300 years, were they asked to do so.

Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer
University of Aberdeen

Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art: A Case Study in Visual Exegesis, by Natasha F.H. O'Hear



Oxford Theological Monographs | Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011 | xvii + 287 pages | ISBN: 978-0-19-959010-0 (hardback) £83.00

This volume, based on the author's doctoral work undertaken at Oxford, explores the visual reception of the Book of Revelation in the late medieval and early modern periods. Noting that the traditional focus on written exegesis concerning Revelation presents a "danger of distorting the interpretation of this most visual of biblical books" (1), this study explores seven diverse visual depictions, touching on historical, artistic, and exegetical questions along the way. Beyond this, O'Hear also seeks "to understand the different ways in which images themselves exhibit hermeneutical strategies akin to those found in textual exegesis" (3).

The first chapter looks at the *Lambeth Apocalypse*, a thirteenth-century manuscript that comes from the Anglo-Norman illustrated manuscript tradition. Produced for an aristocratic female patron, this manuscript contains both text and image, with the text taking a more prominent role in this instance. Visual themes run throughout the illustrations in the *Lambeth*, in-

cluding depictions that would appear to contextualise the work historically, notably a focus on the elect and the reprobate as well as anti-Jewish iconography. Numerous interesting questions arise from this examination, in particular the relation of imaging the text as opposed to exegetical traditions (both seem to be present), as well as the function that visual depictions might have had for those unable to read the Latin text.

The next chapter explores "*The Angers Apocalypse Tapestry*: A Fourteenth-Century Walking Tour of the Book of Revelation." This work, begun in 1373 for Louis I of Anjou, was very much a status symbol demonstrating wealth and power; indeed, the fact that it incorporates personal iconography into the biblical imagery (e.g., angels bearing the arms of Anjou) is noticeable given that many read Revelation as a critique of imperial power. The tapestry, which originally measured 130m long and 4.5m high, is "the largest surviving narrative representation of the Book of Revelation" (43). In light of this, O'Hear focuses on the format, size and layout of the *Angers*, paying particular attention to its visual impact. O'Hear suggests that the *Angers* creates a world which "invites participation from the viewer, who is able to walk along the tapestry in a physical sense but who is also drawn into it on an imaginative level" (67).

Chapter 3 shifts to a focus on altarpieces, exploring van Eycks' *Ghent Altarpiece* (1432) and Memling's *St John Altarpiece* (1479). The *Ghent Altarpiece*, designed for a side chapel in St John's Cathedral, Ghent, brings together various parts of Revelation for didactic purposes, focusing on the Eucharist and resonances to this within the Apocalypse. O'Hear notes that, "Once freed from the constraints of a diachronic book-format, the artist can prioritize parts of a text, in this case the Eucharistic and celestial imagery, and leave others out completely" (87). Memling's piece, meanwhile, was situated at the St John's Hospital in Bruges. While Memling also brings several aspects of Revelation together, the focus here seems to be on offering reassurance to those who are coming to the end of their lives. These depictions of Revelation offer a chance to reflect on the hermeneutical interplay between an artistic piece and its function in a particular setting and context.

"*The Mystic Nativity*: Botticelli and the Book of Revelation" is the subject of the fourth chapter. O'Hear explores whether this painting, which at first appears to be a depiction of the Nativity, was influenced by the preaching of Girolamo Savonarola on Revelation, or if it is "the product of a more sustained interface with texts, ideas, and images relating to a broader late fifteenth-century cultural context" (106). Because of this focus, this chapter

has more historical reconstruction and presupposition than other parts of the study. Botticelli's work is again different from the other pieces explored in that it contains a Greek inscription that acts as an interpretative guide for a reader/viewer who is no doubt well learned. Key aspects of Revelation "are pictorialized, in non-mimetic fashion, as a Nativity scene" (133), and done so through the lens of Botticelli's Florentine.

