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THE REC YCLED BIBLE
Autobiography, Culture, and the Space Between

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Edited by

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Studies*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

The Recycled Bible: Autobiography, Culture, and the Space Between*

Fiona C. Black

Introduction

1. *The Recycled Bible* gauges the immeasurable influence that culture and the Bible exert on each other.[1] "Recycled" refers to the useful by-product of these exchanges; it is an acknowledgement that reading the Bible is always transformative, both of text and of reader. The essays in this volume, then, trace the Bible as it is recycled through a wide range of Western cultural texts, from beer to the devil—and much in between. They consciously and critically employ the personal voice as a means to explore the cultural-biblical interplay. To this end, the essays occupy "the space between" the two discourses of autobiographical and cultural criticism, interacting with each in a variety of ways and to a variety of depths. Taken together, the essays illustrate the breadth of these recent approaches to the Bible, as well as some of the marvelous creativity that has become the hallmark of this kind of work.

When first conceived,[1] *The Recycled Bible* was intended as a follow-up from the first *Semeia* volume on autobiographical readings of the Bible (Anderson and

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* This volume has been long in the making. Normally, one would not mention such a thing in an introduction, but some acknowledgement of this fact is in order, to the contributors at the very least. You see, quite simply—and rather appropriately for the volume's subject matter—*life* got in the way. The contributors have been remarkably understanding of this fact (or maybe by now they have mentally jettisoned their pieces to "article limbo"). Dimly, I remember that their own lives were getting in the way, as the pieces trickled one by one to me over the years. Ironically, it is this summer, with a much more complicated schedule, and very little time to write, that I am squeezing these last words out. Thankfully, one reaches a place—past embarrassment, past guilt, and eventually beyond apathy—where the writing urge, the final push, raises its fiery head and erupts.

1. The project was originally conceived in the graduate room at the University of Sheffield by a group of aspiring biblical scholars (now I really am giving away how long this thing has been in the making). Stephen Moore, also once haunting those halls, agreed it was an interesting idea, and so we proceeded; he eventually came along as the board editor—as such, his role has been much

Staley 1995a). It also aimed to move in a different direction, however, by investigating the intersection between autobiographical and cultural studies. Since autobiographical-critical projects foregrounded the writing subject and his or her place in interpretation of the Bible, it seemed important to ask the same questions of the cultural-critical approach (self-titled "cultural studies")[2] that was just starting to come on the scene.[3] This work, it appeared, was also highly subjective and, more to the point, affective, but its proponents were not yet asking those kinds of self-critical questions when they engaged with particular cultural texts. Why not, especially when so many of the pieces under scrutiny at the time—art, music, literature—prompted responses of a subjective nature? And what would happen if they did ask these questions? Furthermore, could autobiographical and cultural criticisms in biblical studies have something to contribute to each other?

Much has appeared in both the autobiographical- and cultural-critical streams since those early days.[4] The essays in this volume now find themselves among work that is as varied in the nature of either approach as it is in its subject matter. To date, however, the "space between" is still territory that might be thoughtfully considered.[5] With few exceptions (see below), the two areas as they operate within biblical studies remain fairly distinct. But what exactly constitutes autobiographical and cultural criticisms, respectively, especially as they are imported into the context of biblical studies? It is helpful to sketch out the positioning of these two approaches as they intersect with biblical scholarship.

2. The history of cultural studies need not be recapitulated here, but one might highlight a few issues. Its genesis, of course, is usually linked to 1960s and

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appreciated. One by one the other would-be editors realized that they had other, more pressing commitments and dropped out. An overwhelming belief in the value of this project, however, and sheer stubbornness made me continue. Seeing now the quality of the pieces, I am glad I did.

2. As will quickly become apparent, part of the story of autobiographical and cultural work in biblical studies concerns the labels affixed to these approaches by various groups. I hope to clarify some of that below. My own preference is to use "cultural criticism" for the cultural studies or cultural-critical material in biblical studies that is under discussion.

3. See, for instance, one of the first collections of this kind of work, Exum and Moore 1998, which was the proceedings of a colloquium on cultural studies held at the University of Sheffield in that year. One could also mention the *Semeia* issue on film, edited by Bach (1996), Exum's *Biblical Interpretation* special issue on the Bible and the arts (1998), and two feminist literary studies of the Bible, again by Exum (1996) and Bach (1997).

4. For autobiographical-critical and related studies, see Kitzberger 1999b; 2002; Davies 2002; Brenner 2005; For cultural criticism, see Moore 1996; 1998b; 2001; Pippin 1999; Boer 1999; 2001; Walsh and Aichele 2002; Kirk-Duggan 2003; Runions 2003; Walsh 2003. This list is by no means exhaustive.

5. Recently, at least two colleagues have expressed great interest in the present project (Staley 2002:28; Aichele 2004:258), in terms of the freedom that this kind of work may provide from the conventions of traditional biblical scholarship.

1970s Birmingham, with the creation and development of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Originally, the intention behind the center was for a space to identify and study aspects of contemporary (British) culture. Above all, an interest in that contemporary culture, in ideology, and a repudiation of disciplinary boundaries characterize the early days of the movement (Moore 1998a).[6] The center and its formative publications also exhibited a preference for anthropological approaches over aesthetic, an interest in Marxism (eventually Althusserian), and even a reported "co-option" of its aims by scholars promoting interests in gender and race (Moore 1998a). Once cultural studies began to solidify and even become institutionalized, various interests emerged and new research areas developed, including that of sexuality, nationalism, postcolonialism, race, class, and even postmodernism.

As the movement moved out of the sphere of the United Kingdom, it began to reflect a broader and more colorful palette of approaches and aims. As Stephen Moore signals, moreover, by the time cultural studies appeared in biblical criticism, it really did not resemble its Birmingham beginnings at all, but yet, as Moore notes, it nevertheless has arrived (1998a:19). A great deal can be incorporated under its auspices in biblical studies. For instance, early cultural studies by biblical critics experimented with elements of so-called "high culture," choosing to examine, for example, paintings and (classical) music. This work did not engage with the theoretical insights of cultural studies and, moreover, could not really be called iconoclastic (a quick look at the Exum and Moore volume reveals studies of Turner paintings, Bach's oratorios, a Burne-Jones stained glass window, etc.).[7] As this cultural-critical area opened up in the field (see the collection of essays in *Semeia* 82 [Moore 1998b]), however, the subjects of scrutiny did undergo modifications, and they now reflect a more contemporary profile (photography, pornography, popular music, film, tabloids, etc.) By and large, though, the CCCS and cultural studies' origins still remained eclipsed from the discussion. Other theoretical discourses were and continue too be substituted in their place, making the latter-day cultural-studies movement in biblical scholarship more closely reflect the broader, later version discussed by Moore—with

6. Moore provides a detailed and thorough history of cultural studies in *Semeia* 82. It is not necessary to recapitulate that history here, and since this present volume seeks to continue the discussion begun in both *Semeia* 82 and *Semeia* 72 (the issue on autobiographical criticism), readers are encouraged to consult both volumes for more detailed introductions to both cultural studies and autobiographical criticism as it pertains to biblical scholarship.

7. Or could it? Even if not "true" cultural studies in its original sense, we forget that this work was nontraditional (and still is, comparatively speaking) when it appeared, in that it helped to challenge the privileged space occupied by historical, philological, and literary "evidence" in the process of biblical interpretation. In its nontraditionalism and "countercultural" approach, at least, it resembles its distant cousin from Birmingham.

quite a great deal of variation, of course. So what goes for cultural studies (or "cultural criticism") in biblical scholarship these days has a wide and enticing application.

To the list compiled by Moore in his introduction to the *Semeia* volume on cultural studies, one could add some recent and excellent studies, such as George Aichele and Richard Walsh's edited volume, *Screening Scripture: Intertextual Connections between Bible and Film;* Roland Boer's *Last Stop before Antarctica: The Bible and Postcolonialism in Australia;* Stephen Moore's *God's Beauty Parlour: And Other Queer Spaces in and around the Bible;* Tina Pippin's *Apocalyptic Bodies: The Biblical End of the World in Text and Image;* Erin Runions's *How Hysterical: The Identification of Resistance in the Bible and Film;* Yvonne Sherwood's *A Literary Text and Its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture;* and Richard Walsh's *Reading the Gospels in the Dark: Portrayals of Jesus on Film.*

Coincidentally, at the same time and in another part of the world, the tender shoots of another theoretical enterprise were poking their heads above the ground. Autobiographical criticism was initially developed as a theoretical apparatus to account for and elucidate that genre of literature first named, in the 1800s, autobiography. For the theory's likely ancestor, Roy Pascal,[8] writing in 1960, "autobiography involves the reconstruction of the movement of a life, or part of a life, in the actual circumstances in which it was lived" (1960:12). From then until the 1980s, autobiographical criticism operated on the idea that the writing of autobiography and subsequent study of this genre could recover historically verifiable material—a *life*—in which was visible a bona fide person who interacted with those reported events. James Olney, however, illustrates how each aspect of autobiography was eventually put under scrutiny. He describes "a rather naïve threefold assumption" about the writing of autobiography:

> First that the *bios* of autobiography could only signify "the course of a lifetime"… second that the autobiographer could narrate his life in a manner at least approaching the objective historical account…; and third, that there was nothing problematical about the *autos,* no agonizing questions of identity, self-definition, or self-deception—at least none that the reader need attend to. (1980:20)

To cut a long story short, it gradually became understood that the perceptions of the self (the unified self) are more fluid than heretofore perceived, and, furthermore, the relations of that disjointed self to the process of writing are

8. Most histories of the criticism look to Roy Pascal for its origins, in the form of a 1960 study that identified the genre as a viable target for literary inquiry and that, importantly, made a firm bridge between this genre and history. James Olney adds a few earlier essays into the equation when attempting to trace the exact origins of autobiographical theory (1980:7–19).

problematic in terms of their ability to render a truthful and monolithic account. Part of this scrutinizing of the autobiographical enterprise involved challenges lobbied from those who were and are engaged in work from perspectives other than white, Western, and male.[9] In this vein, the contribution of feminist scholarship in the autobiographical-critical enterprise should not be underestimated. In effect, feminist autobiography studies foregrounded the political problems and explored the implications of what it means to represent the self.[10] If feminist autobiographical critics essentially put the question of gendered writing back on the table, it was not to stay there for long before it was pushed around and generally subsumed by other, more weighty matters of gender criticism (sexual difference and the relation to gender among the most obvious, but also the problem of embodiment as it pertains to the process of writing and issues such as gender performance).[11]

How, then, do we get to biblical studies from there? In 1995, autobiographical criticism in biblical studies was spawned by a volume of *Semeia,* jointly edited by Janice Capel Anderson and Jeffrey Staley (1995b). In the editors' view, "autobiographical biblical critics struggle to understand how disciplinary questions, methodological preferences, and the resultant interpretations intersect with individual and communal experiences and commitments—those fluid lives we lead as we read and interpret biblical texts" (1995a:14). Since the *Semeia* volume, a couple of books of autobiographical essays have appeared, both edited by Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger (1999; 2002), the second being the proceedings from a special session of the Semiotics and Exegesis Session at the 2000 SBL Annual Meeting. Finally, to my knowledge, there is only one full-length study of an autobiographical-critical nature, Jeffrey Staley's *Reading with a Passion: Rhetoric, Autobiography and the American West in the Gospel of John.*

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9. For instance, it was once considered that although there is a very large and old tradition of what has later come to be termed autogynography—women writing their lives—this was largely dismissed by the academy as "fluffy," uncritical, journal writing that did not really merit much critical consideration. In response was born a tradition of feminist autobiographical scholarship that has drawn a very important and rich tradition of work to the academy's attention. This, too, eventually came under fire, as feminist scholarship has in general, for its ignorance of other, further marginalized perspectives and writings.

10. One of the more pressing issues brought to light is that, rather than being perhaps a unique (and safe?) space for feminist enterprises, it becomes evident that feminist or women's autobiography is doubly risky, for the female subject, already split in myriad directions because of its compromised position with relation to patriarchal society, writing, the academy, and so forth, essentially undergoes further fracturing in the process of autobiography. The question then becomes, Is that a fracture that can be controlled, or will it cause a writer to disappear in the process, to become unrecognizable?

11. The latter was and is a critical point of intersection between autobiographical criticism and gender studies, since autobiography has a necessarily performative element at its core.

Already there is some variety even in these initial approaches in biblical studies. In many cases, "autobiography" has become a unique and interesting way to start or frame a reading. This is not a criticism, merely an indication that writers have found a useful way to incorporate their personal voices in their work—and to interesting and provocative ends. Many of the writers of these essays problematize their "situatedness" as readers of the Bible and are finally breaking down the barriers erected by more traditional readings that insist on objective, unmoving reading. It should be noted, however, that there is some distance between the theoretical "beginnings" of the approach and its present-day incarnations in biblical studies, in that what is so far missing is an engagement by most with some of the central issues of autobiographical theory, such as the constitution of the writing subject or the indeterminacy of life-history.[12] Even the theme of the most recent Kitzberger volume ("What's so critical about autobiographical criticism?") is one that has been applied to the approach as it reflects on biblical criticism and not so much on the permutations of autobiographical theory itself and to what ends it may be used.[13]

Recently, an interesting turn in autobiographical work has occurred in Philip Davies's edited volume, *First Person: Essays in Biblical Autobiography.* What Davies and his contributors are doing is in essence ghostwriting the stories of various biblical figures. Davies calls this a modern-day pseudepigrapha and observes that that practice is, in reality, thousands of years old. Better called historical fiction than history, one might say that Davies and his contributors are actively engaging with some of the insights of autobiographical theory, in that they are putting to use the reported fictions of autobiography—and biblical criticism—more than anyone else has thus far. (It is unfortunate that Davies and his contributors do not connect their work with autobiographical theory or with other autobiographical readings in biblical studies, however, despite the book's subtitle.) Finally, and in this vein, Athalya Brenner has just published *I Am: Biblical Women Tell Their Own Stories.* This work, under the guise of first-person narration, aims to tell the stories of some of the lesser-known women in the Hebrew Scriptures. *I Am* is fiction,[14] but it is also an academic (re)writing, and

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12. It is not so much that writing about theory is missing but that some of the problems raised by that theory in terms of writing about life have not yet been brought to the fore.

13. The session at SBL was named "What's So Critical about Autobiographical Criticism?" The implication was that it had been assumed or challenged that work using the personal voice in biblical studies would be of a less-critical nature than more "objective" scholarship. Indeed, it is a challenge that Kitzberger herself notes is raised of her previous book on autobiographical approaches during an interview (2002a:8). Most pieces in the collection seem to want to answer that challenge, and it is an important step for the discipline and not one that should be underestimated.

14. More specifically, it is "semi-fictive, fictitious [re]writing" taken into the scholarly realm (xiii). Brenner also considers the applicability of midrash and neo-midrash as appropriate descriptions (xvi–xvii).

each woman clearly reveals the author's background and scholarly interests. As with the essays in *First Person* (indeed, Brenner is a contributor to that volume herself), her work is also rich and creative, an innovative means of exploring some of the Bible's untold stories and of breaking down barriers erected by traditional forms of biblical scholarship.

At this point, it is clear that there are some very obvious moments in autobiographical work that might place it comfortably under the general umbrella of cultural criticism, in its broader definition. In the first place, autobiographical studies historically responded to, and benefited from, challenges from marginalized groups in much the same way that the cultural-studies movement has. In the case of the former, there are many points at which an autobiographical critic could—and should—reasonably involve the matters of race, nationality, class, gender, and the like, as well as the expected literary and historical discourses.[15] Moreover, both have had to wrestle with some of the legacy of postmodernism, in particular with shifting conceptions of the subject and of text. But is autobiographical criticism, strictly speaking, cultural studies? Well, no, but in biblical studies, at least, one does see the muddying of such waters sometimes, and one might fully expect, as a consequence, to see the two fields merging, with interesting results. In reality, it is perhaps not so important how we label these disparate (or similar) attempts but that we consider that the possibilities for rich exchanges between them and among their parts are manifold.

As an aside, and to perhaps confuse matters further, I should also mention a growing stream of work in biblical studies that has been termed "cultural studies" by at least one of its proponents, Fernando Segovia (1995; see Segovia and Tolbert 1995a, b). This has both an autobiographical and cultural-critical flavor, and in fact it has been included in a recent volume of autobiographical readings (Kitzberger 1999b; see especially the articles by Segovia, Patte, and Croatto in this volume). In using the term, Segovia is signaling the importance of cultural location in this approach, but this work is quite disparate from the biblical-cultural studies that I described above, and it is different again from autobiographical-biblical criticism, despite its shared interest in the personal context of the writer. While both autobiographical studies and Segovia's cultural studies may exhibit an interest in the autobiographical foundations of their hermeneutical enterprises, the latter does not explicitly use the personal voice. Moreover, it tends to be positioned from a two-thirds world perspective and has taken on more global ethical and political implications of this foundation for reading the Bible. It is more difficult to say that the autobiography trend as a

15. One could look at work by Leigh Gilmore and Sidonie Smith, to name only two examples, where autobiographical work is rigorously matched with the insights of gender criticism.

whole undertakes a global ethics of reading, and rarely is it, so far, written from the same geographical and cultural perspectives as this other work.

3. How, then, do we come to find ourselves at *The Recycled Bible*? As I mentioned, the project was created some time ago as a way to explore the personal voice in conjunction with readings of some of the cultural flotsam and jetsam of the biblical text. The essays in this book ask what role the critic's life—however that is to be perceived and constructed in terms of its writing, its history, and its enculturation—has to play in experiencing text. This life writing does not then operate as an all-seeing, all-knowing "I," but as one of a number of influences that generates a reading. For all of the pieces, therefore, as would be expected in autobiographical work, the nature of the writing self comes under scrutiny. For Boer, Wilson, and me, the issues of fragmentation and the fracturing of the autobiographical writer are central. For others, such as Pyper, Smith, Nutu, and again Wilson, there are important matters of personal history to be considered, the impulse to understand the self and then the text, as mediated through (childhood) experience, trauma, and/or somewhat rigid processes of enculturation. Pippin, Pyper, Krause, and Smith also write out of conflictedness, by which I do not mean a personal angst, but more a disjoint between then and now, or text and self. All writers are conscious of the demands and ironies of their present career paths and research interests. For many of us, this provides an impulse to write that cannot be ignored.

But why and what culture? Pyper, Wilson, and I continue the practice—albeit critically—in cultural studies/biblical scholarship to date of looking at various "higher" forms of culture: children's fiction, opera, and feminist/lesbian fiction, respectively.[16] Krause, Nutu, Boer, Smith and Pippin, by contrast, look at more popular elements, giving voice to culture's other and to date marginalized forms and influences. Krause explores the notion of hypertext as it bears on 1 Timothy, academic writing, and early Christian history. Nutu looks at the first film in the *Matrix* series, reading it against her experience in postcommunist Romania. Pippin succumbs to the allure of vampiric and other heretical tendencies, reading them with the Gospel of John. Boer indulges himself with a few brews and passes a couple to Yahweh as well. And Smith ponders the figure of the devil in light of his fairly fundamentalist upbringing (and his love for some of the "junk" of popular Christianity). Why culture? For each piece, there is an

16. The spirit in these three pieces is not to privilege so-called high culture but to problematize it against biblical and personal text. So, for instance, Wilson eventually queeries opera/Maria Callas and, by extension, Mary; Pyper uncovers a liberation in the metrical psalms via children's literature; and I use Winterson's (lesbian) fiction to both play into and to regulate the protagonist's indeterminacy in the Song of Songs.

intoxicating blend (*pace* Boer) of biblical text and the world around it, a recognition that the Bible is never static, but insinuates itself into the people and cultures who read it, inevitably changing all in the process.

This blending is also unexpected, jarring, and distinctly iconoclastic. This is one of my favorite aspects of the volume as a whole, and it is one of the strengths of much of both autobiographical and cultural-critical work in biblical studies to date.[17] Variously we have Paul and the Internet; the Simpsons and the devil; John and Buffy the Vampire Slayer; *The Gammage Cup* and the Psalms; Maria Callas and the Virgin Mary; the *Matrix*'s Neo and Jesus; Yahweh and beer; the Song of Songs and the "Twelve Dancing Princesses." All of these (non)matches work exceedingly well to challenge the privileged status of the biblical text, and indeed the notion of the autobiographical voice.

Once readers start reading, they will also discover a wealth of creative energy and difference that comes from the pens/fingers of the contributors to *The Recycled Bible.* If ordinary domestic recycling can turn coke bottles into the miracle of polar fleece, biblical criticism in the mode undertaken here transforms what can be stuffy, critical academic writing (I speak of the discipline, not of these authors' usual works!) into innovative, thought-provoking, and highly entertaining reading. Athalya Brenner calls for this kind of work to be undertaken in the field (as have many others, directly or by example). George Aichele also has hopes for the potential to read one day outside of the canon.[18] If ever we are to approach the paradigm shifts needed in our field, it will be by opening up the critical vistas to allow shifts in approach, in style, and in aims for our work. I believe that the pieces written here are essential and effective steps along this path. I also have expectations that they might put the affective on the critical bargaining table.[19]

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17. In her response to the cultural-studies issue of *Semeia,* Alice Bach questions exactly this issue, particularly in terms of the "shock value" that some of the work of this type can have. Bach recognizes the need for transgressive readings (Bach 1998:303), but her demands for a "cultural, social or narrative connection" to justify the marriage of Bible and cultural texts, making them "viable selections for analogous analysis," seems to trouble that recognition (304). It seems to me that the idea of justifying viable selections "could undermine the effectiveness of transgressive reading and, moreover, might threaten to obstruct the involvement of the personal voice in the process.

18. Aichele and Hart 2004:258. Aichele will evaluate the papers' success in such an endeavor—as well as provide a rationale for calling for it—in his response.

19. Francis Landy pines to read (and by implication for us all to do the same) "beyond reading as a distraction, a fetish, and, worst of all, a commodity" (Staley 1999:28). To my mind, he means reading, in part, so that we confront the risks and failures of our attempts, as well as be emboldened by the "shamelessness" (ibid.) of self-exposure. I do share his frustration at the conventions that bind us as writers and readers of the Bible, and I share his hopes for freedom from those constraints. Yours is a tall order, Francis. One can only echo the (likely) refrain of James Smith (see the essay in the present volume) as a child in the back of his parents' car: Are we there yet? Are we there yet?

Finally, readers will appreciate, as do I, the perspectives of the two respondents to this volume, George Aichele and Erin Runions. Their recognition of the potential of this kind of approach is enlightening; it is also tempered by very fair evaluation of its success. Runions wants to push further for the radicalness of the approach, although she finds some positive movement toward that in what she reads. Aichele wonders at some of the other ties that bind us, namely, our canonical predilections and affiliations, and ponders what might happen when we are released from them. I thank them both heartily for their insights.

And, of course, my thanks to the contributors for illuminating reading.

www.recycledpaul.commentary: Reading and Writing the Pastoral Epistles as Hypertexts

Deborah Krause

I hate papers that begin with a dictionary definition. It seems so hackneyed, so done. In this case, however, done (or redone) seems appropriate. So here goes:

> Recycle vt. -cled, -cling 1 to pass through a cycle or part of a cycle again, as for checking, treating, etc. 2 to use again and again, as a single supply of water in cooling, washing, diluting, etc. 3 to treat or process in order to use again [*recycle* aluminum cans] 4 to alter or adapt to a new use or function [*recycle* an old tenement into condominiums] 5 to use again; bring back; reuse [*recycle* a speech from a previous campaign] –recy'clable adj.

The citation on "recycle" in Webster's *New World Dictionary of American English, Third College Edition* (1988), discloses what is necessary for reuse of a commodity. The parts of the definition, particularly the exemplary asides in brackets, draw upon economy and politics and the technologized, material reality of the re-cycle. Tenements are put to new use as condos. Water and air are cycled around for cooling, washing, or diluting. Speeches are retread for new political campaigns. Recycling, in other words, is a production of culture. The necessary element for the production is some sort of machine. Technology is needed to reclaim, remake, and reproject the old form into some new saleable commodity.

An opportunity to write a commentary on 1 Timothy places me squarely on the idea of recycling and the technologies that enable it. The genre of biblical commentary is a recycling and reuse of a text. As a commentator on 1 Timothy, however, there is at least one other cycle in this project. I recycle a letter (comment upon it) that most critical scholars believe (as an example of ancient pseudepigraphy) recycles the letter-writing activity and ministry of the apostle Paul. The lens of recycling and its material base helps me to ask the questions not only who (as most critical commentators on biblical texts), but how and why. All the while, such questions are necessarily pointed at me as a contemporary

recycler of the letter. How do I write this commentary, and toward what end? As none of these activities is natural, none is value-free. They are all invested. By attending to the writing of 1 Timothy and my commentary as recycling projects, I intend to explore what technologies they engage and to discern how they are connected to culture, how they are invested, and how they are acts of power.

In order to evoke a sense of the technological environment of recycling, I have titled this study with a web address, an imaginary URL. The metaphor of the hypertext and its connections to the Internet provides a site through which I plan to recycle 1 Timothy. By placing the letter within the contemporary technological environment of the World Wide Web, I reproject it and distort it for new, saleable use. Moreover, through this overt evocation of technology, I hope to illumine that as letters, pseudepigrapha, and canonized books, 1 Timothy and the Pastoral Epistles as a whole bear a thick history of technologized recycling. My work as a commentator and their production as biblical texts engage ancient and contemporary sites of recycling. In this case, both recycling sites have a letter at the bottom of the bin.

A Tale of Two Letters

> Let a woman learn in silence and full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman became the transgressor. (1 Timothy 2:12–14)

> Dear Professor Krause, Thank you very much for your letter of 8 April, and welcome to the group of Readings Commentary writers. I have arranged for a contract to be issued for your volume on 1 Timothy, with a manuscript submission date of 31 December 2000. … All the best with your endeavours for Readings, and please be in touch at any time if I can be of assistance. Yours sincerely, John Jarick, General Editor, Readings.

How does a self-respecting feminist get here, writing a commentary on 1 Timothy? To be honest, I wanted something else first. The original solicitation from Sheffield for my participation, however, showed that the "good stuff" in the canon had already been spoken for. Left for the junior scholars, and that would include me, was what one professor in my seminary days had glibly referred to as "the junk of the New Testament." Not wanting to pass up an opportunity, and having spent some time on the Pastoral Epistles and the genre of pseudepigraphy, I pitched myself to 1 Timothy. I am certain it was out of relief that someone was taking it that the publisher accepted. A relationship was born.

It is a relationship that bears some analysis, and by that I mean analysis beyond the paradox that a woman might write a commentary about a text that

commands women to silence. Certainly Jouette Bassler has already done this in her Abingdon commentary (1996), and she and other women have written essays on the Pastoral Epistles (1984; Shottroff 1995). Rather, it merits analysis about the location of 1 Timothy and me in the various structures we cohabit: the church, the tradition, the academic profession of religion. How is it that we wind up here, together?

More than that, as a teacher in the context of a United Church of Christ Seminary, I encounter many students who perceive themselves to be in "recovery" from the church as it has been expressed in 1 Timothy and the Pastoral Epistles as a whole. The claims about silenced women, keeping up outward appearances, and well-ordered hierarchical, patriarchal families made in these letters have had a life in many of my students' religious experiences. They come to my classes seeking ways to refute the claims. As trainees for Christian ministry, however, they are bound to these letters in a way that resists simple refutation. This is their problem as students and my problem as a teacher: Where is it that we go from here?

In order to move from this spot I have sought to engage the Pastoral Epistles in a new machine. Rather than relenting to their description of the early church or simply rejecting them, I have read them through the lenses of postmodern approaches to things historical in light of fields of critique from literary and cultural studies. In other words, I have engaged the texts in a form of ideological criticism. As Timothy K. Beal has noted, following Frederic Jameson, ideology in this sense is not understood in the cursory notion of "false knowledge" but rather as "a strategy of containment" (31). Texts, and interpretations of texts, from this perspective are charged with, though often attempt to conceal, ideological investiture. Through this perspective I have found a way to try to uncover how 1 Timothy, and more broadly the Pastoral Epistles, and I wound up here contained (strategically?) in the project of writing this commentary.

The metaphor that I have begun to employ with regard to the Pastoral Epistles is that of hypertext. I came to this metaphor first through the literary theoretical work of Gérard Genette (1997). Genette's practice of "open structuralism" has helped me to see the Pastoral Epistles not as unitary "letters" but as fragmentary and intertextually tense documents. Not merely rewritten Paul, or "pseudo-Paul," the writings employ many different pieces of tradition, culture, and rhetoric. Such a view has helped me to see the Pastoral Epistles not so much as the product of an author but as an assemblage of many traditions. In this, I see their proscriptions of women's speech, for instance, within a larger struggle about speech and the ancient dilemma of writing in relation to speech. The Pastoral Epistles and Paul share in this dilemma.

From this point I have drawn the Pastoral Epistles even further into the hypertext metaphor, applying what I have been able to understand about the

term as it is used in computing and critical theoretical discourse about the technology of computing (e.g., Landow 1997; Bolter 1991). The technological innovation of the pseudepigrapher and the letter writer more generally comes into bold relief when what is to me the overtly obvious technological innovation of computing, HTML files, and links that constitute the World Wide Web are evoked as analogies. In addition to making clear the located event of letter writing in antiquity as a practice with social, cultural, political, and economic implications, hypertextuality helps to destabilize the unitary notions of "author," "history," and "church" that have stood behind these letters in much of higher-critical discourse. Both venues of hypertextuality, Genette's and that of computing, afford ways to reclaim the Pastoral Epistles as contentious rhetorical performances, to reestablish them in a somewhat different understanding of early Christianity, and to recycle them as a site in my classrooms (alongside other sites, including Web sites) for students to explore their social locations as Christian rhetoricians.

In this practice of viewing the Pastoral Epistles as hypertexts, I have tried in my teaching to reposition the letters in what gets called "the history of early Christianity." In this I discourage a strictly pro or con position with regard to "the church" of the Pastoral Epistles. When we encountered the rhetoric of the implied Pastoral Epistles church, for instance, a student in a recent seminar noted that the offices, polity, and practices of the Pastoral Epistles church share much in common with her own church. For example, unlike Paul's ascetic practice, she comes from a denomination with compensation packages and pension plans for clergy.[1] In this new posture the Pastoral Epistles are more like us than not. Such a historical repositioning in relation to these letters takes part in what I understand feminist-science-studies theorist Donna Haraway to mean by her notion of a "modest witness" in her book *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse.* In response to what she understands as the frightening salvation histories of technological innovation and the development of science in Western culture and consciousness, she is careful not to take a counterapologetic position right away. She does this by honest appraisal of her location. "My modest witness can never be simply oppositional. Rather s/he is suspicious, implicated, knowing, ignorant, worried, and hopeful" (2). Such is the posture of witnesses who are committed to avoiding the narratives that threaten the world at the end of the second Christian millennium. Haraway elaborates on the tense posture of her witness:

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1. Jeanne Smith offered this insight in the midst of a seminar discussion in the course "Following Paul" (Eden Theological Seminary, 4 November 1999).

> Taught to read and write inside the stories of Christian salvation history and technoscience progress … I am a marked woman informed by those literacies as well as those given to me by birth and education. Shaped as an insider and an outsider to the hegemonic powers and discourses of the European and North American legacies, I remember that anti-Semitism and misogyny intensified in the Renaissance and Scientific Revolution of early modern Europe, that racism and colonialism flourished in the traveling habits of the cosmopolitan Enlightenment, and that the intensified misery of billions of men and women seems organically rooted to the freedoms of transnational capitalism and technoscience. But I also remember the dreams and achievements of contingent freedoms, situated knowledge, and relief of suffering that are inextricable from this contaminated triple heritage. (2–3)

In my work with the Pastoral Epistles I am hopeful that such a posture might suggest a way of reading these letters that resists their conscription into a particular Protestant version of salvation history. I want to try to tell a different story, as Haraway says harrowingly, at the end of the second Christian millenium and now at the beginning of the third.

The History of Early Christianity under the Name of Bau(e)r

The modest witness I encourage toward the Pastoral Epistles is one that appreciates them as being about *power.* Their higher-critical, largely Protestant, modern interpretation, however, must first be appreciated as being about Bau(e)r: Ferdinand Christian Baur and Walter Bauer. These scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have done the most to problematize the Pastoral Epistles in their relationship to the historical Paul, for until the nineteenth century the Pastoral Epistles were never detected as "pseudo-Paul." Modern assumptions about unitary authors, consistent personalities, and the attendant historical-critical technologies of syntax and vocabulary analysis related to individual authorial personality changed their scholarly perception as letters from a particular expression of Paul's ecclesiastical teaching to a deceptive misrepresentation of Paul's teaching for the church. It was through Baur and Bauer that the Pastoral Epistles were seen as a recycling of Paul, and as such not as a natural expression of his teaching but as an appropriation of his name and legacy in the letter genre for theological and ecclesiological purposes. It is through Bau(e)r that the Pastoral Epistles were seen as a recycling of Paul.

The history of early Christianity according to Bau(e)r is a particular history. It was F. C. Baur who first postulated (much as Julius Wellhausen in the study of Israel) that the New Testament documents not only contained history but also presented a history of early Christianity in their tensions and contradictions with one another (Krause and Beal). F. C. postulated that by tracing the rela-

tionships between the New Testament books, the New Testament critic would begin to see them as a "development" of teachings. In other words, they had an organic unity. Baur categorized the New Testament literature according to three historical phases of teachings. The first included the first four letters of Paul; the second phase included Hebrews, the shorter Pauline epistles, 1 and 2 Peter, James, the Synoptics, and Acts; the latest phase included the Pastoral Epistles and the Johannine literature. Through these there is a steady dissipation in historical value, from Paul's fiery presentation of the gospel of freedom from the law to ever more conciliated presentations of this gospel in the face of Judaizing opposition and later gnostic heresies. In this framework of interpretation, early Christian history develops from a religious expression emphasizing freedom in the spirit to one ever more burdened with the trappings of the law and institutionalization.

The characterization of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus within F. C. Baur's historical frame far removed from Paul has varied. Some, such as Adolf von Harnack, have argued that the Pastoral Epistles threaten the message of the gospel in that they "break away" from the true teachings of Paul, institutionalize him, and narrow the scope of prophetic inspiration (207–8). Ernst Käsemann argued in his essay "Ministry and Community in the New Testament" that the Pastoral Epistles are "irreconcilably different" from and "inferior" to Paul (100).

All these interpretations share a common concern about the relationship between 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus and what are considered the "authentic letters" of Paul. This concern is that the letters somehow represent a denigration of Paul. They "break away" from Paul and are "irreconcilably different" from Paul. They are the "ization," the "fication," the derivative, degenerate, loss of Paul. As a recycling of Paul, they have been viewed as unoriginal and devoid of spirit. As heated as this characterization about the Pastoral Epistles is, it actively conceals an even more fervent desire that there is within the "authentic letters" (just listen to what we call them) a *real* Paul.

F. C. Baur's New Testament history of early Christianity was most distinctly reoriented and developed by Walter Bauer in 1934 (*Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im altesten Christentum;* published in English in 1971, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christianity*). Bauer's thesis, taken up by Helmut Koester and James Robinson in the 1960s and 1970s, was that, rather than a prevailing orthodoxy that was threatened and compromised by gnostic and Marcionite heresies, early Christianity developed locally and diversely throughout the Mediterranean well into and beyond the second century C.E.

As different as F. C. Baur and Walter Bauer are in their characterization of the unitary nature of the development of early Christianity, their ground of authority for what is truly Christian in that history is much the same. The locus of authority or "presence" in the New Testament and extracanonical writings for

Walter Bauer and the Bauerians is pushed back beyond "orthodoxy" to Jesus and to Paul. For example, Helmut Koester notes that the Pastoral Epistles have the appearance of "a sellout of the Pauline theology under unfavorable conditions" (1965:317). Such a notion holds "the Pauline theology" as unitary, established, and real. This notion of the degeneration of Paul, his sellout, is really nothing but F. C. Baur all over again. In this sense, Walter Bauer and the propagators of his thesis seem to have been writing under F. C. Baur's name.

In the history according to Bau(e)r the Pastoral Epistles have been characterized as other than Paul. They have been disparaged as the "problem" and the curse of early Christianity.

In this characterization I hear an echo from 1 Tim 2:12–14: "For Paul was formed first, then Timothy and Titus; and Paul was not deceived, but the Pastoral Epistles became the transgressor." The echo helps me reflect on my identity as a woman and my role as a commentator on the Pastoral Epistles. As strange as it might seem, we are good company for one another. We are both recycled reproductions—fallen from the original state of grace and divine presence.

The whole problem of constructing a history of early Christianity, of defining its origin and construing its development, has brought forth the "othering" of the Pastoral Epistles. Much as woman resides as "other" to the norm of "man" and letter to spirit and nature to reason in the Western metaphysical tradition—so the Pastoral Epistles have taken the place of the "other" in relationship to the construct of Paul as norm in higher-critical biblical discourse. In the higher-critical study of Paul, the construction of the Pastoral Epistles as "other" has afforded the study of Paul, as in real, authentic Paul, the prospects of presenting a whole, unitary personality: Paul and his nonideological gospel of freedom.

In the higher-critical investigation of the Pastoral Epistles the letters have been seen to represent (make present) the reality of the church a century after Paul. Proscriptions of women's activities in the letters, therefore, have been seen to represent just such a development in the life of "the church." The detailing of codes of gender hierarchy in church offices, the commands about how slaves should obey their masters, the descriptions of the household have been seen as a presentation of the church's development (as a unitary organism). In this model the church developed from the unmediated, nonhierarchical community of freedom to the Pastoral Epistles' mediated, hierarchical institution of bishops and law. In this interpretation the expressions of the Pastoral Epistles present either the necessary restriction of Paul's gospel of freedom to the pressures of heresy or the tragic loss of presence in the institutionalization and stratification of the church. Either way the Pastoral Epistles make present the church's fall from original grace, the loss of presence, the loss of gospel, the "sellout" of truth. It seems to me that this is a trap that plays into the hand of the Western metaphysical tradition's promise of origin, original blessing, and presence. It is a trap that has

played no small role in the denigration of women, Jews, indigenous peoples, the two-thirds world, and the planet. Might there be a way to imagine a reading of these letters, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, that would not partake of such a view of the church's development and history? Is there a way that would not see the letters as representations of *the* church—but as discourses of power from within and around churches in the late first and early second centuries? Such a way of reading would understand the recycling of Paul as contentious discourses. Such a way of reading would be that of a modest witness.

Reading the Pastoral Epistles as Hypertexts

Of late there have been several modest witnesses who have read the Pastoral Epistles outside of the higher-critical notion of the church's development and history. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Dennis R. Macdonald, Luise Schottroff, and Vincent Wimbush and his Colloquy on Early Christianity as Rhetorical Formation read the Pastoral Epistles as examples of discourse in a multicontextual argument about Christian life and practice. What I propose to this conversation is a reading of the Pastoral Epistles as a kind of hypertextual discourse. In this, the letters are not seen as a straightforward representation of the church but rather as technological rhetorical innovations set alongside many of the expressions of early Christian belief and praxis. Such a position understands the letters not so much to represent "the church" as to disclose power struggles within churches and, more broadly, cultures of early Christianity.

No doubt the Pastoral Epistles are different from other Pauline letters. They employ a different syntax and vocabulary. They assume offices and structures of which the Paul of 1 Corinthians or Galatians never speaks. What do we make of these differences? Do they represent an actual church or a desire for an ideal church? In other words, do we have replicas in the descriptions of serious, sober, not double-tongued deacons, or do we have something more like Norman Rockwell's images of early twentieth-century North America, representing an ideal built on a repression of conflicting and competing claims about power? Idealized visions of a stable and structured church, just like visions of a pastoral and quaint America, may be seen as documents of political and cultural struggle. While they present portraits of serene order, around the margins and between the lines is evidence of pathos, rage, and repression. In this way the letters offer valuable historical information, but not information of an origin or an origin deferred. Rather, they offer us glimpses of struggles, struggles of the letter writer and struggles within the church.

With regard to discerning the struggle of the letter writer, the work of Genette on hypertextuality, or intertextuality, is of help. Genette's taxonomy of hypertextuality would classify the hypertextual practices of pseudepigrapher as

"mimotextual." They partake of a certain kind of imitation of Paul's rhetoric. In this, Genette helps me see the Pastoral Epistles' engagement of Paul as a kind of rhetorical power innovation, a technological extrusion of Paul. As Genette claims, "to imitate is to generalize" (85). The Pastoral Epistles are a generalized Paul. In this they are "hyper-Paul."

Elizabeth Castelli has argued that Paul (as in the writer of the "seven authentic" letters) engages in the rhetorical practice of letter writing in order to extend himself. Focusing on Paul's use of the term *mimesis,* Castelli notes that his letters provide a means by which he exerts power and attempts to conform his churches to his model while he is physically absent. Reading Paul through the theoretical insights of Michel Foucault, she troubles the traditional notion of Paul's unitary "gospel." What we call "Paul" are the extensions of the apostle's personality through concrete, politically charged rhetorical practice.

> Paul's pastoral power, articulated in his discourse in a system of differentiation, has explicit objectives: to attempt to solve particular community problems, to (re)authorize his own teachings and the people whom he sends in his place, to assure that the communities follow a particular pattern in living out their new Christian understanding, and ultimately to guarantee their claims to salvation. These objectives layer the social, individual, and spiritual planes of existence, each implicates the other, and situates Paul's pastoral power simultaneously on the multiple levels. (122–23)

The implementation of the letter as a stand-in for physical presence binds the "seven authentic" and the Pastoral Epistles. Moreover, both the "authentic Paul" and the Pastoral Epistles writer are bound by their frustration with the letter genre. Both 2 Corinthians and 1 Timothy evince a struggle with the letter as a flawed substitute for bodily presence. In both contexts the letter is a written stand-in for physical presence. It is writing, not speech. It is at once a speech extender and a speech impediment.

Throughout the seven authentic Paul reveals an ambivalent relationship with "written codes"; he yearns for a "new life in the Spirit" (Rom 7:6; contrasting). His writing of letters poses a problem in relationship to his physical presence. For example, he relates a charge against him from his opponents in 2 Cor 10:10: "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech is of no account." In other words, he has a speech impediment. Paul knows this all too well; he is writing, after all. In response to their charge, Paul discloses his weariness of the letter/spirit bind and the inherent flaw of the letter. It cannot pack his punch. "Let such people understand," says Paul, "what we say by letter when absent, we do when present" (2 Cor 10:11).

As with 2 Corinthians, speech and the letter's role in impeding speech trouble the Paul of 1 Timothy. This is particularly interesting in light of where many

of my students focus in this letter in its prohibitions and proscriptions of women's speech. For example, 1 Tim 2:8–15 commands women to silence, but this is just one of many references to speech and its frustration in the letter. In fact, the entire letter is an example of frustrated speech. Nowhere is this more stark than in the personal reference in 1 Tim 3:14, which reads: "I desire to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how to behave in the household of God, and which is the church of the living God, the bulwark and pillar of the truth." I desire to be with you, writes the letter writer. I want to be present, but in lieu of that I send this writing. Writing is both the solution and the problem. As Jacques Derrida notes regarding writing in Plato, it is φάρμακον, at once poison and cure.

And writing appears to Plato (and after him to all of philosophy, which is as such constituted in this gesture) as that process of redoubling in which we are fatally (en)trained: the supplement of a supplement, the signifier, the representative of a representative (Derrida: 109).

It is through this problem of speech and its frustration in 1 Timothy that I begin to wrestle with the injunction to women's silence anew. On the one hand, the letter demands women's silence and characterizes women's speech as gossip and busy-bodying. On the other hand, 1 Timothy is obsessed with its own striving for speech and the viability of speech. The letter writer asserts that *sayings* are sure (πιστὸς ὁ λόγος; 3:1; 4:12), and yet he is writing. He argues that he speaks (not writes) the truth—he does not lie (2:7), but he does. The desire to speak is thwarted by the necessary evil of writing. Finally, he charges Timothy at the end of the letter to avoid godless chatter (κενοφωνίας, literally "empty sounds") and contradictions (ἀντιθέσεις; 6:20). This final command unmasks an anxiety at work in the letter. Insistence that words are sure and that truth is told rub against the horrifying acknowledgment of empty sounds and antitheses. Within this examination of speech and its impediment in 1 Timothy, the rhetoric of the letter writer is indeed charged with power, but it is more a power fearful of powerlessness. The letter serves as an innovation to curb these fears rather than standing as the empowered institution insisted upon by representational readings.

As letter writers, the Paul of 2 Corinthians and 1 Timothy struggle with a technology that both enables their extension, or hyperactivity, and underlines their absence, or powerlessness. This shared struggle is bound to the curative for their physical absence: the letter. In these letters I can discern and engage their rhetorical claims as charged with desire. Such a reading both attends to 2 Corinthians and 1 Timothy closely and yet divests them of their representational force.

In thinking of the letters of Paul and the Pastoral Epistles writer as sharing both the curative and frustrating attributes of technologies of extension, another

site of their technologization and extension comes to mind. Just as papyrus and pen stand in for the voice and physical presence of the apostle, the means of transporting these letters through Roman roads and trade routes served as another level of derivation and generalization. The letters traveled around from church to church. The conventions of the Pastoral Epistles, written from Paul to intimate companions Timothy and Titus (2 Timothy having a testamentary form of Paul's final words), all seem to belie knowledge of this system. They mock intimate references to travel as a means of extending the apostle's authority to a general audience (e.g., 2 Tim 4:13: "When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas"). Paul's letters were also taken into this system of transportation and communication. Sent not just once to a terminal congregation, they were collected, copied and redistributed. As such, they were recycled. The transportation system provided part of the technological apparatus for this operation. As roads and trade routes, this system was not benign but was maintained by and undergirded the power and authority of *pax Romana.* As such the rhetoric of the letters was relocated, retechnologized, recontextualized, and newly generalized. In this sense all of "Paul" as we have him in the Bible is hyper-Paul.

The imagery of extension and technologies of extension suggest to me an extension of the metaphor of hypertext to the realm of computing and the technological innovation of extension known as the World Wide Web. This contemporary innovation of extension through the means of Web sites intrigues me as a new ground within which to read and teach the letters of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. Much as the system of Roman roads and trade routes was not benign and supported the global military commercial power of the colonizing force of Rome, the web has its own global military industrial connections (Levine et al.). The Roman system of communication and transportation made possible the extension and generalization of Paul into "the church." So too the technologies of the World Wide Web make possible the extension and generalization of institutions, many of them churches, in hyperbolized, global ways.

An example of a projection of a global image on a contemporary Christian Web site can be seen at www.sbc.net, the official site of the Southern Baptist Convention. For the past few years, the site has changed its homepage format but has always included some image of the globe as the backdrop for the church's structures and ministries. What is clear on going to the site is that the globe provides a visual rhetorical cue about the church's sense of identity and mission.

Web sites function to establish a presence on the basis of the multimedia rhetorical features of HTML: text, gif and jpeg graphics files, sound buttons, and links. HTML files, and their representation through a user interface, however, are very different things. For example, without the user interface the image of the Southern Baptist Convention's global presence on their site reads like lines

of code in black type on a white page known as HyperText Markup Language (HTML). There are no pictures or graphics of any kind. Through the projection of the technology of the interface, however, the page springs to life with images of the globe and graphics of the church's symbols and impresses the viewer with the presence of the site's subject. As such, anyone with programming knowledge of HTML and access to a computer and the Internet can project a sense of presence onto the Web. That projection, however, is always necessarily a recycling of the subject and thereby a distortion. It is an invested rhetorical move.

A comical example of this phenomenon is a recent satirical site in the U.S. presidential campaign. In the summer of 1999, as George W. Bush's campaign for the Republican nomination was getting off the ground through something called an "exploratory committee," a man named Zack Exley started a Web site in the candidate's name entitled gwbush.com. This Web site is committed to engaging Bush critically regarding the war on drugs and his double standard in imposing stringent drug laws as governor of Texas, after he himself had used drugs as a slightly younger man. The site is intentionally crafted and positioned with its pseudo-URL in relationship to the Bush "official" Web site (www.georgewbush.com). It has graphics of red, white, and blue campaign bunting and a photo of Bush; only after first blush, and the exploration of various files within the site, is the drug war critique evident. This means of imitation and parody infuriated the Bush exploratory committee. Their lawyers charged that the rogue site was "a wholesale misappropriation and imitation of the georgewbush.com site." They complained to the FEC that gwbush.com "grafted" their own material "onto the look and feel of the Exploratory Committee's site." Further, Bush himself responded to a reporter's claim that such were Zack Exley's first amendment rights with the quip, "Well maybe then some freedoms should be limited." You can now buy a T-shirt emblazoned with Bush's rhetorical salvo on the gwbush.com site.[2]

In contemporary and ancient contexts, the Pastoral Epistles and Web sites employ technologies of extension. Letter writing, roads and trade routes, or HTML files, computers, telephone or cable lines, and interfaces all greatly facilitate the projection and distortion of presence. In considering the Pastoral Epistles and Paul historically, such rhetorical innovations and relocations are helpful to attend to. Will the real George Bush please stand up? Will the real Paul please stand up?

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2. "Internet Political Speech," *All Things Considered, National Public Radio* (16 August 1999), and Associated Press (26 May 1999). According to the AP article, gwbush.com received 6,451,466 hits in the first twenty-five days of May 1999, whereas the official Bush campaign Web site, georgewbush.com, received only 30,000 hits in all of May 1999.

In terms of the practice of Christian rhetoric and its analogous projection through technologies of letter writing, pseudepigraphy, and the World Wide Web, the hypertext metaphor helps me to view the Pastoral Epistles as a site of struggle within which rhetoric and the projection of rhetoric are involved. Many of my students view the "church" of the Pastoral Epistles as "other," "enemy," and oppressor. It is not that I want to deny the negative function of many of the Pastoral Epistles' claims in their experience. But through attention to the rhetoric of struggle and striving within these texts, this enemy can be demystified. Moreover, attention to the Pastoral Epistles in this vein can nuance and empower their practice of Christian rhetoric.

A Web site that serves as an illustration in my discussion with students is one that I learned about through a student. The Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka Kansas and their pastor Fred Phelps post a site www.godhatesfags.com.[3] The student, Keith, was outraged and confused that a church, perhaps in many ways like his church, could post such a message and promote its attendant hate. When logging on to the site there is a counter graphic that displays a record of over one million hits. Click around on the site, and one encounters scriptural justification for the project (some of it drawn from the Pastoral Epistles) and finds photos of church members picketing different sites around the country: lesbian weddings and Matthew Shepherd's funeral.[4] You will hear sound bites from Reverend Phelps's sermons. The technology of the Web provides highways for this rhetoric to travel, receive over one million hits, and be projected in images and audio clips with all the trappings of an elaborate institution.

In much the same way I encourage my students to navigate the features of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, to explore the claims of Eve as transgressor, young widows as wanton and dangerous, women as susceptible to sin and various impulses (2 Tim 3:6), slaves as necessarily submissive and generally shifty, to examine the context in which these claims are made and to discern them as projected to stand for a church, or even "the church."

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3. Keith Kraft brought this Web site to my attention in his final paper for "Biblical Hermeneutics" (Eden Theological Seminary, spring semester, 1999).

4. For example, this citation was recently taken from the site: "July 18, 2000,WBC to picket 'AIDS Walk 2000' Phoenix, Nov. 5. Filthy, disease-spreading faggots—like the 75 million rats of New York City—have no shame, feel no remorse, *'having their conscience seared with a hot iron.' 1 Tim. 4:2.* First infest the nation's (and the world's) blood supply with an incurable disease. Then use the resulting devastation as a propaganda tool to gain sympathy as poor victims, and to recruit Satanic, 'idealistic' idiots like Elizabeth Taylor to help sodomize all of mankind. Here's the Gospel message they need more than oxygen or water: 'God Hates Fags! Be not deceived; God is not mocked!' Gal. 6:7" (www.godhatesfags.com; emphasis added).