Chapter 5 is a substantial portion of the book, looking at Late Medieval and Early Modern Germanic representations of Revelation. This chapter touches on the Koberger Bible of 1483, but gives particular attention to the works of Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach. Both artists produced woodcuts that accompanied the text of Revelation, an approach which presented the book in much more linear fashion than, for example, the representation of Botticelli, while simultaneously capitalising on developments in print media. Dürer's work is a standalone version of the Book of Revelation, where fifteen "large, full-page images jostle for precedence with the text and indeed, one could argue, ultimately overwhelm the text" (137). Dürer's illustrations are primarily aesthetic, though there are critical theological themes embedded in the series. Cranach's twenty-one images, meanwhile, were commissioned by Luther to represent each chapter of Revelation. Luther wished the depictions to be "as true to the text and as visually simple as possible" (186), because of their illustrative and didactic purpose. O'Hear comments that "Where Dürer had allowed for synchronic, nuanced, and, at times ambiguous interpretations of the text, Cranach's illustrations generally admit only one interpretation, and one that is more or less imposed on the viewer" (138).

In chapter 6, O'Hear turns to "Hermeneutical Reflections and Visual Exegesis." Here the author moves beyond the work of laying out the visual reception history of the book of Revelation to discuss broader hermeneutical and exegetical questions related to these depictions. O'Hear explores the relationship of text and image, using Gadamer's concepts of *Vorstellung* and *Darstellung* as a template for the discussion, before moving on to explore the visionary character of Revelation and the implications of this for artistic depiction. This chapter uses the visual depictions examined throughout the book to explore the relationship between textual and visual exegesis, but also utilises more recent representations of Revelation, such as that of William Blake, that embody these various hermeneutical tensions.

The book draws to a close with a short conclusion which is more of a reflection on the final chapter than a conclusion to the study as a whole, followed by three appendices.

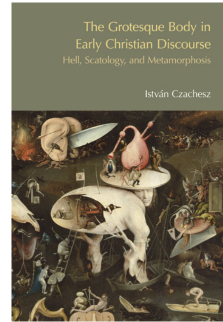
This is a fine study, modelling research that is thorough and scholarship that is truly interdisciplinary. In spite of the increased interest in reception history within biblical studies, substantial contributions in this particular area have been slow to emerge, particular from the side of biblical scholarship. O'Hear's study is a welcomed addition, not least because it is a serious attempt to bring biblical, artistic, and hermeneutical reflections into conversation with one another. Further, the volume has forty-three high quality colour reproductions of the various visual depictions under discussion that enrich the reading/viewing/interpretative experience that lies at the heart of the study.

There are issues with which one might quibble. For instance, elements of the project's origins as a thesis remain evident. The first appendix on the visionary nature of Revelation bears little relation to the rest of the study, and adds minimally to the volume. Of more interest to readers of this journal may be O'Hear's methodological reflections on reception and the relation of her work to others in the field; here I was left, on the whole, unconvinced. O'Hear sees herself building on but eventually diverging from those who have worked in the area of visual exegesis, notably Berdini and O'Kane. The author is concerned that these scholars end up subordinating visual exegesis to textual exegesis. This notion, however, is underdeveloped in the study, and it is not entirely clear that this is a fair reading of either of these scholars. The fact that the book concludes on these issues detracts from the important and careful work done elsewhere in the body of the study.

It spite of these reservations, O'Hear is to be commended for this volume, both for the depth of its research, as well as the demonstration it provides of the promise of interdisciplinary research at the intersection of biblical studies and visual reception history.