Such an endeavor is not simply interested in divesting the Pastoral Epistles or godhatesfags.com of their representational power. Viewing 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus alongside godhatesfags.com as sites of technological innovations in Christian rhetoric troubles our sense of historical or cultural distance from them. Just so, it troubles our smug security that we are in no way a part of *that* church. It postures us as modest witnesses. When seen as technological innovations the letters open up our own technologically connected practices of rhetoric. In such practice, we might make a modest stab of not telling the necessary oppositional story of the Pastoral Epistles in relationship to the "real" Paul or the history of early Christianity over again.

George P. Landow, discussing the decentering potential of hypertext in general, suggests how the medium provides contextual clues that demand a reassessment of their representational force. Such a reassessment, it seems to me, offers the possibility of a new posture toward both ancient and contemporary sites of discourse.

> If hypertext situates texts in a field of other texts, can any individual work that has been addressed by another still speak so forcefully? One can imagine hypertext presentations of books (or the equivalent thereof) in which the reader can call up the reviews and comments on that book, which would then inevitably exist as part of a complex dialogue rather than as the embodiment of a voice or thought that speaks unceasingly. (83)

These texts represent struggles. They give us insight into the history of early Christianity and contemporary Christianity not as an evolving/degenerating organism but as diverse and contentious discourses about God, human community, social relations, and culture. Perhaps reading the Pastoral Epistles in this way may help us navigate rhetoric and make rhetoric in the midst of diverse and contentious discourses in our contexts today.

A Story of Hypertextual Christian Rhetorical Practice[5]

In October 1999 hundreds of Christians gathered in Lynchberg,Virginia, to discuss "hate speech" as it had escalated on the Internet and in the media over the past years. These Christians represented a group called Soulforce led by the Reverend Mel White, a former evangelical conservative Christian and speech writer for Jerry Falwell and now an out-of-the-closet homosexual. Soulforce, guided by the teachings Ghandi and Martin Luther King, resists homopho-

5. Story by Daniel Zwerdling, "Weekend All Things Considered," *National Public Radio* (24 October 1999).

bia and heterosexism, particularly in Christian rhetoric. Soulforce came to Lynchburg as the guests of the Reverend Jerry Falwell and Liberty University. White had challenged Falwell's rhetoric that appeared on his Web site, describing homosexuals as "enemies of God," "blasphemers," "an endangerment to the sanctity of family life." According to Soulforce, such claims contributed to a climate of violence that had resulted in various hate crimes. In addition, White called Falwell to distance himself and to critique the rhetoric of Fred Phelps and other similar antigay Web sites. Falwell and his colleagues hosted the event. They met with the Soulforce participants, gave speeches about their convictions regarding homosexuality as a sin, and heard the Soulforce speeches. In a radio broadcast about the event, a young, gay, former Liberty University student and member of Soulforce, Brain Randall, said he was astounded and touched by the meeting. Later that week, after he went home, he logged on to falwell.com just to check the status of the antigay remarks on the site. There he noted that the inflammatory rhetoric against gays as "enemies of God" had been removed. It was for Brian a modest victory.

Web sites and the World Wide Web provide contemporary sites for the practice of Christian rhetoric. They invite a different reading of the ancient rhetoric of early Christian writings such as the Pastoral Epistles. They offer the potential to imagine them differently, to engage them critically, to challenge them rhetorically, to make new rhetoric, and to tell, perhaps, a slightly different story. Such a story might be the beginning of a modest way for me to recycle for saleable use a biblical book that would seem to command my silence.

Stabat Maria: Marian Fragments and the Limits of Masculinity*

Andrew P. Wilson

A look through one of my secondary school yearbooks reveals, not unexpectedly, that the bulk of the book is filled with a series of obligatory class photos: young men, divided according to age group and lined up in rows from tallest to shortest. In the early years, most of the faces are fresh and prepubescent, smiling naively into the eye of the camera. In the later pictures, the expressions appear more self-aware and scowl with a kind of mocking disinterest beneath strategically scruffed hair. In hindsight, I understand that these evolving expressions chart the passage of young boys, formed through a fierce and extremely rigid process of enculturation, to fit within the parameters of a certain type of Australian masculinity. The success stories, those respected as real "men," were able successfully to adopt a number of what appear to me as very narrowly drawn characteristics that prescribed a certain accent and vocabulary, a near fanatical love of "Aussie rules," a certain type of relationship and attitude toward the opposite sex, and a heightened sense of suspicion, at times resembling an allergic reaction, to all things affective.

Does it seem odd, then, that at an all-boys, lower-middle-class Catholic school, the patron saint is none other than the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM)? It did not seem strange at the time, but now looking back, an amusing picture

* This essay began life as a conference paper presented to the "Biblical Criticism and Literary Criticism" Section of the Society of Biblical Literature 1999 Annual Meeting in Boston. It has no doubt evolved over the past few years, but many of the initial connections remain. Missing, unfortunately, is the music and pictures that accompanied this first presentation. Musical sources have been indicated in the case of Callas recordings, and one picture in particular has been sought, albeit unsuccessfully, for inclusion in this volume. As far as I am aware it is a picture of Callas as Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata.* In this shot, which I believe was taken by Houston Rogers from a production at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Callas has her hands clasped together, as though in prayer, and gazes heavenward with a particularly soulful expression.

emerges when I recall starting the day with the morning "Prayer to Our Lady." In a class full of smelly, overly macho males, we roughly spat out such delicate lines as: "I fly to you, O Virgin of Virgins, my Mother, to you I come; before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy, hear and answer me" (excerpt from the Memorare).

Of course, one must also add to these words a description of voices, recently cracked and deliberately pitched as low as possible to avoid the embarrassment of the inevitable squeaks, reciting the words in a slow and stilted unison with as little attention to the hard consonants as possible and exhibiting a studied avoidance of anything that might resemble poetic meter or rhythm:

> Weeth luv y' becaym 'is Mutha, gave berth t' him, nersed
> 'im, 'n 'elped 'im
> grow t' man 'ood. Weeth luv oi
> retern 'im t' yu, t' howld wunce maw, t' luv with awl
> y' haaht.…[1]

Although she played a seemingly prominent role in our school culture, the impact of the Blessed Virgin Mary was suppressed, overshadowed by far more immediate cultural concerns, as this example illustrates. Even so, it is not so easy to dismiss her influence. Certainly, the energy spent studiously avoiding the lyricism of their devotions attests to this. Could it be that the BVM was still able steadily to wear away at such rigid and muting forces as patriarchy? Could she in fact have been posing a challenge to the boldness and force of a stifling logical discourse? The fact is that not every male who attended my high school is now a stereotypical Aussie bloke, and no doubt there are many reasons for this. However, what interests me is the possibility that the less-obvious participation of the BVM in this morning ritual has particular implications here for the formation of identity. I find powerfully paradoxical, and somewhat amusing the possibility that these adolescent blokes-in-training had a formal affiliation with a figure who would allow them to break free of the constraints of the Australian "blokedom" they were rehearsing so intently.

What challenge does Mary offer for the construction of identity? Furthermore, considering her place on the margins of this scene, how would any such challenge be seen as a threat to the dominant ideologies of identity, in this case, a particular cultural form of masculine identity? The course of this paper

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1. "With love you became his mother, gave birth to him, nursed him and helped him grow to manhood. With love I return him to you to hold him once more, to love him with all your heart" (excerpt from the Prayer to the Virgin Mary).

engages with these questions by exploring some of the fragments of Mary's persona in biblical and cultural texts. Although fractured and incomplete, the picture of Mary that emerges is one that affirms the subversive power of this silent patron, who listens intently, allowing identities to be rehearsed, while all the while proffering the possibility of a radical subversion of the same. In this story, such fragmentation, subversion, and the subsequent challenges to identity hold significance for a group of young men who stand and recite the Memorare each morning before classes begin.

Mary's persona, particularly that which is celebrated in devotional traditions and contexts, is multiple and fragmentary. The pieces of her identity lie scattered and exceed the bounds of any one particular context. Marina Warner, in her influential book *Alone of All Her Sex,* examines these traditions and begins by describing Mary as "a polyvalent figure who appears under many guises" (xxiv). Her "life" has unfolded variously in relation to specific historical circumstances, and it has been lived out in a multitude of personalities. Consequently, Warner challenges the officially sanctioned conception of Mary as unchanging, absolute, progressively revealed by and yet unaffected by historical circumstance. She instead demonstrates that Mary is a complex amalgam representing in her many aspects specific historical, ideological, theological and biological elements; as such she has accompanied various shifts in culture and identity through the centuries (333–39).

Fragments of Mary are found in a number of places—some close to home, others further afield. My initial pursuit of these fragments takes place within John's Gospel, at the crucifixion scene, more specifically the gathering of the women beneath the cross in John 19:25. This is an ambiguous text, sparse on detail but with a rich devotional history, and, moreover, a subversive text with implications for a fragmented view of Mary's identity. One of these fragments, the figure of Mary Magdalene, is followed from this text to another: the gap of the empty tomb where she mourns the implications of absence and ambiguity. Then, cast well beyond John's Gospel, another Mary of sorts, Maria Callas, presents an intriguing parallel with an identity constructed and performed on the boundary dividing the stage from the real world. While the Magdalene's encounter at the threshold of the tomb can be read to reveal the power of the much less detailed text beneath the cross, the legacy of Callas shows that the challenges to identity find their way to that of masculinist discourse. Callas—"La Divina"—has been the focus, indeed object, of veneration, of a number of queer readings, and has been read in particular as part of an ongoing exploration of gay identity.

As a lens for looking at these disparate pieces, I use a reading of the Marian devotional tradition according to a psychoanalytic heuristic: Julia Kristeva's essay "Stabat Mater." According to Kristeva, it is possible to see that traditional

Marian devotion has covered over an encounter with what she terms "primary narcissism," a conflicted moment that provides both possibility for and threat to identity. Kristeva locates this subversive encounter at the heart of Mary's grief, heretofore lost beneath the elaborate traditions of the Mater Misericordia.

Stabant Matres

The scene from John's passion, 19:25, tells of a number of women standing before the cross. Presenting itself amidst the thickly woven theological threads of John's Gospel is a brief instant of barren silence. At the foot of the cross itself the action seems to stall as John momentarily shifts the narrative spotlight to a small number of women silently standing, watching. "But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene" (John 19:25). Just as quickly, however, the light moves back into place, and the drama continues. For a moment, the rich and compelling vision of the crucifixion with all its dense symbolic fecundity is interrupted by an understated, underdescribed, peripheral segue: a short, ambiguous list of women whose very number is in dispute.[2] Compared with the grand themes commentators chart spanning John's whole Gospel, what we have here is generally dismissed as a minor moment, even as a banality, an unexciting space or gap in an otherwise rich narrative progression. Even when this scene *is* integrated into the narrative flow of the Gospel, it is regarded merely as a lead-in to the next scene.[3] It would seem that scholars would much rather skip this detail and move on to Jesus addressing Mary and John from the cross.[4] Some even go so far as to say that the group of women was inserted here from another place in

2. When the text *is* commented on it is usually to point out that it is not altogether clear from the Greek whether there are two, three, or four women present. Brown begins his commentary on this passage with the question: "How many women are meant, two three or four?" (904). Kysar goes so far as to call attempts to arrive at *the* definitive number of women "hopelessly problematic" (288; for a more recent summary of the various arguments, see Bauckham: 204–5).

3. John Paul Heil links the four soldiers with his count of four women, whereby the former appear "hostile," "separate," and "impersonal individuals" contrasted with the women, who appear as "interpersonally and communally designated," not to mention "closely related" to Jesus (94–95). Cf. Schnackenburg, who regards this scene as little more than a "clumsy link" inserted here to provide a contrast with the four soldiers just mentioned and lead in to Jesus' words to his mother and to the disciple (276–77).

4. For example, Colleen Conway, in a book focusing on the distinct contribution of men and women to John's narrative, mentions the importance of women in proximity to the cross, but quickly moves on to the significance of John, the beloved disciple who stands in the company of these women witnesses (183).

the narrative or even from other traditions.[5] In any case, the group of women that includes the BVM, and possibly a number of other Marys as well, remains in the background, silently looking on as the drama continues to unfold.

Although often only noted in passing by biblical scholars, it would be far from the truth to suggest that this moment of pause has gone altogether unnoticed. In devotional terms, this brief moment of silence has been a rich source of inspiration. Attesting to the power of this silence is Jacapone da Todi's famed Stabat Mater poem.[6] Inspired by this scene, this extended meditation on the utter despair and profound grief of Mary has been translated into music, a tradition that has given rise to more than four hundred different settings.[7] Despite the elaborate descriptions from the poem itself and compared to the prolific tradition of Stabat Mater compositions, when it comes to details, the scene beneath the cross that provides the original inspiration remains conspicuously silent.[8] Where the Gospel narrative glosses over Mary as a grieving mother, the tradition of piety marked by the Stabat Mater tradition quickly makes up for any loss of prominence. But where are the wringing hands, the furrowed brows, and the tear-stained cheeks so popular in depictions of the Mater Dolorosa? There is no description at all of the mother's despair in this textual snippet, no description other than that a mother stood and a mother watched. And, certainly, the Stabat Mater poem has no mention of the other women present alongside Mary, sharing her grief. In many ways, the Mary of this scene remains in the narrative background, much like the Mary of the classroom remained visible as an object of devotion and yet seemed lost beneath much more immediate concerns.

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5. Although scholars are also quick to point out that John's version does not match the Synoptic accounts (see Brown: 905–6; Beasley-Murray: 348–49).

6. Da Todi gave voice to the Virgin's suffering in other poems, notably "Donna del Pariadiso," but the Stabat Mater stands out, not just because of its suitably "autobiographicalesque" first-person perspective, but because a question mark hovers over its authorship and thus injects yet another layer of ambiguity and identity confusion into the mix (on the significance of the first-person perspective, see Warner: 213–14).

7. Compare, for instance, the settings by Vivaldi, Haydn, Rossini, and Pärt: the sparseness of Vivaldi's single voice versus Rossini's grand operatic celebration, on the one hand, and Haydn's rich lyrical melodies versus Pärt's more emotionally impressionistic style, on the other.

8. To some extent, this proliferation can be seen to spill over into the next scene, Jesus' commending of Mary to John's care in v. 26. Francis Maloney, commenting on 19:26, observes that "the evocative nature of this scene continues to stimulate suggestions that claim more than the passage can provide" (508).

Kristeva, Mary, and Motherhood

In "Stabat Mater" Kristeva discusses the elaboration of Marian traditions, with a particular interest in the Dolorosa. Through an investigation of the enormous scope of devotional traditions associated with Mary, particularly those that develop the sentiments of weeping, suffering, and anguish, Kristeva shows a picture of Mary manufactured to support a certain discourse and, in turn, a picture that covers over the maternal buried beneath. But in an accompanying poetic dialogue that runs alongside her more conventional scholarly voice, Kristeva effectively splits her discourse. With the inclusion of a provocative account of her own experience of childbirth, Kristeva splits the page in two and demonstrates the kind of fragmented identity she explores in her analysis of the devotional figure of Mary.[9] In this way, the fragmentation of Mary is codified by Kristeva through a psychoanalytic reading of Mary's motherhood.

Kristeva is generally interested in how symbolic and semiotic modes are mixed in any text, but in her analysis of the Stabat Mater she pays particular attention to the connections between the semiotic, the figure of Mary, and the motivations behind innumerable attempts to exhaust her grief through an overabundance and amplification of her suffering. Much of Kristeva's system goes back to the preoedipal, primary processes of identity formation, more specifically for this discussion, the moment of "primary narcissism."

The term "primary narcissism" refers to that indefinite point of initial separation of infant child from mother and represents the passage from the semiotic to the symbolic realm. It is a conflicted moment, a moment that is painful, empowering, and never complete. Moreover, it is a moment that is longed for as well as feared by the subject because it represents both the bliss of undifferentiated union and the annihilation of identity. For Kristeva, Mary stands at this point of alterity, fulfilling a dual psychic function by representing both ideal "woman" and "true" femininity.

In the first instance, as abstracted "woman" and definitive "mother," Mary is dislocated, separated, from her own sex—by virtue of her virginity and assumption she has been spared sex and death. Moreover, it is precisely through her much-defined unreality that she appears to provide clear and safe passage back to "primary narcissism," that first and most threatening of experiences. The safety of this journey back to an encounter with unresolved primary processes depends on a promise never to stray from the symbolic path, and thus never

9. She presents in tandem, contrasting themes such as poetic and academic writing; descriptions of an abstract femininity and an actual mother's body; psychic separation versus physical separation; and, most relevant in the wider context of this paper, detached academic prose alongside a personal, autobiographical account.

place identity under threat. Kristeva is quick to point out, however, that the journey is always under threat by the intrusion of the semiotic, which can never truly be held at bay by such ideals.

The other side to Mary's conflicted position lies somewhere beneath, or within, her constructed femininity. The Marian tradition consists of an elaborately constructed (abstracted) femininity that has covered over what Kristeva regards as a "true" femininity: the "immeasurable, unconfineable maternal body" (253). While "true" femininity itself acts as a conduit to the semiotic realm, for Kristeva, "true" femininity cannot be represented—it always remains a gap within a symbolic framework. As a result, representations of the Virgin, particularly the Mater Dolorosa with her leaking milk and profuse tears, are metaphors for "nonspeech": metaphors for that which is encountered in the semiotic realm before "primary narcissism" and which cannot be accounted for by means of linguistic (symbolic) communication.

Kristeva describes how the "Mother" Mary comes to embody the excesses of femininity that have been marginalized in a patriarchally constructed religious system. She points out that a religious system where the symbolic dominates with an illusion of coherence needs to account for that which disrupts its system at all turns. The most powerful threat to the symbolic is the moment of primary repression, "primary narcissism," beyond which the symbolic does not exist and has no power. The semiotic is substituted with an object that comes to "embody" those ungraspable silences that will always elude and disrupt representation. This object or objects remove the problem of having to relate to some negative space that threatens our control and coherence. But while the object-replacements may appear to solve a problem, they can but loosely hover over the breaches they have been designed to cover.

Silence Becomes Song

The compulsion to engage with and account for the semiotic through the Virgin Mary and the impossibility of exhaustively explicating this encounter have created a kind of "baroqueness," an oversaturation of meanings (Kristeva: 253). This explains for Kristeva why the Virgin Mother has so often been the subject and muse of the arts (250). The Virgin Mary can only ever cover over the semiotic realm, but at the same time she serves to distract from, even conceal, that which recedes into obscurity at the first murmurs of a name. This point of rupture, the gap around which the symbolic stands and over which it attempts to fit, is the place at which Mary stands, indeed what Mary is made to stand in *for*.

This point of rupture is also the point from which the music of the Stabat Mater tradition is heard. In Kristeva's terms, the musical compositions pick

up where the words fail and, as metaphors of "nonspeech,"[10] attempt to communicate something more about this moment (252–53). Despite the creative possibilities afforded by ambiguity and rupture, and the proliferation of music written to convey the grief of the Virgin, conventions quickly formed and controlled the outpouring of this tradition. The fact that the poem attributed to da Todi became standard, for instance, meant that the emotions depicted, although understandable, became routine (anguish, despair, misery, etc.). In this way, a breach in the text and an opening in the tradition were quickly covered over.

Details obscured by these conventions include the multiple women of John 19:25. Traditionally these women are grouped together into the single figure of Mary. Mary is the Mother standing beneath the cross, weeping in desolation. Yet according to John's text she is accompanied by a number of other women. The number is indistinct, and so at this point identity is fragmented, bodies are divided and ambiguous. If this scene is not simply a neutral historical detail, as many commentators argue,[11] and is intended to communicate something significant, then why place these women here, and why leave their number and identities ambiguous?[12] Jane Schaberg puts forward the possibility that a reference to three Marys at this point in the text could be seen as three manifestations of one person called Mary (132). By substituting this ambiguity with a single figure, the gap is closed still further. One other name that stands out, however, is that of Mary Magdalene.

The mix of Marys beneath the cross and the fragments of women found there become more intriguing when one observes in other scholarly work on Mary that scholars see the BVM and the Magdalene as having been divided by the tradition.[13] Traditionally speaking, one can see the BVM as representative of virginity, purity, and constancy, while the Magdalene represents the inverse, namely, uncontrolled sexuality, sinfulness, and the rage of demons. One more specific formulation offered by Jane Schaberg has the BVM and Eve occupying

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10. Music becomes a celebration of the tears and milk that signal a "return of the repressed" in monotheism (249).

11. As to the possibility of the women standing by the cross, Schnackenburg explains that "whether it is historically probable … does not worry the evangelist; he is concerned with the deeper meaning of the scene" (277; for a different opinion, see Witherington: 309).

12. Commentators appear hard-pressed to find significance in the scant details of this verse and typically look to the parallel texts from the other Gospel literature. Brown, for instance, drafts a chart paralleling this scene with the Synoptic accounts and, after much postulation regarding the identity and significance of these women, can only conclude that John was probably not borrowing from these sources (905–6).

13. Katherine Jansen notes that this division is particularly emphasized in preaching, but she quickly shows how in the devotional traditions of the Middle Ages such a neat distinction becomes increasingly less so (286–306).

opposing ends of the spectrum with the Magdalene bridging the gap between the fallenness and the feminine ideal:

> The prostitute Magdalene of legend occupies a place in the imagination difficult to understand, between Mary and Eve: between virgin mother—asexual, morally pure, sacrificing, devoted to her son—and the temptress—sexual, morally weak, responsible for the fall of humanity.… Mary Magdalene is a bridge or compromise between the two, or a blend of the two. (112)

These amalgams—for we know the traditions surrounding both these women come from the compilation of a number of women and benefit from the support of a number of extracanonical sources—lead to a very different reading of the ambiguous moment before the cross.[14] The ambiguity over numbers and the presence of both the BVM and the Magdalene in this scene give us, in fact, the most accurate picture yet of the Mary of tradition that has been developed to cover over the breach of Kristeva's notion of "true" femininity. It is a tradition that is subversive because it works against itself. On the one hand, it is ambiguous, divided, and incomplete and as such always a powerful threat to cohesiveness and absolutism. On the other hand, as a tradition of scattered fragments, it is infinitely expansive and opens the possibility for a host of incarnations and identifications. The mitotic division of identity occurs many more times as the centuries unfold.[15] Some of these roles are invariably favored over others, and in scholarship on John's Gospel the importance of the BVM's role in "mothering" the church and providing the role model for discipleship at the foot of the cross has in many ways overshadowed the Magdalene's place at another gap in the text, a gap at which tears and grief are more apparent: the empty tomb.

Mary Weeps

In accounting for John 19:25b, there will inevitably be the desire to fill this gap with interpretation, to flesh it out with meaning and make something of it. In doing so, one inevitably ends up composing a type of Stabat Mater of one's own, in the process leaving the gap essentially unchanged, particularly if one subscribes to the conventions accompanying this tradition. Taking the ambi-

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14. The classic text on the various faces of Mary is of course Marina Warner's *Alone of All Her Sex,* mentioned above.

15. In the tenth-century Basilica de Santa Maria del Mar in Barcelona, for instance, there are a number of statues of Mary circling the nave. The various Marys represented in this one example include Mare de Déu de Montserrat, Santa Maria de Cervelló, Mare de Déu dels Dolors, Imaculat cor de Maria, Mare de Déu del Remei, Mare de Déu dels Desamparats, Virgen de la Corte, Purísima concepció.

guity of this passage and the fragments of a body and finding these fragments scattered beyond the bounds of this text, however, it is possible to understand more broadly the celebrated tears that the narrative fails to mention. One may even wonder why the Stabat Mater tradition is based on this scene at all, when in another moment a little further on one finds tears that are shed more explicitly—the scene of a Mary Magdalene weeping outside the empty tomb: John 20:11–15.[16] The investigating disciples have departed, and in verse 11 Mary Magdalene is left weeping at the mouth of the empty tomb.[17] But we are told that Mary does not merely weep, she wails—the Greek κλαίω emphasizes the noise of her weeping.[18] Unlike those silent women huddled before the cross, the revelations that follow spring directly from her cries of misery, her response to the gaping, incomprehensible absence within the tomb.

The absence within the empty tomb is emphasized by those things that are present: the linen wrappings from the body remain, as does the veil from over Jesus' face, not to mention the presence of angels, positioned at the head and feet of a now-absent body.[19] The angels ask Mary why she weeps. The Magdalene weeps not just for the death of Jesus but for the body she fears is stolen. Faced with the vision of death, the gap of annihilation that has consumed a once-delineated and unified body, she is in effect confronted with a vision of "primary narcissism." Standing on the boundary of self and loss of self, Mary's response is to weep, to audibly keen over the conflicted desires urging a return to oblivion, while at the same time insisting on the preservation of identity. Mary can take comfort in the angels' words if she wishes, but to bring comfort to her cries would mean accepting their presence as a substitute for the gap left by the body she mourns. Unlike Lazarus, who emerges from a tomb still strong with the odor of death and still wrapped in the bandages of his burial, the risen Jesus does not emerge from the midst of the empty tomb at all.[20] The absence,

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16. Another link between 19:25 and this scene can be found in 20:2, where an equally fragmented Mary refers to herselves as "we" when reporting the empty tomb: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know [οὐκ οἴδαμεν] where they have laid him." Fragmentation takes on further prominence when one considers striking parallels drawn between this scene and the Song of Songs' indeterminate and elusive protagonist (see Black's discussion of the "Shulammite" in this volume along with Schneiders: 161; Fehribach: 156–59, 160; and Brown: 1010).

17. In fact, weeping permeates this part of the scene, with the words "wept" or "weeping" occurring four times within the space of five verses (twice in v. 11 and once in vv. 13 and 15).

18. See Louw and Nida: 25.138.

19. Moody Smith observes: "John has two angels in white appropriately situated at Jesus' head and feet, except, of course, Jesus is no longer there" (376).

20. The Lazarus story is a common parallel here (see Heil: 127). Kitzberger sees a significant connection between Mary Magdalene, both here and at 19:25, and Mary of Bethany at 11:1–46 and 12:1–8 (564–86; see also Moloney: 522).

or gap, within the empty tomb remains unfilled just as Mary's melancholic grief will always remain far from comfort.

Significantly, it is not until Mary Magdalene turns away from the empty tomb, placing her *back* to the gap, that she first sees Jesus standing behind her. Her expression of inconsolable grief is evocative. An encounter with the risen Jesus is made possible, but this encounter takes place not from within the gap of the empty tomb but from somewhere quite unexpected. At first Mary mistakes the vision of the risen Jesus for a gardener, further emphasizing that an encounter with the semiotic, the risen body of Jesus, does not necessarily occur as or where one may expect. That which permeates the very depths of the gap is encountered in unexpected ways and in unexpected places.

The Magdalene's encounter at the gap of the empty tomb can never really compete with John 19:25, however. Dry-eyed by comparison, the power of the gap beneath the cross lies precisely in its never giving explicit expression to the grief that has subsequently been read into it. Despite more than four hundred settings of the Stabat Mater poem where grief becomes song, this scene remains a gap in a text. Kristeva's Virgin Mary, as a powerful symbolic substitute, comes to personify and "stand in for" the gap. But as sorrowful mother, sympathetic ear, nurturing milk, and grieving tears, she also stands at the frontier of identity and annihilation.

Stabat Maria

The fragments of the BVM are many and lie strewn across history in various guises: as the roles she has played to her devotees; in the relics accumulated; in the pilgrimages to her appearances; and in those dedicated to following her example. Many of these pieces can be traced back to the Middle Ages, but they can also be found earlier than this and of course have been even been further flung.[21] In the twentieth century, Mary has another incarnation: a figure who also plays a number of roles for her devotees and has even inspired a cult of relics.[22] It can be argued that within the world of opera, Maria Callas functions

21. The Stabat Mater poem was written in the Middle Ages during the rise of the cult of the Mater Dolorosa, but Warner suggests that this cult follows traditions located as far back as ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian literature (206–9).

22. On 2 December 2000, an eclectic collection of personal effects once belonging to Maria Callas was auctioned off in the chic Parisian auction rooms of Drouot-Montaigne. Considering the legendary stature of the late Maria Callas, the collection up for sale was remarkably mundane and some might say downright ghoulish. In addition to the various portraits, personal letters, and furniture were various items of clothing (with the coat hangers sold separately at $130 each), including underwear, a pair of thick-lensed tortoise shell spectacles (Callas was debilitatingly myopic), kitchen

as a type of BVM: the real woman has been covered over, effectively replaced by the encrustations of her art and her roles. At the same time, however, Callas operates subversively, playing out the battle between identity and disruption. More Magdalene than BVM, Maria occupies the boundaries between theater and the real world.

Callas was at first a creation of the opulent world of Grand Opera. Culturally speaking, it could be argued that opera, at least for an elite few, functions as a kind of Bakhtinian carnival. As such, it is an opening in the social order that grants temporary license to the dangerous and socially subversive elements normally kept suppressed or on the margins of the dominant social order. A temporary space is created where themes that threaten the cultural status quo are able to be safely expressed, indeed vented, before the social order resumes. Opera presents themes and emotions that threaten to undo and subvert, but within the limits of the theater are granted center stage and celebrated under the careful control of the maestro's baton. Under the glare of the spotlight, the audience is invited to participate in the forbidden extremes of grief, infidelity, jealousy, bliss, rage, murder, ecstasy, revenge, betrayal, incest, sickness, not to mention madness and cross-dressing—the stuff of opera. But just as the carnival has its designated end, life resumes as normal once the music ends and the house lights come up.

Opera and the BVM coincide when, considering Kristeva's reading, one recognizes the possibility that the operatic tradition functioned at one time within patriarchal culture much the same as images of the Virgin functioned as safe symbolic substitutes located within a broader religious framework. In other words, much like the carnival, opera served to reposition and control those subversive elements that dwell at the margins of culture, deep within the aesthetic and affective—semiotic elements that constantly threaten to shatter the illusion of structural integrity. If it is indeed the case that Kristeva's system can be applied to the function of opera as aesthetic moderator within broader patriarchal culture, then I have long ago encountered the "Mary" of the operatic world in the figure of Maria Callas.

As Mary fills a multiplicity of roles, so too Callas made a career out of standing in for the many female victims of the operatic stage: those women who fell from glory, were cruelly betrayed, abandoned to madness or all-consuming

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equipment such as a measuring jug (which, incidentally, fetched $260), and even a lock of Callas's own hair. The BBC punningly reported that the sale "ended on a high note," accumulating more than 1.25 million dollars for the two Italian collectors behind the auction (BBC News Monday, 4 December 2000; online: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1051237.stm; see also Michael White, "Callas: A Life For Sale," *Weekend Review, The Independent* [U.K.], 25 November 2000, pp. 1–2).

revenge. As arguably the greatest singing actress of the twentieth century, no one else milked the plight of these women in quite so convincing a manner. Through her art, Callas injected these often two-dimensional caricatures with real depth of emotion and genuine pathos. Speaking of a recording of Verdi's *La Traviata,*[23] music critic and great Callas devotee John Ardoin describes the "reality" of Callas's performance in the latter part of the opera: "it is the final act that represents Callas at her pinnacle in this performance … [singing] with a pathetic beauty which gives Violetta's death an almost unbearable reality" (95).

The creation of this "reality" was a complex process whereby Callas drew on many resources, including a masterful knowledge of her field, a sense of good taste combined with keen theatrical instincts, the inspiration of talented colleagues and mentors, and the adulation of her fans. Of course, none of this would have meant anything without her astonishing voice. Callas possessed a unique amalgam of voice types.[24] Never clearly one type of voice or another, her voice combined a heavy, cutting, and dramatic tone with a stratospheric range of three octaves with dazzling coloratura-like agility. Callas herself boasted that she was known simultaneously for her dizzying high notes and the low reaches of her rich and powerful chest voice.[25] Consequently, Callas was able to bring astounding dramatic power to roles previously known solely as vehicles for technical display, while also bringing an unexpected stratospheric dimension to moments of dramatic declamation.

The singularity of Callas's contribution to the operatic world recalls the role Kristeva attributes to the BVM. Kristeva shows that Mary's position, hovering as she does above the abyss of "primary narcissism," has led to her role as the muse of arts and provoked a baroqueness often expressed in music and the arts. This is demonstrated particularly in the case of the Stabat Mater tradition and the numerous settings of da Todi's poem. Callas, like her namesake, functions in a similar way within the operatic realm, standing at a point of rupture—both within a world of subversive themes set to music but also a place on the border between world and stage.

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23. This recording of a live performance at La Scala on 28 May 1955 is on the EMI catalogue: EMI 63628.

24. John Ardoin celebrates Callas's chameleon-like vocals in his great tribute to her vast recording legacy: "Callas' voice has frequently been criticized as not one, but many. I would say admiringly that she had at least a dozen, or rather the ability to retool her sound to fit the character she was enacting at the moment" (40).

25. From recordings of her New York Masterclasses in the early 1970s (excerpts from ten classes available from the EMI catalogue: EMI 49600). Ardoin describes her "chest voice" as "a seemingly bottomless sound of contralto opulence" (54).

Callas represents fragmentation on a number of levels: her amalgam of voice types; her assumption of numerous theatrical personas; and, of course, the separation of her voice from her body, which is the consequence of being outlived by her extensive catalogue of recordings. Moreover, her status on the borderline is illustrated particularly well in the stories, the operatic legends, associated with her reign as opera's undisputed star, deified as "La Divina." These stories are valuable in demonstrating Callas's position at a point of rupture and, like the BVM, reveal the power of such an ambiguous location.

One such story tells of the finale of a particularly memorable production of Bellini's *La Sonnambula.* Callas sings an extraordinary nineteenth-century showpiece aria, a clear demonstration of her vast vocal and dramatic abilities. More than the vocal fireworks, however, another factor served to heighten the drama of the performance. Gerald Fitzgerald relates the story:

> In the opera's finale, Amina awakens and is reunited with her fiancé. In Visconti's production, as Callas began the jubilant cabaletta "Ah, non giunge," the lights on the stage and in the auditorium—even Scala's great central chandelier—rose to full intensity. Callas, no longer Amina, stood front stage centre, the great prima donna at her moment of triumph—the queen of La Scala. Even before she finished the piece the audience had begun shouting and applauding. "It was more than bel canto brilliance," [Piero] Tosi recalls. "It was magic. She drove the public crazy." (Ardoin and Fitzgerald: 107)

With the appearance of Callas, the operatic spell had been broken. In one live recording of this production, the reaction of the audience makes it more than clear that, while the audience at the Grosses Haus in Cologne may have lost the illusion of Bellini's Amina waking from a dream, they gained the vision of Callas as "Callas," in all her splendor, in a moment that effectively tore apart the conventions of operatic illusion.[26]

While the *Sonnambula* example was devised by the legendary theater director Luschino Visconti to venerate the already-ascendant Callas, in another example Callas achieves an even more dramatic subversion herself, and without so obviously deviating from operatic convention. In 1958, Callas returned to La

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26. In the final scene, as heard on the recording of the 4 July 1957 performance from the Cologne Grosses Haus (and available on the Melodram label: Melodram 26003), Callas whips the audience into a frenzy of clapping and cheering that threatens to drown out the final bars of music altogether. Yet even amidst such raucous acclaim, Callas has still not finished. With one final powerfully authoritative note she cuts through the applause and effectively silences the entire auditorium. As the opera concludes, the acclaim begins again with renewed devotion.

Scala to sing a repeat performance of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena.*[27] This time, however, she found herself the focus of considerable controversy. Only a few weeks before she had insulted the Italian public by "walking out" on the Italian president in Rome—she had cancelled a performance of *Norma* halfway through, claiming ill health. The Italian public and in particular the La Scala crowd, difficult to please at the best of times, were hostile:

> For two scenes [of the opera], the public reacted to her like ice, shouting approval to the others. But in the third scene, which takes place in the great gallery of the castle, the king discovers his wife with Percy and orders her arrested for adultery. Here the role of Anna really gets moving in the exciting ensemble finale. As two guards come to seize her, Callas violently pushed them aside and hurled herself to the front of the stage, spitting her lines directly at the audience: "Guidici? Ad Anna? Giudici?" [Judges? For Anna? Judges?] It wasn't theatre any more, it was reality. Callas was defending herself, all but saying "If this is my trial, judge me … but remember, I am your Queen!"
>
> She dared her accusers and stared them down, dramatically surpassing anything she had ever done, singing with scorching brilliance. When the curtain fell, the audience went mad. An uproar, sheer lunacy. Then Callas swept forth for her bows, inflated with her power, her victory, her magnificence. And every time she came forth, she grew more, more, more. You could not dream what she did. It was a show within a show. (Ardoin and Fitzgerald: 157–58)

By all accounts, the drama in this moment of confrontation, where Callas, not Anna, faced her accusers and rebuked their rash judgment of her, was incredibly intense. She dragged a dispute from the real world into the theater and broke the boundary separating stage from stalls. In the end she succeeded in totally winning over the hecklers and the Italian public and emerged from this performance victorious—"La Divina" once again.

These two examples demonstrate how Callas was able to draw on the power that emerges from border crossings. In the first case she broke the illusion that separates the stage from the real world, and in the second she co-opted the drama and wielded it in her own defense. The real-world Callas was seen to burst through in these instances, blurring the boundary between drama and reality and threatening the conventions of each in the process. To be sure, there are many other instances where Callas blurred and occasionally broke apart boundaries between the operatic and world stages, taking the theater into her life and her life into the theater. As the opera's "Queen," and as "La Divina," Callas

27. Lamentably there is no recording of the night in question, but EMI has a recording of a performance from the previous year: EMI 64942.

represents an intrusion where inside mixes with outside, identity with otherness. In this way, Callas occupies the place at the foot of the cross, that space of ambiguity and indeterminacy that she could keep returning to, one character after another, in a subversive spiral that eventually consumed her.

Callas the woman disappeared at the point at which her offstage identity became indistinguishable from her succession of onstage roles. It was not long before her identity hovered uncertainly between that of tragic operatic caricature and "real" woman both offstage and on. For instance, she remade her more Rubenesque physique in the elegant image of Audrey Hepburn, battled for her art with the fury of a Medea, and eventually died a death of operatic proportions: broken-hearted, she retreated to her grand Parisian apartment and listening endlessly to her own recordings; she slowly and tragically faded away. Maria, like Mary, has been lost beneath a proliferation of roles. A fragmented identity remains, but the woman is lost beneath.

It is no surprise, then, that this aspect of Callas's subversiveness has been the focus of a number of studies from the perspective of queer theory and gender identity. Callas, it seems, has a particular fascination for some gay men and enables them to further flesh out a queered sense of masculine identity.[28] A most vivid example of this can be found in Wayne Koestenbaum's *The Queen's Throat,* where he explores his homosexual identity through a number of operatic themes and conventions. Early on he speaks of his regard for Callas in terms that mix devotion and sexuality: "It is difficult to explain or justify the desire I feel for a photograph of Callas as *Turandot* in an Opera News ad. If this desire is not sexual is it mystical?"(72). Koestenbaum devotes an entire chapter to "The Callas Cult." In his veneration of Callas, he celebrates the fragmented surface, happy to forego the woman lost beneath. He explains:

> Worshipping her, I don't affect the woman sleeping inside the image's shell: my love can't harm dead Callas. And yet homophobic society wants me to abandon my fantasies. To demand that I renounce my veneration is to suggest the desirability of erasing what makes me gay. Gays are considered a dispensable population. Listening to Callas, we become less dispensable: we find a use, a reflection, an elevation. (135)[29]

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28. One could mention Wayne Koestenbaum and Sam Abel's books in particular, but also playwright Terrence McNally and his plays *The Lisbon Traviata* and *Master Class,* and of course Franco Zeffirelli's ongoing filmic homage that began with *La Traviata* (1982) and continues twenty years later with *Callas Forever* (2002).

29. Koestenbaum is responding particularly to a charge made by Catherine Clément in *Opera and the Undoing of Women,* where in disdain for the "Callas cult" she writes: "Come on, men, shut up. You are living off her. Leave this woman alone, whose job it was to wear gracefully your repressed homosexual fantasies. Do not dress her up any more. Strip off all that false love

Koestenbaum celebrates Callas's slippage from fact to fiction and back and as a gay man identifies with this fragmentation: "Her operatic performances seemed real; her life seemed operatic. Since Oscar Wilde, this confusion between mask and truth has been a cornerstone of gay culture" (139). For Koestenbaum,

> Callas was a refuge, where a forbidden sexuality, a forbidden alienation from masculinity, could spread its wings. Listening to Callas, I acquire spaciousness. If consciousness, as determined by gender and sexuality, has certain limits, a voice like Callas' has the power to turn the mind's closed room into an immensity: she bestows the illusion that the view continues endlessly on the other side of the mirror, and that wherever you expect to confront limits, instead you find continuations. (153)

Callas' fragmented identity, including the succession of roles on the stage and in her life, provide a kind of companion in the challenge to monolithic sexual identity that queer readings pose. The Callas cult encourages a kind of male behavior not accepted as being within traditional heterosexual masculine demarcations. Her enormously expressive singing becomes a lament, a keening on behalf of those on the margins. She is celebrated for her strong image, her iconic status, but also for her ability to represent those destroyed by singularity and cohesiveness. In her ability to blur boundaries, Callas affords passage between worlds, entry to those forbidden desires explored on, but limited to, the operatic stage.

As a type of Mary, Callas is but one of many fragments. Callas is a limited example in many ways,[30] but then no fragment should be expected to stand in for the whole. By worshiping the surface, Koestenbaum's queer reading avoids the search for an underlying essence of either Callas or gay identity. Instead, he finds allegiance in the fragmentation of identity and the instability of Callas's multiple roles. Koestenbaum's writing is autobiographical: this further reveals his specific cultural position and potentially excludes others who may not have the same access to the operatic world as he. However, I am not convinced he expects his reading to stand in for all. For the purposes of this paper, a queer reading of Callas, as specific as it is, represents one option among many, but one

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and suffocating tenderness. Let those ashes that wanted to be ashes have some peace" (28). Interestingly, while Clément rebukes those who will not leave Callas be, she maintains her own interest in the Sacred Feminine, in particular the contribution of the BVM (see particularly her dialogue with Kristeva in *The Feminine and the Sacred*).

30. Two chief considerations would be: (1) she functions in an elite art form not necessarily accessible to all gay men; (2) she has been associated specifically with the melancholic and tragic and thus not representative of the spectrum of gay experience of gender.

option that provides an intriguing alternative to the identities being rehearsed in that smelly Australian classroom.

Standing in Silence

This, then, is the point where we come full circle. Callas's boundary-crossing role playing affects gender identity in males and mirrors the ambiguous identity of Mary at the foot of the cross, whose apparent solidity in the Stabat Mater tradition masks a far more subversive and illusive fragmented reality. This fragmentation appears as the narrative gaps that challenge identity and continuity much like the point of "primary narcissism" does for Kristeva. Callas is art, whereas Mary is mother. But Mother and art intersect through their capacity both to reveal and simultaneously blind us from visions of uncontrolled semiotic excess. Mary as Magdalene reveals that it is only when we turn our backs to the gap, when we stop looking, that we find the semiotic emerging, unexpectedly and surprisingly when our guard is down. And so, the young males in this classroom, constructing their identity through mimicry and repetition, stand praying to a Mary who, along with the sentiment and poetic meter of the prayer, appears easily ignored.[31] What they may not realize (at least not explicitly), however, is that Mary, or more precisely her many fragments, allows for the thorough undoing of such conventional limits to identity and in this case opens up a range of possibilities for gender performance and identity formation. Despite the challenge being issued silently from the object of their devotion, traditions of pious identification, stories of operatic proportions from on and off the stage, and queer identifications with a campy diva need not disturb these blokes-in-training. What we know from John 19:25 is that the power of this text to subvert lies precisely in its silence and its elusiveness.

31. At least this is how it appears: their resistance to the affective would suggest at least an implicit recognition of the threat Mary poses to their particular characterization of masculinity.

He/brew(')s Beer, or, H(om)ebrew*

Roland Boer

Thus says Yahweh Sabaoth: You must drink! (Jer 25:28)

Do not look at beer when it is amber,
when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.
Your eyes will see strange things,
and your mind utter perverse things. (Prov 23:31, 33, modified)

After bartenders, writers die of cirrhosis of the liver more than any other group. (Goodwin: 2)

On the verge of another bender, I feel the urge to retreat to the basement, for there is a wort to be bottled, some barley to mash, hops to add, and a hot box that grows cold. Already I have knocked back a few drinks, the number lost now in the swish of mind, washed out perhaps through my bladder, eventually joining the vast wash of the city's rich and warm urine and feces in the endless earthenware, concrete, and plastic sewer pipes.[1] But there is something slowly

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* Honor where honor is due: thanks to Tiny Melrose and Graeme Cole, of the Baulkham Hills G Grade baseball team of the 1997–98 summer. Sitting on the hill overlooking our home ground at Northmead we drank the obligatory after-game beers and began, toward the end of our supply, to make the connections between Hebrew, he brews, and homebrew. This article is the result of a solemn promise made to Tiny and Graeme. It was only later that I discovered the He'Brew Beer Web site (see below). But this is so characteristic of the inverse relationship between life and text, for I find that things seem to happen to me after writing about them: "autobiography" is then not a writing about one's own life but a script for how it might unfold.

1. It is no longer possible to write autobiographically (?) without at least some allusion to Jane Tompkin's bladder: "Intellectual debate, if it were in the right spirit, would be wonderful. But I don't know how to be in the right spirit, exactly, can't make points without sounding rather superior and smug. Most of all, I don't know how to enter the debate without leaving everything else behind—the birds outside my window, my grief over Janice, just myself as a person sitting here in stockinged feet, a little bit chilly because the windows are open, and thinking about going to the bathroom. But not going yet" (Tompkins: 173). Nancy Miller's centering of the essay in her

rising to the surface of my slushy mind, an indistinguishable blob that won't disappear. Is that a paper that I needed to write? Surely not. But just to be sure, I grab another bottle and a small pad and pen and slip down—well it was almost a slide, passing Freud's portrait, except that my feet got tangled up on the way down—to my well-loved basement, bottle shaken and now cloudy (why? see below) but still intact. Haven for stealthy cigars, my secret stash of yet more bottles, masturbation and academic pursuits, intellectual wanking perhaps.

I listen for the kids, a yell and a thump telling me that they don't realize I have gone, so I put aside the pad and pen, pour the bottle into a mug, and strike up a cigar retrieved from its corner. The intersection of alcohol and nicotine, depressant and stimulant, in my blood and my brain is always so highly productive. But all I am doing is invoking a whole tradition of alcoholic and drug-dependent writers for whom creativity is inseparable from addiction—James Joyce, Marguerite Duras, Willa Cather, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Charles Lamb, Edgar Allan Poe, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Steinbeck, Sinclair Lewis, Patrick Hamilton, Malcolm Lowry, William Golding, Tenessee Williams, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Jack Kerouac, whose whole corpus may be read as an autobiography of drinking (Burgess: 227), and so on.[2] A deal with the muses, a trade off, between inspiration and longevity.

Getting Personal (1991), highlighting Tompkins essentializing moves and the exclusions of class and race, but then fetishizing the potential trickle from Tompkins's urethra, ensured that Tompkins's bladder would continue to cause ripples. Theories about the precise state of that famous bladder range from a "halfhearted desire to urinate" (Callaghan: 203) to one that is bursting, its gush held back only by "legs tightly crossed" (Moore 1995:22). Indeed, the stream runs through into biblical studies at the hands of Stephen Moore, one of which assists Frank Lentricchia in his *The Edge of the Night,* who, now with a vastly distended bladder, confesses "I have to take a leak.… Dick in [Stephen's] hand, I worry about my writing" (Lentricchia: 70, quoted by Moore 1995:25). Watery images, those of fluid and flux, are characteristic of alcoholic writers as well (see Günther: 203), but it seems to me that all of this concern with pissing is but displaced discussion of masturbation. For a while now I have been conducting a somewhat "self-serving and icky" survey of the erotics of writing. For some, masturbating is part of the process of clearing the mind before writing, whereas for others a completed piece of writing brings on an extraordinary arousal. But for most of those in my survey it is the act of writing itself that does the trick: "I get horny thinking (particularly when things start to fall into place). I get horny when I write a super sentence, or when a new idea finds itself out on the page. So, the more work I do the hornier I get. I used to think that this had a disabling effect, but now I know it is the energy required to continue" (private communication).

2. On these writers and others, see the finely lubricated collection *Beyond the Pleasure Dome* (Vice, Campbell, and Armstrong) and Goodwin's *Alcohol and the Writer.* On Coleridge, Keats, and Lamb, see Taylor.

Beer first, I think to myself, pouring the h(om)ebrew ale down my throat, wetting my whistle, pondering: Is the wort ready to bottle just yet? A check of the hydrometer tells me that the gravity reading is steady at 1.006. The beer is ready to bottle.

At that moment the indistinguishable blob finally bobs to the top of mind—a paper on the Bible, autobiographical criticism, and cultural studies. Indeed, one would be forgiven for thinking that the autobiographical tone in some recent biblical criticism resembles more the ramblings of drunken scholars than true confessions. Is it possible, I wonder, to use alcohol as a trope for the questions of autobiography and biblical studies? I decide to weave and stagger my way through the theoretical issues associated with autobiography—authority and authenticity, the use of the first person, fiction and the development of the private individual—and engage in an alcoholic exegesis of some biblical texts in the context of my own ritual of brewing and bottling beer.

In doing so I will be following a certain understanding of cultural studies as the study of mass or popular culture in all its many desirable and undesirable facets. This is a more restricted sense than seeing cultural studies as the study of culture as such, with a focus on pluralism, spontaneity, the quotidian, and human values, which in turn leads to the necessary awareness of the culturally specific and determined nature of the critic. If such a line is followed (as, for instance, by Segovia: 25–26), then autobiographical criticism is an unavoidable part of cultural studies. The problem here is that there is little difference between cultural studies and disciplines such as sociology, which has always made arguments for cultural and social locatedness.

However, if we trace cultural studies to the work of Marxists such as Henri Lefebvre or the enigmatic Michel de Certeau, then it turns out that the key issue is the study of everyday life, which becomes in these writers a whole new category for the study of culture. Those who follow in their heritage are interested in the myriad, minute traces of quotidian activity, of which the production and consumption of popular or mass culture is a major element. And here alcohol emerges as a central item that lubricates popular culture at so many levels. Workers fill up at their watering holes on the weekends, have a couple of drinks after work; writers drink for inspiration; diners must drink a glass or two with a meal; sport, especially success in all codes, is virtually inconceivable without alcohol, from the champagne spraying at motor racing through spectators drinking while watching sport to the wild binges after a major victory, now conveniently reported as a natural consequence of such victories, with the requisite footage of inebriated players and fans. At lower levels, senior players of club sport, whether netball or cricket or soccer or football or baseball, may be heard to admit that the real reason they play is for the drink afterwards. In its very subject matter, then, this paper is soaked in a cultural-studies cocktail.

Authorenticity

> And the vine said to them, "Shall I stop producing my wine that cheers gods and mortals to go sway over the trees?" (Judg 9:13)
>
> Give strong drink to one who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress. (Prov 31:6; see also Isa 28:7)

But am I authorized to write on the brewing and drinking of beer or, for that matter, to scrawl some lines about certain alcoholic texts from the Bible? Must I claim that I am entitled to do so, that all authority in heaven and on earth is mine, because I do indeed brew beer? Or do I? How are you to know, after all, except by this word?

From a dank corner, barely touched by the light, I retrieve a crate or two of empty bottles, amidst unseen flutterings and rustlings and squeaks. After flushing the worst of the rust out of the pipe that runs into the small basin, I let the hot water run until it burns my skin. Then it rushes through the narrow necks of the heavy brown XXXX[3] bottles, splashing over the sides and scalding, cleansing my hands and the bottles. I upend each one in turn and shake them out, squirting in some purifier when the water is gone before placing it on a drying tree, a Christmas tree–looking implement with a central pole from which shorter sticks protrude at an angle. On these I impale the bottles, upside down.

Automatic repetition sets in, the mind focusing on the water pouring in and then out, on the bottles dripping dry, slowly, drop by drop, on the rack. Unconsciously I begin a regular, low and slow "om," the sacred Sanskrit syllable, the syllable before all syllables, as I get into the whole h(om)ebrewing process. My cigar fades away and grows cold, abandoned in the tin can that does for an ashtray. By the time thirty 750 ml bottles have been washed and sprayed, my pulse is down, my mind and body relaxed, after this Zen of bottle washing. I pause to relight the cigar, that is, well, a lot of things: a replacement for sex, as Freud would have it, or rather, the real thing for which sex is a replacement (Zizek: 210), since now I want to suck and absorb; but then again, it is probably just a cigar.

It's a pity Jesus didn't smoke. I wonder, would he have done so, had they had tobacco in the Hellenistic world? Probably, given its chronically incorrect status. What would have been his preference: a pipe, cigars (like Freud), tailor-made

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3. XXXX is a brand of bitter, well-known in Australia, brewed in Brisbane, Queensland. Speculation over the four X's is endless: they stand for "beer"; Queenslanders can't spell real well, just like they talk—real slow; a memory of the illegal brewing that first went on; beer under erasure (for Derridean Queenslanders); etc.

cigarettes? No, I suspect he would have rolled his own smokes, mixed in with the occasional Cuban. Think of the possibilities: the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves, two fishes, and three cigarettes; the miracle of the never-ending cigarette machine;[4] the turning of hay into tobacco; the sower of tobacco plants; a lazy cigarette after the Last Supper; and then a last smoke before being hoisted up onto the cross.

Even though it appears Jesus didn't smoke (one can never be certain, all the same), there are stories of Jesus enjoying a drink or two. In what is generally regarded as a genuine saying (on fiction, however, see below) from Q, we find Jesus speaking, "the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard [οἰνοπότης], a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!' " (Matt 11:19; see Luke 7:34). For hanging around with drunks, barflies, pub crawlers, Jesus himself is identified as a piss-pot, an οἰνοπότης, a winebibber, as the older translations so wonderfully put it. And then of course there is the Gospel of John, so much more concerned, in its protognostic thought world, with the πνεῦμα, spirit(s), such as whisky, gin, and so on. John provides us with the story of the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1–11), a stumbling block to teetotalers. For here the very purpose of the wedding is to get blind and rolling drunk, beginning politely with the good wine, complimenting the host on the quality of the early wine, and then sculling down the low-grade grog at the end, when the taste and quality take second place to the alcoholic content. In fact, the host might as well have served methylated spirits, or shaving lotion, or opened the medicine cabinet, for all the guests cared, at least those who were still conscious. The catch, of course, is that Jesus hits them with the good stuff at the end, the water turning out to be superior to the wine served earlier: the steward says to the bridegroom, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until last" (John 2:10). Apart from reading this as the signal of extreme drunkenness, where the nature of the drink can no longer be discerned, or indeed as an indictment of the wedding host, where water is better than the wine he had served—apart from all of this, Jesus comes through as the party animal, abusing his liver from early on (may as well if you're going to die young), slugging back the vino whenever he could, emptying the wineskins with impressive gusto. What hits home in John's narrative is not only that this is Jesus' first sign (σημεῖον) but that it reveals his glory (δόξα) so that his disciples believed (John 2:11).

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4. The miraculous never-ending cigarette machine appears in Philip K. Dick's *Eye in the Sky* (76–77), operating on the principle of division by miracle, where new packets are made by dividing one original. As a whole, the book describes a world in which the laws of nature operate in terms of miracles, which turns out not to be so contradictory.

Such a spirit carries on in the stories from the early church. Apart from the Last Supper, with its bread and wine-blood, Pentecost emerges as a major moment. Two items stand out from the story in Acts 2. The first is the note of division that creeps in at Acts 2:13, where the "others" sneer and say, "They are filled with new wine [γλεύκους]." Those granted the tongues of fire exhibit, according to the story, signs of drunkenness, particularly the gabbling in strange tongues. But note Peter's response to the sneer: "Indeed, these are not drunk [μεθύουσιν], as you suppose, for it is the third hour of the day" (Acts 2:15). "But you should see them later on," we can hear Peter saying, "come back at the twelfth hour and they'll be blotto, tanked up, babbling away in so many tongues it will make your head spin, that is, if they're not totally flaked and comatose, vomiting all over the place."

This reading opens our eyes to the very nature of the Christian appropriation of Pentecost itself, constructed out of whole cloth in Luke-Acts. For it would seem that what lies behind the story is an early Christian saying over the first drink, much like "cheers" or, if you happen to live in certain parts of Australia, "get stuffed!" or "here's mud in your eye!" Similarly, in the head(y) days after the death of Jesus, it was common to salute with "Holy shit, what a good spirit!" Soon this was shortened to "Holy Spirit," for which another myth of origin, another etiological tale, was required. Hence Acts 2.[5]

The collusion in my argument is, then, that the experience of brewing and drinking alcohol, specifically beer, provides me with the appropriate integrity required for my alcoholic readings of Matt 11:19; John 2:1–11; and Acts 2:1–13. And this is what happens with the personal voice, autobiographical criticism, call it what you will: in an overwhelming number of cases it is used to give the writer an experiential basis upon which to claim authority for a certain reading. For instance, the specific geopolitical location of some, in poverty, in the socioeconomic periphery, such as Latin America (Croatto) or the Philippines (Co; Victorino) or Africa-America (Hendricks), or an explicit identification with those in the socioeconomic periphery (Segovia), provides an experiential basis upon which one may then speak of the poor and marginalized peoples of the world in the process of interpretation. Politically, I have the most sympathy with this level of autobiography, particularly when such a personal voice invokes revolutionary moments, either past (Co and Victorino) or future (Hendricks). Yet it is difficult to get around the assumption that the location—geopolitical, ethnic, economic, gender, sexuality—of such autobiographical fragments

5. See also the "spiritual drink" of 1 Cor 10:4; then there is 1 Cor 12:13: "For in the one spirit we were all baptized in to one body—Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all made to drink of one spirit."

gives an authenticity to these readings that they would otherwise lack. The vexed question of who can speak arises yet again (see Roof and Wiegman).

The less interesting, and most predictable, are those concerned to keep up appearances, even at the bar. With a conscious effort, they attempt to hide the effects of alcohol on their bodies and minds. Faces sweating slightly, suits crumpled, and ties loose, they hold desperately on to their dignity, reputation, honor. In these cases, autobiography becomes another curriculum vitae, the race of life, trotted out for job applications, book proposals, and now for personal essays. Unfortunately, some of the guys read this way: an effort to open up over a round of drinks seems only to trigger conference-speak, about who met whom where and at what stage of one's career (Moloney) or what I learned in seminary and what I have learned since (Hagner; Moloney) or a tiny snippet of census information, such as name, age, gender, skin color, and church affiliation (Hagner: 52; Parsons: 128; Moloney: 98; Voelz: 156). This is perhaps the most brittle option for autobiography, for it reveals so little of an obvious kind, yet is highly symptomatic for what counts as personal in contemporary Western society.

But the bar can also be like the confessional, especially later in the evening and well into a long drinking stint. There comes the moment of spilling your guts, of laying your heart on your sleeve: the confession of a drunk.[6] Here we meet the autobiographical hump (the crisis) of faith, where biblical critics finally find voices to link their task of biblical criticism with a personal religious commitment, something so often denied them in conventional historical-critical scholarship. So faith, we read, is finally able to speak its voice—like Walter Benjamin's wizened dwarf named "theology" inside the puppet of historical materialism (Benjamin: 245)—in the critical sphere, not merely in the spiritual domain so carefully sealed off from the scholarly. Personal religious commitment and professional activity breach the dam and come flooding back into one another, whether in terms of the absence of that commitment (Moore 1999:183), of an evangelical conversion (Hagner: 53), of ethics and biblical interpretation (Patte), of spiritual devotion and exercises (Victorino), of a distinct sense of providence (Kitzberger 1999a), of the deeply confessional nature of liberation exegesis (Maldonado; Co; Victorino; Croatto; van der Watt; see Moore 1995:28), of the security and questions of a believing community challenged by rebirth in the spirit (Moloney), of why one would bother to study the Bible in the first place (Moloney: 107; see Moore 1995:31), and as calls to personal repentance (Voelz: 167). The desire here, even though Freud taught us to be wary of the interaction between ego and superego, is for an authenticity that derives from such a belief structure. Of course, the problem here, as Stephen Moore points out, obliquely, I must admit

6. The discourses of confession and intoxication are closely linked (McKenna: 233–34).

(Moore 1995:28), is that this is all very well if the person or people for whom these writers write are also believers. In this case, the play for an authentic commitment is crucial for the authority and authenticity to speak as biblical scholars within such an environment.[7]

Barside confessions, however, can get to be a drag quite quickly, a little, as Terry Eagleton says (in a place I can no longer locate) about postmodernists, like the bore at the bar who cannot stop talking about herself or himself. What everyone seems to like, though, are the really personal details. And this is where the two most engaging and significant authors of autobiographical biblical criticism make their appearance, like the best wine at the end of the feast at Cana: Jeff Staley and Stephen Moore. Not things like where I studied or with whom I worked or which conferences I have been to or even how my belief is at the moment—no, much more juicy and memorable are such questions as who I had sex with, whether my wife (Staley 1999:66), another man (Moore 1999:183–84), or whatever (as long as it had a pulse). Or, what does it mean for reading the Bible to grow up as the child of Plymouth Brethren missionary parents located on a Navajo reservation in the deserts of the southwestern United States (Staley 1995:147–99)? Then again, am I afraid of incestuous tendencies (Staley 1999:81)? How did I feel during my son's circumcision (Staley 1999:72–75)? Or during my vasectomy (Staley 1999:75–77)? Do I still have nightmares about my father's butcher shop (Moore 1996:4) or hear the faint breath of a hacked-up Jesus (Moore 1996:70–71)? What is it really like inside a mental institution/Pentecostal prayer meeting/Cistercian cloister (Moore 1996:119; 1999:183)? Or pumping iron (Moore 1996:75)? Or on LSD (Moore 1995:43; 1999:183)? The list of intimate details continues, as dawn begins to break and drinking continues, everyone mesmerized by these private, personal details from biblical scholars. What will their students think? Will they still regard their professors with respect?

In many respects, they are like the various paralytics healed by Jesus in a swathe of healings in the Gospel narratives. It has always struck me that these stories have been misread in the tradition. Take, for instance, the story of the paralytic. In Mark 2:1–12 (but see also Luke 5:17–26 and Matt 9:1–18) we read of Jesus teaching in a house in Capernaum that was full of people, so full,

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7. A personal anecdote (or is it?), if I may. Once upon a time I taught in a theological college, rapidly gaining a reputation as the most cynical of the lecturing faculty about spiritual matters, so much so that students sought my opinion on a range of matters, precisely because they too harbored suspicions. However, when to our mutual relief and joy I moved on from the college the job description for the position I vacated was substantially altered to mention, among other things, research of "benefit to the church," the modeling of spiritual discipline, a life of prayer, and leadership in informal and formal worship. My authenticity as a biblical scholar, it seems, had always been undermined by the absence of these obvious signs of devotion and commitment.

in fact, that it was no longer possible for anyone else to enter the house. But there was a paralytic, reads the English, a παραλυτικός (literally, one who is loosed from the side), whose friends had heard about Jesus' power to heal such people. The word *paralysis,* from which *paralytic* is derived, means, according to the *Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing and Allied Health,* the "loss or impairment of motor function in a part due to a lesion of the neural or muscular mechanism; also, by analogy, impairment of sensory function." Paralysis is not so much a disease as "a symptom of a wide variety of physical and emotional disorders" (Miller and Keane: 748). In popular parlance, the language of the party and the pub, a paralytic is one who has drunk so much that she is unable to stand, let alone move about. Paralysis in this case is a symptom of drinking, signifying a state of total inebriation, where consciousness fades out, and stretches of memory cease to register. Common for those given to benders, alcoholics, and the like, it seems to me that the story in Mark is actually about someone knocked out from grog, a paralytic unable to rise. Head lolling, his mates carry him up to the roof, smash a hole in it (don't roofs like these collapse rather easily?), and lower him down in front of Jesus. Now what has puzzled commentators, following the scribes in the story itself, for a long time makes more sense. Jesus says "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). Jesus is clearly referring to the binge the paralytic had been on: this is forgiven, and it is time to get on his feet again. Hence the secondary statement: "I say to you, stand up, take up your mat and go to your home" (Mark 2:11).

Is it possible that parables like this determine the intimate autobiographical moments of Moore and Staley (see Moore 1996; Staley 1995), who now become the characters healed by Jesus of their paralysis? It has always seemed to me that the admissions of autobiographical criticism resemble drunken babblings more than the wrenching confessions of angst-ridden souls. But their blindness and paralysis are those of alcoholics recovering from a binge, bed-ridden, fed yet more drinks by co-dependent friends and relatives (on co-dependents, see Chaden; MacGregor) until toxic shock looms. Absolved and healed by Jesus, their contrite hearts firmly agree not to submit to the call of the bottle ever again. Instead, they spill their guts.

And in doing so, there is the implicit assumption that this provides a certain authenticity, an authority in taking a particular stance. Staley has it relatively easy here, for his name is most closely tied up with autobiographical criticism. Tautologically, his confessions provide the authority to write autobiographical criticism. What would an autobiographical criticism look like that did not resort to such a strategy. An oxymoron? Possibly not, but I will need to wait a moment before returning to this question. Yet it is Stephen Moore's work that has enticed, attracted, sucked me in for some time now. Few books call out "read me, read me!" so loudly as do those of Moore. Yet it seems to me that the

myriad critical positions he takes up seem to require some form of grounding in an autobiographical, an experiential, moment. Thus, reflection on dissection and cadavers (Moore 1996:3–34) bounces off childhood experiences of his father's butcher shop; the passion narrative as a posing exhibition comes out of a period of (amateur) bodybuilding (1996:75–138); queer readings are based in a gay relationship (1999:183); the eternal return to the phallus in some way signifies his own ambiguous phallus (1995:23; 1999:187); his predilection for gory biblical texts is traceable to the inculcation of fierce and bloody tales from Ireland's past (1999:185); and the use of LSD grounds his hallucinogenic texts (1995:43; 1999:183). Is there a nervousness about authenticity here? Does work that is not grounded in such experiential moments seem less genuine? A curious problem for an avowedly postmodern and poststructuralist writer.

What of the status of my own autobiographical claims? Do they provide me with an authority for alcoholic exegesis?

I?

> You have given us beer to drink that made us reel. (Ps 60:3, modified)
> My heart is indeed like wine that has no vent;
> like new wineskins, it is ready to burst. (Job 32:19)

I open the hot box in the corner, and I turn off the thermostatically operated light bulb: the eye closes. I draw out the 30 liter barrel in which I have been fermenting my wort, gurgling and bubbling for some six days, leaving a rim of scum around the top, like eye liner. I raise the cask onto the small waist-high bench I have set up for this purpose, and I remove the water lock from the top (this allows air to escape when the pressure builds during the brewing process so that the cask does not explode). To the tap at the base of the cask I attach an extension tube with a gravity valve in it. When bottling, I trigger the tap extension I have attached by sliding an upright bottle over the extension up to the tap. In this way I can fill a bottle at a time without beer flooding onto the floor when I have finished, for the gravity valve closes the flow when I remove the bottle.

I chew on the cigar, soggy in my mouth, as I spray Brew-Shield over my hands. I remove the bottles from the bottle tree, and I place them upright in a tray. Each 750 ml bottle needs 6 grams of sugar for the secondary brewing process. Again, Zen-like, chanting the ubiquitous "om" like some drunk transcendental meditator, focusing on the third eye, I pour carefully measured fine sugar into each of the bottles. I work to a calm rhythm, for I can easily spoil the spiritual tranquility generated by the process, lose my inner vision, if I show any hint of a rush.

When I have the bottles sugared up, I spray my hands again, as well as the cask's tap and its extension. I perceive the cask immediately before me and the

bottle tray on my right. I clear a space for thirty bottles on the bench to the left of the cask. I open the tap on the cask, I drain off a little into a cup to clear the sludge, and I slide a bottle up to the hilt of the tap and its extension. I watch the dark beer, a bitter, rush into the bottle, frothing a little. From long experience, I withdraw the bottle at the moment before it sprays out the top of the bottle. If I lapse in attention I will lose some precious beer, teardrops of beer running down the sides of the bottle. I am totally focused; I have forgotten the world about me entirely; I hold the filling bottle with my left hand while I reach over and clasp the second bottle with my right hand. In one movement, I place the full bottle on the bench to the left while slipping the next bottle onto the tap extension. Full bottle deposited, I switch hands on the filling bottle in order to free my right for yet another empty.

So I go on, until I have filled all the bottles, and I leave only sludge at the bottom of the barrel. I have heard of desperate alcoholics drinking the beer straight out the barrel, flat, tasting terrible, but alcoholic nonetheless. As for me, I like to bottle and brew first thing Sunday morning, religiously. In fact, my busiest brewing time is before Lent, for I sacrifice my brewing during Lent, drinking up my supplies during the period of denial.

I find my authority for an alcoholic exegesis growing. In fact, I find it quite surprising that it has not been done earlier, given the prevalence of alcohol in the Bible. It is mostly wine and blood (on this, see more below) I must admit, but were not the Egyptians, Sumerians, Babylonians, and Philistines good beer drinkers? And have beer mugs not been found by archaeologists replete with strainers at their lips to catch the barley hulls, furry balls, and other growths that hatched during the brewing process? Or depictions of tall jars with straws and instructions to drink with reeds or straws to prevent such blobs spoiling the drinker's pleasure? (see Geller: 259; Corran: 18) In fact, the Bible is inconceivable without alcohol—offered to Yahweh (Gen 29:40; Lev 23:13, 18, 37; Num 28:7–10; etc.), mentioned repeatedly with meals (Gen 26:30; 27:25; Dan 1:5; etc.), proffered to guests (Gen 43:34; Prov 9:5; etc.), used in sex (Song 1:2, 4; 4:10; 5:1; 7:3/2, 10/9; 8:2), not excluding incest (Gen 19:30–8), absent for the Nazirites (Num 6:1–4) and priests in the tent of meeting (Lev 10:9), used or taken as medicine (Luke 10:34; 1 Tim 5:23), a blessing (Gen 27:28; Deut 7:13; 11:14; etc.), the cause of celebration and destruction (Amos 2:8, 12; 4:1; 5:11; 6:6; Hab 2:15–16; Luke 17:27–8), and so on. Alcohol flows in the discourse of the Bible itself.[8]

8. This is not the place to investigate the various levels of the function of alcohol and wine in the Bible in an anthropological way. Such a study would need to begin with the central social and religious function of wine, along with the subtle patterns of approval and disapproval associated with

So let me offer some further exegetical moonshine, a groggy hermenutics. Not only does Jesus heal a paralytic or two, but a pervasive miracle is healing the blind (Matt 9:27–31; 20:29–34; Mark 8:22–26; 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43; John 9:1–41; see also Matt 11:5; 12:22; 15:30–31; 21:14; Luke 4:18; 7:21–22; 14:13, 21; John 5:3; 11:37). As with the term "paralytic" that I focused on above, insofar as that is possible with double vision, the word "blind" may be read in a number of ways. Throughout the Gospels "blind" (τυφλός) has normally been understood to refer to a physical disability resulting in temporary or permanent loss of sight. Yet it can also designate one who is blind drunk, blotto, cactus. As with the paralytic, there is a base in the physical condition, as anyone who has seen double or triple or more, after a few rounds of drinks, until eyesight blurs and then disappears completely, the floor becoming one's closest friend. But, like the paralytic, Jesus responds to the calls of blind people by restoring their sight, that is, getting them over their benders. The Gospel stories read as multiple variations on the same sequence, although sometimes Jesus spits on the blind person's eyes (Mark 8:23) or makes a paste with mud and saliva (John 9:6) or touches their eyes (Matt 9:29; 20:34) or merely speaks (Mark 10:52; Luke 18:42–3). Apart from the mere notices of Jesus healing the blind, the sequence in these longer stories, such as that of Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52//Luke 18:35–43) is that he is out cold in the gutter, lying on the side of the road. The disciples and large crowd tramp by (Mark 10:46), stirring him from his groggy slumber. Once awake, his head begins to thunder, and he cries out in pain from the hangover, cursing: "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!" (10:47). Embarrassed, the crowd quiets him, but Jesus, hearing his name, calls him over, and he, surprised out of his wits to see that Jesus is actually there, staggers over, throwing off his coat, naked and disheveled (10:50). Asked what he wants Jesus to do for him, Bartimaeus, a beggar since he blew his load on grog, says, "My teacher, let me see again [ἀναβλέψω]" (10:51). Jesus assures him that his faith (in what? in Jesus? in abstention? in the wineskin?) has made him well; the "blindness" passes, and he follows on the way.

Where Jesus cures blindness there always seems to be a literary implication, either as a contrast with the perceptive blindness of the disciples or others around Jesus or as a model for those in the early Christian communities to "see" more clearly, to recover from their blindness. Might such stories be read instead as the recovery from a drunken blindness, the catatonia, the unconsciousness, of a binge? In this case, is it not interesting that such blindness is brought on by the drinker, whether consciously or unconsciously, so that something may not

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it. For an example of the kind of study I envisage, see Carlson on the role of banana beer among the Haya and Bukoba of Tanzania.

be seen—a pain or hurt, perhaps, the consequences of a major change (losing or gaining a pile of money, the breakup of a relationship of love, losing or gaining employment, etc.).

If autobiographical critics are very much like the paralytic, blind drunk until Jesus raises them from their pallets and alcoholic stupor, then they are even more like the blind people Jesus healed. For it seems as though their eyes have been opened to see new things, to new ways of seeing, and what their eyes behold is the crucial role of the first person, the "I," in any critical task. Here it is more a case of awakening after a prolonged alcoholic coma, somewhat hung over, to be sure, but painfully aware of the liver's efforts to process the vast amounts of grog to which it has been subjected. This heightened awareness of the self stands in stark contrast to closing one's eye on the "I," the blindness to the personal, that is characteristic of the detached scholarship of modernist biblical criticism, more commonly known as historical criticism.[9] In many respects, autobiographical criticism may be read as the end run of the revolt against the occlusion of the "I" in a now outmoded but still defended form of biblical scholarship.

The signal of blindness to the "I" is the removal of the personal pronoun in intellectual writing, poked out, as Stephen Moore writes on another topic, by the pen of the critic. Banished in shame to the outer darkness, where gnashing teeth predominate although the eyes do weep, guards were set up at the boundaries of biblical scholarship to capture any furtive I's attempting to cross the fence and expel them again (see Segovia: 27–28). But in autobiographical criticism the eye has returned with a vengeance. Having breached the defenses, "I" stands proudly in many sentences, along with its relatives "my," "mine," "myself," "me," and so on.

So I too use "I" as often as I can, for it means that I am talking about myself, of course. Or am I? The use of "I" may also be read as a sleight of hand, a *coup de l'oeuil,* in which the eye deceives or is deceived, a means whereby readers or hearers assume, with little question, that I am indeed referring to myself. But am I? After all, who is to say that "I" is a signifier for me.[10]

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9. On historical criticism as a modernist enterprise, in distinction from realism or postmodernism, see the final chapter of my *Novel Histories* (1997:169–200).

10. I encountered this problem in my aforementioned book, *Novel Histories,* in which a fictional story that included a character named "Roland," with a liking for checking out other men's butts (1997:46), was assumed by readers to be autobiographical for no other reason than that this character and I bear the same name. In my *Knockin' on Heaven's Door,* a first-person detective story may be found where "I" am a transvestite, homeless investigator with a wool festish who has, among other things, sex with a transvestite brothel owner. Apart from advertising the book with a footnote such as this one, one might ask how autobiographical the "I" actually is in this story.

fIctIon

> Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Every wine-jar should be filled with wine. (Jeremiah 13:12)
>
> I will provide for your servants … twenty thousand baths of beer. (2 Chr 2:10, modified)

It is not possible to leave beer bottles open for too long, since impurities can enter with a particle of dust. So I need to cap them as soon as possible, before my body gives way under the wash of beer that I relish so much with each suck on the beer mug (one must use a mug for homebrew to avoid the residue that gathers on the bottom of each bottle). So I put the barrel aside, hearing again the kids coming down the stairs, calling out for me: "Are you down here? Can we help?" The thirty bottles wait as I reach up for the bottle capper and can of crown-seal lids. Gone are the days of hammering a capping device onto the bottle, with the risk of breaking the bottle if the hammer came down too hard. Now a lever system quietly clamps the cap onto the bottle, sealing the beer until it is ready to drink, a couple of months later. I replace the barrel with the capper, not sparing a moment to clean out the barrel itself (that will happen later). On the first bottle I place a flared crown seal, slip it under the capping lever, and press down. The beer is sealed, enclosed, preserved until the amber fluid may touch some blessed lips in the future. Twenty-nine bottles follow, ritually, carefully, sealed and preserved. Once again I feel calm, focused, unconcerned about the usual crap of the world about me. Even with the kids, passing bottles from one to the other, attempting to cap them, and then carefully storing them without breakage.

In fact (like "indeed" and "of course" this is always a suspect moment in any argument and should be subjected to the strongest demystifying criticism), my basement was once my escape,[11] a retreat from a dominant boss who demanded my devotion and commitment to the cause of Christendom, an attendance at meetings in which the church, Christ's kingdom on earth, was to be advanced. But I have escaped from that cage, gone from the spiritual navel-gazing, the concern with one's spiritual formation, the counseling, the need to equip students with tools for ministry.

The capped bottles need to return to the hot box, for four days at a temperature between 21 and 25 degrees Celsius, but I wait on their deposit in the

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11. Anyone with a skerick of knowledge about Australia will realize that basements do not exist in this country. Of course, that is not to say that I am bottling and brewing beer in another place, where basements do exist.

hot box until I have the next wort in place, surrounded by bottles, brewing away while the bottles go through their secondary fermentation. So now I need to clean out the barrel from its former sludge, rinsing it and the clean-water container out with boiled water and Brew-Shield, before I can think about the next brew.

Jesus also, it seems, gave instructions about bottling, this time for wine rather than beer. His guidelines are, to be honest, somewhat cryptic, pithy perhaps, but they get the point across: "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins [ἀσκοὺς παλαιούς]; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins [ἀσκοὺς καινούς]" (Mark 2:22; see also Matt 9:17; Luke 5:37–38). Following the saying about the unshrunk patch placed on an old garment, this saying has been read in a myriad of ways, ranging from an elaboration of the question about fasting in Mark 2:18–20, through allegorical (the wine is the gospel itself) and ethnic readings (the message is for the Gentiles) to apocalyptic readings of a new age. But the saying is chronically indeterminate: in the spirit of Occam, it seems to me that it means nothing more than that one should bottle wine properly. In the days of the use of skins, of bladders, to be precise, Jesus instructs people, the disciples especially, to put new wine in new wineskins. Short of grog money, the disciples need to bottle their own to keep their traveling supply well stocked.

But it is also an admonition not to cut costs too much, for that will lead to a loss of the wine itself: don't put new wine in old skins; that is, don't lose precious grog through incorrect bottling procedures. Yet the conventions of certain strands of biblical criticism caution us to consider more the sensibilities of their respective writers and their communities than the subject matter. These Synoptics, it seems, like their booze: not a drop was to be lost; it must all be sculled, the three Synoptics caution. Except "Luke," who comes through as one appreciative of the quality of wine itself, tones down the rural roughness of the other two Synoptics, who didn't mind what they drank as long it was alcoholic. He adds a supplement that inverts the sense, softens the bite, of the texts in Matthew and Mark: "And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, 'The old is good' " (Luke 5:39). Turning up his nose at the new wine in new skins, he admonishes his readers to let it mature, age with grace. He has, it seems, the patience to await a mature wine, savoring it on a late evening, over a languorous cigar, whereas Mark and Matthew slug it down, anxious about wastage, licking up any spill, swilling the new stuff like it was water, sucking the cracks of the old skins.

But there is another story of old wineskins, this time in Josh 9. I have read this narrative in another place (Boer 1996) and will not repeat that reading here, except to emphasize the theme of deception and ruse that runs

through the passage. The Gibeonites, so the story goes, feared the invading Israelites and therefore sent some messengers laden with the signs of a great journey—worn-out and patched sacks, sandals, clothes, dry and moldy food, and, of course, "wineskins, worn out and torn and mended" (*no'dôt yayin bālîm uməbuqqā'îm uməṣōrārîm;* Josh 9:4). So they travel a short way and put their story to Joshua, who gets sucked in and makes a treaty with them. Not a great treaty it was, for it meant that the Gibeonites became slaves instead of being killed, but it is the function of the wineskins that draws my attention. In deluding a gullible and somewhat dimwitted Joshua, the Gibeonites say: "these wineskins were new when we filled them, and see, they are burst" (9:13). Having been told in 9:4 that the wineskins and other items were already old, we assume here that they are spinning a tale for Joshua and company, the old, burst wineskins (did they drink the wine before they burst, we wonder, but only for a moment, realizing that they were like this to begin with) becoming part of the fiction itself.…

In many respects these old, cracked, and mended wineskins are like the various autobiographies we encounter. The overwhelming wash of autobiographical criticism is that the invocation of the intimate "I" is an implicit claim not only to authenticity and authority but also to truth. To use the personal pronoun, to speak in the first person, automatically makes claim to a realm of veracity, an island that is somehow removed from critical scrutiny. For instance, we hesitate to question the confessions of Patte when he talks about being a "male European American" biblical scholar, or Parsons when he writes of his father, or Staley about his difficulty of gaining tenure, his son's penis, his daughter's mole on her bum, or his own vasectomy, or Moore about his gay partner, conversion, call to priesthood and agnosticism/atheism, or Kitzberger about providence in her life in central Europe, or Victorino about her involvement in the continued people's revolution in the Philippines, or Lategan about his change of mind regarding apartheid, and so on. One of the advantages about an appeal to personal experience is that most of us hesitate for a moment or two before responding, especially where the writer seems to be speaking about the deeply personal. Yet it is precisely at these moments that the greatest suspicion needs to be brought to bear, for the experiential, the personal voice, the autobiographical, is the most ideologically suspect of the lot. A good dose of the old Marxist demystification is called for.

This suspicion operates at two levels; the first is a gentler question, for it wants to query the use of the personal voice, the "I," no matter how genuine and heart-rending the stories may be. Why is the personal voice invoked in this type of criticism? Is it merely heuristic in its best moments, as Rohrbaugh's trenchant but pointed critique suggests (Rohrbaugh: 249–50), or is it meant to provide an authenticity and authority to what is written that cannot be

gainsaid, as I have suggested above? Indeed, the invocation of the experiential is often used as a last bastion, an inviolable zone of integrity that only the crassest will seek to critique. Of course, the whole area of calling upon one's personal location, establishing one's identity in terms of gender, economics, sexuality, geography, and family experience, has already been subjected to the strongest suspicions outside biblical criticism (see, e.g., Lakritz: 11–14; Spivak), so I am surprised to find biblical critics resorting to such strategies. At least a recognition that autobiographical criticism is a rhetorical strategy for a certain type of identification is needed, for only then can it be recovered as a political strategy (see Bauer). Too often, however, calling upon the personal is the last resort of an ideological formation that assumes that the individual, with his or her private property (i.e. feelings, thoughts, ideas, possessions, and so on), is sacrosanct. From my tradition, Marxism, this is wide open to critique.

I hinted above that so far I have followed the soft option, allowing for the possibility that what autobiographical critics write is in fact (there it is again) true. What if autobiography were to be recast as the highest form of fiction? Let's avoid beating about the bush, shall we—What if these autobiographical accounts were regarded as a bunch of lies? What then? Before I am accused of merely discarding all of these confessions, I need to turn, for a moment, to etymology. Fact and fiction begin from similar meanings but then diverge. The root of fact is *facere,* its past participle being *factum,* that which is made, constructed; the root of fiction is *fingere,* its past participle being *fictus,* that which is fashioned, formed, made. Their meanings begin as the same, but they diverge, the one, fact, designating what is truly constructed, the other, fiction, what is false and fabricated. The point of all of this is to suggest that the autobiographical, or personal, voice is that which constructs the "I" in a particular way.

In other words, what we find in autobiography is the construction of a distinct self—the kinkier the better, in seems—for the consumption of the limited reading public of biblical and, occasionally, cultural criticism. At this level of critique I am not even prepared to accept the truth claims of any of the autobiographical moments of all those I have read: they are a series of efforts to construct "what is in some ways an idealized version of a unified or unifiable self" (Awkward: 72). Autobiography is, then, like the old wineskins of the Gibeonites, a process of fabrication in order to tell another story, "poised tenuously between the poles of closure and disclosure, between representation and re-presentation, between a lived life and an invented one (Awkward: 72–73).

You Gotta Say Yes to Another Excess[12]

> For in the hand of Yahweh there is a cup with foaming beer, well mixed. (Ps 75:8, modified)
>
> Thus says Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel: "Drink, get drunk and vomit, fall and rise no more, because of the sword that I am sending among you." (Jer 25:27)
>
> I have become like a drunkard, like one overcome by wine, because of Yahweh and because of his holy words. (Jer 23:9)

The distinct and autonomous self produced by autobiographical criticism is in many respects a strange and unique beast, the product of a particular socioeconomic moment. It is a common move in those circles lightly touched by the occasional whiff of socialism to point out the privatization of the individual, the loss of communal consciousness, and the absence of any desire to develop and maintain a community.[13] However, I am interested in a more explicitly Marxist analysis of the phenomenon, one that seeks to trace the features of autobiographical criticism in the wider socioeconomic sphere. Rather than reductionist (a curious although oft-repeated critique), it has always seemed to me that opening up questions such as that of the individual to the realms of economics, social formations, politics, history, and so forth is to widen the discussion rather than narrow it down.

In this light, the private individual turns out to have a history, to be an invention that was and remains possible only within the realm of capitalism and its indispensable ideology of liberalism. This is not to say that individuals, understood for the moment as distinct biological units, have not existed before capitalism, but rather that the way this unit is constructed varies in different socioeconomic situations. Let me touch off with the whole development of the tradition of human rights, marked forever by the French Revolution, with its claim that each individual human being has certain inalienable rights, from basics such as food, clothing, and shelter to education, medical care, profit-making, freedom of expression, of opinion, of religion, to the right to say what happens to one's body. The political force of such claims lies with the contrast

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12. For those with poor memories, befuddled with excessive alcohol and other less-legal substances, this was the title of a song by the kinky 1980s band Yello.

13. For too long I worked in an environment that tried to do this, a theological seminary that sought to develop a Christian community. It was the most dystopian time of my life, for this effort at community assumed that one performed a self-lobotomy upon entering. Indeed, their motto was "Christ died to take away our sins and our mind."

to the centuries of feudal constructions of the individual, in which a relative few—the lords and clergy and rulers—had anything resembling these "rights." As for the rest, any notion of independent existence and action diminished the further down the hierarchy of human existence one descended, until the mass of peasants were left with very little that could in any way be counted as rights. Thus, the claim to human rights is crucial for the formation of a new bourgeois consciousness: that each person is equal in the new dispensation as an autonomous individual. Of course, this is ambiguous as always, for when pushed to allow everyone the same status after the French Revolution, the bourgeoisie was notoriously reluctant, as the repression of the new working class in the 1848 revolutions in Europe showed, to grant such rights to everyone. Bourgeois autonomy applied only to certain people and not others, even though the initial promise had been made to all in order to enlist their support for the revolution in the first place.

What is most significant for my argument is that the rising individual is inextricably connected with the increasing importance of private property within capitalism.[14] Increasingly, the new autonomous individual is rendered thus by the claim that what she or he owns is private property, that it is uniquely this person's and no one else's. Private property designates, then, material possessions—clothes, furniture, cars, houses, land[15]—but also the more intangible items that are assumed to operate as tangibles: thoughts, writings, spirituality, conscience, feelings, sexualities, and experiences. And so we find, within capitalism, that the private individual is an inviolable unit, the mark of which may be found in the legal system that has developed within the current socioeconomic dispensation. Its task is primarily twofold, the protection of private property and of the private individual.

Of necessity, I have traced out the picture in outline only, for elements from ancient Greece and Rome, as well as the Bible, feed into this, but the way in which these materials have been taken up and transformed within capitalism is distinct from all that has gone before. It is in this context, finally, that autobiographical criticism needs to be understood, for the possession of personal stories, the authenticity and assumption of truth that the telling of such stories entails, are the exclusive domain of the private individual. We need, I think, to ask what

14. As with most things, private property is not the invention of capitalism. Capitalism took up private property and transformed it into something central and constitutive of capitalism as such. See Marx: 939–50.

15. The very notion of the ownership of land by human beings has to be one of the most ridiculous of all the inventions of capitalism. How far down does this ownership of land go? If I were to bulldoze the first 10 meters of "my" land and truck it elsewhere, is it still "mine"?

the ideological function of such moves is, in the same way that assertions of the need for at least a relative or limited objectivity (Rohrbaugh: 248) make us suspicious. Again, a good shot of demystification is in order here.

One of the features of this individual that I have followed through here is the assumption that in its basic workings such a figure is rational and that the life lived will be done so on the base of exercising what counts as rational choice. For instance, the criminal and legal system deals with people on the assumption that they are rational choosers, that any crime, to count as a crime, must have been carried as a reasoned choice by the perpetrator. In other words, in view of the courts, if there are indications that at some moment or other the person could have decided not to go ahead, then that person is deemed to have operated in a rational manner. Yet, as Michael Ford points out, addiction to substances like alcohol creates a curious conundrum here. For instance, if an alcoholic commits a crime while heavily intoxicated, can that person be said to have operated rationally? Recourse to the criteria of comparison with a sober person or stress on the choice to drink in the first place do not face the fundamental issue of the absence of the usual level of reasonable responsibility. Can an addict really choose not to drink, shoot up, snort, or whatever? Ford argues that at these points the deepest assumptions of liberalism about the human person begin to unravel.

Without the private, rational individual—itself the core of the ideology of liberalism—autobiographical criticism could not happen. Of course, it does happen, because liberalism is crucial to the way we think, given that we live under capitalism. Yet if one is always looking for the signs of the end of capitalism, and hence of liberalism, as I do, then there is a need to locate their contradictions, to see where they begin to fail. So also with the particular instance under discussion: my reason for reading autobiographical criticism in an alcoholic vein is that alcohol and its effects provides one of the ways in which the reasoned, private individual of autobiographical criticism begins to fall apart. It is precisely the yes to excess of alcoholism, and many other forms of addiction, that severely undercuts the autonomous unit of autobiography. By sinking into the alcoholic excess of much of the Bible, we gradually lose touch, along with our mental and physical faculties, with ourselves.

So we find that the Hebrew word for feast or banquet, *mišteh* (see Gen 21:8; 26:30; 29:22; 40:20; Judg 14:10; 2 Sam 3:20; 1 Kgs 3:15; Job 1:4, 5; Esth 1:3, 5, 9, and so on), derives from the root *šth,* to drink. A feast is a piss-up, in other words, a drinking party, a drinking bout (*mištēh hayyayin,* Esth 5:6; 7:2, 7), a symposium, in the basic sense of this Greek term. It seems as though people in the Bible are forever having feasts, rolling about in drunken abandon in some great utopian drive like Pieter Brueghel's extraordinary painting *The Land of Cockaigne* (1556) or the sheer excess of Bakhtin's carnivalesque (278–

302). Sex and alcohol also intersect, suggestively, in the Song of Songs, where wine is a central image for delectable sex (Song 1:2, 4; 4:10; 5:1; 7:3/2, 10/9; 8:2), but also for menstruation and the importance of fluids in the construction of a Hebrew sexuality (see Boer 2000).

Ultimately, it is Yahweh's appetite for alcohol, for vast quantities of red liquid, that points to the greatest excess of all. Yahweh demands endless beakers and mugs and pitchers of wine in the drink offerings to be left at the altar along with the bulls and sheep and birds (Gen 29:40; Lev 23:13, 18, 37; Num 28:7–10, 14, 15, 31; 29:6, 11, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39; Deut 32:38; 2 Kgs 16:13; 2 Chr 29:35; Ezra 7:17; Ezek 20:28; 45:17). A long-standing piss-pot, Yahweh can handle so much more than you or I, but his is a heady brew, mixed as it is with the blood of animals and humans in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 22:1–19; Lev 1–7; Ezek 20:25–26; 38:17–20) and with that of Jesus in the New Testament.

Yahweh, then, has been on a bender from before anyone can remember, which might explain some of the strange turns and events of history, for a drunken deity is highly unpredictable, reeling and staggering through the universe, giving rise to competing religious systems that claim him as theirs, to massive blunders that require superhuman efforts to repair. But every now and then he achieves that moment of clarity the hard-worn drunk will find, deep into a bender, in the early hours of the morning, when everything becomes powerfully clear and lucid. It is the moment for alcoholic writers to write and for drunken deities to create.

Such inebriated whims may go a long way to explaining stories like that of Noah. Although there are plenty of drinking stories in the Bible, so much so that my own copy has wine splashed over every second page (often hard to distinguish from the blood liberally sprinkled throughout), a little more work is needed in order to locate the brewing stories, those delicious accounts of the very production of alcohol. Indeed, it has been argued for some time that the first human communities gathered not primarily for the production of grain for bread, and thereby a more stable food supply; on the contrary, archaeological material from fourth millennium B.C.E. Egypt points to the possibility that it was the production of alcohol, specifically beer from barley and wheat, that led to the earliest gatherings of human beings in some form of social organization (Geller; see Braidwood; Corran: 17). In Mesopotamia something like 60 percent of the total cereal crop was barley, and 40 percent of the whole cereal crop was used for brewing (Corran: 15). Beer first, it seems, then bread (the processes are similar).[16] Of

16. For details on Egyptian and Babylonian brewing, see Corran (19–22), Protz (201–3), and Geller (258–59), who argues that modern day *bouza* in Egypt follows basically the same process as

course, I want to say that this makes profound sense. Why would humans trade the relatively light and efficient work of hunting and gathering for the much more labor intensive cultivation of crops? Unless the end product was worth the effort: a good beer or, if you lived in Palestine or Greece or Rome, wine to enjoy at the end of the day, to ease out tired muscles and a burned-out mind.

As it was with breweries, so also with vineyards. The body of a lover in the Song of Songs (1:6; 14; 2:15; 7:13/12; 8:11–12), the image of Israel in Isaiah (5:1–6), of the promise of Canaan (Deut 6:11; Josh 24:13), or the utopian future (Amos 9:14), of the "kingdom" in the parables of Jesus (Matt 20:1–16; 21:28–32; Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19)—the vineyard rarely appears without the notion of cultivation, the organization of labor to keep the wall in repair, the weeds at bay, the vines trained, and the grapes picked for processing. The consistent underside of neglect then functions as a parable for social breakdown, the absence of order, organization, and care. As such the vineyard, like Lévi-Strauss's arguments concerning cooked food (Lévi-Strauss; see Boer 1999:130–49), is a fundamental image of society itself, marking the presence of social organization in the face of consistent threats to that order (see Amos 9:14).

A paradigmatic story that brings all these elements together—the production of alcoholic beverages as socially foundational, the vineyard as a signifier of social order, the threat of dissolution—appears in the story of Noah. The watery dimensions of this story provide the first hint that the story needs an alcoholic exegesis, for images of water, flow, flushing, washing are characteristic of writing by alcoholics. So it is not merely that Noah's story is one of the radical option for renewal via total destruction, nor that it is merely about the forces of chaos threatening created order, nor even that it is another creation story with a little more conflict and destruction than the earlier accounts in Genesis. It seems to me that this is a story about planting and cultivating a vineyard so that Noah can get drunk, for immediately following the story of the flood and the covenant Yahweh makes with Noah there is the story of his vineyard, the first of humankind (Gen 9:20–21). It is only when the vineyard has produced its first crop and when Noah has been able to make wine from that crop and drink it until he is comatose, totally plastered, that society may be said to have begun. Nay, even more, for he lies there naked (Gen 9:21), a prelapsarian state of naked innocence that suggests the Edenic quality of his grog. His sons, of course, return us to the world of sin and shame by covering his nakedness (Gen 9:22–27). Yet the process of planting and cultivating vines until they produce grapes, treading out the grapes, and producing wine takes years instead of days.

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ancient brewing. In Egypt, ancient brewing and baking often happened at the same facility, for beer cakes were used in the brewing process.

That first drink must have felt like it was long overdue! No wonder complete alcoholic stupor was the only thing that could stop him drinking even more. Perhaps Ham (Gen 9:22) could have prevented the curse of his father directed at him had he merely brought Noah another drink instead of telling his brothers about their father's nakedness.

A story about wine rather than beer, I must admit. I really do wish Noah had planted hops and barley and made himself some beer; at least it would have taken less time, half a year maybe, before that first drink. But I can feel for the story, know what it is like to await that first drink after the labor of brewing. In fact, did not Noah get up after his drunken repose, rebuke his sons, and, inspired, write the story of the flood, the vineyard, and sweet, sweet wine?

So I am in good company, with both Yahweh and Noah at their creative best, alcohol rushing through their veins, the creative urge upon us all. For I have been drinking consistently while brewing my beer and writing this paper, greeting the flow, the sparks and connections together in my mind. But I have reached a divide, for I feel simultaneously like collapsing and extraordinarily clear. So I clasp the moment, cracking and mashing—soaking the barley in hot water (65°C/150°F)—and waiting for the starches to convert to fermentable sugars, sparging (washing the sugars off the grains into the wort), boiling the wort, which gets rid of the enzymes that have enabled the wort to get this far, adding hops for taste, drawing off the wort and cooling as quickly as possible, adding yeast for fermentation, and putting the barrel in the hot box. Every now and then I will need to skim the head that forms, but otherwise I can leave it for four or five days before bottling. Sealed from impurities, the water lock goes back in place, and I set the thermostat to 21 degrees Celsius,[17] stagger over to the old leather chair I salvaged from the rubbish pile for precisely this purpose, and collapse. The walls spin, I feel like throwing up, my eyesight dims, my reason and identity goes, and I sink into a semiconscious, forgetful, identity-erasing sleep that only alcohol can bring on.

He'brew: The Chosen Beer

> No longer drink only water, but take a little beer for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments. (1 Tim 5:23, modified)
>
> The Talmud advocates getting so drunk that you can't tell blessings from curses. (Jeremy Cowan, founder of He'Brew Beer, www.shmaltz.com)

17. Beginners may wish to consult Bravery's *Home Booze* (161–75) or any number of other guides for home brewers or buy a ready-made wort from the supermarket and follow the instructions.

Messiah Stout: the beer you've been waiting for. (Slogan for He'Brew Beer)

In my sleep, a spinning, washy dream emerges. Late one night I sit at my computer, fiddling with "Hebrew" and "Beer," and *hinnēh,* lo, there is a web page for a brewer whose beer is called, yes, He'brew Beer. Founded by Jeremy Cowan in 1995 after a high-school joke some years before, the "Shmaltz Brewing Company is dedicated to crafting quality beer and quality shtick for the Jewish community and beyond" (www.shmaltz.com[18]). It is appreciated as a pure, bright beer, leaving no aftertaste, and is one that has been taken up by the Jewish community, especially during the feast of Purim, although it is drunk now by Gentiles as well. Surely this must be the drink of choice for any interpreter of the Hebrew Bible!

So, it seems that the preceding story of brewing is that of a certain Jeremy Cowan, of He'Brew Beer fame, for I am a teetotaler, mad keen on running, cycling, weights, and vegetarianism, and I would never contemplate a drink or a smoke. How can you tell? In an oblique sense, the signals are buried in our syntax (see Rivinus: 48).

18. If you are in the Bay area, or elsewhere in the United States, check out the Shmaltz Brewing Company, 3435 Cesar Chavez, Suite 227, San Francisco, CA 94110; mail order: west 800-966-7835; east/midwest 800-777-9137.

Red Herrings in Bullet-Time: *The Matrix*, the Bible, and the Postcommunist I*

Ela Nutu

In the beginning there are words. *I hold my breath in the deep darkness of the cinema theater.* A black screen. Two voices interact in a whispered, intimate yet professional dialogue over what sounds like a telephone line. The conversation is cut short, and there is fear in her voice. *What they do is illegal; I know it, and my loyalties are still with me.* She is in a hotel room, an old place, abandoned, on course for demolition perhaps. *Like the old yet beautiful buildings in Bucharest, vestiges of a more glorious past, torn down by the Communist government precisely for that reason.* Policemen burst in. *Uniforms do look the same everywhere, don't they?* She is trapped. *I am at the edge of my seat. Why do I choose her side? Am I still afraid of authority figures?* She looks cool, calm, and composed; strong, stylish, and dignified. Her allure is powerful. She is not a "little girl," as the policemen had so arrogantly labeled her. She is called Trinity. *I wish I could have fought as she does. Jumped across rooftops as she does? Impossible!* She's just flown across two buildings and in through a window! She falls skillfully down a flight of stairs, shows a trace of fear. *I want her to win even more.* The Securitate agents are after her. She runs but is crushed in the public phone booth. Defeated. *I ache.* The door to her tomb is removed, and her body is nowhere to be found. Instead, just the smashed phone. She's gone. Disappeared. *How? I'm relieved and surprised, confused yet hooked. This promises to be interesting.*

From real bullets to bullet-time photography, from one bloody and televised revolution to a less violent and fictional, cinematic representation of another, I find myself enjoying *The Matrix.*[1] Produced by Joel Silver (known for his other many productions, such as *Lethal Weapon, Conspiracy Theory, Demolition Man, and Die Hard*—only to name a few), *The Matrix* is a film in which Andy and Larry Wachowski, who wrote and directed it, appear to have created their *mani-*

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* For Georg Simonis (1931–2000).

1. This essay was written before the film's two sequels appeared and therefore makes no reference to them.

festo. Audiences across the world have responded enthusiastically to this film, and heated discussions about its subtexts have become irresistible. Many believe the Bible to have been the principal source of inspiration for the Wachowski brothers. Thus, Neo is perceived as playing the role of Christ, Morpheus that of John the Baptist, and Cypher that of Judas Iscariot. From within a Christian location, one would, of course, welcome such familiar echoes. Yet there are no substantial parallels between *The Matrix* and Christian allegory; instead, only red herrings. *The Matrix* does indeed rejuvenate certain myths, in mutant form, but only because the film breathes an air in which the axes of linear time—and indeed of time and space—have collapsed. Past, present, and future, fact and fiction, and the identities inscribed in them are fluid in this film, and it is within this context that a new myth is born.

The Wachowskis' myth is not that of a new messiah, however, but that of the Matrix, the embodiment of Jean Baudrillard's theory of neocapitalist operational simulation; it presents the potential of a cybernetic order aiming at total control. Baudrillard's *Simulacres et Simulation*—itself featured in the film—and not the Bible is the operative subtext of this film. This understanding of *The Matrix,* however, does expose my own Romanian post-Communist hues as intrinsic to my theory. I see it all through the prism of she who is I.

Recalling Fiction

The Matrix produces the image of an era in which technology has become alive and life-depending. The time is close to 2199—although no one really knows for sure—and represents an equally post- and preapocalyptic phase in human history. It is postapocalyptic in the culturally understood sense, in as much as it defines a time after the end of human civilization as we know it, and preapocalyptic in the Johannine sense of the term, in as much as it becomes the dawn of revelatory salvation of humankind. Both phases, however, are unknown to most people, who think it is still 1999 and enjoy life as they have always known it. The scenario is thus quite compelling: the entire human race is "in bondage" (it lives in a prison for the mind), and, of course, it needs saving. All people need to be disconnected from the Matrix (a computer-generated dream world) and introduced to a new dimension, of the true real. The process is rather delicate, and what is presupposed is a great deal of faith. In his training, Neo, the principal character, is taught how to free his mind by "letting go of it all: fear, doubt, and disbelief." A handful of people have managed that already and formed the Resistance. From it, we meet the crew of one ship, a hovercraft called Nebuchadnezzar. Morpheus, Trinity, and Cypher are some of her crew. Neo becomes the latest addition.