Bradford A. Anderson
Mater Dei Institute
Dublin City University

The Grotesque Body in Early Christian Discourse: Hell, Scatology, and Metamorphosis, by István Czachesz



Bible World 1 | Sheffield: Equinox (now Acumen), 2012 | 240 pages | ISBN: 978-1-84553-8859 (hardback) £55.00

The grotesque has already featured in a number of studies of the canonical biblical literature. In this book, István Czachesz employs the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's subject of "the grotesque" to analyse a variety of non-canonical early Christian texts. He integrates the subjects of hell, scatology, and metamorphosis into a unified discussion of what he labels the grotesque body. Drawing on Bakhtin, he defines the grotesque as combining two elements, namely, a humorous and attention-grabbing component with a confusing, repulsive, and fearful component. In short, the grotesque can be described as "laughing at pain."

Within Part I, Czachesz takes his reader on a journey through hell as found within second-century texts the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Apocalypse of Paul*. The fearful and humorous are interwoven in the imagery of hell, and early Christian literature features a constant supply of grotesque elements, for instance, people sitting in filth (such as a "river of diarrhoea"), images of castration and childbirth, and tormented body parts. The *Apocalypse of Peter*, for example, associates hell with a huge belly which swallows and digests people. There is also a belief that certain crimes are committed by certain parts of the body which are, in turn, punished accordingly. For example, within the *Apocalypse of Peter*, blasphemy is connected with the mouth and adultery is associated with women's hair and men's genitals. This suggests a somewhat different construction of the body and its limits than as found in the Torah. In a subsequent chapter, Czachesz compares the *Apocalypse of Peter* to the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* to further probe the connection between visions of morality and the structuring of hell, tightening the observation that overall images of hell and particular punishments are fitted according to the bodily location of sinful activity (cf. Mk 9:43). In terms of theoretical deployments in this section of the book, Czachesz never gets much further than introducing Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque and then identifying its bodily appearance through the ancient literature surveyed.

In the final chapter of Part I, however, Czachesz shifts to the *Acts of Thomas* and the topic of demonology. Demonic figures are believed to penetrate the minds of individuals' bodies. The *Acts of Thomas*, for instance, employs grotesque imagery to describe such invasions and the processes of the human psyche. Czachesz identifies a narrative pattern occurring three times in the text in which a demon loves a woman and tortures her until a man of God drives him out. He finds parallels of this pattern in other ancient literature, for instance within the Book of Tobit. Recognizing the occurrence of demon possession as a typology, he creatively re-reads the episodes from the *Acts of Thomas* with the help of Carl Jung's psychological perspectives of the mind. The pattern of the "bride of the demon" is described as a narrative of the dominance of the destructive powers of the unconscious over the creative forces represented by the female figure. Czachesz does a good job of drawing out how these narratives can signify the sexual and moral aspects of basic psychological complexes.

Part II of the monograph, "Scatology," begins with a chapter on deviance labelling and the politics of the grotesque. Czachesz draws on social scientific approaches as they have been developed in biblical studies, in particular the challenge-response exchange which functions as a central feature of honour acquisition within a limited-good society, and also the theory of deviance labelling in which deviancy is produced through social processes involving conflict between dominant and weaker groups. Czachesz singles out Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey's application of deviance labelling to the book of Acts (yet curiously absent from his bibliography is their more extensive engagement with the Gospel of Matthew, *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew* [Polebridge Press, 1988]). He applies their emphasis on *status degradation* to certain characters from the canonical gospels, Acts, and the *Acts of Peter*. Czachesz moves quickly over deviance labelling within the gospels and Acts. Of particular note is his reading of Peter's adversaries in the *Acts of Peter*; firstly, between Peter and Simon, and then also between Peter and Agrippa. In both cases, Simon and Agrippa respectively attempt to label Peter as deviant; however, their process is not successful in either case. In fact, within this text, in contrast to the earlier canonical gospels, followers of Christ cannot be labelled as deviants; rather they remain honourable citizens of the Roman Empire.