There is talk of the last human city, Zion, positioned close to the core of the earth, where it is still warm. There is talk of a precursor to Neo, a man *born*

inside the Matrix (rather than *grown* by the machines), who had the "ability to change whatever he wanted, to remake the Matrix as he saw fit." After he died, "the Oracle prophesied his return and that his coming should hail the destruction of the Matrix and the war, and bring freedom to the people." Morpheus believes that Neo is indeed The One (the name Neo can, in fact, be an anagram for "one") who would achieve all that. In other words, Neo is the savior of humankind.

Quite obviously, the language of this film is pregnant with symbols, and the biblical echoes are strong. In his *Ultimate Matrix Concordance,* Jerry Glover declares that "*The Matrix* is stacked with references. Which are verifiable and which are coincidental we may never know" (Glover: 18). What we do know, however, is that in a web conversation the Wachowskis declared that most of the religious symbolism is indeed "intentional" (Amstrong: 22). I would like to look at the textual weaving of this film, since I found it rather striking that much of the symbolism is veiled; its employment, covert. We are given encoded signifiers, which turn out to be red herrings.

Neo, a New Messiah?

As well as an anagram for the "one," Neo can also mean "new." The new One? The new Messiah, perhaps? There are certainly quite a few people who would readily embrace this interpretation. It has been reported, for instance, that a Lutheran pastor in Pembroke, Ontario, "preaches sermons based entirely on the film and shows it in youth confirmation classes," because he believes that *The Matrix* is based on the passion narrative (Armstrong: 22). One could investigate this theory.

Right from the start, Neo is thanked by Roy with, "You are my savior, man; my own personal Jesus Christ." Whether that is a veiled salutation and demarcation of the messianic figure or not is a different matter. However, for a Christian audience, the few uncanny similarities between Christ and Neo seem easy to detect:

(1) The arrivals of both Christ and Neo appear to have been prophesied. The Gospel writers—particularly Matthew—make numerous references to Old Testament texts that seem to be fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. These proclaim the future arrival of "the Messiah," "the Christ," "the Anointed One." Jesus himself is represented as reading the scroll of Isaiah and declaring himself as the one on whom the Holy Spirit rested, the one "anointed to preach the good news to the poor … proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed"(Luke 4:18–19//Isa 61:1–2). Neo's arrival has been prophesied by the Oracle, Morpheus informs us, and his mission is to accomplish the "destruction of the Matrix and the war, and [to] bring freedom to the people."

(2) Both Christ and Neo are saviors, set to facilitate the traversal of humankind from one realm into another. Christ proclaims the kingdom of God and life eternal, while Neo is set to reestablish the reign of the human and the real over the cybernetic and the simulated. Zion as "the city where the party would be" features in both scenarios; in *The Matrix,* Tank, the operator, day-dreams of it as the symbol of peace and liberation, while biblical texts mention it as the locus for celebrations, "singing and everlasting joy," where, for example, "the ransomed … will return; gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away" (Isa 51:11; see also Rev 14:1–3).

(3) Both Christ and Neo are "announced." Jesus is heralded by John the Baptist, who declares that "every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill shall be brought low, the crooked shall be made straight, the rough ways shall be made smooth" (Luke 3:46//Isa 40:3–5). Neo is introduced by Morpheus, who proclaims him to be "The One," who has the "ability to change whatever he wants, to remake the Matrix as he sees fit." Similarly, both John the Baptist and Morpheus recognize the superiority of Christ and Neo, respectively, and are willing to sacrifice themselves for the advancement of the other two.

(4) Both Christ and Neo experience a type of water baptism, and both are affirmed in their identities in the process. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus is reported to have been baptized in the River Jordan by John and acknowledged by God the Father as the "beloved Son." Neo is unplugged from the Matrix and flushed down into the rivers of sewage, then picked up and acknowledged by Morpheus as the long-awaited "One." It is interesting to notice that Morpheus himself is later acknowledged as "our Father" by Tank, the operator.

(5) Both Christ and Neo follow a development process. Luke reports that Jesus "increase[d] in wisdom and stature" (Luke 2:52), while Neo "needs a lot of work." First, his muscles had atrophied, so they need "rebuilding." (It is, by the way, surprising that, although Neo is uncomfortable with using his eyes for the first time, he can, however, speak fluently without any prior physical experience in verbal communication. But we will not go there. More fascinating is the fact that the image of Neo on the operating table unites the temporal axes of past and fictional present in powerfully evoking a postmortem body of Christ at the dawn of Neo's true life. Christ's tomb is thus Neo's heaven, or vice versa.) Second, Neo also goes through a learning process—a painful one at that—leading to his "increasing in wisdom" (Morpheus does a very good job of helping Neo become acquainted with the "true" history of humanity).

(6) Both Christ and Neo experience fear and doubt before climatic moments in their "mission impossible" scenarios. Christ goes through the Gethsemane trial, in which he prays to the Father that the cup of his destiny would be removed (Matt 26:36–46//Mark 14:32–41//Luke 22:39–46), while Neo

declares himself as being "just another guy" and thus ill-equipped for the destiny of a savior.

(7) Both Christ and Neo are betrayed. Judas Iscariot delivers his master with a kiss and for a bag of silver (Matt 26:14–16, 47–49), while Cypher betrays the Resistance over a "juicy and delicious" yet simulated steak and for a place back in "the power plant"; there he would be able to enjoy the virtual—yet, alas, not virtuous—life of a rich and important person: an actor (perhaps the best lifestyle for one who prefers the fantasy over the real). The betrayal itself is in both cases preceded by some close partaking of either food or drink.

(8) Having overcome their weakness, both Christ and Neo discover within themselves the strength to face their enemies and die. The former is caught, tried, and crucified. The latter is fought, chased, and shot. Both, however, are resurrected. To the astonishment of his disciples, Christ comes alive through the power of God the Father, and he returns to heaven having left the promise of the Holy Spirit on earth. Neo, on the other hand, is resurrected by the power of Trinity's love and faith, to the pleasant surprise of his friends and extreme annoyance of his enemies; after defeating Agent Smith, he returns to Reality. Both Christ and Neo are perceived as victorious.

So here it is: Neo is Christ, Morpheus is John the Baptist, Cypher is Judas Iscariot, and Trinity … well, she has been linked to the Mary Magdalene figure—just to prove that where there is a will there is a way. To quote a *Sunday Times* reporter, however, "it's not terribly Mary Magdalene to wear tight black leather and kick the seven kinds of hell out of the bad guys, so the celestial jury is out on her" (Armstrong: 22). I, on the other hand, and just to play the game, would be tempted to suggest a different connection to Christian allegory altogether: Trinity is the Holy Spirit. Despite her not being very dovelike, she is the element that unites Neo (the son) and Morpheus (the father) in a tight trio right from the beginning. She contacts Neo for Morpheus, delivers Neo from the evil bug as a preparatory measure for Neo's first meeting with Morpheus, encourages and supports Neo throughout his travail and training while Morpheus bonds with him in a "father-son" fashion, joins Neo in his *loco* rescue-Morpheus operation, then loves Neo into living, and the trio is reunited. Again, not very orthodox; the trio of *The Matrix* could never be a Trinity in the Christian sense.

In fact, I would like to argue that the celestial jury should indeed be out on all of them. Leather or no leather, my opinion is not particularly linked to the characters' wardrobe—I do not want to be accused of a lack of imagination. In fact, to be fair and in response to the *Sunday Times* reporter, I would have to draw attention to the stark difference between the textile penury of the "real" world—closer, perhaps, to our impression of the sense of fashion displayed by Jesus and his followers—and the glossy resourcefulness of the Matrix; it is,

after all, the "residual self image projections" of the characters that we are likely to remember first, for the simple reason that we are exposed to them for a lot longer during the film. So I take a different stance.

If *The Matrix* is indeed intended to be a Christian allegory (which I do not think to be the case), quite frankly, it fails to deliver. The very element of salvation has different connotations for Christ and Neo. Christ brings a freedom that pertains to the spiritual; he saves humans from spiritual ignorance and spiritual death; he refuses adamantly the political role that many Jews had associated with the messianic figure and does not participate overtly in his people's struggle against Roman control. Christ's message promotes meekness and forgiveness. Neo, on the other hand, takes a quasi-political identity. His fight is to free his people from a regime of total control, in which their minds, bodies, and resources are no longer theirs. Neo's salvation is pragmatic; his motivation quasi-Marxist, one could say, because consciousness and material context are intimately intertwined. His message is "To arms.… Let's have a revolution!"[2]

Thus, although a savior of sorts, Neo is not a convincing messiah (and I mean it here in the Christian sense). His Superman qualities—his flying and fighting abilities, his tight attire, and his long cloak-looking coat—are more evident. The Wachowskis themselves make no direct claims to the messianic status, although it could be argued that the absence of biblical text in this film is much louder than its presence would have been. Furthermore, there are no direct propositions equating Neo with deity. Script and Scripture do not marry here.

Indeed, Neo is "just another guy" with an incredibly high IQ; as Mouse points out, his "neuro-kinetics are way above normal." In fact, I would like to suggest that his special qualities—the very ones that recommend him as a new messiah to some—are entirely the results of acute intelligence. After all, Morpheus keeps encouraging Neo throughout his development to "free his mind." Indeed, even the combat training—Jujitsu, Kung Fu, Drunken Boxing(?)—is all performed at cerebral level only. Neo's death and resurrection are located in the mind, too; they are not real. Neo is mortally wounded in the Matrix, but his brain is strong enough to survive it; Morpheus's statement that "the body cannot live without the mind" is not entirely true, anyway, and so Neo finds

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2. The fact that the Wachowskis choose the Woman in Red as a distracting element for Neo still puzzles me a little: I can't make up my mind whether the deadly enemy masquerading as that charming package is supposed to be Communism—due to the color of her dress—or bourgeois capitalism—due to the quality of her dress, her coiffure, and the tantalizing demeanor of her healthy body (no rations there!). Is Neo a reincarnation of Roy Cohen or Lenin? I am inclined to say the latter.

the source of his simulated resurrection in a very fertile and focused mind. Furthermore, Neo develops the ability to "see in code" and thus manipulate and eventually defeat the program of the Matrix. If Neo is a god, he is only a god of the simulacrum. His super-hero intentions and abilities, however, I will not challenge.

Myth and *The Matrix*

Another element that I will not challenge is the fact that the Wachowskis use mythical language; an eclectic one at that, too. I have already pointed out the savior and the Superman myths. We are also presented with Morpheus, the Oracle, and the three-headed guardian program (evoking Cerberus), which find colorful echoes in Greek mythology.

The information surrounding the Delphic Oracle is still rather cloudy. However, without going into too much detail, the Oracle, or the Pythia, was reported to have been a prophetess of the cult of Apollo. She was served by priests and has been depicted as purifying herself with fumigating laurel leaves and barley meal prior to delivering divine revelation and sitting on a tripod throughout it. The enquirers were not admitted immediately into the temple, above which lay the inscription "Know Thyself." They were also expected to offer a sacred cake on the main altar outside, as a charge for consulting the Oracle (Parke and Warmell: 17–45). The Wachowskis' Oracle is a perceptive and charming middle-aged woman who lives in a flat, smokes cigarettes, bakes cookies, and eventually sits on a kitchen stool. Her voice and her wrinkles are soothing as those of a mother would be. After the expected *ante-chambre* yet performed slightly differently, Neo's consultation begins under the augury of Duke Ellington's *I'm beginning to See the Light,* employs the "Know Thyself" inscription, and finishes with Neo biting into the cookie that the Oracle herself had baked. Very creative.

Morpheus was the god of dreams and the son of Father Sleep, mentioned by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses.* The god Morpheus "excelled to imitate the human form … the features, gait and speech of men, their wonted clothes and turn of phrase," as Ovid described him (*Metam.* 11.616–754). This is not, however, the text of *The Matrix,* although the allusions to sleep and dreams may find themselves at home within it. Paradoxically, the character Morpheus is the one to wake Neo from his perpetual dreaming. The very fact that humanity is preserved in liquid-filled pods in *The Matrix* reminds one of the River Lethe, "the river of oblivion" in Hades, or the Underworld. The dead were said to traverse this river in order to induce forgetfulness of the real, or living world.

Speaking of Hades, the three agents, or the sentient programs, or indeed the prison wardens, evoke Cerberus, the three-headed guard-dog of Hades. The

role of Cerberus was to stop anyone from leaving the world of the shades and join the living, almost identical thus with the role of the sentient programs.

In all fairness, the agents are themselves stars in their own right. Embodied in this trio is the myth of the perfect AI machines, developed to the highest level, that of reproduction. Although they have the impeccable style of James Bond—indeed, Smith appears to think himself another 007 ("Smith, Agent Smith," he introduces himself to Morpheus)—the function of these "all-knowing" programs is less glamorous; they are prison guards, as mentioned earlier. What I find to be the height of irony is that these gate keepers are self-declared prisoners. When trying to extract Zion's mainframe computer codes from the tortured mind of Morpheus, it is Agent Smith who displays human weakness—ironically, the machines' greatest strength; he simply breaks down. "I hate this place, this zoo, this prison," Smith declares. "I must get out of here. I must get free, and in this mind is the key, my key." What a lunatic, I would say, but he is only a computer program.

On the other hand, the most interesting element of that scene is the striking resemblance between the tied and tortured Morpheus and the crucified Christ. One almost thinks of Jan Mostaert's *Man of Sorrows (Christ Crowned with Thorns).* The helplessness, the heavy silence, the sweat and tears, and the crown of pain—thorns for Christ and electrodes for Morpheus—do seem to unite the film with the painting and Morpheus with Christ. Again, the axes of fact and fiction, time and space, indeed the identities inscribed in these are fluid in *The Matrix.* The Wachowskis' creativity is not linear.

Having established that the mythological intertextuality is considerable, the question that surfaces is Why? I was rather surprised that a film such as *The Matrix* would employ mythological language at all. I expected the film to shun metalanguage. The allusions to myths do not only seem to establish that, but they also appear to create connections to metanarrative, to history—at least in terms of cultural development. I wondered whether the Wachowskis were set on producing some reassuring grounds for a *grande* meaning to human existence (lost, apparently, within the postmodern). Should this be correct, Jungian critics would probably see in *The Matrix* a good case for the "myth as compensation" theory.

For Jung, mythology is, in its entirety, a projection for the collective unconscious, which is the common psychological foundation for all human life (similar to the myth of origins concept for Eliade). This is the image in which certain elements, "the archetypes or dominants," Jung says, "have crystallised out in the course of time. They are the ruling powers, the gods, images of the dominant laws and principles, and of typical, reoccurring events in the soul's cycle of experience" (Jung 1956:105). Therefore, myths are not spontaneous products of the individual psyche; they are "culturally elaborated" (Walker: 3–23). In the

accumulated life of cultures, myths are said to "compensate for the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present.… The artist seizes on [a compensatory] image, and in raising it from deepest consciousness he brings it into relation with conscious values, thereby transforming it until it can be accepted by the minds of his contemporaries according to their powers" (Jung 1971:81–83). In this light, even Ovid's *Metamorphoses* could indeed be perceived as compensatory, namely, to the Augustan spirit of seriousness; its stories could easily be identified with a playful hedonistic spirit that was seen as subverting Augustan morality and the consolidation of imperial power (Walker: 20). It comes as no surprise to me that Ovid died in exile (on the shores of the Black Sea, in a Roman province that later became Romania, as it happens). Moving on, Steven Walker declares that Jung perceives myth as "a potential compensation for the sense of meaninglessness that plagues modern culture, proud of its rationality but at the same time a prey to doubts and existential anguish" (1995:22–23).

So, by extension, is this what *The Matrix* does? Employ myth and metalanguage as a compensatory method to bring cultural equilibrium to a now-postmodern society with no clear parameters? Malinowski, who studied myth all his life, came to the conclusion that myth is indeed "an indispensable ingredient of all cultures … constantly regenerated; every historical change creates its mythology, which is, however, but indirectly related to historical fact. Myth is a constant product of faith, which is in need of miracles; of sociological status, which demands precedent; of moral value, which requires sanction" (Malinowski: 21). *The Matrix* does indeed rejuvenate certain myths, in mutant form; this is owed to the fact that the film breathes an air in which the horizons of linear time[3]—and indeed of time and space—have collapsed. Past, present, and future, fact and fiction, and the identities inscribed in them are fluid, not crystallized, in this film; it is within this context that a new myth is born. As Barthes would say, "myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion" (Barthes: 129).

Contrary to popular belief, however, the Wachowskis' myth is not that of a new messiah but that of the Matrix. It is the myth of the world beyond the mirror of Alice in *Through the Looking Glass* and Dorothy's fantastic journey to Oz (both alluded to in the film). The new myth is that of operational simulation, indeed *simulacrum of the third order*—and I shall explain what I mean by that in a moment. The myth is that of the virtual, which happens to be more colorful than reality, if indeed distinguishable from it; that of the prison for the mind, which is beyond human sensory perception. It is one in which all human axes of experience are subjugated by the code. Thus, perhaps the question should

3. For a more detailed approach to the theory of collapsed linear time, see Tester: 131.

be not What is the Matrix? (*à propos* the website of the film), but What is the matrix of *The Matrix*?[4]

The Matrix of *The Matrix*

At the beginning of their film, the Wachowski brothers offer the audience a sign, which in the myth becomes a signifier.[5] Neo takes a book from a shelf, opens it, and takes out a zip disc from its belly. The carved-out section in the pages of the book reminds one of other films in which the Bible suffers the same treatment, that of a cinematic prop. Neo's book, however, is Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacres et Simulation*.[6] This and not the Bible I believe to be the matrix of *The Matrix,* the inspiration behind the script.

The myth of the simulated is not new to cinema. Other films, such as *The Truman Show* and *Ed TV,* have dealt with similar issues, in which the medium becomes the message, the fabricated replaces the natural, the script replaces the real, and vice versa. However, Baudrillard goes further in his assessment; "we must think of the media as if they were in outer orbit," he declares, "a sort of genetic code which controls the mutation of the real into the hyperreal" (Baudrillard 1983:55). The Wachowskis seem to have clothed Baudrillard's theory with the story of the Matrix. Baudrillard describes thus a world in which metaphysics goes with the simulation:

> No more mirror of being and appearance, of the real and its concept … rather, genetic miniaturisation.… The real is produced from miniaturised units, from matrices, memory banks and command models—and with these it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times.… It is hyperreal, the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.… The age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials—worse: by their artificial resurrection in a system of signs, a more ductile material than meaning, in that it lends itself to all systems of equivalence, all binary oppositions and all combinatory algebra. It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself, that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double, a metastable,

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4. Throughout this paper I refer to the film itself when using "*The Matrix,*" to the computer-generated dream world featured in the film when using "the Matrix," and to the dictionary meaning of the term when using "the matrix."

5. For further exploration of the transformation of signs into signifiers in myth, see Barthes: 115.

6. Although the original French title is *Simulacres et Simulation* (Paris: Galilée, 1981), the book has been translated as *Simulations* in the Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series (1983).

> programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes. Never again will the real have to be produced—this is the vital function of the model in a system of death, or rather of anticipated resurrection which no longer leaves any chance even in the event of death. (Baudrillard 1983:3–4)

Thus, moving beyond his first two orders of simulacra—(1) *counterfeit,* as the dominant scheme of the "classical" period, from the Renaissance to the industrial revolution; and (2) *production,* as the dominant scheme of the industrial era—Baudrillard envisages the simulacrum of the third order, or the *simulation,* as "the reigning scheme of the current phase that is controlled by the code.… The great simulacra constructed by man, which pass from a universe of natural laws to a universe of force and tensions of force, to a universe of structures and binary oppositions. After the metaphysics of being and appearance, after that of energy and determination, comes that of indeterminacy and the code," Baudrillard postulates (1983:83, 103).

What code, however? Well, inspired by McLuhan and his very high regard for the mathematical genius of Leibniz, who saw in "the mystic elegance of the binary system that counts only the zero and the one the very image of creation," Baudrillard declares the genetic code as "the most accomplished form" of the *genesis of simulacra.* He describes the industrial simulacra—the new *operational* configuration (like the cybernetic control of *The Matrix*)—and declares "digitality [as] its metaphysical principle (the God of Leibniz), and DNA, its prophet." Baudrillard envisages a radical mutation with "signals of the code, illegible, with no gloss possible, buried like programmatic matrices light-years away in the depths of the 'biological' body—black boxes where all the commandments, all the answers ferment! … Such is the genetic code: an erased record, unchangeable, of which we are no more than cells-for-reading. All aura of sign, of significance itself is resolved in this determination; all is resolved in the inscription and decoding" (Baudrillard 1983:103–5).

The Wachowskis' Matrix seems to be just that. The binary oppositions create even the essence of the myth: the one and the zero (Neo and Cypher).[7] Thus, the "transcendent finalities" of humanity are reduced to a dashboard full of instruments. Human beings are grown as crop. The genetic code, now manipulated by the machines, controls all life.[8]

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7. Cypher, or cipher, is the arithmetical symbol 0, from Arabic *sifr,* zero.

8. Baudrillard calls Jacques Monod "the strict theologian of this molecular transcendence" and Edgar Morin "the rapt disciple" who developed the AND anagram of DNA, to be read Adonai (Baudrillard 1983:109).

Echoes

The Matrix engages me more than I had anticipated, and in a surprising fashion, too. I find myself wearing shoes that fit. Its echoes ring of my own experiences. Perhaps *The Matrix* and my location have more in common than immediately apparent. The mighty cooperative, the Borg-like system in which people's minds, bodies, and resources are centrally controlled and managed seem to be the means of both the Matrix and Marxist Communism. Even the classic concept of ideology as "false consciousness" presupposes a certain degree of social naïveté, if not ignorance. After all, Marx's well known attitude to ideology is, as expressed in his *Capital,* "Sie wissen das nicht, aber sie tun es," translated as "we are not aware of this, nevertheless we do it" (Marx 1887:45).

Subtly manufactured in *The Matrix* and ideologically created and maintained in Communism, culture as the medium of control is another shared element. Ironically, one of the most prominently argued points in the Marxist critique of capitalism is the idea that culture—and literature in particular—is a powerful political tool in the hands of the ruling class. Here, both the neo-capitalist scenario (the Matrix) and the Marxist product (Communism) appropriate this tool rather skillfully.

After he scornfully dismissed philosophical pursuits in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach by saying, "philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" (Marx 1969:286), Marx later acknowledged that "philosophy cannot realise itself without the transcendence of the proletariat, and the proletariat cannot realise itself without the realisation of philosophy" (Marx 1975:257). This action-oriented ideology, or emancipatory knowledge—that was later to become in Romania "multilateral development," or "higher degree of consciousness"—plagued me as I grew up. In its antiphilosophical, anti-Idealist, and anti-Utopian orientation, Marxism birthed a new kind of philosophy, a new level of Idealism, and a new image of Utopia: Communism. Marx preached freedom, and instead his theory gave birth in the East to a labyrinth of iron prisons (similar to the human power plant of the Matrix) in which entire nations rotted; he preached progress, and instead Communism achieved not stagnation but regress (maintained through the denial of individuality and its creative force and through the promotion of "blissful" ignorance, imposed by means of closing all borders, fabricating all news, and starving and tiring the masses to exhaustion). Now I can say, echoing Hocquengham in his critique of the French system, that the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) "played the role of a kind of bourgeois superego: it stood for the moral principles which it accused the ruling class of respecting in theory, only to betray them in practice" (Hocquengham 1978:37).

The social workings of Communism in Romania were not very different from the capitalist system, despite the fact that the latter was supposed to be

characterized by perpetual class struggles, according to Marx. As noticed by Baudrillard himself, Marx only managed to hold up a mirror to capitalism, since he appropriated its categories (e.g., production). Through it, Marx managed to subject the lives of his unfortunate disciples to the capitalist-rationalist ideals of deferred gratification and purely pragmatic usefulness (Baudrillard 1975:26). I was thought that we had to make costly sacrifices for the advancement of society, that I didn't matter as an individual but only as part of "the people" (even in the Matrix, where all experience is manufactured, the corporate scenario of Mr. Rhineheart's software company, where "every single employee understands that they are part of a whole," exists). The few degrees of separation between the two social systems resided within the defining elements of class: although a nonclass system in theory, Romanian Communism promoted and maintained a very solid class system in practice. Thus, the superhuman party leadership, the poor-yet-honorable intelligentsia, the strong-and-proud proletariat (working class), and the humble-yet-honest peasantry were clearly demarcated. The pyramid structure of this system, with the party leadership as its pinnacle, made centralization of all power, knowledge, and resources an easy game.

Yet total control can only be imperceptible up to a point, the point where a revolution is simply inevitable.

> Hence there is a major role for students, youth who are disqualified in advance, voluntarily or not, as well as all types of social groups, … because, by the process of the centralisation and technocratic pyramidisation of the system, they fall into marginality, into the periphery, into the zone of disaffection and irresponsibility. Excluded from the game, their revolt henceforth aims at the rules of the game.… This is what gives the new left or hippie movement its meaning. Not the open revolt of a few, but the immense, latent defection, the endemic, masked resistance of a silent majority, but one nostalgic for the spoken word and for violence. Something in all men profoundly rejoices in seeing a car burn. (Baudrillard 1975:67)

Although Baudrillard's view does focus on the Western milieu, it can also describe (as well as any theory can encapsulate *histoire vivante*) the inceptive winds of December 1989 in Romania.

My own revolt manifested itself first through apathy and cynicism vis-à-vis the system (universal signs of a true teenager, perhaps). Then it appropriated a more active existence in the element of personal faith, or the shunned, ridiculed yet feared "alternative." Indoctrinated in the Communist ideology from kindergarten and essentially an atheist for half of my life, I was allowed to have my childhood and early teenage years flavored by Greek mythology, existentialism (Sartre and Camus in particular), theater, and film. As windows into the "beyond," these allowed my soul to rest now and again in its perpetual oscilla-

tions between dreams of demigods and my clearly understood yet angst-ridden mortality, the world through the looking screen and the hard seats of the cinema theater, the fantastically fabricated attacks on my senses and the penury of my Communist context. The illusions of another world, or the world of illusions masquerading as "the answer" fed me. Then, just like Neo, I realized that "the question" drove me further and further. What is the m/Matrix? Control. I have no clear recollection as to how the answer finally came; it just did. One day it was simply there, staring at me … and I *knew* it.

Having treated Christianity as yet another set of myths, my journey to believing in its God was even more taxing than Neo's own *fidei via* in *The Matrix.* When I eventually did manage to "let go of it all: fear, doubt, and disbelief,"[9] I found in Christianity not a means to abhor Marxism, however; it had stopped being about giving Communism the finger. I encountered and embraced answers, the euphoria that accompanied them, and, of course, an identity beyond one's social, political, and economic grounds, a world in which individuality and corporate identity could co-exist happily. So, I readily inhaled the opiate, which was not at all of the masses. I stumbled first—like the newborn that I was—then stood upright, alone with a handful of like-spirited people. I refused membership in the Communist Youth and thus wore my visible new clothes: sewn on them, the star-eyed stigma of a *mad* outsider, a miracle-believing pariah.

I could not fly like Neo, however, and it was not my doing, but the miracle happened: the Romanian masses came to their senses. Riding on our gathered strength, we accomplished at the end of the 1980s a spontaneous revolution, or ideological regress (since the natural evolution of social systems was, of course: capitalism followed, through socialism, by Communism; as much as the Stone Age was followed, through the Bronze, by the Iron). Yet a revolution was the only available means not of progress but survival. The oligarchic power-system was overthrown because we simply wanted our minds, souls, bodies, and resources back. At the end of it, the illusion was complete: we were finally and totally free. We had been "unplugged" from our Matrix. The memory of it continues to appear like a dream. My current context is genetically different, and I have to remind myself: I lived through a revolution, and our revolution was televised (sorry to prove you wrong, Gil Scott-Heron).

On closer inspection, however, I would find it difficult to articulate precisely whether it was pure freedom or an euphoric cocktail of freedom and anarchy that we tasted and tasted and drank and drank and lived and lived and became. Paradoxically, in order to join the masses, I forgot about individuality and differ-

9. As Morpheus encourages Neo in *The Matrix.*

ence—the very objects and objectives of my own struggle—and allowed myself to be dissolved within the larger identity of "the people" once again. One could say that, for a few days, I was essentially Marxist. In fighting against the ruling class of Communism, I adopted a Communist technique: the loss of individuality and the creation of the united collective. *We* stood up, *we* marched, *we* held hands, *we* sang, *we* defied the authorities, the police, the army, the Securitate, and their bullets. Foucault's *madness* (1961), or the *sauvage* social movement of Baudrillard, where each and every person profoundly rejoices in seeing signs burn (Baudrillard 1975; 1981)? Perhaps that is why I enjoyed watching *The Matrix* despite its being rather violent a film.

Death, however, is always suffocatingly painful to watch in reality, particularly, for me, the death of students … young, beautiful, bright, courageous human beings with a taste for freedom. It is in their memory that I must value my life and fight for my liberty. December 1989 was my second new birth; from blood and bullets, I emerged deciding that my earthly existence was going to matter, since its brevity was painted all over me in true red. Now, years later, I safeguard my uniqueness to the point of pain (mine and, alas, of those around me, sometimes). In resisting assimilation, my own revolution continues. It colors my decisions in life and my readings of text, even my choice to watch and my desire to interpret *The Matrix.*

Thus, I see *The Matrix* as a film that upholds Baudrillard in his warning concerning the potential move of society toward the establishment of a neocapitalist, cybernetic order that aims at total control. "The Matrix is control," Morpheus declares, and I react by clenching my fists. Quite surprisingly, I do not object to the violence in the film, because the heroes fight under my colors, and they win. If we are to believe Baudrillard,[10] the social mutation animated in *The Matrix* is not accidental. He describes it as "the end of a history in which, successively, God, Man, Progress, and History itself die to profit immanence, the latter corresponding to a much more advanced phase in the vertiginous manipulation of social rapport" (Baudrillard 1983:111). The Wachowski brothers appear to desire, like all storytellers, the role of the Muses. Their creation seems to wish to inspire fear of the Simulated and faith in the Real, at least.

10. He has been accused of "talking nonsense" by some of his critics, after all. I, on the other hand, side with Chris Rojek and admire Baudrillard for his desire to provoke. According to Rojek, "he *wants* to be accused of talking nonsense in order to compel critics to confront the nonsense which lies behind their own assumptions and proposals" (Rojek 1993:111).

Playing the Game

Yet, all this is on the *pellicule,* on the silver screen. It is in the film that the Matrix represents ultimate cybernetic control and in the film that it is contrasted with the "desert of the real." Yet, reality is also fabricated. It is only the reality of the script, the reality of fiction. Baudrillard would declare, "Here comes the great Culture of tactile communication under the sign of the technico-luminous cinematic space of total spatio-dynamic theatre … the completely imaginary contact-world of sensorial mimetics and tactile mysticism; essentially an entire ecology grafted on this universe of operational simulation, multisimulation and multiresponse" (Baudrillard 1983:139–40). Here comes Control through the means of popular culture, in other, fewer words.

Then again, maybe *The Matrix* is *only* a film whose entertaining qualities create its commercial value. After all, the special effects are indeed revolutionary: the bullet-time photography manages to leave many mouths open. After the release of *The Matrix,* martial arts clubs reported an enormous influx of new recruits, all aspiring to a Keanu, or demigod, status (proving perhaps that people do not always need personal faith or ideology; culture is sometimes sufficient). Certain mobile phones and web search engines, among other things, are advertised in the film; an entire generation of *The Matrix* memorabilia is available in shops and on the Internet. There were three million videos and one million DVDs sold worldwide by April 2000; *The Matrix* is indeed the bestselling DVD in Britain (Armstrong: 22). Quite lucrative, and quite capitalist, it reminds me of Marx's idea of the *fetishism of commodities* (Marx 1887:41–65).

So, in conclusion, *The Matrix* is a fabulous motion picture. Yes, it introduces a new myth. However, it is not the myth of a new messiah. The references pointing that way can indeed be inspiring (attracting audiences and a profit, therefore) but are just a source of red herrings. There are some similarities but no substantial parallels between *The Matrix* and biblical allegory, for the simple reason that there are no straight lines in this film; everything is circular, indeed spiral … layer after layer, viewed in supra-fashion, in which there are no perceivable originals; instead, only hybrids. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the new myth is that of the Matrix, or total cybernetic control beyond human sensory perception. Baudrillard's theory of *operational simulation* seems to be the matrix of *The Matrix,* the code of the apparently encoded film.

That said, however, we are still left with a paradox. The film introduces the myth? That means that the fantasy exposes the simulation. The audience is warned against the virtual by the virtual. Perhaps that is immaterial. Perhaps we should indeed remember that *The Matrix* is only entertainment, an element of pop culture and not necessarily a controlling tool, that we "don't believe in all that crap," as the Oracle says, that we are in control of our own destiny. So we

should take stock of the fact that our lives are indeed ours and they are indeed real. Or are they?

Perhaps the motion picture is, as the Disneyland machine for Baudrillard, "a deterrence set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real," to conceal the fact that the real is no longer real and thus save the reality principle (Baudrillard 1983:25). In other words, perhaps the dream on the silver screen is there to help us accept and not challenge the dream in which our lives are real, or really free, in which they are all they can be.

Then again, these are only the visions of a post-Communist I. Without a red pill and only with the cinematic expression of the Matrix and the televised reports of the Communist system, the Western world would indeed perceive the spiritual elements in this film more readily, hence the frequent connections to biblical elements. The political allusions are perhaps far more open to those whose lives have been taken through the iron fist of Control and for whom overthrowing such a system has a precedent. Locations are intrinsic to interpretation. Always.

Feasting with/on Jesus: John 6 in Conversation with Vampire Studies

Tina Pippin

Introduction: Confessions

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains. (Hymn 107, Southern Baptist)

I have always been attracted to heresy and heretics. I include in my list Jezebel, the whore of Babylon, Marcion, the various Gnostics, Arius, Pelagius, medieval witches, the women at the Reimagining Conference in 1993, and many others. There are certainly heretics I would align more closely with theologically than others, but I am fascinated by all the battles. The line between orthodoxy and heresy, what is right thinking and what is not, is blurred. For example, was the fundamentalist takeover of many Southern Baptist seminaries in the late part of the last century mainly over theology or politics and money? There are still many Constantines wanting to unify their empires, Nicene Creeds being rewritten over time. In biblical studies at the turn of the millennium the hermeneutical debates are around the traditional historical methods and the multidisciplinary readings of the Bible as a cultural artifact. The possibility of heresy haunts every new, and every old, theoretical conversation.

One heretical strain in literature has been the so-called "inverted Christ," or the vampire. The vampire, like Christ, has broken the bonds of finitude and roams the earth for all eternity (in most cases in the dark and when properly fed with blood). As studies of horror and the holy show, the creepy and the horrific have always drawn Christians in, but why does Christianity have to be creepy, violent? I want to make connections between vampire theory and the rhetoric of the Eucharist in John 6. A poster for the film *Interview with the Vampire* spoke with Johannine overtones: "Drink from me and live forever." What can

the ancient (and modern) myths of the vampire tell us about the ancient (and modern) myths of Christian sacrificial theology? Has the nature of Jesus since even before Nicea been of an undead deity demanding a ritual feasting, a (symbolic) devouring of his flesh and blood, in order to unify with him? What can vampire theory tell us about violence, desire, death, and eternal life? How are we to understand the absurd statement by Jesus, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life" (John 6:54)?

The Need to Feed

> If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. (Gal 5:15)

I want to challenge the right doctrine of a so-called orthodox Gospel, the Gospel of John 6:50–58. In this long discourse on the bread after the feeding of the five thousand (6:15–71), Jesus relates in a series of "I am" sayings, "I am the bread of life" (6:35; 48) and "I am the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone who may eat of it may not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (6:50–51). The "Jews" (6:52) as well as the disciples (6:60) are confused by this teaching. The Jews (the religious leaders) ask among themselves, "'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus says to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them' " (6:52–57). Jesus has replaced the manna that Moses and the Jews fed on in the wilderness with his own flesh. Even though the bread was given by God (6:32), Moses and company died (6:49; 58). The manna from heaven is bread that perishes, but Jesus as bread lasts forever. Whereas the woman at the well in John 4 received living water from Jesus (4:13–15) and need never thirst again, the feeding sign from Jesus in chapter 6 gives eternal life. In a move from chapter 4, it is no longer water but blood that is the drink of choice. As C. K. Barrett explains, "The bread of life is not a commodity which Jesus supplies—he is the Bread of Life; and to eat it does not mean hungering, eating, and hungering again" (291). This sign is the ultimate feeding miracle! Yet the Eucharist is a sign of hunger, of needing a reassurance and a periodic replenishing.

Commentators on John 6 mostly point to the symbolic rhetoric of the Eucharist in this chapter. After all, further on in John 6 Jesus says, "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." But whose flesh is useless? Peder Borgen claims this passage is an

antidocetic homily (188). Jesus is the Son of Man but also a man of flesh and blood. The term "body" (Greek σῶμα) is part of the more common eucharistic rhetoric from Paul and the Synoptics. But John uses the jarring term "flesh" (σάρξ). Bultmann defines σάρξ as "*the whole sphere of that which is earthly or 'natural'*" (1955:234). Thus, the flesh is the natural flesh that serves as eucharistic bread. Bultmann further explains, "It is a matter of real eating and not simply of some sort of spiritual participation.… It really is so! Jesus' flesh is real food and his blood is real drink!" (1971:236). Bultmann points to Ignatius's understanding (in Eph 20:2) of the Eucharist as the "medicine of immortality, the antidote that we should not die, but live forever in Jesus Christ" (1955:147–48). Rather than the "nectar and ambrosia" that is the food of the gods in Homer or other divine foods that give eternal life (e.g., the plant of life in the Gilgamesh Epic), the deity is the bread of life in John, and the believers eat this flesh and drink blood to gain life (Bultmann 1971:223). In other words, they engage in an existential, natural act to gain an eschatological, supernatural existence. This concept of "eating" (τρώγειν) is intriguing here. Bultmann notes that this word has the meaning of "munch" or "chew" in Matt 24:38 but that "it is possible that in colloquial usage [it] took on the meaning of 'eat' = 'devour', which it has in modern Greek" (1971:236). Raymond Brown backs off this understanding of eating: "This cannot possibly be a metaphor for accepting his revelation.… In fact in the Aramaic tradition transmitted through the Syriac, the 'eater of flesh' is the title of the devil, the slanderer and adversary par excellence" (284). Does the activity of demons become the tradition of the believers? As vampire theorist Laurence Rickels states, "Vampirism comes about through the hunger of demons.… they crave a body. That is what drives them" (341). Relating a similar idea of hunger back to John 6, Jorunn Buckley observes that regular food can be deadly, as Judas experiences in John 13, but food from Jesus, such as the fish and loaves earlier in chapter 6, are nourishment. Buckley argues,

> Clearly, the food is Jesus himself, both bread and fish being symbols of Jesus in John. And the gathered remnants, which Jesus insists must not be scattered, conveniently fit into twelve baskets, the number of disciples. Jesus' substance continue[s] on in them. The verb *bibrôskein,* "to eat up," "gnaw," "consume," is used in v. 13, perhaps a consciously chosen verb to indicate that what the people have eaten was no ordinary meal. (1998:66)

Thus, if you want to live a regular, physical existence that eventually leads to death, eat regular food. If you want eternal life, eat Jesus.

I have always agreed somewhat with the accusation of cannibalism and incest in Pliny's report of Christian activity to Emperor Trajan. Early Christians in Pontus/Bithynia were not technically cannibalistic in their eucharistic practices, and we cannot know much about their private family values. In defining

incorporation in the eucharistic liturgy, Maggie Kilgour delineates three types: incarnation, consubstantiation, and " 'sublimation' or 'cannibalism'—two related activities.… it involves the subsumption of one body by another. The bodies involved in these various intersections can be personal, textual, or corporate" (250 n. 11). The sublimation of cannibalism in the church has been to make it symbolic and thus socially acceptable. Kilgour admits that "there is a potential for cannibalism in the sacrament of the Eucharist.… It becomes difficult to say *who* is eating *whom*.… Both God and man can play 'host' " (15). Christians eat to gain immortality, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to the eternally sought after tree of life. The first tree of life was in the garden and is inaccessible, so Christians can feast on the new tree of life where the new Adam hangs.

The charge of incest was based on Christians calling each other "brother" and "sister." But in vampire folklore the incest motif is related to the dead corpse returning to drink first from family members (Dundes: 163). According to Rickels, "Vampirism thus seeks to obtain the greatest pleasure, the release of all pleasures, by erecting one Law, it seems, and the Law requires that incest be committed" (342). The paternal order is vandalized by vampire activity: Alan Dundes refers to "the underlying oral erotic basis of the vampire belief complex" (170), and he grounds his reading in Freudian understandings: "The vampire, though overtly carrying out an aggressive act, also approximates the original life-giving and partly erotic breast-feeding relationship" (171). Dundes notes a connection with the biblical idea of a promised land flowing with milk and honey, that is, "the idea of a blissful death involving a regression to a postnatal paradise" (169) and a return to sucking the mother's breast. (Most Freudian readings make me uncomfortable, but here I am uncertain whether my discomfort is with Freud or the Bible or both.) Furthermore, in the act of vampiric drinking "the vampire may be said to *merge* with the victim" (Dundes: 169). "The body is lost" in vampire stories, observes Rickels (341). "Every body is made available to everybody else.… Vampiric blood fuels the pleasure to be had unbound by the body as limit. That is why vampires are polymorphously perverse" (343). The supernatural body of the vampire can stalk anyone, any gender, especially including family members, and drinking their life fluids (blood or milk in the folklore) is the vampire's calling card.

Also in the Gospel of John water is a magical, eternal life–giving substance. In John 4 Jesus at Jacob's well offers "living water" to the Samaritan woman: "The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (4:14). Compare the Apocalypse of John 21:6, where the one seated on the throne says, "To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life." There is more than one substance that can bring eternal life, and in this new "life" the body is transformed—no longer dry

(which forms the root meaning of the word "sick") but revitalized by a variety of liquids (see Dundes: 164). These bodies do not roam the earth as undead; postearthly death they roam paradise or heaven as those who will never die. But what Jesus' body and blood and living water (in baptism and/or Eucharist) offer to the earthly believers is a foretaste of eternal life, and the Eucharist provides a way to satisfy an insatiable hunger for heaven. The prohibition of Deut 12:23, "Only be sure that you do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the meat," has lost its authority in practice and in metaphorical usage as eucharistic language increased in the early church. Flesh and blood are reconnected.

How can I move from John 6 to vampire theory and back? And what does it mean to speak of Christianity as a religion of the revenant, of those who eat and drink the deity's flesh and blood so they can share eternal life with him? Christian believers die and are born again (John 3). Jesus leads the believer through this symbolic death and gives them eternal life with his flesh and blood. God needs blood sacrifice ending with the impaling of Jesus. Is God thus the father of vampires, of the undead? Is the resurrection of Jesus his new birth into a different form of vampirism, the eternal sacrifice, repeating itself over and over, an infinite supply of flesh and blood?

Fantasy theorist Rosemary Jackson gives an overview of the gothic vampire story: "The vampiric act is divided into two: Firstly, a penetration of the victim with canine (phallic) teeth; secondly, a sucking of the victim's (life-supporting) blood" (120). In this gothic culture vampires are the undead who live forever. Jackson continues, "further objects of desire are endlessly generated, creating an 'other' order of beings, for whom desire never dies and whose desire prevents them from dying" (120–21). The fear of and desire for a death that brings eternal life drives the vampire myths. Death and desire are symbolically incarnate in a demonic other, the vampire, and controlled and maintained by the mythology. Jackson maintains that the vampire fantasy (as all of the gothic, uncanny literature) "reinforces a bourgeois ideology" (122). The vampire story supports cultural prejudices (e.g., xenophobia and misogyny in the Dracula myth; anti-Jewish sentiments in the Gospel of John). Or as Auerbach observes, "vampires prop up the ideologies and institutions they had undermined when they (and their centuries) were in their prime.… It is impossible either to exorcise or to trust a species whose immortality has given them supreme adaptability" (8). What is repressed can be played out in the myth, through a being who only comes out at night. Lilith, the first succubus, flies at night, forever expelled from the Garden. Christians can return to paradise only when the crucified Christ comes again.

The comparisons with Christianity have been between the impaling of the vampire and the crucifixion "on a tree," which Lloyd Worley believes is

a euphemism for the ancient practice (of the Assyrians and some others) of impaling. Worley finds similarities between the Christ and vampire stories: "Where Christ shed his blood to give life, the vampire takes blood and gives death or a 'living-in-death' " (177). One obvious image is of the "sacred heart," in which the heart is surrounded by a crown of thorns and stabbed through with the cross. There is an impaling in this image, but, as Worley explains, "This imagery does not equate Christ with the vampire" because the impaling of the former is certain and leads one on the path to eternal holiness (178). Christ broke the bonds of his tomb at night, right before daybreak, and he does not turn to dust as vampires do in the sunlight. The women had come to prepare the body, that is, to mummify it, so that it could be preserved and not cannibalized.

Thus, the folkloric roots of the vampire story, but certainly not the dominant Bram Stoker–Anne Rice versions of vampires, preexisted and existed beside the Christ story. As the story develops into the gothic narrative, links are made to Christ's death on the cross and to the promises of eternal life in a variety of ways. For example, Dracula becomes an inverted Christ. He gives himself to others, but "the reciprocity of exchange is thus shown to be an illusion, for he is an alien who possesses those who let him into their bodies" (Kilgour: 173). The same is true for Rice's vampire Lestat, who gives himself to create more vampires (e.g., Louis and Claudia). Christians can ingest the bread and blood of life and thus be possessed by and filled with Christ. There is the official God and Satan rivalry, and in vampire stories it appears to be a Christ/ian and vampire/s standoff. It is often not clear who (God or Satan) gives clearance for the vampires to rise (see Dundes: 162), but that is a simplistic understanding; christologies and vampire theories have a far more complicated relationship. Vampires are not exactly the antithesis of Christ. For example, crucifixes sometimes repel vampires, but in more recent versions of vampire encounters, vampires find crucifixes attractive. Vampires certainly belong to the realm of the demonic, but like other monsters of the Bible, the line between good and evil is not so clear and absolute. For example, in *Interview with the Vampire* the vampire Lestat points to the similarity between vampires and God:

> "Evil is a point of view," he whispered now. "We are immortal.… God kills, and so shall we; indiscriminately He takes the richest and the poorest, and so shall we; for no creatures under God are as we are, none so like Him as ourselves, dark angels not confined to the stinking limits of hell but wandering His earth and all its kingdoms." (Rice 1976:88–89)

Here vampires are compared to demonic angels who are loosed from hell and roam the earth in search of victims. In a later novel Lestat is in cahoots with

the devil, a teaming that teems with evil. Slavoj Žižek points out that great evil events of history are full of the undead who continue to speak of the evil that befell them: "The two great traumatic events of the holocaust and the gulag are, of course, exemplary cases of the return of the dead in the twentieth century. The shadows of their victims will continue to chase us as 'living dead' until we give them a decent burial, until we integrate the trauma of their death into our historical memory" (1991:23). The dead from these genocides were not properly buried and thus return in trauma and memory. "The return of the living dead, then, materializes a certain symbolic debt persisting beyond physical expiration" (1991:23). Do these living dead demand revenge (as Freud would tell us), or do they desire their own Truth and Reconciliation commissions?

Nietzsche sees revenge and mass murder in the Christian Eucharist. Rickels comments: "Christianity had to cover its ass, I mean mass.… With the new Christian morality, a mass culture could be invented, one in which the masses would become a body, the body or bond celebrated in the Christian mass. How is mass culture constituted? Nietzsche says: out of and only out for revenge" (329–30). Nietzsche finds evil and the slave morality in Christianity. Christianity needs a sacrifice. God is dead, nowhere to be found. And as Žižek relates from his reading of Lacan, the living dead are in between two deaths, and the second death will upset the symbolic order. There is natural death (the first death) and absolute death (the second death) (1989:131–36). There is a whole symbolic system of exchange that takes place between the two deaths; debts have to be paid, and gifts have to be given. Žižek tells us, "In a way, everybody must die twice" (1989:134). In his understanding the Freudian death-drive begins this process. Are Christians, then, between the two deaths of baptism (death to self that brings new life) and physical, absolute death (that brings eternal life)? Is the trauma of godforsakenness in the mass murders of history (and in the murder at the mass)? In other words, are Christians the living dead between two deaths, needing to feed in anticipation of the final apocalyptic destruction, constantly hungry for eternal life?

A Violent Thanksgiving Feast

Bread of heaven, on thee we feed,
For thy Flesh is meat indeed;
Ever may our souls be fed
With this true and living Bread;
Day by day with strength supplied,
Through the life of him who died.
Vine of heaven, thy Blood supplies
This blest cup of sacrifice;
Lord, thy wounds our healing give,

> To thy cross we look and live:
> Jesus may we ever be
> Grafted, rooted, built in thee. Amen. (Hymn 323, "Bread of Heaven," Episcopalian)

Eternal life is a gift; in Christian theology it is a gift given through the sacrifice of Jesus. "The gifts of God for the people of God" is the way the sacrifice is pronounced in some Christian eucharistic liturgies. Reflecting on the sacrificial exchange in cultures, Jill Robbins relates, "The metaphysics of participation (or methexis) assumes the interpenetration between the unseen and seen worlds, the presence of the supernatural in the natural" (289). Taking communion on the tongue so that the teeth do not touch it, keeping the cup away from the laity (from the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 C.E.)—the blood is drained from the flesh and is reserved for the priesthood only. Or the people share the cup and also penetrate the flesh, leaving teeth marks on the host. The Eucharist is a reenactment of the great sacrifice of Christ impaled on the cross. The deity died but is now undead, living forever in the heavenly realm. Believers can share that eternal life by partaking, ingesting, possessing, participating in the blood sacrifice.

The Eucharist is, of course, a symbolic sacrifice. God no longer demands the sacrifice of firstborn males or animals; the execution of God's Son, God's own flesh and blood, was sufficient. Since sacrifice was connected with food consumption, "the great thanksgiving" of the Eucharist substitutes for the more barbaric practice with a subdued feeding ritual on account of "his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world" (*The Book of Common Prayer:* 334). In the history of food, "[Sacrifice] was substituted in the Eucharist with a 'vegetarian' sacrifice (bread and wine), which, nonetheless, recalled a far crueler sacrifice that took place once only for the good of all men [*sic*].… Christianity reinforced the values of the Roman ideological food model and transmitted it with renewed energy to the generations that followed right into the early Middle Ages" (Fandrin and Montanari: 77). Still, Christ is the Lamb of God, so is the main course not being served?

Medieval mystics engaged in a variety of fantastic readings of the Eucharist. In her study of fasting and the Eucharist among certain medieval women, Carolyn Bynum shows how these mystics understood the Eucharist as "eating God":

> Because Jesus had fed the faithful not merely as servant and waiter, preparer and multiplier of loaves and fishes, but as the very bread and wine itself, *to eat* was a powerful verb. It meant to consume, to assimilate, to become God. To eat God in the eucharist was a kind of audacious deification, a becoming of the flesh that, in its agony, fed and saved the world. (1987:3)

Then Bynum quotes the thirteenth-century mystic Mechtild of Magdeburg to show the connection between eroticism and ecstasy: "Yet I, least of all souls, / Take Him in my hand / Eat Him and drink Him / And do with Him what I will!" (quoted in Bynum 1987:3). Mechtild and other women mystics noted the superiority of the blood in the feast. Blood was understood as the basis for breast milk (65). Some of the women mystics knew Jesus intimately and erotically; his body was food (hosts from his side; breast milk). In the most extreme forms, "Women regularly speak of tasting God, of kissing him deeply, of going into his heart or entrails, of being covered by his blood" (Bynum 1992:190). There were sometimes visions of bleeding hosts, which referred to the violence of sin and the violence against believers by others outside the church (63).

Contrary to Barrett's reading of John 6, one can eat and drink and the hunger remains. Bynum notes that this "hunger began to mean a craving that can never be filled" (1987:66). By the later Middle Ages there was a move from the bread of heaven to an emphasis on flesh: "To eat God was to take into one's self the suffering flesh on the cross. To eat God was *imitatio crucis.* That which one ate was the physicality of the God-man.… If the agony was also ecstasy, it was because our very hunger is union with Christ's limitless suffering, which is also limitless love" (67). As John 6:56 states, "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them," and those who eat share in the life of the Father and the Son. And the Word became flesh, became food.