The next chapter analyses scatological humour in the *Acts of Peter* and the *Acts of Andrew*, with passing reference to scatology in the Old Testament and through Greek and Roman literature. Czachesz focuses on the role of

metabolism as a tool of grotesque humour in the service of ridiculing enemies. For example, in the *Acts of Peter*, after Marcellus is misled by Simon, he has his servants beat him before emptying chamber pots onto his head. Czachesz argues that these pots were not simply litter bins, but pots "full of filth" and containing human excrement. In a brief survey of scatology in the Old Testament he notes that within the Pentateuch metabolic products are not in themselves unclean; purity laws concerning bodily matter are found in Leviticus 15 and include flow or discharge, male semen, and menstruation, although there is no mention of faecal excrement. Within narrative and prophetic texts, however, scatological language typically symbolizes death and destruction. This section could have been enhanced by engagement with a 2004 article on the topic by Gershon Hepner who argues that the biblical authors often obfuscated their language when referring to scatological objects ("Scatology in the Bible," *Scandanavian Journal of the Old Testament* 18, no. 2 (2004): 278–95).

Part III of the monograph deals with the subject of metamorphosis, beginning with "Polymorphy" in chapter 7. Polymorphic appearances (to appear in different forms simultaneously) of Jesus occur across a variety of early Christian writings. Jesus's polymorphy, according to Czachesz, involves an element of the grotesque, although this link is tenuous and remains somewhat underdeveloped in his exploration. Czachesz observes instances of polymorphy in the *Acts of John*, the *Acts of Peter*, the *Acts of Andrew*, and the *Acts of Thomas*, before considering parallels in polymorphic appearances within early Christian literature and other Greco-Roman sources. He argues that the widespread religious idea in Greek culture that divine beings have no fixed appearance and are capable of manifesting themselves in several forms, possibly lies behind the occurrences of polymorphy in early Christianity.

The next chapter shifts to animal bodies which speak; a surprisingly rare occurrence within the canonical texts when compared to the apocryphal *Acts* and rabbinical literature. Czachesz focuses on speaking asses in the *Acts of Thomas*, making comparisons with Jesus's entry into Jerusalem in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, before briefly considering some of the psychological aspects of speaking animals. Psychological considerations return in the next chapter, "Metamorphoses of Christ," in which cognitive science is employed to illuminate why supernatural abilities associated with dead people occurred frequently in the ancient world. Czachesz explores depictions of Christ in animal form, such as when he appears as an eagle in the *Apocryphon of John*, written into the creation account as one teaching Adam and his "fellow essence"

about their fallen state. Christ as an eagle also appears in the *Acts of Philip* and the *Acts of Thomas*. Czachesz suggests that the appearance of Christ in the form of an eagle has its antecedents in Homer and the frequent use of bird metamorphosis in Greek literature. Chapter 10 elaborates considerably on the cognitive perspectives mentioned previously. Czachesz proposes that the attention-grabbing and humorous components of grotesque elements are closely associated with ontological categories which have been attested cross-culturally. However, archaic emotions of fear and disgust are also driven by the confusing and repulsive aspects of grotesque imagery.

The epilogue rounds off Czachesz's study of the grotesque in early Christian literature by outlining some useful historical considerations: first, in continuity with Bakhtin's emphasis on the "all-popular" nature of grotesque images, early Christian sources also have connections with sub-elite and popular cultures; secondly, the geographical expansion of early Christianity led to a mix of social diversity which no doubt gave rise to aggressive rhetoric and malignant gossip; thirdly, metamorphosis, a widespread idea in ancient religious discourse, became a central theme in the development of early Christian thought. Czachesz is careful to emphasize that his study is more concerned with *how* the early Christians used the grotesque rather than *where* they borrowed certain ideas from. He also admits repeatedly that his study is not especially concerned with the social features and structures of early Christianity that gave rise to the grotesque, although I feel that if such considerations had been developed it would have certainly strengthened the study—especially in terms of what a reader might take away from the book.