There are many overt eucharistic parallels in vampirism. Vampires are of supernatural flesh and actions, although they often live as the elite, from the wealth stolen from rich victims. For example, in Rice's *The Queen of the Damned* in a chapter entitled, "Lestat: This Is My Body; This Is My Blood," Lestat describes his eternal body as whiter, with brighter eyes (1988:355). Anne Rice's vampires often prefer their blood out of expensive crystal wine glasses; Lestat also gives his own blood in order to create new vampire companions. Bram Dijkstra notes this parody of the Eucharist in vampirism:

> This symbolic bond of blood, this gift of God's blood-sacrifice, the essence of God ingested by the faithful, holds the promise of eternal life. Among those given to blasphemy, this holy ritual (which undoubtedly can be traced to an origin in analogue pre-Christian ceremonies) could easily be mistaken for a form of "energy vampirism" through which the communicants would gain immortality by ingesting the "blood" of the Son of God. (89)

The symbolic meal of Christianity is a real meal in the life of the vampire. Vampires are cannibalistic in as much as they pierce the flesh and suck all the blood out. They ingest only blood, not flesh. Blood is the real life-force, and the ultimate taboo. Again, Deut 12:23 is instructive, "Only be sure that you do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the meat."

Then follows a warning in 12:25: "Do not eat it, so that all may go well with you and your children after you, because you do what is right in the sight of the LORD." There is a total disregard for these laws by both vampires and Christians.

So am I saying that Christians who partake of the Eucharist are vampires? Or that at the very least the Eucharist invokes vampiric desire? By this I mean an imaginary desire that historian Joan Scott would call the "fantasy echo": "the designation of a set of psychic operations by which certain categories of identity are made to elide historical differences and create apparent continuities" (2001:304). In Scott's fantasy echo there is something psychological and political and sexual happening at once in the formation of a group's identity. The echo is the repetition of the fantasy and, in the case of the Eucharist, is the ritual reenactment of a bloodthirsty desire for an exclusivist immortality. To repeat the Johannine text again, "the Jews" in John's Gospel are not allowed in, for they spoil the fantasy narrative with their complaining: "Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven'" (John 6:41). Jesus responds, "No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day" (6:44). So if you are not drawn to Jesus by the Father, then you cannot eat Jesus' flesh and drink his blood. And again: "The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'how can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them: '… unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you'" (6:52–53). Jesus is speaking these words in Jewish space, in the synagogue. Thus "the Jews" are left abandoned by the Father and without life, both in the Johannine "present" and in the future eternity. The Eucharist, with its endless historical battles over who can partake and how, is a narrative spun off John 6 (and other texts) and is a central narrative of Christian identity, along with baptism (that baptismal font of Jesus' blood). There's power in the blood, and identity formation, and the fantasy of being singled out (in a particular group) for eternal life, of being "drawn by the Father" and thereby special and specially privileged. But echoes are not so clean and clear; they repeat but also bounce and change the "original" voice. The fantasy echo in narrative also repeats the desire, which I see in John 6 and its interpretive history as the desire for the deity in some subversive ways that "normal" Christians would never, ever admit to, either to themselves or in a public setting. But the eucharistic ritual, at least in my tradition (and I would argue in all others as well), legitimizes what we would usually relegate to the perversities of vampire fiction. Perhaps Scott can help clarify some of the psychoanalytic and historical workings of fantasy narrative:

> In the fantasy scenario, desire is fulfilled, punished, and prohibited all at once, in the same way that social antagonism is evoked, erased, and resolved. But the fantasy also implies a story about a sequential relationship for prohibition,

> fulfillment, and punishment … and it is precisely narrative that evokes, erases, and thereby resolves social antagonism ("we" are responding to "others" who have taken away our *jouissance*). (290)

Borrowing from Žižek, Scott notes that fantasy works by "attributing to reviled others (Jews are one classic example) the causes of one's own (or a group's) lack of satisfaction: 'they' have stolen 'our' *jouissance*" (288–89). To be sure, the Eucharist in itself is not the cause of anti-Semitism, but seen as one fantasy echo of this one Gospel line in John 6 there is a division being created between "insiders" and "outsiders" that is quite harsh. In the least, and this is a gross understatement, kosher laws are abandoned.

To avoid such literalistic journeys as mine, the Reformers in the 1500s made, in various ways, clear reference to the symbolic nature of the eucharistic ritual and the words of institution. However, much of their doctrinal explanations are anti-Catholic, and they tend to read the Catholic liturgy literally. Luther and other reformers often referred to Roman Catholics as cannibals. Kilgour notes, "In numerous Protestant tracts, the Catholic mass was turned into a bloodthirsty rite, in which the priests ate God over and over again" (82–83). I want to focus on the eucharistic liturgy in my own tradition, the Episcopal Church, since as an ordained deacon I am in a better critical position, and as a Southerner I am aware of the mostly ignorant but sometimes dangerous anti-Catholic sentiments that still exist in my region. *The Book of Common Prayer* in the Episcopal Church echoes more the Synoptic version of the Last Supper, using "body" instead of "flesh." But John 6 is echoed in the gift of eternal life in Eucharistic Prayer A of "The Holy Eucharist: Rite Two": "Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts. Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him" (*The Book of Common Prayer:* 363). Many congregations prefer it when the priest gives a sharp crack when the host is first broken, providing noisy symbolism of the broken flesh of Jesus. I am just now examining why I always used to wince at this breaking, especially if I was standing close. And after first beginning researching this paper two years ago, I began to experience a certain queasiness about partaking, and I now cannot remember how long it has been since I have been involved in a eucharistic ritual. My queasiness has turned into, well, a turning away from a central sacrament in my tradition.

It follows that when the servers give the bread and cup to each person they say: "The Body (Blood) of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you in eternal life" (365). Prayer D makes a further connection to the undead Christ and living forever: "To fulfill your purpose he gave himself up to death; and, rising from the grave, destroyed death, and made the whole creation new" (374). Through the eating and drinking ritual Episcopalians become members of an exclusive society of the revenant. We eat and receive the promise of eternal life.

In recent years I joked with an Episcopalian religious studies major at my college about developing a line of gourmet communion wafers; we designed flavors such as basil tomato (for the brunch Eucharist), mocha (for evensong), peanut butter and jelly (for the kids), cinnamon raisin (for the early-morning Eucharist), and so on. Of course, the appropriate vintage of wine would be served with each. Part of our joking reveals a cynicism about the quality of the church service wafers, but more than that, I imagine we are covering an uncomfortableness with the directness of the liturgy. Con- or transubstantiation both use the violent metaphors of sacrifice, of what Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker term the "divine child abuse" of the cross and traditional atonement Christology. What does God require of Christians—that we feast on his Son? Every Sunday and at every eucharistic service, Christians participate in the violence, tearing at and eating the flesh of the deity and drinking his blood, but of course in a subdued and acceptable manner through our symbols of remembrance. In her discussion of the Corpus Christi festival Marina Warner relates that performance of a meal "reveals how profoundly disturbing the idea of eating a person, human or divine, actual or symbolic remains. These tender and ambiguous zones of fantasy and desire are the main breeding grounds of the sacred" (128). Warner asks an important question: "do our appetites make us monstrous?" (135). The (raw?) flesh and blood are symbolic relics that we ingest; faithful (and monstrous?) Christians need this divine nourishment frequently to secure again and again their connection with eternity.

Fellow Episcopalian Carter Heyward explains the link between patriarchy and sacrifice through which she traces a line of victims and scapegoats: "Nor am I being too literal in suggesting that *blood sacrifice* has been established spiritually and politically as *the* way to God/god in Christianity" (176). Heyward strongly voices, "I am arguing that we ought not participate in a social or religious order constructed on the blood sacrifice of *anyone* for the common good. Nor should we worship a god who legitimizes it. We should rather be struggling to expunge from our spirituality and politics the patriarchal logic that such sacrifice is good for us or others. We *must* do this if we hope to be nonviolent people" (178). Heyward raises the main ethical question: "Can there be a *nonviolent* Eucharist …?" (242 n. 31). There is nothing in her new eucharistic prayers about sacrifice or eternal life, but she still retains the words of institution, of Jesus = body and blood: "Take. Eat" and "Drink this" (209). The bonds are human ones of compassion, love, and erotic power. But these alternative eucharistic liturgies preserve the notion of consuming the deity. Jesus remains the once-for-all great sacrifice, and thus the sacrificial meal. Can there be a totally nonviolent Eucharist? Can there be a Eucharist detached from vampiric echoes? For those of you reading this article who take communion, will you not now think of vampires each time you repeat the sacrament? Do I not now need to redeem the Eucharist

for these readers? And further, how would I explain this article to my Episcopal bishop? Am I merely enacting my own fantasy, the deacon as a sort of vampire slayer? Is my true desire to "slay" all those in the church who practice exclusionary exegesis and politics toward, for example, LGBTQ people? Wouldn't this slayer act also be exclusionary? Of course, the most famous slayer of our culture is Buffy, eternally young and blonde, and consistently warding off the evil creatures that spew forth from the mouth of hell. The slayer fantasy is huge. But it is fed (pun intended) by the deeper desire for divine food.

Conclusion: Like Chocolate for Blood

In a striking set of illustrations for an Authorized King James Version Bible, illustrator Barry Moser has done what Doré and Dürer did earlier—imagine black and white scenes of various biblical texts. Like Doré, Moser puts his illustrations in the pages of the biblical text. Surrounded by the language of 1611 England, Moser shares his dark, gothic visions on 232 engravings. The mood of many of the illustrations is unsettling—a valley of skulls, a bloody child, a Christ triumphant. There is one illustration in particular I am drawn to: of Mary Magdalene kissing (licking, feeding off?) the feet of Jesus on the cross. Mary can just reach his toes, and stretching to place her lips on them, she holds firmly to the base of the cross to keep her balance. The striking part of the image is the blood dripping from Jesus' toes into her mouth; a significant amount begins to drip down her chin. Moser puts this shocking detail into perspective when he describes how he stylized the scenes of Jesus. Moser chose a waiter at a dinner party to pose as Jesus and other regular people to be models. Reluctant at first, the waiter "was soon posing with a crown of thorns and rivulets of chocolate-syrup 'blood' on his face (a trick copied from Alfred Hitchcock, who used it in 'The Birds') in Mr. Moser's studio" (Bukowski). In a Hitchcockian mode, Moser substitutes chocolate for blood, but the mood of horror and the grotesque is the same. At this fountain of blood Mary experiences a dual sacrament, Eucharist and a baptism of blood, at the same time. Sacraments converge, while the (implied) vultures hover ominously overhead.

The scene is excessive and erotic. Mary feeds from the feet (A euphemism? Is the blood semen in this instance?) of Jesus on the cross. Is Jesus not yet dead? Or has he entered into death, transforming into his eternal body? Is Mary a necrophiliac? Will this blood intoxicate her? Whatever the case, Mary is participating in the ultimate eucharistic feast—on the flesh and blood of the impaled Jesus fresh on the cross. Jesus is already host, in Latin *hospes,* which "originally meant both host and guest" (Kilgour: 15). Mary Magdalene is Eve, returning to the garden to partake of the tree of life and to eat and live forever (Gen 3:22). Will her hunger and thirst ever be satisfied? Will this craving for the monstrous

(and union with the monstrous) ever end? Must Mary, and her brothers and sisters for all time, continue to return to the cross, sucking the sacred blood in ascetic ecstasy of divine union?

Outside In: Diabolical Portraits

James A. Smith

A Biblical Afterbirth

Once upon a morning early, came a gas all light and swirly
Coiling 'round his body firmly, took his life that morning early
Garigue sat there fearing, flushing, when suddenly there came crushing
In him a mind misguided, with the life of Christ collided
Crushed beneath its weighty burden, death to his body earthen

Darkness prepares a sky, dew gathers for glistening, kookaburras ready a laugh, little creek giggles, Garigue whispers a final breath. The sky arrives, the dew glistens, the kookaburras laugh, darkness remains. Moist still grass, shining in the sun; tall ghost gums stretch to morning blue: silent seers of darkness. Man walking yelping dogs. Engine running. Curiosity. Yelping dogs. Ringing phones. Ambulance. Police. Mourning. Death. Darkness. Devil.

Figure 1: "Device to Root Out Evil"

… so this guy comes by, right, with his noisy dogs and everything, and of course he has noticed this van parked near the creek, and as he wanders closer he hears the engine still running and goes up for a bit of a look-see. Gary's inside, of course, all sallow and limp from having died and everything. So the guy tries to open the door, but everything is locked, so he runs back to his house and calls the ambulance and the

?
"A Diabolic Dialogue"

Jamie is bent over his desk. One hand pulls back the forelocks of his thick, golden hair, the other doodles with a pen. The blank paper that should contain insightful comments about cultural criticism, startling revelations about himself, and their respective intersection serves as the canvas upon which his failure to perform is revealed to the world. He begins to mutter to himself about cultural criticism and the worthless piece of critical crap that it is anyway. He leans over to call Fiona and cancel the deal. He always finds it easy to cancel rather than to commit to anything that might expose him. He is dialing the number and feels a clammy hand patting his wrist. It is an old acquaintance, the demon Esbeelzebub.

Esbeelzebub: There there, it's all right Jimmy boy.

Jamie: You again! Don't call me Jimmy, you know how I hate that. Now, bugger off, I'm busy.

Esbeelzebub: "Busy"! Who's not "busy"? Anyway, you're only "busy" trying to get out of being "busy." You think that you can weasel your way out of this paper? Well forget it mate.

Jamie: What are you talking about?! If I don't want to write it, I won't.

Esbeelzebub: But you do want to write it, don't you, don't you, Jamie, you doo … yoouu dooooo. …

(Esbeelzebub tries to dazzle and create wonder in Jamie by wiggling his fingers in front of Jamie's face and making his eyes turn into slowly spinning red and white spirals.)

Jamie: Stop playing silly buggers; you know that doesn't work. Why would I want to write this paper?

police. He knows it's kind of pointless, but you know, when you're in that kind of situation you have to run to make the surreal urgency somehow real. You have to kind of materialize it. So they all come, and they open the van door, and they have to step back a little so all the smoke from the exhaust can clear a bit. It's been a few hours now, and Gary's body has a rubbery stiffness to it. They tow the van away, and the plastic pipe coming from the exhaust comes loose from the tape near the back window and starts to drag along the ground. Some guy gets out of the tow truck and tugs at the clear plastic pipe taped to the exhaust. The taping eventually gives way, and he opens the back door, throws the pipe in and slams the door shut again. He's a little annoyed, but he knows people are watching.

Gassing oneself is a bit of a cliché, I admit, but Gary was a simple fellow, and he did things simply; but he always did them well, and as my Mum says, that's what counts, right? Gary liked to try to do things just right because he was always trying to overcompensate for the fact that he mucked around for the better part of his childhood and ended up getting brought into my family as a "juvenile delinquent" made "ward of the state." To me, Gary was absolute cool. My model. My brother. I was passionate about my hero-worshiping rituals, my imitation, service, and love for Gary.

Back at home, I go through his things. I get distracted when I realize that I can have all his stuff now. I feel guilty. I should be focusing on my pain, and Gary's death. I read a few letters. I ride his motorcycle. Tears prevent me from seeing clearly. I take a corner too wide … no cars, good! I think. I lay blame. I write. Gary has written. His block capital print betrays his education; his angst reveals a tortured soul. His words reveal the torturer: "I can't stop sinning, Satan has won the battle." I read the letter over and over. I read for signs, clues, anything. I keep writing. Gary does not.

The Devil at Dinner

My parents were exorcists … well, on the weekends, anyway. Each night in the spare chair at our dinner table there sat a spectating specter. The spectacle of the specter who was there but not there was enough to chill my porridge. Cold porridge and a spare chair, humble instruments deftly manipulated by the long and ancient fingers of ecclesial power.

There were six people in my family, now there are five—those ancient fingers strangled the life out of one of us. Our parents arranged us around our round table in accordance with a simple equation: seating placement equals the radius of adult arm swing divided by the likelihood of misconduct. Naturally, there was a variable X-factor to be incorporated into this equation: the spare chair, a remainder at the table. Those children who also represented an unknown poten-

Esbeelzebub: You doo, you d … ah, forget it. I wonder why that doesn't work any more … anyway, you need to write this paper because it will help you along in your academic career. … *(Timidly)* Oh, um, did that feel tempting to you? Please tell me it was tempting, I just don't seem to be very good at this any more, I'm really beginning to doubt myself … *(he attempts a pathetic smile).*

Jamie: Well, yeah, it's sort of tempting, but the fact is that cultural criticism is held in such low esteem by the *real* biblical scholars. And if that's not bad enough, autobiographical criticism is practically the scourge of the SBL. So I hardly think that participating in this little venture is going to shore up some academic kudos for me. If anything, it'll get me fired. So I need to be writing some stodgy old paper on Paul, if I want people to see how I can perform academically.

Esbeelzebub: So its performance you want, is it!?

Jamie: Hardly! Those kinds of academic papers can scarcely be understood as performances; they're the abject absence of performance, and necessarily so because to make it in this business you have to be able to divest yourself of such trinkets. Good solid research and logical argumentation are what people are after. You can't get a job just by driveling on about your personal life or talking about *The Simpsons*, as if it has some academic significance.

Esbeelzebub: I'm afraid I'm going to have to disagree with you on that point. I mean if you think about it, they're still performing, it's just that they're dancing a dirge, the *danse macabre,* even.

Jamie: What do you mean, "dancing a dirge"?

Esbeelzebub: Oh, come on! When you go to some of those SBL papers, it's like sitting on the set of the *Night of the Living Dead,* watching dried-up corpses try to jig about and pretend they've still got some life in them. You can even hear the bones rattling when you walk through the book exhibit! It's terrifying. Nonetheless, my point is that it's still a performance; except that the name for that performance is "scholarship."

Jamie: Well, that may be so, but you don't get academic jobs without being able to perform your so-called "*danse macabre.*" Anyway, hasn't Veeser already made that point, when he announces that "the autobiographical critic wants performativity" (xiii)?

tial for misconduct were placed next to the remainder, the variable qualities of which were in direct proportion to the variable qualities of the child's behavior. The remainder was indeed a spare chair but certainly not a spare place at our table … oh no, not at all! It was, in fact, regularly occupied by either Jesus or the devil. This was religious instruction *ex cathedra.*

The dining table in our house was the regulating fixture of our daily regimen. It was where we learned our family values, where we conducted our family Bible study, and where we learned that if we didn't eat our tripe and veggies then Jesus would be disappointed with us.

> "Eat your veggies and be good, because Jesus is sitting there watching you."
> "But I don't like vegetables."
> "Well, Jesus won't be very happy with you and he'll take some stars out of your crown. Then you'll be the devil's friend."

The seating equation required me to sit the farthest from my parents and nearest to the remainder variable: Jesus/devil. I liked sitting next to Jesus, but I didn't like eating tripe.[1] I didn't want to complain and disappoint Jesus only to find that he had gouged a few stars off my crown and vacated the spare chair. For the lust of those stars and because of my abject fear of the devil, I closed my eyes and swallowed the slippery, rubbery, not to mention absolutely putrid, tripe … well, sometimes.

Inevitably, there were those days when my lust for a star-encrusted crown was overcome by an uncontrollable passion for irritating, humiliating, despising, and entertaining my younger brother and sister. There was no better time to impersonate my grandmother's Nazi countenance than while Mum and Dad were being transported during family prayers. These diabolical delights were a sure sign that the devil had pranced into our dining room and tipped Jesus off his chair—there he was sitting all-a-grin, upsetting our family prayers, provoking me into all sorts of silliness and unchristian behavior. I liked sitting next to Jesus, but I didn't like sitting next to the devil.

The devil appeared to me frequently. He followed me around the house shutting the doors behind me and causing all sorts of aggravation wherever I went; at least my mother explained that this was what was happening because I was clearly very naughty. It was because I was "so bloody naughty," with doors

1. The fat of the first and the lining of the second stomach of a cow (remember that cows, along with most ruminants, have four stomachs; for reasons only too obvious, we have restricted ourselves to eating only the first two stomachs).

Esbeelzebub: Well, yes, but Veeser's point is not broad enough to articulate the state of affairs of your biblical studies. Wouldn't you agree that all academic writing is a performance? It's not just the autobiographical critic who wants to perform, but anyone who presents anything wants to perform in some capacity, and even if they don't want to, it doesn't change the fact that they are.

Jamie: You sound like J. L. Austin, and wasn't he …

Esbeelzebub: *(Interrupting)* Yes, indeed I do, and for good reason: he was right! Language is always doing something. Those dried-up "scholarly" dirges read in some of these SBL groups are as performative as anything an autobiographical critic publishes. This, of course, is in spite of the fact that they create rhetorical overtures that attempt to engulf the performative qualities of their papers in technical language as if their papers were pure constative presentations of truth. Perhaps we should say that "scholarship" is the magnificent art of masking performance.

Jamie: I wish you wouldn't cut me off like that; now I forgot what I was going to say. … Well, anyway, if scholarship, as you understand it, is the magnificent art of masking performance, what do you call those acts of criticism in which the performance is more conscious?

Esbeelzebub: If indeed they are more conscious. In fact, I'll venture to say, my dear boy, that these cultural critics are no more conscious of their performances than traditional "scholars." It's just that cultural critics label what they are doing as "performance," and the traditional "scholars" label what they are doing as "logical argument" or "presenting research." It's all performance, and it's all conscious.

Jamie: Well, who draws the line between acceptable performance and unacceptable performance?

Esbeelzebub: Ah, a decent question, at last! Good boy.

Jamie: Perhaps we could cut down on the "boy" thing, but as I say, if it is indeed all performance, why is one a part of the institutional structure of the academy and the other not?

Esbeelzebub: Excellent, excellent! You're asking precisely the sort of question that needs to be asked. Good boy … ah-um … human … adult … person … thingy.

shutting behind me and causing all sorts of aggravation, that the devil so frequently occupied the place beside me at the dinner table. I was utterly terrified of the devil, and I didn't at all like the idea of him following behind me shutting doors and causing all sorts of aggravation. I really wanted Jesus to sit beside me at the dinner table, where I could eat my hot porridge, tripe, and veggies in peace. This *ex*(*tra*) *cathedra* logic leaves a remainder in which what I think is outside of me enters and takes its seat.

You Got the Devil in Your Heart

I enjoyed going to Sunday school, not simply because I was guaranteed delicious Fruit Tingles at the end of the lesson ("they leave a tingle-lingle-lingle on the tip of your tongue"), but they helped. Hell was quite a popular place in our church because they always talked about it and we learned about hell in Sunday school all the time.

What is hell, Miss?
Hell is the lake of fire and brimstone.
A lake on fire, Miss?
Yes.
What's brimstone, Miss?
Very hot rocks.
Who goes to hell, Miss?
Sinners.
Who are sinners, Miss?
People who do naughty things.
Why do people do naughty things, Miss?
Because they have the devil in their hearts.
The devil is in their hearts, Miss?
Yes.
Why, Miss?
Because they do naughty things.
How will I know if the devil is in my heart, Miss?
You'll be doing naughty things.

One Sunday, after stumbling out of a particularly searing lesson on hell, we got in the car to go home. On the way home my younger sister was clearly breaking a cardinal rule by letting her leg touch mine each time we hit a bump in the road. As this was a long dirt road, there were many bumps. I informed my sister that she needed to move over. She didn't want to move. Her reluctance was a clear sign of naughtiness. It was my good Christian duty to introduce her to theological truth, so I looked at her and pointed out: "You got the devil in your heart!" Her face just sort of curled up into a tight little

Jamie: Yes, well, that it may be, but I notice you don't seem to be forthcoming with any answer to what is, at least in your mind, an apparently good question.

Esbeelzebub: Well, that's, um, easy because of, um … marginal … ized; no, violent opp … hierarchies, and Mexico, the poor are, um, there and er … not here and history is written by Victor, and.… Look, just trust me on this, okay!

Jamie: It appears to me that you don't actually have an answer, and therein lies the big problem. If I write a paper that "performs" autobiographically as I engage some cultural phenomenon or other, then I place myself squarely outside the rather rigid walls of the academy. A place, I might add, from which it is quite impossible to submit papers and apply for jobs. Nobody cares whether it's all performance or not; the plain and simple fact is that some performances are acceptable and some are not; some performances are institutional and some are noninstitutional; some are inside and some are outside.

Esbeelzebub: Oh, come on, it's not that bad, you think…

Jamie: Are you kidding!? Can you imagine me applying for a job and listing in the bibliography a paper entitled "Outside In: Diabolical Portraits," I mean what is that!? Forget the intersection of culture and autobiography; how about the intersection of me and a good job. Second, I've done heaps of research on Paul and have a lot to say about him, but could you imagine what they would say if I submitted a proposal to one of those crusty Paul groups at the SBL that described the paper as "an autobiographical critique of Pauline texts."

Esbeelzebub: Actually, it would probably get accepted with the assumption that it was some kind of analysis of the autobiographical sections of the Pauline corpus. Which is fine because, you see, even Paul performs!

Jamie: Well, that's obvious isn't it? Anyway, we've already gone over that point: everyone performs all the time.

Esbeelzebub: No need to be snippy; I was simply trying to give you a leg up for a paper.

Jamie: What, "Pauline Performance: Me and My Indiscreet Shadow"?

ball of red and white silence as the tears of theological truth flowed freely. She was clearly moved by the wonderful power of Truth—Let it go sister, let it flow! Amen, sister, hallelujah! I silently nodded in pious approval as the great weight of theology crushed my little sister deep into the back seat of our 1960 Holden. Later, between the stinging blows, my parents explained that in fact my sister didn't have the devil in her heart at all. No, actually the problem was that I had the devil in *my* heart, and he made me say that to my sister. Still, I couldn't help notice the effect that theology had upon my sister; indeed, the same theology that had once crushed my little sister into the backseat of our car slew my brother on the backseat of his.

Danse Théologique de Mort.

What a fine work is theology
A delicate *danse macabre*
Propositions we ponder, through syllogism we wander
The delicate *danse macabre*

Invisibly, it begins to permeate the interior of his car. Silently, it forges a theological alliance between COHb and his hemoglobin, the doctrine of the carboxyhemoglobin. This new doctrine is preventing his blood from transporting oxygen to body tissues and vital organs, his brain, his heart. He feels nauseous. His head throbs. He is becoming more confused, unsure of himself. The theology is working well. It has risen up from within. It has seized control. A million thoughts, images, and voices are flying and screaming around his mind, but slowly and imperceptibly they give way to the ever-present silent darkness.

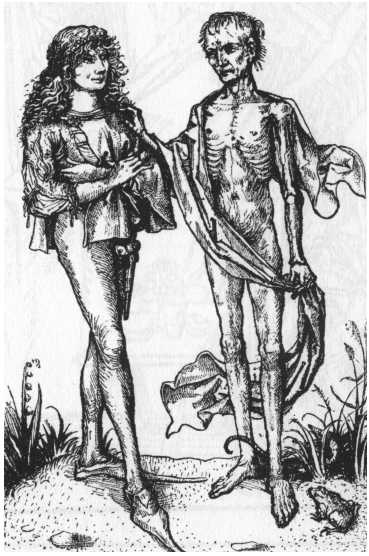

Figure 2: "Death and the Young Man," *Danse Macabre*

"Ten chapters a day Jamie," says Gary, looking over at me while I watch TV.

"Huh?" I stay focused on Scooby and Shaggy.

"You should be reading ten chapters of the Bible a day."

"Mmm-yeh-mm." Shaggy and Scooby are being chased by a flying table that has a crystal ball stuck to it that has appearing within it the head of the ghost of Elias Kingston.

Esbeelzebub: Well, you wouldn't want such an obvious play on Jane Tompkins's "Me and My Shadow." Though I did love that essay, especially the exquisite little whisper that she was thinking of going to the bathroom (28)!

Jamie: Yes, well I find it delightfully ironic that some woman's announcement that she wanted to go the toilet and the introduction of autobiographical criticism are found in the same movement.

Esbeelzebub: O, poo on you! Anyway, regarding Paul and performance, I was thinking of a paper along the lines of "Breaking a Leg: Pauline Performance Falling Flat on Its Face in the Politics of Pauline Theology."

Jamie: Okay, I confess I like that.

Esbeelzebub: I'm serious!

Jamie: But even if I do play around with Pauline performance, I'm forced to do it within the confines of institutional Pauline studies, where it is not the case that I may also be seen performing, even if I am. And, again, that's really the main point of my argument against writing the autobiographical paper: it is intrinsically exterior. I spent eleven years clambering over university walls just to get on the inside, and now you want me to hurl myself back over.

Esbeelzebub: No, not at all. Surely you know that I only ever have your best interests in mind. I could scarcely suggest something that would in some way be detrimental to you … really!

Jamie: Well, saints be praised! Of all the devil's mignons, I happen to have found the one demon that is genuinely altruistic. What are the odds of that, hey! You know, I always thought you guys were in it for something else. Man of poverty that I am, I have been laboring under the impression that you were only pretending to help me in order to secure some bigger goal. But now, with the glorious light of truth glaring brightly, my only recourse is to disabuse myself of this heinous ignorance and to offer as a humble act of contrition …

Esbeelzebub: So you're mocking me now, is that it? Is that what you think of our relationship?

Jamie: Yep, that's about right, I'd say.

"Jamie, I'm serious. You can't keep watching that crap every afternoon."

"Canwetalkaboutthislater?" I loudly exhale in an exasperated manner, offering some sense of my disdain for being interrupted while watching Scooby Doo. He's just lucky it wasn't Gilligan's Island.

"Turn the TV off. Do you think God wants you to watch TV?" Now Gary's getting annoyed as well. "You need to be reading ten chapters from your Bible every day!"

"*Ten chapters!* That's a lot. Why ten chapters? Is that what you read?" I cannot believe this. I would much rather sprawl out in front of the TV than read ten chapters of the Bible, especially for no particular reason other than the fact that they come from the Bible. I feel guilty, though. Should I be reading ten chapters of the Bible *every* day!? Maybe I'm not really a Christian if I don't want to read ten chapters from the Bible. Now quite concerned about my spiritual well-being, I ask: "How long does this take you?"

"Oh, a few hours."

"A few *hours!*" I can't imagine doing anything for a few hours, reading the Bible in particular. School lasts a few hours. It doesn't even take a few hours to go to church. "Isn't there something else I can do?"

The flying table powered by the ghost of Elias Kingston has crashed into a wall, and Velma announces that it's not really a ghost-table at all! It's actually a normal table that has a fan underneath it being remotely controlled by Uncle Stuart Witherby. The crystal ball is actually a receiver that is picking up projected images from a nearby camera. Apparently, as Velma and the gang uncover, Uncle Stuart Witherby was trying to scare off his older brother from accepting the inheritance of the Witherby estate. So, the evil spirits and ghostly apparitions have been shown for what they are: the machinations of some shafted younger brother, devices to procure a fortune. It turns out that the outside was the inside all along.…

Gary was one of the people who were the frequent objects of our weekly, often nightly, "deliverance" sessions. After careful analysis, he had been diagnosed as being wracked with demonic oppression. How so? Well, he would experience terrifying visions in the middle of the night and often be "taken over" and "wreak all sorts of havoc, indicating oppression." All of this was thought to have begun with his dabbling in the occult outside the "Aerosphere" (about which, dear reader, I shall give account later).

Gary was a wayward lad, to be sure. After being adopted into my family when I was very young, he spent many of the ensuing years in and out of trouble. He left home when he could, but as he matured he spent more and more time with us and eventually moved back. Unfortunately for him, he moved back at the same time our church was developing its obsession with the devil and the "deliverance ministry." Fortunately for Gary, the church was able to

Esbeelzebub: Look, all I'm trying to do is to *help* you in your professional pursuits. I don't see anything wrong with that.

Jamie: Yes, you are indeed an enormous help, especially if I'm trying to get fired.

Esbeelzebub: All I am saying is that you should write the paper. It'll be a blast. Even if you think it's not worth anything, at least you can have some fun. Just try to be interesting. This should be the first rule of writing that everyone learns when they go to college: be interesting first, then worry about content.

Jamie: I hardly think I've got anything interesting to discuss, especially in print.

Esbeelzebub: What are you talking about?! I'm interesting—you could talk about me, or us.

Jamie: "Us"! I'm not so sure that I'm ready for an "us"; in fact, I'm really quite sure I'm not.

Esbeelzebub: "Ready"! It's a bit late for that, my dear boy.

Jamie: Anyway, I'm still not sure about the validity of the whole thing. I mean, who cares about my personal stories? Sure, there may be one or two points of interest for those morbid people who thirst for the scandals and misfortunes of others …

Esbeelzebub: So what you're saying is that there's something for everybody. Great!

Jamie: Well that's the problem with avant-garde academia, isn't it? It's so obsessed with the self. I mean, we're possessed by such a strong desire for the self that our own selves are no longer adequate; we thirst for the selves of others, and we think others are equally interested in our own selves. So much so, in fact, that we'll start flopping about with our writing and reveal all and sundry to anyone who'll read it.

Esbeelzebub: I think that you're kind of off the mark there. Sure, it is about the self, and yes, this is even truer of autobiographical criticism, which is highly self-orientated. But I think the point of this is not to further the academic obsession with the self but to simply acknowledge that critical practice is *performed* by selves and not by the seem-

instill in him a good and healthy fear of the devil, so that they could lead him (bound, gagged, and shackled) along the straight and narrow path to freedom. And, oh yeah, it's kind of funny really, because, ironically, it was also why he killed himself.

In My Name They Will Cast Out Demons

The responsibility of an exorcist is largely about the removal of the devil, or his minions, from the lives of humans … mostly. The inner circle of exorcists, or "deliverers," comprised people with special knowledge of the operation and machinations of the devil and his "bugs." From no more than the gurgling in a lady's throat, they could discern the demonic communication. With a few erudite questions in the name of "Jesus Christ the Son of God who was crucified for our sins" (as opposed to the names of tricky demons who liked to call themselves "Jesus Christ" or even "Jesus Christ Son of God"), they could ascertain a demon's name, function, and rank.

Rank is extremely important in the demonic world, since bigger, tougher demons can force smaller, wimpy demons to assume their personae and thereby trick the deliverers into assuming that they had made a real haul, when in fact they had only snagged a few little fish in their nets, blissfully unaware of what lay beneath the surface. Invariably, however, at the last moment before a demon was sent screaming into eternal torment, some clever deliverer would throw out an incisive question in the name of Jesus-Christ-the-Son-of-God-who-was-crucified-for-our-sins and discover the real rank of the swiftly-departing demon. Excitement would tingle through the little band of deliverers as it became apparent that lurking below there were bigger fish to fry!

"We command you to come up in the name of Jesus-Christ-the-Son-of-God-who-was-crucified-for-our-sins!" the little band would shout and scream. The victim's face would darken, and the deliverers would be whipped into a frenzy as some enormous, foreboding spirit welled up from the depths of the poor wretch's life. The noise was deafening as people jumped around and screamed commands and questions in the name of Jesus-Christ-the-Son-of-God-who-was-crucified-for-our-sins and as the demons would shriek and blaspheme and writhe against the irresistible power of Jesus-Christ-the-Son-of-God-who-was-crucified-for-our-sins. Sometimes the demon would try to flee, so the delivers would have to grab and wrestle the victim's body down to the ground so they could continue yelling and screaming at the demon.

Not all attempts to subdue a fleeing demon are successful. Sometimes the demon will turn and attack the deliverers. Being young and thin, I was an easy target for some demon to demonstrate its strength and attack me—I was once chased out of the house and up the road by a knife-wielding demon. Fortu-

ingly other, third-person phantom "writer of this paper." In fact, I would venture to say that critics who practice the artifice of otherness in their writing are simply being dishonest. Their writing suggests some utopian critic who peers down from his ivory idyll and deigns to comment upon this or that aspect of the biblical text. The autobiographical critic, on the other hand, opens him or herself up to show just how pathetic his or her life really is, to show that he or she is utterly acculturated, entirely contextualized, completely subjective and thus that his or her criticisms necessarily participate in this pathetic, acculturated, contextualized, subjective self.

Jamie: Ah, yes, that may be, but surely there is some unconscious element in these exposed selves. Surely there is something that is hidden, some devil in the details.

Esbeelzebub: Well, perhaps, but the goal is to say, "Hey, look, this is who I am, and this is what this 'I am' has to say about that 'it is' right there."

Jamie: But ultimately, it never arrives, does it.

Esbeelzebub: Sure it does.

Jamie: No, it doesn't. The fact is that no matter what a critic might reveal about him or herself, she is always not revealing something; *yet* the impression is that the necessary subjectivities have been revealed, when in fact that is quite impossible. The critique is always more subjective than it can consciously be; in other words, any claim to subjectivity does not at the same time limit the critique's subjectivity. In fact, I think I could argue that it actually transforms critical texts into the sort of dangerous texts that are supposed to be disarmed by that very criticism.

Esbeelzebub: Oh, come on. How could that possibly be the case? Part of the point of autobiographical criticism is to open up the critical process in order to make it vulnerable; it's exactly the opposite of being dangerous.

Jamie: On the contrary, it is exactly this attempt to open them up and give the *appearance* of being vulnerable that is the most dangerous thing about them. Why does Jane Schaberg point out that Luke is the most dangerous book of the Bible for women? It's precisely because it *appears* to be the friendliest. SUSPICION!!! Whatever happened to suspicion? Are we supposed to think that these trendy autobiographical critics are somehow pure by virtue of saying they are not? Are we to assume

nately, the demon had chosen to possess a fat bus driver, so escaping was not too much of a problem. Eventually, regardless of the drama or the demon, and in spite of the bruises, the deliverers were always able to deliver the victims and allow them to take sweet, victorious possession of their bodies once again.

The Devil Prowls about Like a Roaring Lion, Seeking Someone to Devour

A few things puzzled me when I was young and watching, or in some cases peeking, at the "sessions" going on in my house or down at the little church building along a dusty dirt road. Seeing the fervent lust turn to a narcotic ecstasy in the satiated eyes of the deliverers at the end of a "session" was always a little confusing. There was no denying the exhilaration the deliverers experienced as they battled "against the authorities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against evil spiritual [beings] in the heavenly places" (Eph 2:16). After all, what other people only get to experience in the video games,[2] these people experience in real life.

Perhaps a little more troubling was the sense of awe that surrounded the deliverers. They held the keys to Satan's secrets, and that's something to be just plain scared about (the people of old Salem village knew that only too well). Each church service began with displays of power, the calling down of angels from heaven, the putting of "spiritual" blood on the door posts, the banishing of Satan from even looking in the windows and from the little babies who were crying and from the people who were coughing and from the old man sleeping and from the old lady with the chronic flatulence ("demon food") and from the minds of the nubile girls and the distracted boys. Still worse was the fate of any who crossed the deliverers. They were pronounced as demonic and in desperate need of the healing power of deliverance. Failure to comply meant being run out of the church by the most unflattering means available.

I was absolutely terrified of the devil and of appearing to be so. Fear of the devil was a clear indicator of his presence because "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18), and only the devil can take away your perfect love, so he must be in you for you to be afraid of him. As a young male who could think only about sex, the devil was clearly having a great time at my expense. I feared him to the point where my entire sense of personal identity was determined by what the devil might do to me if I did or did not do one thing or another. I found that

2. The manufacturer of *Doom,* Travel Master, describes the video game in the following way: "Welcome to Doom soldier. Now shut up and start fighting because there's no time to waste! We're talking total war against the forces of evil…."

that confession somehow removes from the critique its author's sins? Confession may absolve sin, but it doesn't remove its presence. Furthermore, surely it is the case that when a text appears to be more open, it is even more tightly closed. And further still, surely it is the case that when someone claims to be up front about the intersection of self and criticism, that person merely substitutes the institutional third-person façade of "the writer" for the equally façadal "me and my shadow." Worse, this substitution suggests that somehow the façade has been removed, that somehow there is a glimmer of neo-objectivity poking through the clouds of subjectivity, that somehow the sun shines right out of the autobiographical critic's bum.

Esbeelzebub: Even if I concede that a mask remains in place, though I still think that it is a mask reflective of the critic's personal contours, it's not as if this has gone unnoticed, and it's not as if your concerns are aimed at the heart of the matter. To begin with, Moore has already observed that "the self is no less slippery than the text, and never more so than when the interpreter is reaching out, hammer in hand, to grasp it, and nail it down. Then it begins to thrash uncontrollably" (1995:37) …

Jamie: *(Interrupting)* I fail to see either how that is relevant to my point or how it reflects my poor aim. In fact, all it does is reinforce my earlier point about academic self-obsession.

Esbeelzebub: Well, first of all, you never let me finish. However, if I must spell it out, I maintain that the academic interest in the self is a valid one and not at all an obsession, although I further concede that there are some people out there making cheap mileage off the academic interest in the self, everywhere publishing an article and never contributing a thing. But trite academic use of the self because it seems easier does not invalidate the larger philosophical project of investigating the role of the self in the production of meaning, social significance, ethics, valid, invalid, inside, outside, privilege, and so on. The fact is that all these things conspire to constitute real people's lives as one thing or another. Indeed, I might even say that the investigation of the self is perhaps one of our greatest social responsibilities.

Jamie: My, my, what big dreams we have! I'm simply floored by your optimism. I can't even begin to imagine how you could associate such grandiose ideals to some guy talking about his penis or some woman reflecting on her desire to urinate. You're clearly so obsessed with the self that you've turned it into the answer for all of life's problems.

my reading of not just the Bible but the entire world around me was centered around the activity of the devil who roams around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. I had to get away from this, but escaping your roots is made all the more difficult when there's a Satanic lion patrolling the perimeter of your theology.

The devil as a means by which the church secures its own power enfolds itself in and out of the identity of ecclesial practice—at once both inside and outside, the devil as a device to root out evil forestalls the sort of closure required by ecclesial practice to remain nonsecular, that is, to remain on the inside of itself. But where lies this boundary between inside and outside? Is there something other than the inside and the outside that holds their confluence in abeyance? What is the nature of the edge of the inside that is not also the edge of the outside? I found the same question skulking about the perimeter of this essay, seeking to devour someone: Where is the edge of me and where is the edge of not-me? But hey, enough about me … or not-me, or … "us."

Me on the Edge of Myself as We Watch the Bible on TV

In *The Simpsons* episode "Homer vs. Lisa and the 8th Commandment" (episode 7F13), we begin with a Mount Sinai scene in which three men taking a break from their routine lives of stealing (the role of the preincar[toon]nate Homer), committing adultery, and carving graven images, respectively. With due pomp and circumstance, Moses comes down from the mountain and announces that he has Ten Commandments from God, which he will now read in "no particular order." When the three men realize that it's Moses, they panic, and one shouts, "Quick, let's look busy!" They hurriedly scuttle to look busy with their routine stealing, committing adultery, and carving graven images. After Moses reads out the three relevant prohibitions, we cut back to present-day Springfield, where the Simpsons live, and drop in on a scene in which the evangelical Christian neighbor, Ned Flanders, is berating a cable guy for offering him free cable. Homer, perceiving a crack in the window of opportunity, runs out onto the street and melodramatically throws himself in front of the cable guy's truck and begs him for free cable.

Very soon after, we are taken to a Sunday school class in which Bart and Lisa are being given a lesson on hell:

> Miss Allbright: Today's topic will be hell.
> Kids: Oooooh.
> Bart: All right! … I sat through Mercy and I sat through Forgiveness, *finally* we get to the good stuff.
> Miss Allbright: Hell is a *terrible* place. Maggots are your sheet, worms your blanket, there's a lake of fire burning with sulfur. You'll be tormented day and

Esbeelzebub: Well, it seems to me that your constant complaining reflects your own little obsession with the self. Nonetheless, allow me to educate you.

Jamie: Oh, please!

Esbeelzebub: If you would just listen for once, you might actually begin to realize just what is going on here, and then maybe you could write something that had some significance. No, no, let me speak! Now, relatively recently people have begun to realize in earnest that what lies at the very center of everything is in fact the human subject. By that I mean that social structures are simply individuals writ large; political structures, human relationships, sexuality, history, theology, philosophy are all extensions of the human subject. *AND,* in as much as this is the case, then what structures the individual subject most certainly structures itself into all of those things that are extensions of that human subject. Thus, it only makes sense to say that if we are to make any real progress with political, sexual, historical, philosophical, and theological issues, we must critique what is prior to them, the structure of the thing that gives them structure. This is why the unconscious is such a big player in contemporary critical theory. Critical theory questions the way things are thought to be the way they are and necessarily incorporates into its questioning the nature of that thinking that makes things the way they are, namely, the human subject and its psychology.

Jamie: So, you're saying that unless I've got myself on the couch, I'll never write any good critiques? I hardly think so.

Esbeelzebub: No, I'm not saying that … entirely … well, perhaps I am. Let me put it like this: social meaning is going to find both its significance and its origins within the human subject. As a human subject thinking about the manifestations of other human subjects, does it not make sense, as you put it, "to get yourself on the couch" first and consider the dialogue between your own sociopsychological composition and that which it composes? How could you possibly begin to offer criticism about biblical texts and their *cultural* significances without first acknowledging that what is common to both biblical texts and cultural significance is, in fact, the human subject? Thus, any such discussion must assume that the human subject is a part of the very *structure* of these respective critical objects, and the subjective critic will necessarily not only be a part of the general structuring, but his or her own per-

night for ever and ever. As a matter of fact, if you actually saw hell, you'd be so frightened, you would die.
Lisa: *[gasps in terror and experiences an episode of tunnelvision focusing on the eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not steal."]*
Bart: *[raises his hand]* Oh … Miss Allbright.
Miss Allbright: Yes, Bart.
Bart: Wouldn't you eventually get used to it, like in a hot tub?
Miss Allbright: No.
[Bart raises his hand]
Miss Allbright: Yes, Bart.
Bart: Are there pirates in hell?
Miss Allbright: Yes. Thousands of them.
Bart: *[rubs his hands together with glee]* Hoo hoo, baby!
Martin: "So what you're saying is that there is a down side to the after life…. How does one steer clear of this abode of the damned?"
Miss Allbright: "By obeying the ten commandments. Ten simple rules that are easy to live by."

The episode continues, and we encounter a series of events in which Lisa assumes a hellfire-and-brimstone posture toward Homer's stealing of cable. At one point Lisa enters a room where the family is watching free cable—and is thereby in the act of breaking the eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." Her mind is seized: the room turns red, the mercury bursts out of the top of the thermometer, flames lick their way into the scene while great, superheated stalactites and stalagmites descend and rise into the living room around the blissfully unaware family watching TV on the couch.

Lisa is terrified by all this, yet her terror rises to a mind-altering level when there appears, sitting on the couch alongside the family, a red humanlike creature with horns, a shaggy crop of goat hair spiking from its head, cloven hooves, a pointed tail, a pitchfork, and a great big smile. In the voice of the evangelical neighbor, this devil speaks in slippery whispers that crescendo into an otherworldly thunder: "Come on, Lisa, watch a little TV, it won't cost you anything … *except your soul!*" Lisa flees the living-room hell in fear of her very soul. A little later and apparently having overcome her visionary episode, Homer entices Lisa to take her repose by the television; she responds: "No thanks, I'd rather go to heaven."

This episode of *The Simpsons* sustains the classic ecclesial failure to maintain a difference between its own interior and exterior. The devil, and the consequential location, hell, are the means by which the confluence of Christian theology and practice is achieved. In view here is not simply a fear of the exterior but a failure to maintain an exterior that is in fact exterior and not also *in*terior. Thus, the act of using the devil as a device to root out evil belies the stability of the opposition between devil and church. The church—Catholic, evangelical, and

sonal composition will be the contours over which the critical observation and its subsequent presentation are laid.

Jamie: What good is any criticism, then? If it is always problematized by the presence of the critic, what's the point?

Esbeelzebub: Who said it was a problem?

Jamie: Of course it's a problem.

Esbeelzebub: If this is the way things are, it's hardly a problem, at least in the broader sense of the term. It's only a "problem" if you live in a fantasy world in which prancing blue unicorns carry critics off to a luxurious land where things are simply what they are with no actual relationship to anything else.

Jamie: Logical Positive Land? Didn't we have an SBL there?

Esbeelzebub: Something like that, but I think the SBL was at Disneyland.

Jamie: Funny, I didn't notice.

Esbeelzebub: You're being a bit of a smarty pants for someone who's barely gotten anything published. I dare say you're a tad bitter.

Jamie: Hey, I'm happy.

Esbeelzebub: Yeah, right, that's why I caught you blubbering like a little girl.

Jamie: I was not blubbering, and shouldn't you point out that boys cry too?

Esbeelzebub: Stop whinging, you big girl's blouse!

Jamie: My, my, hasn't this degenerated quickly. My point was simply that I'm quite satisfied with just critiquing things; as Oscar Wilde says, "When a man acts, he is a puppet. When he describes he is a poet" (127). I'm a poet. I don't have to publish.

Esbeelzebub: Of course you are; you're *very* clever, indeed.

fundamentalist forms in particular—uses the very thing from which it wants to deliver people as the very means of that deliverance. The presence of an unstable border (or no border) maintaining a difference between inside and outside is at the same time a collapse of the inside and outside—a disappearance of that which establishes the Christian identity relying upon such oppositions.

"Ironic Punishments Division"[3]
"All Hope Abandon, Ye Who Enter In!"[4]

> For the pernicious sin of gluttony
> I, as thou seest, am battered by this rain.
> And I, sad soul, am not the only one,
> For all these suffer the like penalty,
> For the like sin. (Dante, canto 6)

The Simpsons' "Treehouse of Horror IV" (epidsode 1F04) provides us with the ultimate display of the failure to maintain the difference between church and devil. The first of the three stories, "The Devil and Homer Simpson," begins with a scene in which Homer is apparently lusting after the long legs of a catwalk model, announced as "a vision in raspberry cream." As we follow the line of Homer's sinful lust up these long, slender legs, the full complement of Homer's desire is exposed right there on the cat walk: a doughnut, in all of its vaginal glory. Homer's lust is for food, doughnuts in particular; his deadly sin is gluttony.

Homer awakes to discover that he is still at work and that it was all a dream, but it takes a lot to dishearten Homer, who sees a doughnut box sitting on the break-room table and optimistically says: "and now to make the leap from dreams to reality." But alas and alack, the doughnut box is devoid of doughnuts. Suddenly experiencing a sharp rise of anxiety and confusion, Homer tries to calm himself and reorganize his thoughts. He manically commands himself to "stay calm; remember your training." He runs into his work station and grabs his thick "Emergency Procedures" manual and opens it up to reveal a square hole cut into the pages, into which fits an emergency doughnut. Upon opening the Emergency Procedures manual, the hide-a-doughnut hole reveals no doughnut, but rather a note: "Dear Homer, I.O.U. one emergency doughnut. Signed, Homer." To which he responds: "Bastard, he's always one step ahead."

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3. Sign on the door of Homer's Dantesque punishment room in hell in episode 1F04.
4. Sign on the gates of the vestibule of hell in Dante's vision (Dante, canto 3).

Jamie: Look, just because you're ethereal doesn't mean that I won't punch you in the nose.

Esbeelzebub: Aha! The violent side rears its rather ugly head. Go ahead if you must, but I can assure you that your pugilism will prove quite pointless. But if you will, allow me to concede Wilde's point, which is only slightly out of context—but what does that matter these days. Indeed, in the very same text, Wilde also makes my point for me: "Surely criticism is itself an art" (133). And, while I won't point out that I went to pains to make this clear for you earlier in our conversation, I will point out that Wilde's point is precisely why you should go ahead and write this bloody paper! I'm growing a little weary of having to convince you of this, so if you won't listen to me, at least listen to Wilde.

Jamie: Yes, but Wilde is not saying that all criticism is artistic, rather that all art is critical.

Esbeelzebub: My dear boy, that is the very point. Note that Wilde continues by saying that "just as artistic creation implies the working of the critical faculty, and, indeed, without it cannot be said to exist at all, so criticism is really creative in the highest sense of the word. Criticism is, in fact, both creative and independent." Indeed, he further contends, and I shall summarize, that criticism bears the same relationship to its object as does a traditional artistic piece to its object. This is certainly the case with biblical studies, since it is the ideological expression of the biblical authors' responses to the world around them.

Jamie: That may be, but you're forgetting that Wilde eventually claims that criticism is more creative because it "has least reference to any standard external to itself and is, in fact, itself its own reason for existing" (134–35). Yet I find that biblical criticism, like it or not, is *primarily* the maintenance of external standards, and this has been my point all along. There is a very big difference between an intellectual and an academic, you know; sadly, there are too many academics and not enough intellectuals. So while in an ideal world I could easily concede Wilde's point, it does not correspond positively with the reality of the *practice* of biblical criticism, which is fundamentally institutional. And on top of that, you're trying to coerce me into writing a paper that has as its explicit purpose to step outside of the institution, which took me forever to get inside, simply to perform a noninstitutional critique on a noninstitutional object.

Homer is overcome with grief, anger, anxiety, not to mention an uncommon lust for doughnuts. Thus he ruefully states: "I'd sell my soul for a doughnut." Suddenly the devil appears: "Heh, heh, that can be arranged!" Homer looks over at the devil, who has Ned Flanders's face (complete with slippery spectacles) and torso but a red, hairy goat's body and legs with the obligatory pointed tail, and states the central "thesis" of this … well, "paper":

> Homer: "What … Flanders! You're the devil?
> Flanders-Devil: "Ho ho, it's always the one you least expect."
> Flanders-Devil: "Many people offer to sell their souls without reflecting on the grave ramifications."

The Flanders-Devil is telling the truth here. One of the more famous, and certainly one of the earliest, documented pacts is that of the French cleric, Father Urbain Grandier. During the 1600s European witch hysteria, he was accused by a mob of Ursuline nuns (who probably loathed his playboy lifestyle) of being in consort with the devil and of sending demons to possess them. Somehow a document was eventually produced that was purported to be a pact with the devil. It is signed by Father Grandier and countersigned by Lucifer, Beelzebub, Satan, Elimi Leviathan, Asteroth, and Baalbarith (just to be sure). This all turned out quite poorly for Grandier, who was sentenced according to the following:

Figure 3 (above): Grandier's pact with the devil

Figure 4 (below): Grandier's burning

We have ordered and do order the said Urbain Grandier duly tried and convicted of the crime of magic, maleficia, and of causing demoniacal possession of several Ursuline nuns … as well as of other secular women, together with other charges and crimes resulting therefrom. For atonement of which, we have

Esbeelzebub: I'm not comfortable with "coerce"; perhaps "tempt" would be a more suitable description. Anyway, if criticism is to move on, if the institution itself is not sufficient to deal with those things with which it must deal, then by all means, step outside! If you like the institution so much, take heart in my observation that if you do step outside, you will soon find yourself thoroughly entrenched in institutional structures that provide the formalizing comfort you seem to desire. Indeed, does it does not say anything to you that this noninstitutional paper is in reality for an edition of Semeia Studies, a product of the well-established institution, the Society of Biblical Literature?!

Jamie: Yes, it affirms everything I've been saying!

Esbeelzebub: How so?

Jamie: Well, I remember back when the subtitle *on the cover* of the *Semeia* journal used to say "an experimental journal for biblical criticism," or some such thing. That provocative subtitle eventually crept to the inside of the jacket and then disappeared altogether along with the journal itself. Why, because no one on the inside is really interested in what is on the outside. What now remains is Semeia Studies, and the little blurb is on the website: "Experimental studies in the field of biblical studies. . . ."

Esbeelzebub: YAWN . . . if you have a point of some variety, feel free to come to it at any time.

Jamie: I'm trying to say that not even experimentation is noninstitutional. The only way to get something from the outside published on the inside is to never really leave the inside.

Esbeelzebub: Well, actually, something very important just occurred to me. First of all, I need to go, because I have a temptation at 2:30 and a possession at 2:45. Second, your own observations about Semeia Studies should tell you that, even though you're pretending to write a noninstitutional paper, in reality you're writing a thoroughly tame paper that meets all the comfort levels required by the publisher. If you're not, then it won't be published, and you won't have to worry your pretty little head about anything. If you are, then it will be published, and you can breathe a sigh of relief that you remain on the inside.

Jamie: Yes, you are thinking quite well. However, you fail on one point, and it is essentially the same point I have attempted to make out all

condemned and do condemn … Grandier to make amende honorable, his head bare, a rope round his neck, holding in his hand a burning taper weighing two pounds, before the principle door of the church of St. Pierre-du-Marché, and before that of St. Ursula of this town. There on his knees, to ask pardon of God, the King, and the law; this done, he is to be taken to the public square of St. Croix, and fastened to a stake on a scaffold, which shall be erected on the said place for this purpose, and there to be burned alive … and his ashes scattered to the wind. We have ordered and so do order that each and every article of his moveable property be acquired and confiscated by the King; the sum of 500 livres first being taken for buying a bronze plaque on which will be engraved the abstract of this present trial, to be set up in a prominent spot in the said church of the Ursulines, to remain there for all eternity. And before proceeding to the execution of the present sentence, we order the said Grandier to be submitted to the first and last degrees of torture, concerning his accomplices (Sidky:163).

Surely the Flanders-Devil is thinking more of Homer's soul than his body; nonetheless, with such grave consequences hanging in the balance, what is Homer's response?

Homer: "Do you have a doughnut or not!?"

We must note that Ned Flanders, whom Homer recognizes as the devil, is Homer's card-carrying, fundamentalist, evangelical Christian neighbor. Here's the dirt on Flanders:

> Age: SIXTY (looks 35 at most … all that good livin').
> Married: AT THE TIME YES, BUT NOW WIDOWED
> Children: TWO.
> Occupation: LEFT-HANDED ITEM MERCHANT
> Education: Ph.D. MIXOLOGY
> Pet Peeves: WIFE UNDERLINING PASSAGES IN HIS BIBLE
> Favorite Book: THE BIBLE (copies owned: Aramaic Septuagint, Psalms, Children's Bible, Holy Bible!, Good News Bible, St. James, Today's Family Gnostic Bible, Hebrew National Bible, The Thump Resistant Bible, Samaritan Pentateuch, Song of Solomon, NASB (x 2), The Living Bible, Hebrew Interlinear, The Vulgate of St. Jerome, The Word, Who Begat Whom, and The Bible according To Hoyle
> Favorite phatic sounds: IDILY and OODILY (prefixed, suffixed, interfixed)
> Reverend on Speed Dial: YES
> Emergency Baptismal Kit: YES[5]

The pronouncement of the devil as Ned Flanders announces the (re)incarnation of the biblical Satan in the form of the evangelical Christian. Such an amalga-

5. Compiled by various fans of *The Simpsons* with way too much time on their hands.

along. Remember our discussion on performance? … In theory we all perform even though we don't all know it, etcetera. Well, the same applies here. Writing a paper for Semeia Studies may indeed be a thoroughgoing institutional act; it is not considered to be so by many other scholars who see it is distinctly extra-institutional. And frankly, I cannot afford to express myself in ways in which the power brokers of my discipline deny is valid. So, before you fly off to pester someone else, allow me to point out that you have indeed failed.

In a flash of angry light, Esbeelzebub disappears. Jamie is leafing through his address book looking for Fiona's number. Her number has been mysteriously erased. He's hungry; he needs some chocolate and a cup of tea. He thinks about the paper. He is happy he's not going to bother with it. It's the right thing to do; after all, he thinks, it's time to get serious. He feels the urge to go to the toilet; he can't because Tompkins is already in there. Jamie is terrified of going to public toilets because he might make some embarrassing noises; he thinks of all those fools who actually write about this in their papers. Is nothing sacred, he asks himself, as his overly retentive bowels contract painfully. He wonders what sacred means.

mation, such a disregard for sacred difference, suggests that the writers of *The Simpsons* see clearly into the primordial moments of theological formation. The devil as a device to root out evil appears to be a favorite tool of preachers and artists not only in the present but throughout history. The problem, again, is that it lays siege to the sanctity of the proposed boundary between sacred and secular, God and Satan, church and world. With the conscious dismissal of such boundaries, what happens to their respective identities?

The "Devil and Homer Simpson" story continues with the Flanders-Devil warning Homer that once he has completed eating the doughnut, his soul will belong to the Flanders-Devil. By the time the Flanders-Devil has finished the warning, Homer has already consumed the doughnut, save for one final bite. He realizes that he can keep his soul, if he does not eat this final bite. After poking fun at the Flanders-Devil for not seeing this loophole in the agreement and chanting "I'm smarter than the devil" over and over, Homer stores this final bite in his pocket and then later puts it in the fridge with several paper notes attached to it telling him not to eat "Daddy's soul donut." Unfortunately, Homer wakes up in the middle of the night and wanders into the kitchen and proceeds to eat the final bite: "hmmmm, forbidden donut."

The moment Homer swallows the final bite the Flanders-Devil pops up from hell: "Well well, finishing something?" Suddenly a fiery hole appears in the middle of the kitchen floor, and Homer is dragged into it. The family wanders into the kitchen as Homer screams and clings onto the fridge door (or is it his gluttony?). He loses his grip on the fridge door, but his fat body gets stuck in the fiery portal. There's a slight delay as the Flanders-Devil grabs a toilet plunger and proceeds to unclog the portal. Lisa cries out for the devil to wait and asks whether Homer does not have the right to a fair trial. The devil reluctantly acquiesces. A trial time is set, but Homer must spend one day in hell.

Homer finally plummets down into hell's fiery pits and lands on a conveyor belt. He is then sliced into pieces by one of the Flanders-Devil's grotesque mignons. After then being reincorporated, he is taken to a Dantesque room entitled "Hell Labs: Ironic Punishments Division." The Keeper of the room proceeds to punish Homer in accordance with his deadly sin of Doughnut Gluttony: "So you like doughnuts do you?!" "Yes," confesses Homer, to which the Keeper menacingly replies: "Well, have all the doughnuts in the world!" The Keeper then shoves a big doughnut feeding machine into Homer's face, forcing Homer to consume all the doughnuts in the world.

The irony of this ironic punishment is that Homer's fabulous greed devours the hellish expectations of the Keeper as Homer continues to beg for more doughnuts, even while growing impossibly fat. Again, the identity confusion between devil/Christian, outside/inside occurs even here in hell, where Homer's greed exceeds the boundaries of the doughnut gluttony punishment room. Hell is found to be a place in

which Homer takes great delight, and in which Homer's apparently lethal lusts are fulfilled rather than punished.

Devil in the Pulpit

I am sitting down playing the newly invented TV game Pong with my friend P.[6] His sister, our minister's teen-aged daughter, rushes up the stairs with her friend and makes the grand announcement to her parents that they have just prayed for one whole hour and six minutes. I think, "They must be really spiritual. I wonder what they prayed for." I look at my suddenly unedifying Pong game and feel guilty. I wasn't even winning. Should I be praying for an hour and six minutes? What would that look like? Would I kneel for the whole time or move about a bit? I couldn't kneel for an hour, no way! I'd have to move around. I'd probably end up opening my eyes and having to start all over again. Could I keep my eyes shut for an hour and six minutes? What would I say? I can't even think what I would say. I wonder what sort of things one prays for when one prays for an hour and six minutes? I'm curious. I timidly raise my voice from the other side of the room: "What did you pray about?

"Oh, you know, the youth group, birds, stuff like that."

"Birds!? … What about the birds? Is there a problem with the birds?" I nervously glance out the window and wonder what kind of birds they have around here. I don't see any birds. The W.s do live in the bush a bit; maybe there are some dangerous birds around here, like the bloodthirsty magpies that live near my house. I hate magpies. Every breeding season they dive bomb me on my way home from school. I usually try to hit them with my cricket bat, but I never get a good swing at the mongrels—probably because I'm usually running away with my head down, covered with one arm, and blindly flailing the cricket bat around in the air with the other.

"Oh, you know, we were just thanking God for them."

"Oh." Should I be thanking God for the birds? What kind of a Christian am I? The minister's daughter is even praying for the birds in the middle of the day, but when I pray it's only at night and almost always that when I wake up in the morning I'll have magical powers—I start each morning trying to levitate my sleeping brother or make my breakfast appear in our room. It never works.

"We didn't just pray about birds, silly, we prayed for the youth group and against the devil," she exclaims only slightly piously exasperated.

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6. No change of names here, but I will abbreviate them all for obvious reasons.

"The devil!" Oooooh, I think. *The devil,* Cool! Praying about the devil I understand: birds, no; the devil, yes. My parents always talk about the devil at my house. "Why did you pray about the devil?"

"So he doesn't possess all the kids at the youth group," she splutters while eating a slice of the lemon cake her mother had on the table for afternoon tea. "We told you about P.'s idol didn't we?"

"No!" I hungrily complain.

Her mother interrupts with a snap, "Don't start talking about that, D. Just mind your own business!" Looks are exchanged. I know it's time to go downstairs where I will hear all the metaphysical details laid out for me by a thirteen-year-old girl who loves to terrify herself. We all meet later and are informed about how P. and D.'s dad brought a Tiki home from New Zealand and then during the night all the lights in the older boys' room were going off and on, and the windows were opening and shutting *all by themselves!* I walk over to the window and study it closely. P. shows me how the locking mechanism works and explains how impossible it would have been for someone to do this from the outside, so it must have been the devil (on the inside).

I'm mesmerized. "So, what happened then?"

D. explains how her dad tried to break the Tiki but couldn't, how he then took it outside and tried to smash it with a hammer, and then an axe, and when these didn't work, how he went and got his Bible and prayed over the Tiki and burned the cursed thing.

"Wow!" I'm still mesmerized, but I want lots more. There is no more. D. and her friend leave to go and play in the sandstone cave in the bush behind the house.

P.'s dad, Mr W., comes down and knows what we've been talking about. He is a missionary evangelist. He travels around with a great big inflatable tent, the "Aerosphere," and preaches the gospel. It was he who first met Gary when Gary and his "hoons" were running into and bouncing off the fat white walls of the Aerosphere while Mr W. was holding a crusade down at Beenleigh. After the crusade, Mr W. went out to invite Gary and his mates to come in. He came across the lads while they were drawing pentagrams in the dirt behind the Aerosphere in an attempt to conjure the devil, or Beelzebub, or any demon that might rise and do their bidding. Mr W. tells them that Satan will come and get them but that they will be safe if they come into the Aerosphere and pray. They stayed outside. That is, until the next night when they all came running into the Aerosphere and sat right up the front and wanted to give their lives to Jesus because the devil had appeared to them and tried to get them and now they wanted to be protected from him.

Mr W. knows all about the devil. He is standing and evangelizing at the front of the Aerosphere. He is trying hard to explain to the gathering of believers

and seekers that the devil is out to get them. He explains what the devil will do to them. He explains how the refuge of the church will secure their protection against the devil and his destiny. He roars, he whispers, he pauses dramatically, he recites rhyming poems. He calls for a response, he bellows for repentance, he fervently commands the devil to be gone, he pleads for us to flee the devil. He can see the devil trying to get us, we are terrified, we all want to get the hell away from this creature whom we cannot see but fortunately Mr W. can. Where will we go? We will flee to the altar. We will be received into the blessed security of the church. We will be baptized and we will be safe from the devil. … Hallelujah! Amen!

Father Irenaeus and the Children of the Forest

> Let those persons, therefore, who blaspheme the Creator, either by openly expressed words … or *by a perversion of the sense* (*of Scripture*) … be recognized as agents of Satan by all those who worship God. (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.26.2, emphasis added)

Our eyes are stones tumbling along the riverbed of Christian history; our thoughts are petrified logs in an ancient forest of fear. We think we are advancing into new vistas of spiritual victory, and all we do is affirm that which denies us. We employ the devil to win souls for Jesus. We do more than this. We employ the devil to purge our little church of impurity. The impure, the different, the others are denounced in the name of Jesus. We use the devil to root out evil. We destroy people. We destroy the church. We are not young; we are not alone. We stand on the firm tradition of the second-century church father Irenaeus.

The history of the early church is replete with the very same use of the devil employed in my own church and thus with the very same inside-out identity confusion. Applying stigmata diabolicum *to the ideas of others was (and is) a primary way of maintaining "orthodox" teaching, or, to put it another way, those in power maintained their ideological and theological dominance by "diabolicizing" difference. Thus Ignatius writes, "he who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop, does (in reality) serve the devil" (9.1). The history of the church is a history in which the devil lurks within every recess of every person's life and thus a story of Nietzschean "micrological power," essentially void of specific content, at once nowhere and everywhere.*

"There Was Given to Me a Thorn in the Flesh, an Angel of Satan" or *Stigmata Diabolicum,* Corpulent Turpitude, and My T-Shirts:

Hellfire and brimstone rain down weekly upon those poor parishioners subjected to the sermons of devil-fightin' preachers trying to scare their flocks into heaven. But the devil has proved to be even more useful. It turns out that anything that is undesirable is unchristian and thus of the devil. My personal favorite example is sitting right here on my desk. It's a book by C. S. Lovett, entitled *Help Lord—The Devil Wants Me Fat! A Scriptural Approach to a Trim and Attractive Body.*

Lovett comments that the book is his response to the overwhelming number of letters he received after publishing an earlier article entitled, "Can the Devil Make You Fat?" (8) He suggests that if I, the reader, had a chance to see those letters I would "get the feeling that Satan had unleashed an *army of glutton demons* on American Christians" (9). To prove his point, and to validate the book, he cites a letter from "one reader": "Brother Lovett, there appears to be a satanic plot at work in the land to make Christians obese. You'd do the body of Christ a great service if you'd tell us how to cope with this attack on God's people." *[How 'bout stop eating so much, porky!]* Lovett suggests that there is "a satanic food conspiracy" afoot and that, "as a result, a multitude of believers across this country is overloaded with fat. Not only does it make them look ugly…" (10).

For Lovett, it all begins with a personal story of his meeting a man who stated "I don't see how a really fat person can be a true Christian." Lovett confesses to being surprised at first but gave the fellow a hearing and was subsequently convinced. Why? Because in Phil 3:19 Paul speaks of "those whose God is their belly." Thus, he reasons that for the fat man, "it seems to me that food is his real master, not the Lord Jesus. Those extra pounds are proof he puts his stomach ahead of the

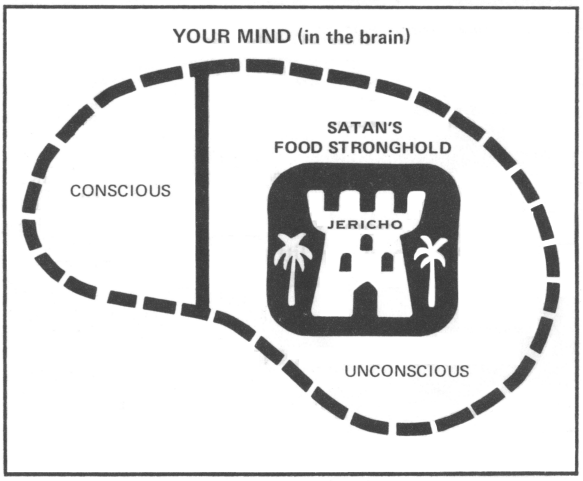

Figure 5: Lovett's diagram of the human brain

Lord" (18–19). The book is very much like this through the first three chapters (or "Phase One"), which teach us how to stop the devil from making us fat. To assist in his explanation, Lovett provides us with a brief explanation of how the devil works on the brain, accompanied by a detailed diagram of the human brain (43).

I used to have a lot of T-shirts with theological slogans on them. Due to the great interest in the devil at my church and in my home, the "God beats the devil" motif was my favorite. In particular, I cite one such T-shirt, which was a nice black one with funky dark red and green lettering stating, "God beat the devil with an ugly stick."[7] I find that even my T-shirts have become a part of the ecclesial confusion between inside and outside.

The Christian devil has developed into a grotesque and thus "ugly" figure. The historical roots of the devil's ugliness are old and continue to be brought to bear on the maintenance of power within the Christian tradition. Furthermore, they are an essential element in Lovett's God-given, fat-bustin', devil-stompin', starve-yourself-stupid "scriptural guide to a trim and attractive body" hootenanny. Lovett feeds on these roots throughout the book, but in particular by developing the idea that fat is ugly and thus evidence of the devil's presence (8). Christian history has developed the trend of attributing the undesirable to the devil, especially when it comes to the physical body.[8]

Ancient pre-Christian Mesopotamian cultures tended to attribute each sickness or disease to a specific demon, and this association appears to have been carried over into the general thought of early Christians, resulting in the early church's "identification of deformity and ugliness with demons" (Messadié: 254). Being intimately associated with disease and all things opposed to what humans desire, the undesirable body has thus been readily associated with the devil. Guazzo's *Compendium Maleficarum,* written in 1608 to assist Christians in their defense against the devil, represents the tradition that association with the devil somehow affects the body's form. Thus, when Guazzo describes the "certain matters common to all … pacts with the Devil," and there are eleven of them, he notes that the tenth matter is where the devil "places a mark upon some part or other of their bodies" (Guazzo: 15 [1, vi]). This of course is what lies behind the idea of the famous *stigma diabolicum,* or "mark of the devil."

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7. The available variation on this theme was "God beat the devil with two ugly sticks," but I couldn't afford two T-shirts, so I just bought the one-stick beating.

8. Ironically, and this is just a suggestion, in the late medieval period in Europe and America the strength of sexual desire toward (typically) female bodies by those men wielding ecclesial power was itself turned into the undesirable and ultimately associated with the prince of undesirability, the devil. Thus the objects of that desire were punished (typically as witches) for being in cahoots with the devil.

Figure 6: The devil applies his mark, *Compendium Maleficarum*

Stigmata diabolicum ultimately amounted to any deviations from perfection that some clerical examiner deemed to be of the devil; thus virtually everyone was susceptible to accusation based on such evidence. The actual practice of examination was of course an inversion of the cause-and-effect relationship, insofar as the presence of a stigma caused the effect of attributing to the stigma a diabolic cause. Though in some cases there is a distinction made between the devil's mark and a witch's mark, it remains the case that association with the devil and his demons produced corporeal malformation.

Such stigmata typically included any mole, wart, patch of hair, form of extra hairiness, birth mark, that is, any form of grotesque physiognomy, even including that which is associated with old age (see Guazzo: 15; Sidkey: 39, 121). In the case of witches' marks, an extra nipple was thought to evidence a closer relationship between a witch and her[9] familiar, in that it was the means by which the familiar was suckled and thus sustained (e.g., Sidkey: 41). In the case of Lovett, his perception of fat as ugliness enables him to use fat as a *stigma diabolicum.*

> At Porrentury (30th Oct., 1590) … Claude Bogart was about to be put to the torture and, as the custom is, had had her head shaved. A scar on the top of her forehead was thus plainly brought to light. Thereupon, the Judge, suspecting the truth, namely, that this was the mark of the Demon's talon, which had before been hidden by her hair, ordered a pin to be thrust deeply into it; and when this was done it was seen that she felt no pain, and that the wound did not bleed in the very least. Yet she persisted in denying the truth, saying that her numbness to pain was due to an old blow from a stone; but after she was brought to torture she not only acknowledged that the mark has been made by a Demon, but recounted several other cruel injuries which she had received from him. (Remy: 9–10)

9. Less so "his" than "her."

Interestingly, Lovett's fat-as-*stigma diabolicum* corresponds somewhat to the medieval "swimming ordeal" in which it was supposed that "God has appointed … that the water shall refuse to receive them in her bosom, that have shaken off them the sacred Water of baptism and willfully refused the benefit thereof" (James IV: 81). In other words, if you were innocent, you sank and often drowned; if you were guilty, you floated and were convicted (usually resulting in death). Unfortunately, the fatter a person is the less density she has and thus the greater likelihood of floating and thus the greater likelihood of being convicted of having commerce with the devil. Whatever the case, the *stigmata diabolicum* represent this same disturbing confusion of inside and outside, of *corpus* and *spiritus.* The flesh has become spirit.

Frightful Illuminations

While *The Simpsons* is typically thought to reflect a "secular" biblical afterlife, I find that when compared to that which people do in the name of the church, it's not really all that secular. After all, what could be more secular than using the devil to accomplish your goals? My childhood thirst for knowledge about the devil and general Christian interest in theology led me to a standard set of texts referred to as "Chick tracts." These tracts are actually a set of evangelistic tools and aids and are the same little tracts you see left in the restrooms of truck stops and rest areas.

Chick Publications make the claim to have sold over 500 million copies of their tracts. Such is the extent of their international influence that even in Australia unwitting youths like me grew up feeding on them. Indeed, throughout the main course of my youth, I dined on these little tracts for my primary source of entertainment and theology. They use the devil and hell to such good effect that even my attempt to collect and read them for this essay evoked a strong sense of guilt and anxiety. As I considered these devices to root out evil, holding them up to a critical light, I feared for my very soul. I pondered the possibility of being freely cast into the very hell I am discussing, just for daring to think

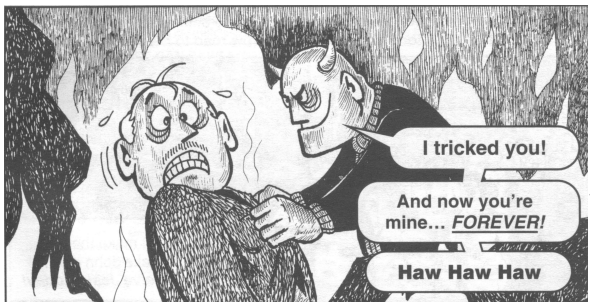


Figure 7: A man leaves it too late

about them—indeed, it wasn't hard to imagine the scene, since nearly every tract provides you with a graphic image of your soul being thrown into hell if you don't agree with the tract's message. To achieve their goals, they employ, with lavish abandon, grotesque and terrifying images of demons and the devil as the primary device of their rhetorical operation.

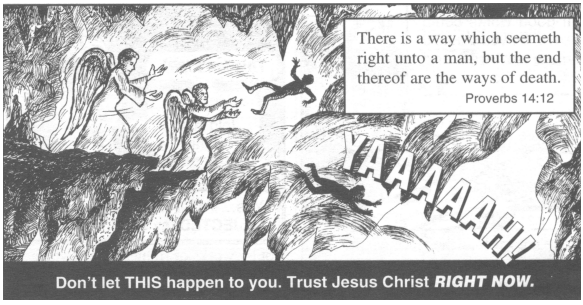
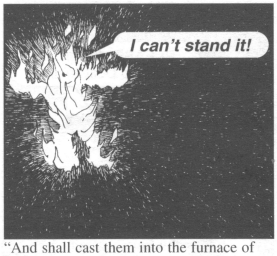
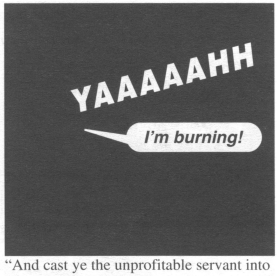


Figure 8: The results of relying on good works



"And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Mt. 13:50



"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness…" Mt. 25:30

Figure 9: The other side of the veil for an untrusting suicide victim

Apart from the painfully obvious deconstruction of inside and outside, what I presently find most interesting is the rhetoric of the image of the devil. My own fear of the devil was always concerned with what he might do to me. That fear of what he might do to me is exacerbated by the fact that what he might do to me is not actually clear in the biblical texts. If I have to, I will concede the whole "getting devoured" thing in 1 Peter, but isn't that just hortatory posturing designed to increase my ethical sobriety? The devil really isn't a lion … is he? After watching Stephen Hopkins's 1996 movie, *The Ghost and the Darkness,* I'm now terrified of lions, too; moreover, it's for the same reason: the movie, which claims to be grounded in historical reality, suggests that there is an unaccounted gap in our understanding of lions. The title of the movie bears this out: "ghost" and "darkness" represent what is not, or cannot, be known. What the devil might do to me resides within a biblical lacuna; thus nowhere, and even more thusly, everywhere.

The whole discussion of what the devil might do to me relies on far more interesting rhetoric than that of lions and snakes alone. Dominating the early historical imagery of the devil is actually the formless concept of darkness (Russell: 40). The long shadows of this darkness are cast well beyond the boundaries of the Bible, but within the Judeo-Christian tradition we begin the whole story in Gen 1:2 with this very thing: a formless earth shrouded in "darkness" (חשך). The Spirit of God peruses the darkness and commits its first creative act: "Let there be light" (Gen 1:3). But of course, what is "light" (אור) except for something other than what was already there: the indiscernible confusion of the lack of God. Is it presumptuous at this point to call that "darkness"? Perhaps we can abide the label if we also understand "darkness" to be a reference to the other of God. And this is not a darkness that is scuttled westward by the sun, a darkness not here but there, but a darkness radically other than God. As a prelight/God category, the primordial darkness did not require light to be whatever it was (not). It preceded binary structures. It is God's other.

The presence of darkness as an absence of God remains a dominant feature in the construction of evil and the devil's activities. An all-too-popular example is from one of the more famous contemporary Christian fear mongers, Frank Peretti. Peretti has written a series of stories about the devil and the church that were designed, I'm sure, to scare the bejeebers out of me. The first is about a little American town besieged by demonic forces, which are then repelled by the local preacher. The book postures itself with grandiose rhetorical gestures designed to use the horror and fear of the characters to engender a greater spiritual fervor within its readers. It thus breaks with the "ideal" structure of a radical opposition between God and devil and relies rather on God's absence as a presence within the narrative, not simply the presence of God's other, but the presence of God's absence—hence the title, *This Present Darkness*.

Darkness eventually transmogrified into something more tangible, even within the biblical tradition, where typically the devil is an angel, though we have some alternative forms such as the serpent deceiver in Genesis, the roaring lion image of Peter, and the great dragon of the Apocalypse. However, it's the postbiblical tradition where things start to get interesting. Maintaining the angelic-being theme, the early church fathers began to inscribe features into the dark void of God's other, which resulted in a formal distinction between the bodies of good angels and the bodies of bad ones. The initial premise was that only God is pure spirit; thus angels must have had some corporeal substance, and the difference between good and bad must also be represented by differences in material form. The thinking was that the form depended upon what they consumed: good angels consumed heavenly food, such as manna; bad angels "have grosser bodies" since they consumed such things as the sacrificial smoke from pagan sacrifices (Russell: 64). We begin to see here the develop-

ment of a more visceral response to the construction of the devil and his angels: Who wouldn't want to eat the heavenly manna? Who could stomach sucking down the smoke of a pagan sacrifice? Christian language about the devil and his demons had already begun to move beyond the metaphysical and into the ideologically rhetorical.

From the early stages of the Christian tradition, the language about the devil was designed to incite a visceral revulsion that, one assumes, would result in an ethical rejection of the devil and his ways. A necessary part of this rhetoric was to suggest that the devil and his subordinates were understood not to be just "acting out"; rather, as with the Petrine lion, the devil and his demons were deliberately out to get us, attempting to make us more like their sinful, doomed selves. They target our physical attachments and use them against us to bring about their goals (Russell: 76). The fathers who espoused these ideas did so in order to enable the church to avoid being deluded by the devil. It took a surprisingly long time for the devil to emerge from the pages of Christian literature and assume a graphic form. When the graphic imagery finally appeared, it followed the same basic rhetorical goals of the literary imagery: to incite a revulsion (or fear) of the devil, which would then be translated into a revulsion of the deeds of the devil and thereby produce piety.

Early imagery of the devil was naturally influenced by the pervasive theme of darkness that had dominated the depiction of evil throughout history. The earliest extant Christian image of the devil or a demon is found within the pages of the illuminated Rabbula Gospels (586 C.E.). The scene is a pair of demoniacs having the devil cast out of them; the illuminator has depicted the devil/demon as a small black, silhouetted figure with its arms cast above its head in the apparent posture of despair or anguish. While the image is designed to engender hope, since the devil is defeated, the comparative lack of definition maintains the devil as a faceless, unquantifiable figure who is mysteriously operative within human bodies.

It's possible that this image already depicts the devil as having wings, since the image bears pointed features poking out from underneath the raised arms of the figure; they're either the bottom parts of his wings or the pointed fall of the sleeves of his cloak. Whatever the case, subsequent images of the devil apply the wings. The eighth-century Book of Kells depicts a temptation scene in which a skinny, silhouetted, winged devil hovers beside Christ, who sits atop the temple. A wealth of other examples can be found in the ninth-century Stuttgart Gospels, where the devil and his demons are typically winged creatures. One illumination depicts a winged devil (the wings are attached to his head), in the holy city, sitting cross-legged, entwined with a serpent, gaping in horror as Christ heals the body of a demonic. What is interesting about the Stuttgart Gospels' illuminations is that the devil no longer appears as a

black, silhouetted figure. He has taken on features, which are, for all practical purposes, human. Notably, however, all the other figures in the illumination are beardless, lighter colored, and clothed (the demoniac remains naked); even the hand of God slipping out from the folds of the sky, appears to be clothed. The devil, however, has a rough beard, is a darker color, and is naked (in other words, not European).

All the images participate in the rhetorical construction of fear. Something of a climax within this rhetorical tradition is found in the thirteenth-century Codex Gigas, also famously known as "The Devil's Bible." It was so called for two reasons: the first is the magnificently frightening picture of the devil found on one of the pages. The second is that the monk responsible for the codex was supposed to serve penance in his cell until he had copied the Bible in its entirety; however, he is said to have completed his penance in a single night with the aid of the devil, whom he had conjured. In this image, we have the full complement of the rhetoric of fright: the wings have disappeared and been replaced with long pointy horns, threatening talon-like fingers and toes, *all the better to snatch you with;* he has large bright eyes, *all the better to see you with;* the reptilian head has a mouth lined with a set of big teeth, *all the better to eat you with.* The clear function of this image is to induce fear. What is remarkable about this image is that it appears to be entirely gratuitous, since it does not appear to be illuminating any text. It does serve, however, to further illustrate the ecclesial confusion of inside and outside: the devil writes the Bible.

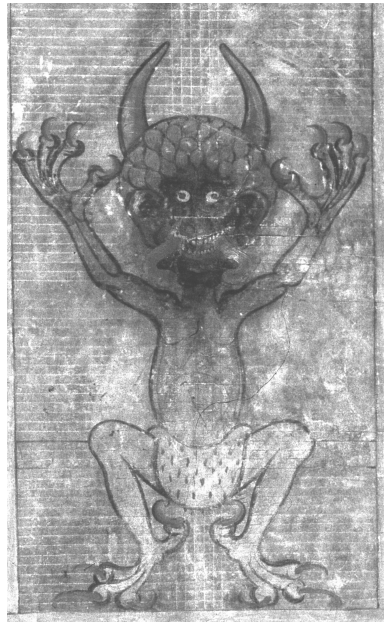


Figure 10: The devil, in the Codex Gigas

What is important about the development of the image of the devil is that it becomes less and less a commentary on biblical text and more and more a part of the ecclesial device to root out evil. As the devil moves away from the biblical text and into the church's rhetoric, he also moves away from the exterior and into the interior of the church. In the contemporary world, liberal Protestant churches tend to avoid such depictions and uses of the devil, preferring to keep him at bay with a rejection of his personhood. Within the Catholic, evangelical, and conservative Protestant traditions, that is, within my own theological tradition, such use of the

devil is dished up in liberal quantities. It's amazing to me how embarrassed I am by what people do in my own denomination, yet, I don't have the slightest inclination to leave it.

In October 2000, a church in Kentucky performed a play called *Angel Walk,* which was intended as an alternative to Halloween. Alternatives to Halloween are common among evangelical churches these days, since we apparently don't like the idea of our kids mixing it up with demons, devils, and witches. No, we prefer to scare the crap out of them with demonstrations of what is going to happen to them if they don't sit up and listen in church.

Such was the point of *Angel Walk.* It depicts normal people, *just like you,* who live their lives here on earth but upon their deaths are spirited away to heaven or hell—the fact that the obvious majority of the characters ends up in hell further suggests that the point here is to scare people. The play shows people on both sides of the veil. Most important, once they have crossed to the dark world of the devil, they are shown engaged in dialogue with the devil. Ironically, during the initial performance, the church caught on fire and the youth minister, who happened to be playing the devil, was photographed by the *Lexington Herald* trying to put out the fire. All this takes place *inside* the church building. The play swiftly turned a device to root out evil into a divine comedy.

You have to wonder … What is going on inside the mind of the youth minister who puts on a devil suit in order to dramatically scare people into heaven? I mean, when he leaves his house and drives down to the church and goes into his office and sees a red suit with a tail and horns hanging in the corner, does he not wince … even a little? When he checks his e-mail while he steps into his red suit, and as he calls in a passing colleague to ask if the horns are on straight, is he thinking about how odd it is that he himself is assuming the image of *the devil*?! Does he wonder where the horns came from? Does it pass through his mind that the exterior of the church, God's other, has now become his own exterior as he cracks jokes while making his way through the interior of the church to its auditorium? Has it occurred to him that the exterior he is about to portray has already by virtue of the very portrayal become an internal feature of ecclesial practice?

My own experience of this (in/re/per)version of the devil was exacerbated by imagery. Sure, seeing a grown man writhing on the floor of our living room screaming out various obscenities and descriptions of deviant acts (which were anything the exorcists did not do) leaves its mark on an adolescent mind. But it's not as bad as the psychological wounding caused by seeing most of the members of your church, one after the other, people who were supposed to represent stability, people I at one time looked up to, flop about the floor with their skirts up around their ears speaking in demonic "tongues" and screaming about their vaginas and what they've been doing with them.

The really sensitive issues (the really juicy problems) were dealt with behind closed doors, often while I was at school. I had to resort to sneaking peeks at the "log book"—the rather detailed record of what naughty things certain people had been up to and with whom. Of course, where the literary analysis failed, there were always the tape recordings that my sister and I used to pinch out of the filing cabinet and listen to while we sat around eating our homemade ice blocks. There's something Addam's Familyesque about a couple of kids sitting on the floor listening to a demoniac screech out her confessions while at the same time being distracted by trying to lick the little rivulets of melted ice block from their elbows:

I hate hate hate you!
Slurrrp.
Jesus is dead, Satan is alive, Satan is master, Satan is master!
Thlick … thhllllickk.
Aaahhh, he's trying to kill me, aaahhh!
Can you pass me that tea towel…
Satan Satan, I love Satan aaaahhheeeggh!
Stupid ice block! You should have left it in the freezer longer … slurrrp.
Noooooooo! Don't make me go there, do it, do it, no nooo, gak guh owgkleeii …
Do you think Mum and Dad will be home soon?

Illustrations

Figure 1: "Device to Root Out Evil." Collection of the Denver Art Museum, promised gift of Ginny Williams, courtesy of Joseph Helman Gallery, New York; 1997.205. Photo: Edward Smith, Venice; Dennis Oppenheim.

Figure 2: "Death and the Young Man." *Danse Macabre.* In Ernst and Johanna Lehner, eds. 1971. *Picture Book of Devils, Demons and Witchcraft.* New York: Dover.

Figure 3: "Grandier's Pact with the Devil." In Ernst and Johanna Lehner, eds. 1971. *Picture Book of Devils, Demons and Witchcraft.* New York: Dover.

Figure 4: "Grandier's Burning." In Ernst and Johanna Lehner, eds. 1971. *Picture Book of Devils, Demons and Witchcraft.* New York: Dover.

Figure 5: C. S. Lovett. 1977. *Help Lord—The Devil Wants Me Fat! A Scriptural Approach to a Trim and Attractive Body.* Baldwin Park, Calif.: Personal Christianity.

Figure 6: The Devil Applies His Mark from *Compendium Maleficarum.* In Ernst and Johanna Lehner, eds. 1971. *Picture Book of Devils, Demons and Witchcraft.* New York: Dover.

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Figure 8: Panel from Jack T. Chick. 1998. "Flight 144." Chico, Calif.: Chick Publications. Copyright by Jack T. Chick. Reproduced by permission of Chick Publications.

Figure 9: Panel from Jack T. Chick. 1997. "No Fear." Chico, Calif.: Chick Publications. Copyright by Jack T. Chick. Reproduced by permission of Chick Publications.

Figure 10: "The Devil" in the Codex Gigas. Original belongs to the Royal Library of Sweden; shelfmark A 148.

The Bible as a Children's Book: The Metrical Psalms and *The Gammage Cup**

Hugh S. Pyper

Is the Bible a children's book? I suspect that for most biblical critics, at least, the answer would be a rather puzzled "Of course not." The suggestion that the Bible was written for children seems unlikely, and, in any case, the concept of children's literature applied to ancient Israel is surely an anachronism. Yet for as long as I can remember I have been exposed to the Bible. For me, and for many of my generation in Scotland, the Bible was part of our childhood reading, as it has been for generations of children in Western, particularly Protestant, cultures. I am not thinking here of the Bible rewritten for children, the subject, for instance, of Ruth Bottigheimer's recent excellent study. It is the Bible undiluted to which we were exposed.

For this child, at any rate, the Bible was a part of my earliest reading. Immediately this suggests a number of further questions. How did this early encounter affect the way I now read the Bible? How, indeed, did it fit into my wider experience of reading? If Graham Greene is correct when he writes, "Perhaps it is only in childhood that books have any deep influence on our lives" (13), this is an important issue. As a voracious reader from an early age, to trawl through the whole range of intertextuality this self-searching might bring out would be fascinating but would go well beyond the scope of this paper. Luckily, I recently made the rather unexpected rediscovery of another beloved book from my childhood: Carol Kendall's enchanting but neglected fantasy, *The Gammage Cup* (1959), which I first read under its British title of *The Minnipins.* Rereading it, I rediscovered scenes I had long half-remembered that, I think, affected, or at least confirmed, my attitude to texts and still have repercussions in my approach to biblical reading. Juxtaposing these two memorable texts of my childhood has thrown light on what the implications of reading the Bible as a children's book

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might be. This in turn raises the question of what we mean by "children's literature" and suggests some intriguing questions about the interactions of personal histories and cultural norms in reading.

The Metrical Psalms

This paper represents an effort to explore the question of the effect of childhood reading of the Bible by reflecting on my own reading experience. I was brought up as a moderately Presbyterian child in the Edinburgh of the 1960s. For an evocation of what that meant, one need only turn to Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.* When I asked myself what my earliest memories of the Bible were, I had a sudden flash of fuzzy-felt pictures of Abraham and a camel that derive from my Sunday school from the age of three. I suspect many children could recall similar impressions. What struck me as more distinctive, and particularly Scottish, was that an established part of my education from the age of six or seven was to learn by heart metrical psalms and paraphrases.[1] These were culled from the Scottish Psalter of 1650, still printed in the back of Bibles sold in Scotland. These strange transpositions of Hebrew poetry into rhymes and rhythms related to ballad meters, sung to foursquare but often ruggedly powerful melodies, are deeply imbedded in the cultural memory of any Scot of my age or older.

I was surprised what returned almost effortlessly to mind. Especial resonances came from a quaintly powerful setting of Ps 24 often used to introduce communion services:

> Ye gates, lift up your heads and sing!
> Ye doors that last for aye
> Be lifted up, that so the King
> Of Glory enter may.

I always loved that. The tune was stirring, but the words have stuck because even then I felt their fascination. The personification of the doors singing and lifting up their heads has a curious excitement, as does the implied power of apostrophe in that weird word "Ye." The strange enjambment of the verse and

1. For an enjoyable history of the Scottish Psalter, recording its derivation from the Anglo-Genevan Psalter of 1561 through various revisions until the form still current was reached in 1650, see Patrick. The paraphrases, versifications of passages of both the Old and New Testaments, were published by a Committee of the General Assembly in 1781 in response to a long-standing demand for an expansion of the scope of worship to include more specifically Christian material, although many of the passages chosen came from the Old Testament. Both psalms and paraphrases were included entire in the Revised Church Hymnary of 1928 on which I was brought up.

the annoyance that it is only at the end that one realizes that "aye" is to rhyme with "may" and not with "sky" also make it memorable. What rang most clearly in my memory, however, was the little shiver caused by that "that so." Language was being twisted under constraints that could ride roughshod over conventions of grammar in the interest of some conceived higher purpose. The tortured syntax exposed some of the sinews of English in a startling way.

Other well-known lines from Ps 121 that I learned then reinforce this point.

> I to the hills will lift mine eyes
> From whence doth come mine aid.

A great part of the charm of this was the shifted word order, the quaint euphony of "mine eyes," and the licensed ungrammaticality of "from whence."

Far from these crabbed contrivances dampening my enthusiasm for poetry, I was even then intrigued that compression and distortion may lead to unexpected juxtapositions and unlikely meanings. For a good Presbyterian child, this was God's Word, after all, and he had a right to do what he liked with grammar. He could play with words in other ways too:

> All people that on earth do dwell,
> Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
> Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell,
> Come ye before him and rejoice.

Undeniably, this version of Ps 100 has a plain and sturdy grandeur. Again, though, syntax goes by the board, but the inspired oddity of the word "mirth" in the third line also stuck in my mind. There is the assonance of its first letter with the last letter of "Him," emphatically but unidiomatically dragged to the start of the line, and the hidden rhyme with "earth" in the first line. The word itself was an unfamiliar one, but I knew its connotations of rather uncontrolled laughter. It seemed rather surprising, but also a relief, that that would serve the Lord.

What learning the metrical psalms taught me was that the rules of language could be played with and that there could be a visceral delight in the incomprehensible. I was intrigued to come across a quote from Willa Cather that also touches on this effect of biblical reading.[2] In an essay on Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers* she writes, "The effect of the King James translation of the Bible upon English prose has been repeated down through the generations, leaving its mark on the minds of all children who had any but the most sluggish emotional natures" (1936:102). Her novel *My Ántonia* gives an example of how

2. I owe this hint to Judith Dusinberre's discussion of Cather in *Alice to the Lighthouse.*

this emotional effect extends to the oddities of the text when she records the deep impression made on her character Jim by his grandfather's reading from the psalms. What particularly catches the young man's imagination is not the sense of the text but his grandfather's intonation of that eminently incomprehensible word "selah": "I had no idea what the word meant: perhaps he had not. But as he uttered it, it became oracular, the most sacred of words" (1954:13).

The Bible was full of this resonant incomprehensibility. "Alleluia" and "Amen" are the most prominent members of this class of biblical words that to a child had no meaning but their sound and their texture on the tongue. Biblical names had the same quality—Jehoshaphat and Jehoiakim, Bildad the Shuhite, who, as all children knew, is the shortest man in the Bible, and those wonderful and mysterious lists in Chronicles. Not just the names of people but of peoples, lands, and cities: Ramoth-gilead, Ur of the Chaldees, the Wilderness of Zin.[3]

For a Scottish schoolchild, the strangeness of the language of the psalms had a further resonance with other things we had to learn, the Scottish ballads and the poems of Burns. Here too were the same characteristics of a constrained verse form and a queer syntax, with a fine seasoning of unfamiliar and sometimes bizarre, yet musical words. *The Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens* was one we learned by heart:

> The king sat in Dunfermline toun
> Drinking the blude-red wine.
> "O whaur will I get a skeely skipper
> Tae sail this ship o' mine?"

For an urban Scots child, much of this was a foreign language. What a lovely word "skeely" is—so much more crafty that mere "skillful"—and how much redder "blude" is than blood. The psalms supplied such words too. What on earth was a "tabernacle"—yet didn't it trip off the tongue?

Another resonance was with the work of Lewis Carroll. Set in a ballad meter and filled with marvelous words was a poem like "Jabberwocky."

> 'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
> Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;

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3. That this relish of the mystique of such names and such words is not just a private quirk is borne out in Lin Carter's afterword to the Pan edition of some of Lord Dunsany's fantastic tales, *Beyond the Fields We Know* (290–99). Carter draws attention to the fact that not only Dunsany's prose style but the names of his invented cities and characters were profoundly influenced by the Bible. Carter sees this as the beginning of a rich tradition of "Hebraic" names still evident in fantasy writing, mediated through H. P. Lovecraft.

All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

We will have occasion to discuss the wider importance of Carroll's work later, but this poem brings echoes not only of linguistic play, where half-recognizable but wholly mysterious words stand in perfectly proper sentences, but also of the world of the mysterious bestiary of fantasy: toves, borogoves, raths, bandersnatches, and the Jabberwock itself, "with eyes of flame." Something of that also come through the psalms and chimed with my devouring of fantasy literature:

Praise God from earth below,
Ye dragons and ye deeps:
Fire, hail, clouds, winds, and snow,
Which in command he keeps.
Praise ye his name,
Hills great and small,
Trees low and tall;
Beasts wild and tame.

There in the psalms themselves were those potent denizens of imagination's realm: dragons—and what is more, dragons of the deep!

That the metrical psalms have had a significant wider influence has been carefully demonstrated by Coburn Freer. He argues persuasively for their importance to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets, especially George Herbert, and traces the influence further to such poets as Watts and Cowper and, in a later generation, Browning and Hardy. Auden is the modern poet he cites as "voracious and perverse enough" (15) to use the metrical psalms, quoting in support of this Naomi Michison's testimony that Auden was fascinated by their inversions. Lines by Auden, indeed, sum up as well as any the phenomenon we are pursuing:

Blessed be all metrical rules that forbid automatic responses,
Force us to have second thoughts, free from the fetters of self.[4]

Freer in his study goes on to suggest that the influence of the metrical psalms was twofold:

first, a flagrant crudity of technique that could highlight extremely sophisticated statements. More importantly it permitted the speaker to comment on the manner in which he treated his subject, while in the very process of treating it. (48)

4. Quoted as the epigraph to Brodsky.

He goes on to explain what he means by this last sentence, arguing that the religious poets of the time drew on the example of the metrical psalms in making their stumbles part of their message; "as one finds one's self by losing one's self, so the poem may complete itself by what may at first seem to be a loss of control" (49).

In the case of the metrical psalms, we reach the odd conclusion that their significance is that they are badly written. Freer quite baldly says, "most metrical psalms are, quite frankly, miserable verse" (6). Donald Davie in the introduction to his anthology *The Psalms in English* agrees and indeed finds some comfort in the universal opinion of every generation of critics that the versification of the so-called "Old Version" of the Metrical Psalms produced by Sternhold and Hopkins in 1551 is "wretched" (xlvii). For Davie, this gives some support to the idea that there is a lowest common standard by which poetry can be judged on technical and stylistic grounds, without considerations of class, gender, or sociopolitics. Freer, on a similar track, goes on to an interesting discussion of what makes bad verse bad. He refers to the classic treatment of ineptitude in Demetrius's *On Style,* where badness is seen to be a violation of decorum. Freer suggests that there may be a kind of verse that violates even more basic conventions of lexicon, syntax, and rhythm, of which the metrical psalms are his key example.

The relevance of this to the child as reader is hinted at in a passage from Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* on children's acquisition of language:

> During the period in which a child is learning how to handle the vocabulary of his mother-tongue, it gives him obvious pleasure to "experiment with it in play," to use Groos's words. And he puts words together without regard to the condition that they should make sense, in order to obtain from them the pleasurable effect of rhythm or rhyme. Little by little he is forbidden this enjoyment, till all that remains permitted to him are significant combinations of words. But when he is older attempts still emerge at disregarding the restriction that have been learnt on the use of words. (174)

Freud sees the beginning of jokes in the struggle between the child's play with language and the critical censorship, external and soon internalized, that rejects what is meaningless or absurd. Jokes serve to subvert that distinction by finding situations where that inhibition is subverted (177–78). Imaginative activity is rebellion, so Freud says.

Freud goes on to declare, somewhat surprisingly, that "children are without a feeling for the comic" (288). What he means, it turns out, is that children actually know what they are laughing at. Freud argues that adults laugh at someone falling over because it is somehow "comic"; children laugh from *Schadenfreude.*

Indeed, he goes so far as to wonder if the comic should be regarded as "the lost laughter of childhood" and to make the child the explanatory middle ground for the study of laughter. When an adult finds another adult funny, Freud suggests, the underlying comparison is, "That is how he does it—I do it in another way—he does it as I used to do it as a child."