As someone who is generally satiated with the grotesque elements one finds in abundance within the canonical biblical literature itself, I must admit that venturing forth into extra-canonical territory was both exciting and illuminating. Through Czachesz's presentation, I encountered foreign textual bodies previously unexplored. This is a definite strength of the monograph as it enables the construction of a well-rounded understanding of the body within the period of the earliest Christian centuries. The flip side to this, however, is that the book attempts to cover a lot of ground, and this lack of focus means that the analysis of some texts is somewhat fleeting. Moreover, the study would have benefited from a more sustained and robust engagement with Bakhtin's thought right throughout the book (for example, more elaboration on the ways in which the literary trope functions as a means of social critique from a marginal identity within the wider Roman Empire in Part I). Similarly, the excurses into cognitive science prior to chapter 10 were very

brief, and would have profited from a lengthier explanation, perhaps in the book's Introduction, as to their relevance for understanding the grotesque.

Robert J. Myles
Auckland

God in Pain: Inversions of Apocalypse, by Slavoj Žižek and Boris Gunjević

God in Pain: Inversions of Apocalypse is interesting for 95 reasons.
1) Žižek says God is in pain.
2) Gunjević argues that St. Augustine can help us elude capitalism.
3) Žižek suggests that adopting an apocalyptic stance is "the only way to keep a cool head."
4) Gunjević tells us how theology is necessary for the

New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012 | 288 pages | ISBN: 978-16098-0369-8 (softback) $21.95

What is to be done when you start repeating yourself? This question kept recurring as I was reading *God in Pain*. Before I try to answer it, perhaps I should say something about this collection of essays first. It is of the same ilk and seems to have sprung out of the same flurry of "debates" that we find in *The Monstrosity of Christ* (MIT, 2009)—"debates" because the two protagonists, Žižek and Milbank in this case, spent most of their time talking past each other and simply reiterating old arguments. The present collection has enough of that, at least on Žižek's part, but it is a curious collation (apart from the annoying allusion to Luther's 95 Theses on the cover). At a formal level, Žižek and Gunjević are quite close to one another: both skim across bewildering texts, examples, stories, anecdotes, in a way that seems to avoid close engagement with any one text or thought. Even when ostensibly focused on one object, they run here and there. I suspect this may well have something to do with an educational system in which one covers vast slabs of material, picking up an idea or two and then moving on. But that is only a suspicion.

On the level of content, they are quite disparate. The reader finds it difficult to see where they are actually responding to each other's texts. Instead, we find Gunjević reflecting on the theological core of true revolution, Augustine, the Qurʾān, Radical Orthodoxy, and then the Gospel of Mark (of course, a subversive text). And Žižek offers various pieces on, well, just about everything. But his topics are ostensibly ethics (its suspension), the otiose nature of the structures of religion (which the Christian impulse overturns), the Qurʾān, a suffering God, and then a curious reflection on Derrida and his cat.

It really is an edited volume, with two authors instead of the usual gaggle. So I take them in turn. Gunjević is the more interesting, but only because he is relatively unknown to English readers. A Lutheran priest and theologian in Croatia, he is clearly enamoured with that strangely parochial and rather conservative venture in the UK known as Radical Orthodoxy. This explains much, for his readings are all rather mainstream. That is, Augustine is read in reply to Hardt and Negri, who do not take the man from Hippo far enough, to offer a theological challenge to the depredations of capitalism. How so? Augustine sees the Roman Empire, for all its flaws, as a divinely appointed means to overcome the various sinful, wayward, and corrupt variations of his own day into one, universal movement. That is, the widespread empire enabled an empire of another sort that would transcend and critique the earthly one. How do you avoid the same temptations reappearing within the movement? Through a dose of good old asceticism, for only in this way can one achieve Beauty, Truth, and Bliss (with the capitals). Forget Augustine's exclusive universal, in which those who did not fit his idea of "catholic" were to be eradicated. Similarly, the reading of Mark's Gospel argues that it is an anti-imperial text, that it deconstructs the messianism of his day, that it was written in a troubled, revolutionary context, and that its call to radical discipleship involves hearing, seeing, watching, and praying. To his credit, Gunjević does cite some of those who have already argued some of this—Horsley, Myers, et al. Not much is to be gained by saying that he is in a familiar groove, within a certain line of New Testament scholarship. I am more interested in the mainstream nature of such a reading. One takes a particular biblical text and argues for a core meaning, here an anti-imperial one. Thus, any reading which runs otherwise distorts the text, bending it to another purpose. All we need do is realise what its proper meaning is, and, since it is after all Sacred Scripture, that is enough. Little, if any, ambivalence here; little recognition of the complicity of such a text with the status quo in its very act of resistance.

To give honour where honour is due, Gunjević does provide some of the best quotes in the book. For example:

> Some day when we get around to writing a genealogy of our failures, inadequacies, and disappointments, an important place in such a study will be the books we never read, for whatever reason. Aside from the music we never listened to, the movies we never watched, or the old archives and maps we never explored,

> the books we never read will be one of the indicators of our anachronisms and our flawed humanity. (131)

Of course, one book that should not be on that list is the Qurʾān, in which the opening line of the first sura that was published (now 96:1) is: "Read in the Name of your Lord Who has created." And that command was given to a man who was illiterate. To his credit, Gunjević does offer a reading of the Qurʾān, one that is a good deal better than Žižek's attempt. Yet even here, the agenda is a curious one, for the purpose is to overcome fundamentalist readings that—he suggests—seek to control the text and fix the meaning, as well as Western imperial readings that sees it as a manual of terror and therefore to be opposed. Perhaps I am missing something, but I cannot help wondering how this approach can sit side by side with his appropriation of Augustine and indeed Radical Orthodoxy.

Now to Žižek: unfortunately there is nothing new here for anyone who has read a reasonable portion of his other works. Only a God who abdicates God-hood can save us; Christianity, unlike Judaism and Islam, faces the reality of sacrifice, that of God; with God everything is permitted (sexual abuse in the churches, imperial terror, libertinage and so on); Christ as the mutilated animal-as-Third; the death of God as the much-needed fiasco; the evils of postmodernism and apocalyptic scenarios; Hegel; Levinas; films; Alain Badiou … all of this in his perpetual and unrealised search for a real break, a way of resetting the coordinates so that we do not fall back into our old ways. We even find old and much-repeated jokes, such as the one about the man who thinks he is a seed about to be eaten by a chicken (even when "cured" he worries that the chicken does not know he is no longer a seed) or Niels Bohr's horseshoe (it works even if you don't believe in it).

So I come back to the problem of repetition. What do you do when you start repeating yourself a little too often? Is it time to close the books, fold down the computer screen, plant some onions, learn the ukulele or perhaps Italian, and inquire about the retirement village? This is a perpetual problem for anyone who has written as much as Žižek. I am not interested in the unwritten codes of intellectual life, such as the incompatibility between quantity and quality, or the pretence to innovation when it really is business as usual. But I am interested in what happens when the key components of one's thought have developed and when it then becomes a matter of tinkering here and there, reshuffling ideas in ever different combinations, or of simply quoting yourself. This problem is particularly germane to philosophers who

feel called upon to build systems, with that extraordinary assumption that one can produce a system of the universe while sitting at a desk in a cottage, pencil and paper in hand (or rather, laptop and internet glowing before you). In the end, all you do is reiterate the system, since it can explain everything.

I suspect that Negri hit upon an idea in relation to this problem. He once said that the most interesting period for a thinker is when he or she stops writing for a while. Negri experienced this himself for several years, while engaged in activism among the factory workers near Venice. The reason: it signals a problem, an impasse, a need to stop and rethink matters from the ground up. For Žižek that problem is his unfulfilled search for a truly radical break, one that really changes everything. So what would Žižek be like if he did so, if he spent five or even ten years not writing? Is this the real abyss that Žižek fears?

Roland Boer
Renmin University of China