The child can see in the work of bad poets an adult failure in the same struggles she has with the conventions of language. The fact that this is an adult who struggles, and who struggles in the name of a text that is also the source of authority and convention, adds to the fun and reinforces the hope that language will always provide an escape and a means of subversion.

What is at work in such cases is not so much a refusal of convention but a reversal of priorities. The greatest bad-verse writer of all time, according to many critics, is the nineteenth-century Scots weaver William McGonagall, who can achieve a sublime banality and naïve absurdity but who nevertheless, though rhythm may creak, sense reel, and sentiment ooze, always achieves some sort of a rhyme at the end of his lines.[5] This convention overrides all others in his work. It is the application at all costs of the severe metrical constraints of the Scottish Psalter that not only permits but demands the tortuous dismemberment of syntax, the juxtapositions of register, and the oddity of its vocabulary. Bad poets, of course, are the ones who display to the reader, despite themselves, the artifices of their craft that good poets conceal.

This point is made clear from the fact that beginning almost as soon as they appeared there were constant calls for the revision of the childish ineptitude of the metrication of the psalms, which gathered momentum as the passing of time increased their quaintness. In a remarkable passage, the eminent Scots Professor William Robertson Smith, a great influence on Freud, argued against one such revision as follows:

> As the Old Testament Church [*sic*] left for our guidance a perfect model of a *childlike* faith and devotion … it is essential that this model should be kept in all its simplicity. Every artificial touch, every trace of modern taste must be avoided.… A translation of the psalms for devotional use must be, above all things, simple, even naïve. This great requisite our Scottish version has fully realised and to have done so is a merit that outweighs a hundred faults.[6]

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5. The influence of the metrical psalms on McGonagall might be worth further investigation. Interested readers can find some of McGonagall's *Poetic Gems* on the website of the William Topaz McGonagall Appreciation Society at http://www.taynet.co.uk/users/mcgon.

6. Patrick (226, emphasis added), where this quote is cited as from an Address in Aberdeen Free Church College, published in the *Presbyterian Psalmodist* for 1872, p. 105.

Robertson Smith explicitly argues here that these texts are in essence childish and that their rough simplicity is a virtue. This argument is tied to a widespread view of the Old Testament as representing in some aspects a childlike religion that in the Christian revelation reaches a new maturity. A whole book could be written on the effects of this metaphor both on the view of Judaism and its implications for intellectual attitudes to the "simple folk" who filled the pews of Scottish churches.

My argument is that the childlikeness of these psalms is not so much in their naïveté as in the scope they give, often unwittingly, for a sense of linguistic play that deconstructs their claim to plainness, simplicity, and directness of communication. The effort to make language conform to simple verse for simple folk may not instill a sober regard to the plain sense of scripture but can be the gateway to a sense of language as a field of fantasy and imaginative construction.

What bad poetry, to use that term, gives us is the spectacle of a claim to authority or propriety stuttering through a lack of ability to control language. If language evades this authoritative control, what does this say about the scope of an authority figure's power? There is a subversive delight in watching language as it wriggles out of the grasp of those who seek to use it as a tool to limit the imagination. Equally, however, there is a childlike wonder in the possibilities of language that open up and deeper sense that there may be truths that are too much for language at its most eloquent.

Embedded in my childish experience, and in our cultural and linguistic memories, are texts that struggle against the constraint of language. These lumbering but potent Gullivers are tied down by versifying Lilliputians and strain at the bonds of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, claiming the authority of a truth that is barely articulated or articulable.

The Gammage Cup

It is at this point that I want to turn to a book that opened up this possibility to me in childhood and that, looking back, I think had a powerful influence on the way I now read the biblical text: Carol Kendall's *The Gammage Cup*. It concerns the doings of a race of small people (the Minnipins) who, so their legends have it, fled from their enemies, the Mushrooms, through a river tunnel into a hidden valley and were miraculously saved when the tunnel they had climbed up flooded. For several hundred years, they have lived peacefully in this impregnable refuge, protected by the river and by unscaleable mountains on every side. A harmonious way of life has evolved, much of it based on the increasingly hazy lore of their mythical leader at that time, Gammage. The resonances with the biblical story of exodus to the promised land hardly need pointing out.

In Slipper-on-the-Water, the village where the main story takes place, however, there are distinctive features of the culture based on the discoveries of the one Minnipin who has ever left the valley and returned: Fooley the Magnificent. Having flown over the mountains and back in a balloon, he brought with him treasures from the outside world, now carefully preserved in the town museum. Unfortunately, his landing was a rough one that not only destroyed the balloon, and so any chance of reusing it, but also knocked the labels off the objects. Fooley himself, so legend has it, was knocked unconscious in the crash and thereafter could remember nothing of what happened to him outside.

So the Minnipins are confronted with these mysterious artifacts and the equally mysterious names that somehow attach to them. Sign and referent have literally come apart in this momentous event. How will they disambiguate them? Well, by dint of comparison with what is familiar. There are two drawings in the basket, for instance. One shows a large house with a tree in the garden, and the other shows a strange pattern of vertical and horizontal lines that connect pictures of decorated shields. Fooley's detached labels include "The Painting" and "The Family Tree." This is an easy one to resolve. The tree is so prominent in the drawing of the house that there can be little doubt that this is "The Family Tree"—and what a pleasant idea! From that time on, every house in Slipper-on-the-Water had a tree outside it, the family tree of those who lived there. That meant that the design of lines and shields must be "The Painting." So that's how paintings are done in the outside world! Ever after, the official painters of the village rang variations on the themes of shields and lines. Only the children, and the maverick woman known as Curly Green, painted things supposed to look like the real world, which the official painters sneered at as "daubs."

The passage that most intrigued me was one where three characters give their interpretations of "The Poem" (47–53). This is a mysterious, and revered, verse that Fooley brought back from over the mountains. It runs as follows:

> Mary had a little lamb,
> Its fleece was white as snow;
> And everywhere that Mary went
> The lamb was sure to go.
>
> It followed her to school one day—
> It was against the rule;
> It made the children laugh and play
> To see a lamb in school.

After Fooley's return, this text becomes the model for all subsequent officially recognized poems. They must begin "someone had a little something" and carry on in that vein. The passage where this poem is interpreted is one in which

Wm., the official poet, is writing a welcome poem for the return of the village mayor. Wm.'s name tells us that he belongs to the leading family of Slipper-on-the-Water, the Periods. These are the descendants of Fooley and have adopted the distinguished practice of naming their children from a list found in Fooley's balloon of words that no one could decipher, but all of which ended in a full stop: Etc., Geo., Eng., for instance. The Periods are the jealous guardians of Fooley's heritage and are imposing an increasingly intrusive uniformity on the other villagers.

Muggles, the timid but mildly eccentric Minnipin who looks after the museum, begins the discussion by asking Wm. if his new poem will be sad. Asked why she expects so, she replies by revealing that The Poem had always seemed sad to her. Not knowing what a "lamb" is, she imagines it to be a white mouse, perhaps taking a cue from its littleness. Neither does she know what a "school" may be. She deduces from the fact that the children only begin to laugh and play once the lamb and Mary have arrived at school that the children were ill, as otherwise they would be playing anyway. "School" then must be some kind of hospital. The implication is that Mary herself must be ill to be going to school, "and altogether it is a sad sort of poem isn't it?" (48).

Muggles's reading reflects the problems of deduction that faces any reader confronted with a text that comes from an unfamiliar culture with unfamiliar terms, not least the biblical reader. The reader cannot help noticing, however, that her predilection is to examine the emotional situation implicit in the poem and then try to build a scenario around that emotional truth that she thinks she has seen. As in many rabbinic interpretations of problematic passages, she seizes on a transition in the text. Why does it make the point that the children *began* to laugh and play? This turns the reader's attention to the question of what they were doing before. Muggles takes it as natural that children would be playing, perhaps reflecting her own genial nature, now clouded by the increasing conventionality of the village.

Wm.'s reaction as the official voice is scathing. For Muggles even to suggest that the poem is sad is a slur on the central text of Minnipin culture. Instead, he interprets the word "lamb" as "friend." The poem is a cautionary tale about the friend turning up at a village meeting, which he was too young to attend in any case, in a garish white cloak instead of the standard Minnipin green one, and the children's laughter was ridicule at the spectacle he was making of himself. Muggles herself is wearing her rather daring orange sash, and the other nonconformists of the village stand out by their predilection for bright colors. Wm., as a Period and therefore a member of the establishment, turns the poem into a didactic tale that preaches conformity.

His reading in turn is countered by Walter the Earl, the heir of an ancient family and the eccentric reader of ancient documents in his family's keeping.

These form a countertext to The Poem, but only he can decipher them. He leans on this superior knowledge to undermine Wm.'s conventional reading. "School," he argues from his study of the older language, means a shoal of fish. So far so good. Having postulated fishing as the semantic field of the poem, he interprets the unfamiliar word "lamb" as a derivative of "lamprey." This parasite is attached to Mary, herself a fish, and therefore follows her. The children are laughing at this unfamiliar sight. Walter then turns this interpretation against Wm., declaring that the children are foolish to laugh at what was a threat to their food supply. He ends up by roundly declaring that the poem itself is ridiculous.

Wm. is routed for the moment, and Walter takes the chance to explain to Muggles, who is both delighted and scandalized by his behavior, that the ancient scrolls show that far from losing his memory in the crash of his balloon, Fooley was indeed a fool, even before his flight. No brave adventurer, he had been carried off by accident.

I can still remember how funny I found these rereadings of the story as an eight-year-old. Returning to the book, I am now more able to appreciate the subtlety with which Kendall tailors the interpretations to the characters' perceptions, personality, and social location. Part of the joke for the reader is that all the interpretations are "wrong," and not only childish readers can feel a certain smugness at being smarter than the characters in a story.

This helps Kendall to reveal the political aspect of interpretation. Wm.'s reading is a blatant claim to authority. He declines to explain his reasoning, unlike Muggles, who ponders aloud as she interprets. He dismisses her reading as "utter nonsense," while he uses expression such as "obviously" and "that's clear enough" in lieu of explanation for his own interpretations. To such claims of transparency and authority Walter opposes his expert knowledge. Walter's scholarship proves to be just as misleading as Wm.'s claim to authority from the reader's point of view—a salutary lesson for all academic readers of the Bible. Kendall does leave it open for the reader to wonder how seriously Walter is dealing with the text and how far his interpretation is simply a device to discomfit Wm. His stern diatribe against the poem is, we are told, interrupted by a surreptitious wink to Muggles.

The parallels to biblical reading are almost too obvious to need stating. The Bible comes to us from "over the mountains," so to speak, and we are in little better position than the Minnipins to give definitive meaning to the practices and beliefs of the ancient culture that gave rise to it. The official poet's wrestling to cram all meaning into the form of "Mary had a little lamb" is not so far removed from the valiant efforts of those who metricated the psalms. The book is also full of just the joy in language to which we have referred.

It is also a plea for the acceptance of diversity and unconventionality. Carol Kendall herself talks about her sense of the stifling influence of conformity:

> A few years ago, at least twenty years after *The Gammage Cup* was published, I was asked what first influenced my feeling about conformity, and I gave the matter some heavy thought. A long-forgotten story gradually took shape in my mind, one from the old *Child Life* magazine I subscribed to when I was perhaps nine years old. It was about a costume party, and went something like this: "Everybody" was having costume birthday parties that year—it was the very latest fad—and the mothers met in protest to plan an end to their children's copy-catism. When the day of the party finally came and the children began to arrive at the birthday house, they found that their secret costumes were exactly like all the other secret costumes. They were a party of sheep.
>
> The real beginning in my interest in conformity surely lies in that story, its author unknown to me. I had forgotten it over the years, but the memory was there all the time, safely stowed in my head. (May: 250)

Reading as a child, then, influenced by Kendall's book, the metrical psalms became a entrée into the subversive possibilities of interpretation. It confirmed for me the self-destructive effect of convention, which in its attempts to squeeze diversity into uniformity is almost bound to heighten the sense of difference and lead to the rupture of the supposed unity. As a child who would rather be a solitary reader than take part in the conventional activities of my peers, this is a message that confirmed me in my sense of difference. It also confirmed me in my suspicion of those who claimed to know the meaning of texts.

I remember even as a child rejecting the kind of literalizing reading of the parables, for instance, that my good Sunday school teachers gave me. I still vividly recall my indignation at being told that the incident where Christ walked on the water was easily explained if one realized that the Sea of Galilee was prone to very shallow sandbanks that the water barely covered. Christ simply walked out on one of these. Quite apart from the fact that the people who he supposedly took in by this act were professional fishermen, which stuck me even then as an unlikely scenario, somebody somewhere was being taken for a fool. Either Christ thought the disciples were fools, or the Evangelist thought his readers were fools, or my pious teacher thought I was a fool.

Even then I suspected that this convenient piece of hydrography might owe more to the need for an explanation than to any real characteristic of the Sea of Galilee. To have this shabby trick peddled to me as a way of saving the authority of the biblical text was intensely irritating. I knew even then that stories did not work like this and that the suspension of disbelief they called for was not to be equated with simple credulity or a shameful sort of willed ignorance. The story gave a glimpse of another world, or, more accurately, a transfigured version of the world we live in. My acceptance or rejection of it was not concerned with plausibility but with believability. Whatever happened, something in the text was being traduced. Just that sense of play, of wonder, of

the ability to turn a text so that its facets sparkled in the light of its imagined world, was missing. The American writer Annie Dillard records her own similar experience as follows.

> The Bible's was an unlikely movie-set world alongside our world. Light-shot and translucent in the pallid Sunday-School watercolors on the walls, stormy and opaque in the dense and staggering texts they read us placidly, sweet-mouthed and earnest, week after week, this world interleaved our waking world like dream.
>
> …What arcana! Why did they spread this scandalous document before our eyes? If they had read it, I thought, they would have hid it. They didn't recognise the vivid danger that we would, through repeated exposure, catch a case of its wild opposition to their world. (134)

The Bible as a Children's Book

To this day, then, I think my interpretation of the Bible is colored by my encounter with it as a children's book among children's books. In this regard, it is quite striking how little attention is paid to the Bible in historical surveys of children's reading.

One notable exception to the general neglect of the Bible in this regard is John Goldthwaite's *The Natural History of Make-Believe.* In this idiosyncratic reading of the tradition, he traces children's books in the West back to the book of Proverbs. He holds little brief for Proverbs as a book children ever read with pleasure: "It is no leap to imagine Israel's young elite having to commit these sayings to memory and loathing everyone of them.… Here the eternal father stands, scandalized before the hormonal stupor of the eternal adolescent" (5). Yet Goldthwaite sees the proverb, the "annoyingly stable truth," as the necessary substrate for the world of make-believe. His ideal of children's fiction is *Pinocchio,* which he reads as a fairly faithful modern reworking of the book of Proverbs. The errant son rebels against the father and meets the chastisement of Lady Wisdom in the person of the blue-haired fairy often in situations and terms that can be closely paralleled from the biblical text.

Goldthwaite is particularly scathing about the book that many other writers regard as the real turning point in literature for children, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* This he sees as an appalling betrayal by Carroll of his duty as a clergyman to instruct children. In the name of innocent play, he professes to abdicate the obligation to teach his readers. Yet, Goldthwaite argues, every book teaches, and what *Alice* teaches is a specious and irresponsible relativism. Not content with God's world, Carroll invents his own. Not content with language as a medium to convey truth, he displays its arbitrariness.

Similar points are made, interestingly, though with an entirely different conclusion, by Juliet Dusinberre. In her *Alice to the Lighthouse* she convincingly argues that *Alice* is an essential precursor to Virginia Woolf's fiction, liberating the child to make autonomous judgments on her world against the spurious authority of tradition and patriarchy.

Goldthwaite and Dusinberre represent in this regard versions of the two sides of a fundamental debate that can be traced through the history of children's literature. John Rowe Townsend, for instance, structures the early chapters of his *Written for Children* around this. The division is often made between books of instruction, which are predicated on a view of the child as a defective being who needed instruction to overcome the effects of innate sin, and books of entertainment, which saw the child as in some senses innocent of the adult world and, if anything, needing protection from its corruption. Locke's *Thoughts on Education* of 1693 are often cited as a prime influence in the gradual move toward the second attitude and hence to the production of a specific genre of literature designed for children. Entertainment might draw the child into learning willingly, rather than having knowledge beaten into him.

Although this is a relatively common view of the case, Karín Lesnik-Oberstein makes it clear that the debate can be carried back almost two centuries in her discussion of the role of Luther and Comenius in the reform of education. Luther himself championed the setting up of schools for all children, where their instruction might be enticing and attractive, not to say seductive, as much a source of pleasure as playing with a ball. Yet Luther is clear that these schools exist to train readers of the Bible. Under the guise of entertainment, instruction is taking place. This is of course Goldthwaite's point.

Lesnik-Oberstein explicitly draws parallels between Luther and the modern-day critic of children's literature. On the one hand, Luther lays the Bible open to the manifold interpretations of the individual. On the other, he invokes the Spirit, and his own function as commentator, to rein in that meaning, while decrying the claims of the pope or anyone else to limit the freedom of the reader. She sees a similar dynamic at hand where freedom of the actual child reader becomes subsumed in the concept of the child promoted by the critic, or indeed the educationalist.

Lesnik-Oberstein reminds us of the darker side to this. This play itself is under the controlling power of God. She acknowledges her debt to a seminal book by Jacqueline Rose: *The Case of Peter Pan: On the Impossibility of Children's Literature.* In this work Rose points out that almost without exception what is called children's literature is written by adults, reviewed and appraised by adults, and the bulk of it is bought by adults. There is a long tradition of praising those writers who are thought to be able to recollect their childhoods, but even they are writing for some virtual construction, the "child reader." All

implied or virtual readers are fictions, in that sense, but there is a particularly noticeable gap between the producer and the consumer, the adult author and the child reader, in children's literature.

Rose characterizes children's literature as follows: "There is, in one sense, no body of literature which rests so openly on an acknowledged difference, a rupture almost, between writer and addressee" (4). Rose argues that the child in children's literature is always the creation of adult desire, about adult investment. In this sense it is also a literature of seduction, drawing the child into the world of the book. All literature is based on the seduction of the reader, it is true, but Rose here again emphasizes the asymmetry between author and intended reader. "Children's fiction sets up the child as an outsider to its own process and then aims, unashamedly, to take the child *in*" (2). Though Rose does not make much of this, there is a telling ambiguity in the final phrase: "taking the child in"—*in*cluding the child or *de*luding it? How far is the subversive voice of children's literature a deceptive or seductive freedom offered by a complicit adult?

The striking thing is that, taken on its own, Rose's statement about the distance between author and reader could surely be as well—or better—applied to the Bible's relation to its readers, especially when it is understood as scripture. What literature is more concerned to make the point both of the distance between its divine author and its human readers, and indeed to emphasize the nature of the rupture between them? Furthermore, what literature is more concerned with the seduction of these readers, with the enactment of the divine desire for the human?

Carrying this point further, Lesnik-Overstein uses Rose's work to explore the parallels between the father-son relationship between God and humans and the relationship between the child reader and adult author. Here we come close to a remark of Gabriel Josipovici's in *The Book of God.* The Bible is unique, he says, "in that it is the only book in our culture where the child's relation to books is perpetuated into adulthood" (8). Josipovici is thinking here of the fact that the Bible is still read aloud to us, but his remark has wider resonances. As he says later, "the one relation between fathers and children which towers above all others is the relation of God to man, and in particular to Israel" (145). Reading Judg 10:11–16, he extends the analogy: "What we have here … is exactly what we might expect of a conversation between a loving father and an ever-naughty but charming child" (145).

The Bible constructs its readers as children, the children of Israel or the children of God. In that important sense, it presents itself as a children's book. The question, then, is whether it is a book of instruction, or of entertainment, or a book that itself deconstructs that opposition. Against Goldthwaite, I simply bring my own experience as a child who found in the Bible elements that have something in common with a poem like Carroll's "Jabberwocky." The attitude

to reading that Goldthwaite decries seems to me traceable to the biblical tradition itself as transmitted to me.

Goldthwaite seems to underestimate the element of play in the Bible. It is far from simply a book of instruction, and insofar as it is, it displays all the tensions over convention to which we have alluded. In both the Old and New Testaments, the instructions it offers are often direct counters to the conventions of human society. In any case, it is a book about law resisted and broken, and at times overturned. Ezekiel, for one, is clear that the conventions of previous generations are not to be followed and goes so far as to say that God gave bad law. Third, where the reading of law is enjoined, it is enjoined as a delight. Meditation on the Torah is not a grim reading through an instruction manual but a source of joy, and the rabbinic tradition outdoes any other in the playful use of puns, assonance, and seeming inconsequence in its reveling in the texture of the text.

In the New Testament, Jesus' use of puns and of jokes against the authorities seems to have more in common with the subversive strand of children's literature Lurie talks of, where the forces of convention, the responsible adults who bear the tradition, are incapable of fathoming the secret that can bring down their structures of authority. Isaiah's commission to prophesy so that the people will not hear, repeated several times in the New Testament, can be related to Lurie's "Don't tell the grown-ups."

One verse, however, that may best sum up the anomalies we have explored is to be found in the very book that Goldthwaite, quite convincingly, holds up as the paradigm example of children's literature as he understands it. It is Prov 8:30. In this chapter we have Wisdom herself, a figure of imagination, redescribing creation. A whole dimension is added to the plain account of Genesis. She seems guilty of the same act of literary revision that Goldthwaite found so reprehensible in Carroll. In 8:30, however, we learn that day by day her business is not to teach but to rejoice, or play, before the Lord. She is there as a *sha'ashu'im,* just the kind of playful reduplicative word that strikes us in nonsense rhyme, and one that commentators still boggle over: "darling"? "plaything"? "playmate"? even "little child"? In addition, she tells us that in her daily and perpetual play "my delight was with humankind," itself an enigmatic phrase in Hebrew. We can read out of it that it was her delight to play with humankind, or that she took pleasure in humanity, or, with a slight wresting of the syntax, that humankind was the object of her desire.

Right here, then, we find the enigmatic invitation to play that in this dark world must always hold its dangers as well as its delights. The seductive adult can turn into the child abuser; the smiling child in the playground can turn out to be a bully. The playfulness of language can indeed mean that it may treacherously slip and betray us. But all the instruction in the world will not

substitute for the interchange of delight and fear, of dangers courted, sometimes overlooked, that make up the true learning of childhood, dangers and delights for which the imaginative world of the children's book, the Bible included, can offer both entry and escape.

Writing Lies: Autobiography, Textuality, and the Song of Songs

Fiona C. Black

Am I the Shulammite?
—anonymous

I had a name, but I have forgotten it.
—The Dog Woman[1]

Pre-amble

My subject is identity, and several women—or two, depending on how you count—who are in the process of contesting it. They are the female lover in the Song of Songs and the shifting subjects of several of Jeanette Winterson's protagonists (in, e.g., *Sexing the Cherry, Written on the Body,* and *The Power Book*). This is perhaps an odd grouping, on first examination, but Winterson's creations and the Song's protagonist have much to say to each other, especially via an exchange in autobiographical and related gender-critical readings.

"She" (if we can call the woman in the Song that for the moment)[2] never overtly asks the question of my epigraph: "Am I the Shulammite?" It seems to me, however, that she is engaged in an eight-chapter negotiation with her lover and other figures over her identity. Feminist critics often point out that she speaks for herself, with surprising candor and regularity (Weems, Falk, Pardes, etc), but it is noteworthy that she must constantly speak as a nameless, or named-by-another, figure. This question, "Am I the Shulammite?" therefore, might be a fitting response to Solomon's[3] naming of her. It is also pertinent

1. Winterson 1996:11.

2. She is unnamed, except for one ascription (appearing twice) in 7:1.

3. Since the central problem in this paper has to do with name calling, it will become apparent that there might be problems with universally ascribing identity of the male lover to Solomon. He, after all, receives his name from her (3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12) and never actually names himself (unless

to a few centuries of biblical interpretation on these texts, where the identity of the woman has been a long-standing textual "problem."[4] It is, however, not simply a matter of an actual name that is at issue.[5] If it were, we could be satisfied with the centuries-old interpretive ascription, "the Shulammite," or more recently, "the beloved" (Landy 1983), or even "the girl" (Pope). In fact, if we wanted more, Exum's recent naming of the woman as "Shulamit" would go some considerable distance to granting an identity, a name on which to hinge the figure (1998:226).[6] The matter at hand, on the contrary, is that names represent handles, figuratively, but in her case somewhat literally, in the sense that they are devices by which others grasp and pull. Thus, in the Song's economy of desire, to name this unnamed woman is to tug at her, to pull her aside, to move and position her for one's own ends.

So, for the purposes of this paper, I have slipped the question, "Am I the Shulammite?" into the protagonist's mouth, in the expectation that it will shed a different light on the issues of naming and identity in the book. Stepping to one side of previous attempts to pin down the woman's identity, this paper looks at it instead as a matter of textual flux. It attempts to see how identity might be read as constructed, particularly as the site of a conflict that is played out between the lovers. To this end, I look at three texts. The first is the challenge launched by Solomon in his naming of the woman as the Shulammite in 7:1. The second and third are two places where the woman makes comments about herself, her appearance in particular, that could be construed as identifying statements. These occur in and around statements or actions by her brothers, and they frame the book. The first of these is her announcement that she is dark

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one considers that he wrote the Song, and its ascription in 1:1). Since this is, at least, a proper name, however, I am happy enough to let the king play the lover, for my purposes here.

4. The matter was once solely the province of historical critics, who sought to find various degrees of social and historical context for the Song's textual characters, among other things. Later critics worked out scenarios of a country lass and her romantic adventures, limiting themselves to what might be known purely from within "the world of the text." We must not also forget the long history of allegorical interpretation of the Song, which lasted for numerous centuries, and which, by and large, ascribed an identity to the woman as Israel, the soul, or the Bride of Christ (the church). This was not, however, intimately taken up with the name "Shulammite" per se.

5. There is for critics past and present a need to know who she is, perhaps because, as has been suggested (Landy 1983; Black 1999), the connection that readers have with this text suggests that they interpolate themselves into it, presumably into the minds and bodies of Solomon and the lovely She. If naming has implications for how the lovers relate to each other, it is all the more pertinent to how readers attach themselves to the stories of those about whom they read.

6. Exum's subsequent work does not continue the practice. Athalya Brenner has, however, recently taken up the banner (2005). Both attempts at ascribing this proper name, of course, are derived from Solomon's original title.

or black and (or but) beautiful in 1:5–6, the second that she is a wall and that her breasts are like towers (8:10).

It is not only the protagonist's own voice that will speak here, moreover: the women of Winterson's fiction also have a role to play in this discussion. Variously, they represent several facets of the same self,[7] who are being tried out as part of a lengthy experiment in love and identity (Winterson and Wachtel). Winterson has been playing with the shifting self, with the possibility of discovering what a person contains, what are the risks of self-discovery, and what are the methods of taking on and manipulating disguise (Winterson and Wachtel). Her work is not consciously biblical-critical but is definitely favorable to being examined under biblical light. That Winterson is well acquainted with the Bible and uses it regularly, either to purge herself of childhood bile[8] or to re-create it artfully, need not be spelled out here.[9] My use of Winterson in this context is not intended to catalogue her biblical proficiency or even to provide a comparison between the figures. It is, instead, a *reading with.* In this project, Winterson's woman/women come on the scene as a kind of response to the difficulties and triumphs of the Song's protagonist.

Furthermore, the reading I propose is augmented by the employment of autobiographical theory. On the one hand, the Song functions literarily as a kind of life-writing, a biblical autobiography of sorts, which may be scrutinized with these appropriate theoretical means. Winterson herself is, in addition, interested in the autobiographical endeavor, both in terms of the involvement of the writer's story in her writing and the problems associated therein (namely, the fictionality of the self, or the fracturing of the subject). She does not use this discourse overtly, but in her fiction she plays at displaying the self, in terms of gender and other cultural identities. Additionally, and on the other hand, the question implicitly being asked by the Song's protagonist—who am I?—is naturally one that is pertinent to the autobiographical enterprise. It is a question, moreover, that is not limited to the Song of Songs' players but that cannot help but implicate the reader as well.[10]

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7. Is it Winterson's self, perhaps? Eleanor Wachtel asks the question in an interview (Winterson and Wachtel).

8. See, for instance, her *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit.*

9. She is, moreover, very familiar with the Song of Songs. It punctuates her well-known novel, *Written on the Body,* both in overt quotation and in veiled homage to the book's *was*fs. (So say I. The descriptions are usually evaluated as an immediate homage to Monique Wittig's *Le Corps Lesbien.*) In *Sexing the Cherry,* the connection is less overt and more a matter of exposures.

10. It is clear from reader-response work, among other approaches, that reading is always in some respect subjective, even if not consciously written as autobiography. This theoretical apparatus, therefore, allows for a forum where one might move beyond the mere acknowledgment that readers cannot be purely objective in scholarship and into a realm where the conceptualization of our own

It should be acknowledged that there are certain features of the book that allow an inquiry such as mine to be possible, that even facilitate it. The Song consists of a series of poems whose actual number is not important and whose boundaries may be demarcated thematically, structurally, or through figural connections. Delivered through these poems are sense-impressions, narrative moments, maybe, and evocative events replete with sexual tension. Unlike other readers, I do not attempt to locate a consistent narrative in the book but do acknowledge the myriad attempts by others to create one, or, at least, to organize the poems into a recognizable pattern.[11] To this end, it is possible to gather up a few textual moments and read them together, quite without concern that one is breaking narrative flow, or reading out of turn, or even missing the "rest" of the picture.[12] My reading, therefore, is intentionally selective, and it is responsive to the playfulness of the Song's poems and its imagery.

"There's No Such Thing as Autobiography; There's Only Art and Lies."[13]

Generally, essays in the autobiographical-critical mode in biblical studies begin with accounts of the personal. *And so, here might begin a torrid tale of my lives and my lovers. (The Song of Songs is, after all, about eroticism.)* These shared details ostensibly augment the writer's reading of a given text. *But I have performance anxiety—or, I'm compositionally frigid.* The point is not to tell an exhaustive story of one's life but to situate oneself, historically and culturally. *It turns out that writing about autobiography is easier than attempting it, especially where the writing might necessitate engagement with the subject matter of the Song.* In addition, autobiographical work also allows for a little more creativity and innovation in the writing, both as a means to incorporate the writer's story and as a response to more traditional methods of biblical criticism. *And, after reading some of the insights of autobiographical criticism, it is clear that the nature and identity of one's "I" in autobiographical writing is more fluid than we might like to admit.* A number

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subjectivity may be put to useful ends in the critical enterprise. The recognition of the critical subject is by no means a new idea for biblical scholarship, but it is one that is able to be foregrounded and explored in biblical textuality through the contours of autobiographical theory in an interesting way.

11. These I attribute to desires for readerly and textual cohesion in the face of a puzzling array of poems. See Black 1999.

12. Clearly, therefore, the order I select is the one that is best suited rhetorically to my purposes here. It may well undo the reading to respect the textual order, but, as I hope will become clear, it is precisely this playfulness with text that allows for investigations and determinations of the "identity" of the Song's protagonist.

13. Winterson 1995: *passim.*

of these projects have been memorable, so much so that one threatens to become distracted from the biblical text/task at hand.[14] *So the question arises: How does one (and is there only one?!) make a start?* It transpires that telling enough and telling it well is a matter of talent, and taste, in this genre of criticism.

Autobiography is about life-writing, to be sure, but it is also a clever dance between the historical and the fictional. As such, it foregrounds the "slipperiness" of the self in an interesting way.[15] To this end, Leigh Gilmore writes of the "problematical deployment of the I," which moves between the person who says I and the I that is the fiction of literature (1994:6). In a similar vein, Sidonie Smith traces the variety of constituents that make up a writer as a means of showing how fragmented and artificial is the notion of a unified self who writes her or his own story (1994:270–72). One might be led to ask at this juncture, therefore, if writing anything of one's life story accurately is impossible. Surely, however, that is too pessimistic; it is reasonable to assume that one might explore the movement of identity and not be frozen by the recognition of a lack of fixedness of the self. Is it possible to allow the fictions of representation to the fore and use them in a way that is critically useful? What would be the effects of such a venture?

And what of the risks involved, should one make a start? I bring this up because, as I indicated elsewhere in the introduction to this volume, the autobiographical enterprise is especially risky for women writers, who are already subject to the multiple fragmentations and allegiances of their selves in culture. We are little able to gauge the risks of making these revelations, yet. Here, the matter gets more complicated, because even if we acknowledged the fictions or constructions of autobiography and autobiographical criticism, what is revealed still seems able to be compromised—my person, however constructed, is subject to the threat of exposure. To be sure, writers of autobiography have to be willing to undertake risks of exposure; this is expected of the genre. What, however, are the lasting effects, critically speaking? Is there a way to tell one's story in a way that is safe and still critically useful in this endeavor?

Is there an alternate course? The introduction to this volume provides a brief history of autobiographical theory as it intersects with biblical studies; this need not be recapitulated here. In the intersections between autobiography and Bible discussed there, though, one might identify two trends. The first, already mentioned, is the self-conscious integrating of the critic's "story" (however construed or constructed) into biblical-textual study. The second is arguably related:

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14. I won't point an accusing citational finger, though see Boer in this volume for a few examples of distracting scholars.

15. The phrase, I think, is Stephen Moore's, but the reference is long since lost.

the writing of a biblical character's life through the guise or fiction of the first person. This ghostwriting[16] is largely fictional, of course, and as Davies represents it in his edited volume, is modern-day pseudepigrapha. The ghostwriting I have read is, not unexpectedly, creative, fictional, a source of variety for the biblical scholar and, undoubtedly, the textual character. It occurs to me to ask whether this might be a useful compromise between what are the problems and risks of the first trend of autobiographical work and the natural shifts that occur in the attempts to represent the self. To be sure, ghostwriting is not a conscious attempt to represent the writer's own life; on the contrary, it is the life of a Potiphar or an Abishag that is being attempted. But in the process, the ghostwriter still brings himself or herself to light in a visible way. For instance, one hears the clear voice of Francis in his representation of Isaiah (Landy 2002). And are not Athalya's concerns, as another for instance, about the person of the Shulammite in her chapter of *I Am: Biblical Women Tell Their Own Stories,* clearly represented in the rest of her scholarship?[17]

Fiction clearly has a dynamic and significant role to play in ghostwriting. Winterson takes it one step further, however, in her observation that "there is no such thing as autobiography, there's only art and lies" (1995: 69). The statement comes in response to the narrator of *Art and Lies,* who is asked what lesbians do in bed. Her response acknowledges the fictions of autobiographical writing but makes an additional comment about the artifice involved in the process.[18] Indeed, in many of her books she plays at displaying the selves of her characters, one of them famously remaining androgynous, so that Winterson can make further comment about gender indeterminacy in the context of sexual relationships (1996). Fiction in ghostwriting is expected, but can one use artifice to a critically useful end? The lure of playing with the biblical text in this manner is especially intoxicating.

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16. Francis Landy used the term in his essay in Davies 2002.

17. Brenner's reason for writing the book is in part to redress some of the problems of contemporary biblical scholarship. What is interesting to me is that her preface acknowledges the artificiality of adopting an autobiographical voice for her subjects, but she chooses to do so as a means of making these texts accessible—and as postmodern prerogative (xviii). She does not, however, comment directly on the addition of her own voice into the mix (this is assumed), but she does play with her own identity as a kind of grand narrator ("And who am I, the initiator, the convener? In due course, my dears, in due course. I'm not telling you now" [8]). Of all her work in this book, it is in the chapter on the Shulammite that Brenner's voice—as a scholar and experienced and proficient reader of the Song—comes most loudly to the fore.

18. Winterson is also making a commentary on sexual identity and labels ("lesbian"). She does this here and throughout her work.

The Challenge, or, Shelomoh Gets Carried Away

We give the first word to Solomon, who ponders: "Why gaze at the Shulammite?" Solomon, as the male lover in the Song of Songs is called in several places, asks the question, ostensibly to an assembled group, in 7:1. As scholars try to reconstruct the scene, the most logical scenario is that the woman is asked to turn around or turn back, submit to being gazed upon by her lover and others, as she presumably performs some kind of dance, the מחלת המחנים—the identity of which has been much discussed.[19] In the text that follows, Solomon then proceeds to itemize her body, arguably as a tribute to her beauty, in the poetic form that is usually referred to as a *waṣf* (7:2–10).

My interests are with Solomon's initial naming: the Shulammite. No clues as to the origins or the significance of such a name appear before it or after it in the text. Nevertheless, it is the only such naming, beyond the ubiquitous terms of endearment, "my sister," "my bride," and as a result, interpreters have followed Solomon's lead for centuries and reinforced the ascription. It may seem a little obvious, but this is an assignment of identity, is it not? Yet it is meaningless to us—at least, biblical critics have spent considerable time trying to pin it down to a definitive identity, be that historical or fictional. Three main solutions have been proposed, and they are excellently summarized by Marvin Pope (596–600). The first is that this Shulammite may really be a resident of Shunem or Shulem, that, in other words, we have simply a textual error or variation and so should read "Shunammite" instead. Second, and most appealing to commentators, is the option that the term Shulammite is a diminutive of Solomon, even possibly linked by their root, שׁלם, rendering something like "Solomonite" or "Solomoness," as one has awkwardly suggested (Rowley: 89). Solomon, therefore, considers her to be part of himself and, in fact, names her after himself: "my little me." Third, it has been proposed that Shulammite is an epithet for a goddess and that this figure is being aggrandized by her lover by being named after a great divinity.

In the first formulation, the Shunem/Shulem error, the text would offer a biographical detail about the woman, not established as any preexisting information for the reader, but presumably known to her lover and mentioned briefly here. As such, the term provides a clue to her possible identity as Abishag, the woman who was given to David on his deathbed to warm him and who is subsequently requested by Adonijah in 1 Kgs 2:17, 21, 22. She is therefore the signifier of his attempt to usurp Solomon's throne. As H. H. Rowley has observed, however, commentators' wishes to link the desirable Abishag with Sol-

19. See, among others, Fox: 158; Murphy: 181, 185; Pope: 601–14.

omon cannot really be substantiated textually (89). The suggestion that they are both beautiful forms but a tenuous link between the two and really reveals more about the commentators than the woman in question. Elijah's Shunammite also gets considered in these discussions, but no one seems to fancy a childless woman with an aging husband—with questionable relations to the hairy man—as their choice of protagonist in these elevated texts. In sum, despite its numerous possibilities, the Shulem/Shunem confusion has not been seriously taken up in criticism on this text, irrespective of observations that *lamed* and *nun* were likely interchangeable in other Semitic dialects, and therefore a case could be made for their substitution here.[20]

Let us, however, turn to the most favored proposition, that *Shulammite* is a feminization of Solomon's own name. The suggestion seems to have first appeared in biblical scholarship in 1906, as advanced by W. Erbt, who mentions similar scenarios, such as *Judah* and *Judith* (Pope: 596). However, early Jewish and Christian commentators also made the connection, and Rowley catalogues innumerable citations to this effect (84–88).[21] The suggestion would be quite convincing, were it not for the small problem of the initial *qibbuts,* which does not, of course, exist in the name Shelomoh. It has been proposed, however, that the woman's title was initially "Shelomit." Somewhere down the line, as it took on its epithetic form, some variation occurred, and the vocal *shewa* became a *qibbuts* (Pope: 597). In its posited relation to Solomon's name, the title also bears the possibility that it is related to the noun *shalom.* Michael Fox explicates this theory, basing it on the initial suggestion by Robert, that *Shulammit* is an archaic qal passive of שׁלם, meaning "La Pacifée," or "Peaceable One."[22]

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20. As Pope points out, there is little evidence that the town Shunem (Josh 19:18; 1 Sam 28.4) was also known in biblical literature as Shulem (even considering the modern Sulam, a town near the plain of Jezreel). Most manuscripts of the LXX read *sulamitis,* as do the other ancient versions, though it should be mentioned, however, that *sounamitis* (with two spellings) does appear in some manuscripts of the LXX (598). In addition, C. C. McCown has also pointed out the reference to "this Shunamite" in the *Testament of Solomon,* which purports to provide reasons for the king's downfall, namely, his lusting after foreign women, one very beautiful woman in particular (116–18).

21. Rowley's catalogue is in fact of early and later interpreters who made the connection between Solomon and Shulammite. He disputes Pope's (and Goodspeed's) linking of the names first to Erbt.

22. Fox observes, however, contrary to Robert, that since this stem is intransitive in the qal, we should not expect a qal passive. Instead, he proposes that *Shulammit* makes more sense as derived from the noun *sulam,* of the pattern quttal/qūtāl (admittedly rare). Fox explains further: "and to take *šūlammĭt* (pointing *šūlāmit*) as its 'nisbe' form. The formation of adjectives (which in turn may function as nouns) by the addition of the gentilic *yod* is very common in Mishnaic Hebrew" (157–58).

The third possibility is that *Shulammit* is in fact the name of a goddess and that, as such, the entire book presupposes a cultic interpretation. The tracing of the origins of this name is somewhat dizzying and does not need to be explicated fully here for us to get the point. Suffice it to say that it has been proposed, variously, that the Hebrew Bible name as we find it is possibly related to Shelem, another name for Tammuz, the Canaanite god, as the feminine form. Thus, our protagonist could be none other than Ishtar, Tammuz's consort. In W. F. Albright's view,[23] a series of conflations took place (*Shulman*/*Shulmanitu,* Shunem and Shunamite [Abishag]), with the result that the name as it now stands reveals a considerable morphological and cultural development. In the end, we have a conflation of cult and story, powerful goddess and potent virgin, who, despite her powers could not make the aging David rise to the occasion. Then, not to be outdone, Pope counters with the theory that the name, as an ancient participial form of the verb שׁלם meaning peaceful one (following Robert), actually refers to the violently pacified (martial or venereal—his terms, not mine; 600) goddess of love and war, Anat. As Pope would play it out here, Solomon (or Baal as he might like his lover to call him), would be required to subdue or make peaceful his consort, after a particularly bloody massacre of humankind. Baal calls her the "Peaceful One," as a sort of ironic euphemism, in an attempt to bring her down from her bloody high (600).

Goddess, Shunamite, Solomoness. Which is the most convincing? I am not interested in pinning down the ascription but wish to signal the term's indeterminacy. It is significant that the possibilities for meaning are many and that the range of meaning remains unresolved and open. At this point, I want instead to concentrate on what I can be sure of, namely, that the lover is the namer and the one who seeks, by whatever means, to pin an identity onto the object of his devotion. In other words, Solomon wishes to define and delimit his lover's person. Whether he wishes to subsume her identity into his own, a sort of devouring by nomenclature, or liken his lover to a violent goddess, nonetheless pacifiable, is moot. Moreover, what is also important is that, if multiple interpretive possibilities have anything to do with it, he has considerable difficulty attaching a concrete identity. Yet he does it, in a manner of speaking, for the name, at least, sticks in the history of biblical interpretation. And we must add another ingredient into the mix: Solomon's identification is intimately tied up with the gaze—male, of course. Naming equals looking, or looking equals naming. "Turn, Shulammite," he says, "so we can look" (7:1)

Significant, too, is the fact that these critical possibilities for the meaning of the term may also act as intertexts for our reading of the import and impact of

23. Albright is following Meek, Wittenkindt, and others. See Pope (598–600) for full discussion.

Solomon's naming. We get, then, variously, the possibility that Solomon might be connecting his beloved by means of a pun, an allusion, whatever, with a great goddess; a beautiful maiden (maybe a childless woman); with the abstract noun *peace.* One could take such a reading much further. Abishag's character, in particular, is quite provocative in this respect. Her beauty is commented upon in 1 Kings, and her sexual power is made clear. The narrator is at pains to point out, through the maintenance of her virginity, either the extent of David's decline or his reformation after "Bathsheba-gate." This woman has the power to turn princes and kingdoms, though, as is made evident through Adonijah. She is the tool of a brother's downfall, the site of sibling jealousy and rivalry, the cause of a man's death, the strength of a kingdom. With these texts written onto the Shulammite, Solomon makes quite a proclamation of lordship and victory when he commands her to dance for himself and his friends. A volley, perhaps, in a gender-political war through naming?

Once upon a Time…

There lived a king (I think his name was David) who had twelve daughters. They all slept together in one chamber, side by side, and after it was dark their father locked them in at night for safekeeping. Every morning, however, when he unlocked the door, he discovered that their shoes were worn out and their clothes rumpled. He searched in vain for the answer and finally settled on a tried and true method of discovery. He called for princes and peasants alike to come and try their hand at detection. Those who failed would forfeit their lives (it had to be thus for the sake of the story), and he who was victorious could have his pick of the litter for his wife. As an added bonus, the promise was made that the successful suitor-detective would become the next king. (David wasn't fond of his actual heir to the throne.)

To cut a long story short, after much time had elapsed, and not a few heads had been sent rolling around the courtyard out back, a strapping young man with a six-pack stomach (Walsh: 66) named Solomon volunteered his talents. At first the king was reluctant, because he was sure that he had fathered the boy and was loathe to sacrifice one of his sons to the chopping block. But with persistence from Solomon—and Solomon's mother—David relented.

Three nights passed (again, I conserve on details), and, at the end, the king sent for the royal executioner Joab to prepare his axe and collect some fresh straw. As a matter of courtesy, David asked Solomon if he had been able to discover the mystery of the worn-out shoes. Solomon replied, "your daughters have been in a magic land, dancing with twelve would-be suitors, numbering among them a dark maiden, a king's son, various daughters of Jerusalem (meaning, unidentified women), and a shepherd." David was of

course unconvinced by the obvious fabrication, but he did find himself somewhat intrigued by Solomon's impression of the significantly varied tastes of his daughters. So, still disbelieving, he put an end to the contest, allowed Solomon to live, and gave him his kingdom. He also followed through on his other promise and bade Solomon choose a wife from among his daughters.

Being a man of discerning tastes (his wives would eventually number in the hundreds), Solomon asked for some time to observe the women. He demanded of them all a few spins around the dance floor and other samplings of their talents that need not concern us here. When satisfied that he had seen all that he needed to, he selected the youngest, and he told the king the very same day. Because he wanted to spare the king any further trouble, he was also good enough to select matches for the others from among his friends. And, as we have come to expect from such stories, they all lived happily ever after.

A Happy Ending?

If another version of the story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses is to be believed, however, all of the matchings were ill-fated (Winterson 1989). Here, for example, is a report from one of the princesses on her marriage:

> He called me Jess, because that is the name of the hood that restrains the falcon. I was his falcon. I hung on his arm and fed at his hand. He said my nose was sharp and cruel and that my eyes had madness in them. He said I would tear him to pieces if he dealt softly with me.… His game was to have me sit astride him when we made love and hold me tight in the small of my back. He said he had to have me above him, in case I picked out his eyes in the faltering candlelight. I was none of these things, but I became them. At night, in June I think, I flew off his wrist and tore his liver from his body, and bit my chain in pieces and left him on the bed with his eyes open. He looked surprised, I don't know why. As your lover describes you, so you are. (Winterson 1989:56)

Jess's final remark brings an interesting possibility to light for the shifting parameters of lovers' profiles and personalities. Winterson is no doubt exploring the concept of identity in the context of romantic relationships. Her particular interest in the retelling of this tale (and in *Sexing the Cherry* more globally) is with sexual identity, but I wonder if her comments might be taken more generally in this case. Do lovers become what their partners expect or anticipate? Do their bodies resemble what their lovers describe?[24] Does "the Shulammite" experience the same—as her lover describes her, so she is?

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24. Winterson traces this process in another way in *Written on the Body*. There the body of the narrator's lover, who is dying of cancer, is described in minute detail as the narrator ponders

The one exception to the ill-fated matchings in Winterson's version is that of Fortunata, the princess first selected by the prince who discovered their secret:

> On her wedding day… she flew from the altar like a bird from a snare and walked a tightrope between the steeple of the church and the mast of a ship weighing anchor in the bay. She was, of all of us, the best dancer, the one who made her body into shapes we could not follow. She did it for pleasure, but there was something more for her; she did it because any other life would have been a lie. She didn't burn in secret with a passion she could not express; she shone.…
>
> She must be old now, she must be stiff. Her body can only be a memory. The body she has will not be the body she had. (1989:60)

Elsewhere another version of the marriage is told with the same near miss: "Look, O Daughters of Zion. Behold King Solomon with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding" (3:11). The protagonist looks from a distance and reports on an activity of which she is not a part ("Look, O Daughters, I once was his, but now I am not" ["3:12"—with liberties]).[25] Does she, perhaps, show herself aware of the perils of romantic relationships? Was she unwilling to become what her lover described?

It would appear that she was. The woman's answer to Solomon's challenge is bold, if somewhat indirect at first glance. Through a few small textual gaps, she is able to play with her audience, inviting them to look but not study, to admire but to turn away. In 1:6 she protests to the Daughters of Jerusalem (or an unidentified group of males—the verbal form is masculine), "do not look on me, for I am dark." What ensues in biblical criticism has been a debate on the woman's racial origins and/or her length of exposure to the sun's damaging rays, while she has been tending—or not tending—her vineyard.[26] In addition, the situation is complicated by the preceding verse, where, seemingly without provocation, the woman announces in celebratory fashion, "I am black and beautiful … like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon." The conjunction, the *waw,* in this phrase, however, has been open to some dispute: Does it mean

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the slow defeat of her lover's body. In language that resembles the Song's *wasf*s, the dying woman undergoes a piecemeal de-composition as each part is itemized and fetishized.

25. The event is contested in Song of Songs scholarship. Early commentators insisted that the Shulammite married Solomon and that 3:11 is a reference to their marriage (and 5:1 to the consummation of the marriage; see Goulder, as an example of a modern commentator who understands that a wedding has occurred). I might also add 8:14 to my case: Does she call her lover to her at the end of the book (she being the mountain of spices), or does she send him away?

26. Compare Fox: 101; Pope: 307–18, 321–22; Bloch and Bloch: 139–40; Murphy: 126, 128; Goulder: 12; Snaith: 17; etc.

"and" or "but"? In other words, is her beauty conditional upon, or an exception to her darkness (however it has been transmitted to her skin)? Early Christian readings have carried the speculation further into discussions of the nature of that beauty: Should נאוה be interpreted *pulchra* (pretty), *speciosa* (well-formed), or *formosa* (beautiful)?[27]

A few features in these verses are worth further comment. First, the troublesome adjectives שחורה and שחרחרת. Commentators have tried to distinguish between the two, usually in translating one "black" and the other "dark" (or "swarthy," "swart," "blackish" "darkish").[28] In truth, what has occupied them more is the cause of this darkness and the relation to her beauty, as I have already mentioned. So blackness, in the first instance, is a condition of her person, a racial designation, in other words, and darkness a result of the sun's gaze. The Hebrew in the first case, שחורה, seems to denote "black." Certainly, the adjective is used elsewhere to depict the color, as with hair (Lev 13:31, 37) and horses (Zech 6:2, 6). The second adjective is a *hapax* and has been hypothesized to be a pun on the former: blackish (Murphy: 128). That it refers to blackness of skin, from the influence of the sun, is supported by the verb שחר, which appears in Job 30:30. The problems here are not so much that the two words exist but whether they may be taken interchangeably and what each purports to mean.

Related to this, and next, is the troublesome conjunction. MT uses the conjunction *waw,* and LXX's καί allows for similar fluidity between "and" and "but." The Vulgate and other versions, however, select "but" as their translation. The *waw* is not only problematic in light of this issue of darkness/race and appearance that I have been tracing so far, problematic, that is, for commentators. Of interest to me is that its indeterminacy allows for some change in perspective on the part of the woman. She either celebrates her color and beauty or asks that she not be looked at because of it. Or some kind of combination of the two. There is room there for a change of mind, or a contradiction, or even a logical flow, which nevertheless invites other questions.

In this light, the particle אל at the beginning of verse 6 has been the subject of some discussion, and this, too, throws the meaning of the woman's sentiment into some confusion. Cheryl Exum has proposed that, rather than it being read as the negative particle, it be understood as an asseverative, which gives the request an emphatic meaning. Her rendering would read, "Look at me that I am black, that the sun has gazed on me" (1981:416). This argument removes the need for concern over the conjunction in the preceding verse and gives a

27. See Moore's interesting discussion of the implications of this ascription in the interpretive tradition (2001:58–66).

28. See note 27 above.

consistent logic for both verses, in terms of the relation between darkness and beauty. The woman first draws attention to herself in verse 5, then invites the gaze of her onlookers. As Exum herself notes, however, the existence of asseverative אל is infrequent in the biblical text, so much so that some doubt its existence in Biblical Hebrew entirely. More to the point, the now-consistent reading that invites the Daughters to look and celebrates the woman's beauty and color seems to be out of sorts with the ensuing statement, that the brothers are angry over the vineyard.

The audience to whom the woman addresses herself also bears discussion. In verse 5 she names the Daughters of Jerusalem, heretofore unidentified. In verse 6, however, she asks "do not look on me," and the verb ending implies a group of men. Is the protagonist asking this of the Daughters, and do we merely have an inadvertent confusion of verb endings, as we do elsewhere in the Song (e.g., 3:5, 15)? The infrequency of the feminine plural ending of this verb seems to suggest such a reading. But, if it is the daughters, again we ask, Why refuse their gaze when the previous statement seems sure to secure it? A momentary schizophrenia? A hasty change of mind brought on by sudden shyness? The woman seems hardly capable of that. If, on the other hand, it is Solomon and his group of friends who are being addressed, and the statement responds to his command that she turn so he can look, the statement seems apologetic and the assurance in her own beauty, whether because of, or despite, the blackness, undermined.

In sum, as with the naming by Solomon, the ascriptions of darkness and beauty and the request that she not be gazed at seem open to considerable variation in interpretation. And, as with the text in 7:1, I want to resist the temptation to attempt to pin down the meaning definitively. Rather, these two verses seem valuable for their indeterminacy, in that they operate, as we shall see, as a source of identity for the woman, a place where she may construct her self in relation to her lover and to those around her.

Now, It Came to Pass That…

Solomon, being heir to the throne and a king's son besides (David's uneasy feeling was right after all), was not about to be humiliated by a little rooftop dancing (Winterson 1989:60). *He laughed along with the joke but had his men meet his bride at the city walls near the port. There was a brief scuffle, and they brought her back with minimal protestations and not a mark on her—only her tunic was ripped (this, at any rate, is how the official version goes). They were married the same day amid much pomp and circumstance. David contentedly slipped into a doddering old age, and … they all lived happily ever after.*

Or did they?

Solomon eventually collected many other wives, but his poor ego was quite bruised by the fact that the first wife regularly kept to herself and had lots of private visitors. It was hard for the country's greatest paramour not to be drooled over by every woman in his company. He went to his mother for advice, but her solutions were a little too draconian. In the end, he decided to lavish gifts and compliments on his wife, in the hopes that he might woo her into a state of servility. She always met his words with a wry smile, but nothing else besides....

In the Song of Songs, if the woman is resisting the gaze of her suitor, it may not be the quick escape of Winterson's Fortunata, via rooftops and church steeples, that she is after. Like the princess's sisters in Winterson's tale, there does not seem to be another lover waiting in the wings. (There might be a stray shepherd, but he's not obvious to all who read the book.[29]) There is something, however, to the possibility that the woman resists Solomon's advances to some degree, not because they are unwelcome but because she understands the risks of what Solomon is proposing.

Winterson frequently traces this dynamic, of lovers who want to give themselves to their partners but who also need to keep their distance. It is certainly the profile of Fortunata, who refuses to go with Jordan in *Sexing the Cherry* but who can be seen at his shoulder as he sails away at the close of the book, a ghostly apparition who watches over him. And it is the fate of the lovers in *The Powerbook* as well, as they move across the globe, ever away from and ever toward each other. The trouble is, the resistant souls do their bidding in Winterson's work always at the cost of the freedom of a lovestruck fool. Desolate, the lovelorn either track their lovers around the world, or they wait, pining, until they deign to visit them again … sometime, somewhere … upon the mountains of spices (Song 8:14). Winterson's view is not exactly pessimistic; rather, it wants to bear witness to the pitfalls as well as to the triumphs of love ("there is no love that does not pierce the hands and feet"[Winterson 2000: *passim*]). By contrast, readers want to believe in the lovers' lasting and mutual romance in the Song of Songs. Is it there, or does it pierce the hands and feet?

From her perspective, we will never be entirely sure. In a playful admission by the woman in the Song, we come full circle to Solomon's command: "turn, so we can look." The brothers, who had been berating her for her failure to "keep her vineyard" in 1:6, propose a course of events that metaphorizes her body and

29. One phase of dramatic interpretations of the Song envisioned a third party, a shepherd, who captures the woman's attention and manages to lure her away from Solomon. See, for instance, Ginsberg, Renan. Pope summarizes the theory and its various developments (34–37).

presumably her sexual freedom. In response, she takes up their metaphor, in what is clearly readable as a contrary statement, and expresses her independence. But that independence is limited, as we shall see, for in asserting her self, she possibly aligns herself with her lover, and not only that, but with his description of her as the Shulammite.

In 8:8–9 the brothers appear, to assert that they have a little sister who has no breasts. Most commentators see this as a statement about her physical maturity.[30] It might also be an evaluation of her sexual currency, that she is not mature enough for male sexual consumption, in other words. They then ask themselves what they should do with her, on the day on which she is spoken for, that is to say, either the day that her intended spouse comes to claim her and/or, it is implied, Solomon appears to reconnect with her. Their answer is perplexing. If she is a wall, they will build a battlement or some kind of enclosure (טירה) on her; if she is a door, they will panel her up with cedar. The identity of the pieces of this building project are, needless to say, open to some debate.

Scholars generally interpret the wall and the door to represent opposites in a spectrum of sexual violability.[31] That is to say, if the woman is a wall—impenetrable—she will be treated in one way; if she is a door—an aperture, able to be opened or closed (each state implying the possibility of the other)—she will be treated in quite a different way. Surprisingly, the brothers' solutions do not exactly match the expected results of this reading. The response to the impenetrability is to erect an enclosure out of silver. Is this, as some have thought, a battlement? If it is, then the added defensive capabilities they impose on her body match a certain patriarchal logic, but why make it decorative? Why not a fortified battlement, to assist these would-be defenders of chastity? And similarly, if the enclosure is meant to stop the "door" from "opening," why make that ornamental? True, the materials selected could merely be to ascribe worth to their beloved sister, but the extra decoration might suggest a certain collapsing or diversion of logic.

The response the brothers get seems understandably indignant. "I am a wall all right," the woman answers, but both adopting and refuting their images, she adds that her breasts are like towers. Contrary to their evaluations of her body and its physical maturity, she asserts that not only does she have breasts but that they are מגדלות, military structures. Is she seizing on their ambiguity in the use of טירה? Perhaps she is saying that she needs no ornamentation; her breasts provide that. Is she asserting her sexual inviolability here? Arguing that she is

30. See Murphy: 198; Fox: 172; Pope: 678; Snaith: 122; Goulder: 66; Bloch and Bloch: 215; etc.

31. See Murphy: 198–99; Fox: 172; Pope: 678–80; Snaith: 124; among others.

sexually mature, but that the brothers need not worry, that she can guard her own body? Or is she taking on another kind of defense, one against the brothers' prying eyes and actions, making herself impenetrable to *their* interference? And then, a curiosity: all the while refuting the characterizations and restrictions of her body by her brothers, the woman says she is as one who has found (**מצא**) or who has brought out/produced (**יצא** [*hiphil*]) peace, *shalom,* in her lover's eyes.

One had better not miss the pun here, it would seem, the reference to peace, in light of Solomon's naming of the woman as the Shulammite (potentially, "the peaceful one") in 7:1. One wonders if the protagonist is asserting her right to choose in this instance. Refusing the alliance with the brothers, and their somatic incarceration, she instead selects her lover's description as the point of reference for her identification. Yet the matter remains unsolved, for the woman is careful to say that it is in her lover's eyes that she has this identity as one who relates to peace. Furthermore, the verbal options presented by the participle **מוצאת** allow for her to have an active or passive relation to Solomon, who makes the pronouncement. Is it on her initiative that peace is achieved, or does he ascribe it by virtue of seeing it? As with the brothers' description, then, one could read that she both adopts and denies this assignment of identity. To what end? Am I the Shulammite, our protagonist asks? Am I Solomon's little Solomon?

Whereas some have seen the Song of Songs as a delightful dialogue between two lovers, equitable and always courteous, I perceive that the dynamics between the two figures are always highly charged, and not always positively. Part of that dynamism is, I suggest, the wrestling for control over the lovers' independence, their personhood, and this process is intimately tied up with naming and describing, with discourse about the body that is ubiquitous in the Song. So, whereas Solomon names his woman and calls her his own, the woman refuses to be complicit in his politics of identification. She maintains her independence and sexual autonomy through, I propose, indeterminacy. In the first place, she does not give herself a title but both hides behind and takes pride in her I, her **אני**. What is more, she is clever and creative as she does so. She uses her brothers' and her lover's words but twists and turns them and throws them back repackaged. Her words tease; they partially reveal and partially conceal. They invite speculation and prevent the full consummation of knowledge. Moreover, I begin to suspect that they find empowerment in what could be traditionally rendered disempowering, or of little value in the Song's sexual economy. In darkness, in the hardened surfaces of walls.

In this case, the descriptions of the darkness of her skin and her wall-like physique are, respectively, useful as barriers to her lover's gaze. Not metaphors for her virginity or sexual accessibility, or even statements about her attractiveness, they are, instead, shields from prying eyes. Look but do not look. Look

enough to see that I am dark (not transparent), and, therefore, do not gaze. Consider me a wall. Consider, she says, my breasts to be battlements that, rather than inviting touch (like the fawns to which Solomon compares them), are armed to protect if need be.[32]

Re-amble.

Sidonie Smith problematizes the relation of the skin as a physical barrier of the body to the body and its subject, as if these thin peeling layers somehow stop the one from within from being delineated fully. She observes that we have to "look at the cultural practices that surface on the body and through the body to get at the emergence of the autobiographical subject" (1994:270). So the autobiographer's body, in this case, the woman's (and also in this case, mine), is the site of "multiple solicitations, multiple markings, multiple invocations of subject positions" (1994:270–71). To complicate matters further, the autobiographical text contains "multiple bodies … that coalesce in complex autobiographical alignments," such as the "specific body" of the speaker, the " 'subject body' of the autobiographical I," and the "cultural body" (1994:271). Her point is, in part, that it is impossible to separate all of these traces. If it were possible to delineate and isolate them, the result would only be a point of departure, not a single, finite subjectivity. As she says, "identity may well be the bane of subjectivity's existence" (1994:270). To this end, in the Song, the woman's brief comments—the brief descriptions of her own body—are merely simple scratchings on the surface that give us but one point of access. To try and definitively identify "the Shulammite" in ways that historical critics have done in the past is no more certain—or ludicrous—a proposition than trying to find the name of Jonah's fish.

Indeed, when dealing with a fictional autobiographical subject, surely navigating these muddy waters becomes even more difficult. Smith's comments refer to historical bodies and subjects, but they are no less appropriate for the subjects of fictional autobiography. In this case, our protagonist is subject to the same layerings and multiplicities as in Smith's description, but more besides, in that there is at *least* one more body to contend with, that of the creator of this character. The point here is not to attempt to tease out each of these multiple parts—arguably a futile endeavor, especially in this case when cultural and social

32. It's rather a humorous image. One is reminded of one of James Bond's opponents in *Goldfinger,* who sprouts poisonous darts from her breasts. The image is remade and becomes even more ludicrous in *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery,* whose "fembots" sprout "machine gun jubblies." (My thanks to Stephen Moore for reminding me of this last important cultural development.)

influences seem so remote—but to point out the fragmentation inherent in the (fictional) autobiographical enterprise and to ask, as I have above, whether that might be critically useful. In literary terms, it would seem that the woman who speaks her own story in the Song of Songs is doing so in such as way as to foreground that contested skin-space of which Smith writes. Identity, she teaches us, is a matter of permutations and multiplications, not simply of name-calling.

But one cannot really blame Solomon, can one? If it is impossible to trace all the fragmentations but necessary to get a handle on a loved one, it could be that a name, no matter how irretrievable, is quite simply his only recourse. The problem is, of course, that it is not simply the matter of a name that is in question but a body that is commanded to turn, to submit itself to observation, then to be enjoyed as it performs for a would-be suitor and a group of gathered friends.[33] In the Song, as elsewhere in autobiographical writing, the body and its handles are not easily separated. To put it more strongly: one depends upon the other, though never with complete success.

Winterson seems to agree. She experiments with this notion in *Written on the Body,* where she fails to provide a name and a gender for the narrator. The result is the production of an anxiety in narrator and reader, where the signifying chain between name and material realities (of gender, sex, sexuality) is untraceable (Gilmore 2001:130). Significant questions abound: How does identity become determined? Does a name indicate presence, and its lack, absence or loss (Gilmore 2001:130, 128)? Or might the lack of a name indicate the lack of fixity in the subject, its (her) refusal to be that which the namer assigns (Gilmore 1997:240)?[34] Whichever way one answers that question, Gilmore cautions us that names do not really take care of all the questions that identity prompts: names might "stabilize" questions of identity, but they "are not identical to them" (1997:237). Questions still abound.[35] In Solomon's case, the naming might relieve anxiety, but the disconnect between body and name, and/or woman and body seems ever-present. If she had not resisted it—and indeed, as I noted above, the label has stuck in the history of interpretation—would that disconnect persist? The label *the* Shulammite (or even "Shulamit," the proper name) cannot provide the fixity of identity or the physical presence that Solo-

33. One does not have to read this scene as sinister, either. My point, however, is that the collocation of naming, gazing (and definition of the body) should not be overlooked.

34. Gilmore's discussion traces naming and not-naming in Monique Witting's *The Lesbian Body* and Winterson's *Written on the Body* (see 1997 and 2001).

35. The particular questions dealt with here are about gender and sexual identity, especially around the label "lesbian." This is the subject of Gilmore's discussion (1997). It would seem that her observations might pertain to identity on a more general level, however—identity that incorporates issues of gender and sexuality but is not limited to them.

mon seeks. The Song's subject is ever on the move, dashing from mountain to field, dodging epithets as she goes.

She? The Shulammite? The female protagonist? What's in her name? Ghostwriting cannot answer the questions posed by Gilmore, but it might employ some of the traces into a fictional narrative, not to assign identity, but to explore it in literary terms. My initial steps into ghostwriting her story suggested that she might cleverly use her descriptions of herself both as a form of self-preservation and as a source of empowerment. But I have made the protagonist into a virago, and I did not mean to do that, at least not right away. (The breasts-to-battlements was the final straw—though the idea was hardly original to me.) Could this be a means of identifying her? What would transpire in a reading like the one I propose is the floating of the possibility that identity, however construed, is, for the woman, power. Her story, if I were to tell it, would celebrate her impenetrability or, at least, her control over her lover's infiltration of her person.[36] There would be narrative, and dialogue, intrigue and more. The lovers in the Song might finally reconcile their differences, or she might give him the boot. Most important is that ghostwriting might foreground the fictions and fragments of textual and critical selves in an interesting and provocative way.[37]

"They Call Me the Dog Woman and It Will Do"[38]

In Jacobean England there lives a figure who, because of her pets—and her appearance—is called the Dog Woman. A consequence of her status (for one cannot imagine that "Dog Woman" is in any way a mark of respect or admiration) is that she is inexperienced in the ways of love. She explains, "I am too huge for love. No one, male or female, has ever dared to approach me. They are afraid to scale mountains" (Winterson 1996:34).

"How hideous am I?" She ruminates:

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36. If that seems a little harsh, one might point out that military language is no stranger to the Song (e.g., 4:4; 6:4).

37. Brenner's ghostwriting of the woman's story (2005), which appeared while this piece was in the process of being written, does not tell a story of this life in the way I am describing, so much as it has the woman recapitulate Brenner's previous work on the Song's humor and its *wasf*s (1993). To be sure, there is common ground between the two, in that we are both concerned with the body and how its figuration affects the autonomy and identity of the protagonist. However, as ghostwriting goes, I feel that there is still more of the story that is yet to be told.

38. Winterson 1996:11.

> My nose is flat, my eyebrows are heavy. I have only a few teeth and those are a poor show, being black and broken. I had smallpox when I was a girl and the caves in my face are home enough for fleas. But I have fine blue eyes that see in the dark. As for my size, I know that … a traveling circus came through Cheapside and in that circus was an elephant. (Winterson 1996:24)

The Dog Woman's body functions as a source of humor but clearly is political for Winterson. It is marked by the experiences of a particular historical period, and within that context it is always transgressive. In its size and volatility (the bodily processes as much as the behaviors of the body), it threatens to undermine the status quo. In terms of love and sex, too, the Dog Woman does not fit into expected relationships, but clearly the issue is that she has opted out of them, or preferred to explore them differently, as much as that she has been overlooked because of her difference. She is matter of fact about her self and her body and does not appear to feel any dismay over her inexperience (her reference to her hideousness is not a note of self-disparagement). Moreover, she seems glad to avoid all the bother of sexual entanglements, though she does wonder what sexual love feels like, having only heard it through a wall once. In light of these issues, her body generates some power for her, as much as it causes problems. Indeed, the holy grail for her, as it is for all of us, Winterson says, is real love ("I fell in love once, if love be that cruelty which takes us straight to the gates of Paradise only to remind us they are closed forever" [1996:35]).

In the Song of Songs, the body seems always in contestation, and, consequently, I would argue, so is love. The extended descriptions of the woman's body, primarily by Solomon (one of them, in fact, right after he names her the Shulammite, 7:2–10) are often taken as complimentary, loving descriptions of a lover about his beloved. Elsewhere I have argued that the grotesqueness of these descriptions signifies their problematic nature in relation to the gender politics of the book; in turn, they problematize love and desire in the Song (see Black 2000; forthcoming). At issue is not that this potentially unflattering language *negates* love but that it raises questions about looking (the gaze), ownership, and absence.

In the broader context of language that is used to describe the body, the woman's brief descriptions of her own person take on an even greater significance. Their effect, I have already said, may be empowering, even ironic and therefore playful. More than this, though, they are sharply focused autobiography: the few and simple statements with which the woman seems to counter others. The protagonist understands that the body is a distinct figure in the writing of one's life, not because it reveals the self, but because it reveals some of its complexity and multivalence. As such, the body might be used in the relations of lovers, not only in the obvious ways, but also in the quest for knowledge and

the dance of ownership that is part of love. And so, what of the Shulammite's words? How might Solomon receive them?

The Dog Woman plays out the scene a little further. Once, when she was younger, she loved a boy who had a face that made her glad.

> I used to get up an hour early and comb my hair, which normally I would do only at Christmas-time in honour of our Saviour. I decked myself out in my best clothes like a bullock at a fair, but none of this made him notice me and I felt my heart shrivel to the size of a pea. Whenever he turned his back to leave I always stretched out my hand to hold him a moment, but his shoulder blades were too sharp to touch. I drew his image in the dirt beside my bed and named all my mother's chickens after him.
>
> Eventually, I decided that true love must be clean love and I boiled myself a cake of soap.…
>
> I hate to wash, for it exposes the skin to contamination.
>
> I hate to wash, but knowing it to be a symptom of love I was not surprised to find myself creeping towards the pump in the dead of night like a ghoul to a tomb.…
>
> When I was so drenched that to wring any part of me left a puddle at my feet, I sat myself by the baker's ovens until morning. I had a white coating from the flour, but that served to make my swarthy skin more fair.
>
> In this new state I presented myself to my loved one, who graced me with all of his teeth at once and swore that if only he could reach my mouth he would kiss me there and then. I swept him from his feet and said, "Kiss me now," and closed my eyes for the delight. I kept them closed for some five minutes and then, opening them to see what had happened, I saw that he had fainted dead away. I carried him to the pump that had last seen my devotion and doused him good and hard until he came to, wriggling like a trapped fox and begged me to let him down. "What is it?" I cried. "Is it love for me that affects you so?" "No," he said. "It is terror." (Winterson 1996:35–36)

Our protagonist, the Shulammite, would silently smile at such a scene, as she imagines herself, a giant as tall as a palm tree (7:8), plucking Solomon out of his palanquin, and crying "kiss me!" (3:9; 1:2). For her, the imposition of mountains and buildings and towers and trees on to her body by her brothers and lovers is not a threat but a compliment, though in ways that scholars never dreamed.[39] And for Solomon?

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39. The Dog Woman-Shulammite makes for an intriguing conflation. Elizabeth Langland, who has considered the Dog Woman in terms of Judith Butler's understanding of gender performance and drag, points out that the "Dog-Woman's wholly unconscious evocation of gender norms is meant to reinforce those norms, but her anatomy decrees a different social performance and reception of those normative expressions and disrupts the would-be unity among anatomical sex,

—Turn, Shulammite, so we can look on you.
—Why? What is it? Is it terror of me that affects you so?
—Well, … Yes.
—Good.

The Shulammite smiles to herself as she shuffles into place and tilts her hips in a way that makes the men whimper.

—I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers.

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gender identity and gender performance" (103). It would be interesting to consider the Shulammite along these lines, in terms of the way her body is constructed by her lover and in terms of the typical expectations placed on her in the text and by commentators as she performs her gender.

Panopticon Gone Mad? Staged Lives and Academic Discipline(s)

Erin Runions

The question I take up in this response is whether or not autobiographical criticism is any different from the panopticon gone mad. Or in other words, I ask, Can autobiographical criticism be resistant to social control? Here I take my cue from James Smith's admonishment to Esbeelzebub on the necessity of suspicion in evaluating autobiographical criticism.

Certainly, as is well known, autobiographical criticism started out as a form of resistance, specifically feminist resistance, using a genre historically preferred by women authors to disrupt the notion of the disinterested, objective, universal scholarly point of view. But what if this genre were, say, to be taken up by mostly straight, mostly white, mostly male biblical scholars? What if it began suspiciously to smell of privileged people's need to talk about themselves incessantly, to suggest why they are not, in fact, so very privileged and should therefore take center stage once again? Would it then represent a critical stance different from the masculinist position that previously called itself disinterested and objective? Would autobiographical criticism then have been co-opted?

If I were to let that stand as a description of autobiographical criticism as it has been taken up in biblical studies, I would be unfair. Some of the pieces in the various collections on autobiographical criticism and biblical studies go far beyond this masculinist stance; it has the potential to be quite radical, as Osayande Obery Hendricks (1995) shows in his riff on guerilla exegesis. Maybe, in the spirit of the exercise, I should rephrase with a focus on myself.

Take Two

What if I were, say, to find myself writing autobiographical criticism, not because I was convinced of its feminist impact and value, but because I was responding to a trend in biblical studies? Would I, along with the genre, have been co-opted?

Self-surveillant, self-censoring, wanting to conform, wanting to fit the sexy-academic-writing bill, I display myself thus regulated. This is, in part, what I mean by the panopticon gone mad for the market. Zygmunt Bauman helpfully explicates such a point in *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (1995). Bauman suggests that in the movement from modernity into postmodernity, social control is marked by a movement from bodies regulated for production into bodies regulated for consumption. He takes Foucault's analysis of Bentham's panopticon to its logical conclusion: surveillance, the institutional gaze, proliferated and streamlined during modernity for the purposes of ensuring healthy productive bodies, is now completely internalized. No longer is "conform and reform" the name of the institutionalized production game. "Freely consume" has become the motto for the privatized market. The fear of deviance has become a fear of inadequacy and ineptitude, a fear that, in turn, propels consumption. These fears are kept in check, Bauman argues, by an overwhelming desire to experience, to handle, to taste, to gather sensation—that is, to consume in excess (105–25). Thus, thoroughly self-regulated, individuals no longer require supervision. The central panopticon tower need no longer be staffed. It is sufficient merely to invoke the gaze and the inadequacies it might reveal, for example through media productions such as advertisements and real-time television shows.

As Jean Baudrillard might put it—having been brought to mind by Ela Nutu's use of Baudrillard to analyze the subtext of *The Matrix*—postpanopticon, there is no real, only hyperreal, simulacra. For Baudrillard, contemporary production is no longer the production of actual consumer items, but rather it is cultural production that stands in for what was once real supervision and surveillance. Just as the scenario of work, Baudrillard argues, "is there to conceal that the real of work, the real of production has disappeared" (26), just as war stands in for real antagonism, though there may only be diplomatic maneuvering (37–38), and—I might add, letting my mind wander tangentially from the panopticon—just as prisons, filled to capacity by drug laws, now stand in for criminality, so also the cultural production of *tales of surveillance* can be seen to stand in for surveillance itself. The simulacrum is control. Along these lines, Nutu reads the use of recycled biblical myth in *The Matrix* as a "compensatory [stand-in] method to bring … equilibrium to a now-postmodern society with no clear parameters" (77). Although she does not state the connection explicitly, Nutu goes on to hint that this cultural invocation of the Bible is social control, as sure as the social control that she lived in the iron structures and closed borders of Communist Romania. While Baudrillard does not speak of the kind of centralized control that Nutu escaped through her own process of "unplugging" from the Matrix, his work is certainly apt to describe my fears about the co-opting potential for autobiographical criticism.

In short, I wonder if autobiographical criticism is one more instance of the social control of simulacrum. James Smith hints at similar fears when he wonders whether autobiography is simply a marketable performance. I wonder if it is one more of these media projections of the internalized gaze, one in fact that both creates a market and demands self-regulation in one shot. Look at me looking at myself. Consume my life, my scholarship. Write likewise, and in order to do so, scrutinize yourself. To be sure, one could produce a lot more, a lot faster this way—journaling for publication. Ironically, as a form of disciplinary measure, it seems remarkably undisciplined. But if we all do it, we can keep this hyperreal simulacrum going.

Or so the theory goes. What Bauman and Baudrillard seem not to notice, at least at these points in their arguments, is that the postmodern simulacral bodies that they describe are Western bourgeois bodies. Production still happens, bodies are still involved, but off the scene, elsewhere, in prisons (see Browne; Parenti: 230–31), or by women under far worse than panopticon conditions in third-world countries (see Given; Kim). Indeed, prisons have skipped the step of trying to reform people to send them back out into the production line; now they *are* the production line, often privatized at that.

In truth, you might have noticed, I'm having a hard time staying focused on autobiographical and cultural criticism in biblical studies. I'd rather write about the prison industry. I've just spent an intense weekend at the Critical Resistance East Conference in New York, a conference of over 2000 activists who came together to analyze and think beyond the prison industrial complex.

I'm feeling emotionally wiped from imagining the horror of prison and the racism that drives it, and especially from imagining women's lives in prison. As Laura Whitehorn puts it—herself recently released after fifteen years of time for underground resistance against the U.S. government—for women, being in prison is like waking up every single day to an abuser, and not being able to do anything about it; it is being punished through lock down or solitary confinement for any iota of resistance to verbal and physical abuse. I can barely imagine such a feeling of helplessness, in the face of abusive power. They say if you're not insane when you go in, you more than likely will be when you come out, and I can see why. I try to imagine what it would be like to have the threat of my only support and social interaction comprised of five fifteen minute phone calls a week, and maybe the odd letter or visit. The loneliness and lack of contact would undo me. As one prisoner writes in a plea for a pen pal, "I am sitting in prison, afraid of dying from loneliness. Praying everyday that they'll call my name at mail call. But they never do. I'm alone and forgotten by all my so-called friends and family. I just want a friend."

I've been challenged by listening to former Black Panthers and young black revolutionaries talk about revolutionary discipline. I watch these people give speeches in the faces of cops that could surely cost them their lives or their freedom, as happened

to Malcolm Ferguson, the young black man shot and killed by cops the day after attending a demonstration against the killing of Amadou Diallo. I am amazed by their strength and courage and determination. These young revolutionaries know they are not free, yet they dream of freedom. They seem to take up words from the autobiography of the once-imprisoned, now-escaped Black Panther Assata Shakur as their own:

> I believe in life.
> And I have seen the death parade march through the torso of the earth,
> sculpting mud bodies in its path.
> I have seen the destruction of the daylight, and seen bloodthirsty maggots
> prayed to and saluted…
>
> I have been locked by the lawless.
> Handcuffed by the haters.
> Gagged by the greedy.
> And, if I know any thing at all,
> it's that a wall is just a wall, and nothing more at all.
> It can be broken down.
>
> I believe in living.
> I believe in birth.
> I believe in the sweat of love
> and in the fire of truth. (2)

I find this hope and this call to struggle moving and compelling.

But me, I embark on a reflection on the latest trend in biblical studies. My discipline is not revolutionary. At least not as yet. I think about the panopticon and prisons in abstract terms. Yet Critical Resistance pushes me to ask my question a little more urgently, and with some hope, rephrasing: How can autobiographical writing resist and work against social control, that control which is hyperreal, whose reality seems not to exist, because it is hidden from sight in the form of the prison industry or two-thirds-world sweatshops?

I find my way into thinking about an answer in Deborah Krause's reading of the Pastoral Epistles as hypertext, which in turn resonates with other contributors' attention to the fictionality of the *I* in autobiographical writing. In her piece, Krause's own autobiographical voice is more muted, noting only her struggle as a feminist in writing a commentary on 1 Timothy and in teaching this text to questioning students. Krause, thinking about computer hypertext and Genette's notion of hypertext, suggests that the Pastoral Epistles as pseudepigraphy are mimotextual, texts that imitate Paul, recycle Paul, stand in for the authentic Paul. They are "hyper-Paul." Drawing on Elizabeth Castelli's use of

Foucault to read this kind of mimesis of Paul as a rhetorical means of extending his power and authority, Krause suggests that these texts aim for a kind of social control. She reads the Pastoral Epistles as "discourses of power from within and around churches in the late first and early second centuries. [This] way of reading … understand[s] the recycling of Paul as contentious discourses. Such a way of reading would be that of a modest witness" (18).

Thinking back to Nutu's essay and Baudrillard, I might say that in this understanding, pseudepigraphy is a genre that facilitates the hyperreal authority of the epistolary, autobiographical "I, Paul" that comes through in these letters. Pseudepigraphy is a genre, Krause writes, in which its "technology" enables its writers' "extension, or hyperactivity, and underlines their absence" (20). For Krause and her students this demystifies their apostolic ("I, Paul") authority, by enabling them to see "I, Paul" not as a unitary figure but as an "assemblage of many traditions" (13) in a rhetorical site of struggle.

Juxtaposed to Boer's piece, Krause's reflection moves me to think about how the notions of pseudepigraphy, hypertext, and hyperreal can trouble the autobiographical *I,* and perhaps with it social control. Self-consciously playing with himself, Boer characterizes himself as the biblically inspired alcoholic, an addicted individual, not necessarily in full control of will. He uses this image of himself to critique autobiographical criticism as the logical individualistic output of the capitalist system. The interesting part of the article, though, is that throughout Boer winks to the reader that perhaps he is not really writing about his true self. Indeed, Boer's writing style exemplifies Krause's point that pseudepigraphy represents a fragmented site of struggle for authority, even while he critiques the notion that personal experience should grant any kind of authority. Boer's piece, read alongside Krause's piece, shows up the *I* of autobiographical writing as an assemblage of sometimes-conflicting social citation.

At points, Boer's *I* incorporates the autobiographical selves of those upon whom he comments, including their sexual behaviors, which he simultaneously adopts and dismisses. For instance, he writes, "[M]ore juicy and memorable are such questions as who I had sex with, whether my wife (Staley 1999:66), or another man (Moore 1999:183–84), or whatever (as long as it had a pulse)" (52). He makes his own the homoerotic bonding and competition that goes on among his male colleagues. Citing Stephen Moore, citing Frank Lentricchia, Boer writes, "Dick in [Stephen's] hand, I worry about my writing" (46 n. 1). He also makes reference to the *I* character in his book *Knockin' on Heaven's Door* (1999): a transvestite locked in embrace with another transvestite (Yahweh). But because Boer's borrowed sexual exploits are framed through the disclaimer of the alcoholic fantasy in which he claims to write the paper (67), they are not given the status of being fully rational (64). It is unfortunate that nonheteronormative forms of sexuality are thus sacrificed as amusing side effects of addiction in an otherwise

important critique of the late-stage capitalist ideology of the rational autonomous self. Boer counters this assemblage of sexualities with the suggestion that for his own part, he has to make do with cigars (48), thus subtly reinscribing the "autonomous unit of autobiography" that he critiques through his ruminations on addiction (64).

Nonetheless, Boer helpfully highlights the autobiographical *I* as fictional, pseudepigraphal, an assemblage of contesting traditions, and so hypertextual, hyperreal. Boer's argument intersects here with those of James Smith and Tina Pippin, who show precisely that identity is always fluid, contradictory, changing. These writers suggest that readers can ingest fluid identities as they come through texts and culture, making them part of their own set of identity effects. Pippin shows that what might be thus ingested are contradictory identity effects, present within a more dominant expression of identity, but disavowed. The *I* of the text becomes quite different in its extraecclesial afterlives. Though few would admit it, the vampire may be lurking beyond the *I* of the bread of life in John. Moreover, Pippin's argument suggests that though ostensibly drawn to the *I* of the text, those readers of the Gospel longing to be fed by the bread of life in the Eucharist also ingest another, contradictory, vampiric desire to eat and drink blood. James Smith poignantly illustrates the dangers that might lie within another kind of ingestion. He shows the convergences in the multiple personal, medieval, and contemporary pop culture representations of the devil. These representations are consumed by those who worry that the devil has infiltrated their selves. His own story illustrates the potentially devastating effects of such consumption on believers, not the least of whom were children growing up in a family of exorcists. These writers show how fragmented textual and cultural identities are taken up by individual selves in ways that transform those who identify with them.

Thinking of the autobiographical *I* as a conflicting assemblage of social and textual citations brings to mind Judith Butler's argument in *Bodies That Matter* (1993) that the symbolic, patriarchal, heterosexist law of the father—also known as social control—is given its power through citation and continual recitation. She queries:

> For how do we account for how the symbolic becomes invested with power? The imaginary practice of identification must itself be understood as a double movement: in citing the symbolic, an identification (re)invokes and (re)invests the symbolic law, seeks recourse to it as a constituting authority … such that citation … effectively brings into being the very prior authority to which it then defers. (108–9)

Put another way, what I have been calling postpanopticon social control, following Bauman and Baudrillard, is a kind of consumption of social norms, a

consumption that takes the form of a citation, and so investment in and establishment of these norms. Of course, though, this also leaves open the possibility that the autobiographical *I* can resist giving power to the symbolic law by identifying with, and so citing, oppositional social discourses.

Here Fiona Black's article is instructive. Black, reading Jeanette Winterson's works alongside the Song of Songs, shows how the self is fragmented in autobiography, novel, and biblical text. Black asks how such fragments might be critically useful, especially to women, for whom such fragmentation might also prove problematic. For Black, the fragmented, multivalent identity of the woman who speaks in the Song—illuminated by the equally undecidable identity of Winterson's autobiographical protagonists—problematizes and resists the gaze and possessiveness of her lover and her brothers (who, one might say, are representatives of the symbolic law of the father). The undecidability of the woman's identity and appearance allows precisely for oppositional discourses to come into play, to trouble the patriarchal waters. Through her shape-shifting, the woman is empowered, given independence and sexual autonomy. Moreover, she resists the identifications forced upon her by her male interlocutors by using them to her own ends in her self-descriptions. As Black shows, the gaze that is turned inward in life writings does not always result in disciplinary conformity.

Not surprisingly, I am not the first to think of Butler's argument in relation to the oppositional potential of autobiographical writing. Smith makes a very similar argument in her essay "Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance." Smith suggests that autobiographical writing can trouble identifications with the regulatory norms of the symbolic law, by practicing what Teresa de Lauretis calls dis-identification (S. Smith 1998:110). Precisely because the autobiographical *I* is composite, as Krause and Boer point out, it can never quite fit into one normative identity category; something always spills out to disturb that identification (111; see also Muñoz). As Smith describes it, dis-identification is resistance to identification with regulatory norms through a "staging of incommensurable differences" (114). Thus, attention to the incommensurable social citations that make up an autobiographical *I* can trouble normative identifications. Not only, Smith writes, can the process of autobiographical writing help the writer to see how their "interiority is an effect of social discourses" (113), but also, she implies, the discomfort that this kind of writing produces in the reader can also perhaps aid others to question and resist the normative identifications that make up the postpanopticon syndrome.

The question is, of course, How would this kind of autobiographical writing look? Sidonie Smith provides two nuanced examples, which I will not, in the interests of brevity, repeat here, though I do recommend her article. I would offer instead the essays of Hugh Pyper and Andrew Wilson, both of which move in this direction.

Pyper looks at the biblical afterlife of the metrical psalms of the Scottish Psalter with which he grew up. For Pyper, the metrical contortions of the psalms defied the conventions of grammar such that, early on, he learned "that the rules of language could be played with and that there could be a visceral delight in the incomprehensible" (145). Introduction to the play of language and interpretation instilled in him at an early age a sense that other conventions might not be as controlling as they seemed; they too could be altered. Moreover, the Psalter's metrical efforts at authority only emphasized the difference it tried to conceal, subtly valorizing this difference, thereby affirming his own sense of difference. Thus for Pyper, the social citations of the "bad poetry" of the metrical Psalms enabled him to establish an (autobiographical) *I* that could contest "the self-destructive effect of convention" (154).

Along similar lines, Wilson shows how Mary, the patron saint of his Catholic boys' school, becomes part of his identity in ways that challenge the conventions of gender. Reading Mary through Julia Kristeva, Wilson shows how the unattainable ideal of Mary's femininity stands in for that moment of primary narcissism—perhaps not unlike Baudrillard's inaccessible real—yet can never fully occupy that space. Mary, the ideal (and silent) point of gender identification for women, always threatens to rupture through the fragmenting semiotic processes that have produced Mary's (and ideal femininity's) multiple identities, including Mary Magdalene and Maria Callas. In the queer world, Mary morphs into Maria Callas and comes into the subversive space of the opera stage, where she plays with the division between reality and fiction. She thus highlights the construction of gender and the construction of the self, providing a doubly seditious point of (dis)identification. Mary, patron saint of both girls and boys, necessarily troubles the very codes by which gender is constructed in her name(s). Though he does not come out and say it, Wilson implies that Mary's multivalent identities have affected his own gender (dis)identification.

As the essays in this volume show, radical autobiography may be a matter of consciously citing other, marginal, autobiographical voices, recognizing them as social citations that make up the *I* and that help to trouble it. To return to my former concerns, then, perhaps autobiographical critics might consider citing those voices that make up the real real, the real of production, the real of oppression that the hyperreal disavows, that is, voices of prisoners or voices of third-world laborers. I have experimented with such citation here. I am not advocating appropriating these voices in any way, but rather I am suggesting that these voices be given place, that they be recognized, and that they be allowed to challenge hegemonic norms. In including them as part of what makes up the fictional "I," the self necessarily moves away from the notion of an autonomous, bounded self. As part of a larger, more fluid *I,* these voices can be acknowledged

as internalized instances of the social that already trouble the symbolic law, that already dis-identify.

In the spirit of resistant voices, and with the knowledge that escape (from the self, from the panopticon, from the simulacrum) is sometimes possible, I would like to end with an autobiographical poem by Assata Shakur. These words confront my own self about my implication in the hyperreal of academic discourse; they present another contestatory *I* to the *I* of the biblical critic, one that might be allowed to enlarge its borders and challenge its definitions, and they resist the norms of the panopticon, as it hides behind the simulacrum.

i understand that i am slightly out of fashion.
The in-crowd wants no part of me.

Someone said that i am too sixties
Black.
Someone else told me I had failed to mellow.

It is true that i have not
straightened back my hair.
Nor rediscovered maybelline.
And it is also true
that I still like African things,
like statues and dresses
and PEOPLE.

And it is also true
that struggle is foremost in my mind.
And I still rap about discipline—
my anger has not run away.

And I still can't stand ole
el dorado.
And I still can't dig no
one and one.
And I still don't dig no
roka fellas.
And I call a pig a pig.
And a party, to my thinking,
happens only once in a while.

Anyway, I'm really kinda happy
being slightly out of style.
(Shakur: 240)

Recycling the Bible: A Response

George Aichele

> The subject that I am is not unified. … To then say "It's I!" would be to postulate a unity of self that I do not recognize in myself. (Barthes 1985:304)

> Simulation is precisely this irresistible unfolding, this linkage of things as if they had a meaning, so that they are no longer controlled or regulated except by artificial montage and non-sense. (Baudrillard 1992)

The act of reading a text again and again is a kind of recycling—a recycling both of signifying text and of signified meaning. This recycling is what keeps the text "alive" and relevant when it is read again in different circumstances; it is an engine of semiosis. The potential to be combined in endless intertextual permutations appears within any text, and thus it also appears, perhaps even more so than usual, within the multitextual assemblage that is the Bible. To borrow terms from Deborah Krause's essay in this volume, canon is a hypertextual machine that supports the endless and constant recycling of the Bible. As canon, the Bible demands to be reread again and again, and indeed this repetitious reading is part of what "canon" means (Sanders 1984:22).

Canonization restricts the intertextual framework in which the selected texts are read to one that promotes the ideology of "orthodox" Christianity.[1] Canon opens a semiotic space in which recycling of the Bible is encouraged, but in a carefully controlled context, producing a range of ideologically satisfactory meanings. Canon stands in an intimate relation to commentary, for to comment on a text is in effect to "canonize" it. Indeed, the biblical canon of scriptures is itself a kind of commentary. Canon provides a mechanism that supports the rereading of texts of the Bible in ways that will be acceptable to a believing community of readers, reinforcing the illusion of a united, universal church that

1. I restrict these comments to the Christian canon. Further thoughts on the relation between the Jewish and Christian canons may be found in Aichele 2001.

remains faithful to its apostolic origins, and this is also one of the traditional functions of biblical commentary.

In the present volume, this recycling of biblical texts takes on several forms. One of these forms tests the canonical control of meaning but finally accepts the legitimacy of canon. Ela Nutu explores the widespread interpretation of *The Matrix* as an allegory of Christian theology and finds this reading of the Wachowski brothers' movie wanting. Nutu aptly turns to the cultural analyses of Jean Baudrillard to show why. However, it appears that she shares the theology of the movie's allegorists and only disagrees as to its relevance to the film. To borrow an observation from Hugh Pyper's article, also in this volume, Nutu is willing to play with the movie but not with the Bible. Her reading does not escape from the canonical control of meaning.

Krause reads the Pastoral Epistles as a mocking pastiche of "Paul" that could take the reader far from a canonically authorized reading. Along the way she raises provocative questions about the role of the Bible and especially the Pastoral Epistles in the Christian construction of Pauline thought. However, Krause's "modest witness"—reading the pastorals as "discourses of power from within and around churches" (18) in order to demystify them—despite its hypertextual play, also appears finally to remain intra-Testamental, and indeed, intra-Pauline. Would Krause enlist heretical writings or pagan ones in the rhetorical struggles that she describes? Furthermore, are these struggles restricted to overtly "religious" texts—that is, texts of "instruction"—or do they also include texts of "entertainment" (in the sense that Pyper uses those terms[2]), such as *The Matrix*? Krause concludes her article by telling a story about a silencing of Internet "hate speech." This suggests that, although "Paul's" silencing of women is not acceptable, other kinds of silencing may be acceptable and perhaps even desirable. It appears that, after all, a set of unquestioned and authoritative values remains in place.

Tina Pippin castigates mercilessly the "craving for the monstrous" (99) expressed in the accepted reading of John 6, exploring its vampiric depths and placing her reading in tension with the canonical tradition. Pippin reads John's text far more "literally" than would so-called biblical literalists, and she shows us that the text is a "mysterious artefact" (quoting Pyper again). She is willing to play with John's Gospel in light of Bram Stoker's or Anne Rice's books and thus to break free from the Christian canon. Nevertheless, like Krause, she is apparently not so willing to play with her own very serious ethical commitments.

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2. A clergy friend of mine once took a side job as a nursing-home chaplain, leading weekly worship services for the shut-in patients. He was dismayed to receive his first paycheck and discover that his labors had been budgeted as "entertainment."

On what grounds does she assert that nonviolence is "the main ethical question" (98)? The contemporary fascination with vampires (in novels, film, and TV) is among other things an interrogation of the bourgeois ethics of the self and of violence. If we recycle the Bible but still talk as though there are ethical absolutes, then it seems that we have simply exchanged one canonical intertext for another.

Pippin's blood-sucking deity is mirrored in and perhaps even surpassed by James Smith's deconstruction of the God/devil opposition. Nevertheless, Smith's wry interrogations not only do not drive him away from Christianity but may even be what encourage him to remain within that tradition. He admits to being "embarrassed" by his tradition, but he has no wish to abandon it (139). Although Smith raises fundamental questions about autobiographical criticism, he leaves the biblical texts largely untouched. Indeed, it appears to be the autobiographical act itself that makes possible this strange result—that is, autobiography "saves" the Bible when all else fails. Like Nutu, Krause, and Pippin, Smith interrogates the canon but ultimately affirms either its authority or that of some substitute standard. To use Krause's term, the Bible remains "saleable" (25) for each of them.

The recycling of texts in each of these readings becomes a reappropriation of Christianity. Clearly, one benefit of the Christian canon (as I have frequently been reminded) is its power to generate such creative rereadings. The canonical solidity of the Bible is preserved, although now in a more personal mode, one that may stand in some tension to the Christian communities to which Krause, Nutu, Pippin, and Smith belong. Indeed, modern recycling of any text is inevitably personal and even selfish, but even the most idiosyncratic reader always reads herself in relation to, or in tension with, a community, and thus an ideology of some sort. Perhaps Pippin would argue that she reads John 6 as she does because the canonical, Christian reading is still powerfully aligned with a dominant and oppressive ideology, and I do not disagree with that. But this alignment is at least partly a consequence of continuing to read the Gospel of John in precisely the way that she does!

I wonder if the hymn that Pippin cites, "Bread of Heaven," could also be read otherwise—perhaps even in the way that Pyper (in his younger days) read the metrical psalms, or as though it had been written by Lewis Carroll (to be recited, no doubt, by the Walrus). Andrew Wilson suggests such a transposition when he places the veneration of the Virgin Mary of his Catholic boys' school youth in tandem with the veneration of opera diva Maria Callas by gay men. Yet although Wilson's juxtaposition critically challenges the ideology that surrounds the "BVM," and especially John 19:25, it does so again from within Christianity. In other words, despite (or perhaps because of) Wilson's Kristevan analysis, Callas as Mary seems no less or more problematic or objectionable than Neo as Christ (but then, I'm not Catholic).

These readings challenge biblical texts, or even the canon, but ultimately they affirm the Bible's power. In contrast, what if one were to invert Nutu's approach and reread biblical texts in light of *The Matrix,* to "reverse the hermeneutical flow," as Larry Kreitzer (2002) says? What if we were to think of the canon of scriptures itself as a "matrix" that traps its readers in shared Christian illusions? Perhaps Nutu would say that it is easy for me, a product of capitalist-Christian-middle-class America, to propose such a counter-reading and that the biblical canon was not the control matrix of the world that produced her. It is true that my own heritage makes me sympathetic to the concept of hyperreality. However, if Nutu's "neo" can also be Aichele's "matrix," what does that imply?

Indeed, *The Matrix* itself does not push this thought far enough, and one disappointment of the movie was that in the end it simply replaces one notion of reality with another. The film (and its sequels) fail to explore sufficiently the concept of the simulacrum (the copy without an original, or "precession of the model" [Baudrillard 1994:16]). In the last analysis, the film's main character, Neo, is quite "real" (in the fictional world of the movie), as is the message that he brings to a humanity that has "really" been enslaved by intelligent machines. A better cinematic example of the simulacrum[3] appears in David Cronenberg's film *eXistenZ,* where the heroes do not win and "faith in the Real" (Nutu: 83) is utterly demolished by the film's end. When reality itself has become simulation—not merely hypertext but hyperreal—then the "god of the simulacrum" is the only god there can be (not really, of course, but hyperreally!).

Conversely, when reality itself dissolves, then there are no longer any canons. The biblical canon has indeed begun to fail in the modern world, and, as a result, the recycling of biblical texts is spinning out of control. This failure is not yet complete, and the canon continues to exert substantial influence on the way that the Bible is read by both Christians and non-Christians. Nevertheless, as the authority of the canon as a whole slips away further with each passing year, the many texts that once were thought to "speak" together are increasingly seen to transmit many different messages, in many different ways. Readers discover other intertextual mechanisms that also recycle the Bible's texts, sometimes in quite different ways. This leads to rather different forms of recycling.

Pyper's invitation to play with the "rules of language," and his enjoyment of the "resonant incomprehensibility" (146) of text that he discovered in childhood encounters with the metrical psalms (among other writings), suggests a recycling strategy that breaks free from the canon, not simply to be reabsorbed by another

3. Baudrillard is indebted to Deleuze 1990. On the simulacrum and "the primacy of the 'neo,'" see Jameson 1991:18.

canon, but free in a world without canons. Similarly, Roland Boer's reading of "alcoholic" Bible texts pursues linguistic and textual play with a vengeance even as it questions the ideological function of the autobiographical impulse that accompanies (more or less) every recycling—the same impulse that allows Krause, Nutu, Pippin, Wilson, and Smith to remain "within" the (or a) canon.

Fiona Black sets the Song of Songs over against stories by Jeanette Winterson, and mixing in some of her own "ghostwriting," she suggests tensions in the (lack of) name, the gaze, and the body in the Song between "She" and "Solomon." Black also critiques autobiographical approaches along lines similar to Boer and Smith. Black suggests that her ghostwriting of the story of David's twelve daughters, like Philip Davies's "virtual letters" from the Bible (2004), "might be a useful compromise between what are the problems and risks of the first trend of autobiographical work and the natural shifts that occur in the attempts to represent the self" (166). However, while I find the conjunctions between the various stories by Winterson and Black and the Song of Songs in Black's article illuminating, even a fictional "I" has largely disappeared from her essay. To be sure, every story is autobiography, and every autobiography is fiction, but if fiction has entirely swallowed the self, then is there any value or use remaining in the category of "autobiography"?

For such readings, authenticity is a fiction, as is the individual itself. As Chuck Barris's bizarre "unauthorized autobiography" reminds us, it is more important for the life story of the self to be interesting (entertaining) than it is for it to be truthful (instructive). Once again we encounter the simulacrum, only now in the thought that every "personal voice" is a copy without origin. As Boer says, "the autobiographical … voice is that which constructs the 'I' in a particular way" (61). Like textual recycling, autobiography plays out in different ways: ways that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari categorize as "paranoid" and "schizophrenic." Both tendencies appear in any autobiography, to greater or lesser degree. Autobiography may reinforce the security and integrity of the (re)territorialized self. Not unlike the biblical canon, this paranoid tendency identifies the accepted boundaries of the "full body" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983:281). Boer seems to see this as the only option.

However, autobiography may also disassemble or deterritorialize the self, breaking it into inconsistent fragments, molecular partialities, the "body without organs" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983:8), and returning the self to the frothy flow from which it had been decanted, to borrow Boer's metaphors. The schizophrenic type of autobiography is less common than the paranoid type, but it too appears in Boer's own choice of an "alcoholic vein" (64). Indeed, although the two types of autobiography are distinct, they may sometimes seem quite similar. In this volume, I find some curious convergences—for example, between Pippin's vampire deity, Boer's drunken God, and Smith's divine "other," or the

appearance of Lewis Carroll in the articles by Pyper and Nutu, or even the childhood recollections of Wilson, Smith, and Pyper.

Once they escape from the tight rein of canonical control, formerly canonical texts find themselves in strange, "unauthorized," schizophrenic alignments with a wide array of noncanonical texts, resulting in "unexpected juxtapositions and unlikely meanings" (Pyper: 145). The textual body of the Bible is shattered, recontextualized, and reassembled, and its referential functions are suspended, split, or played out in a wide variety of ways. The "eclectic" blending and weaving of stories from various sources that Nutu finds (and seems to disapprove of) in *The Matrix* and that Pippin, Wilson, Black and others celebrate become widespread in narratives that range from *Finnegan's Wake* to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (blood-sucking can be funny!) and far beyond. The mythic traditions, biblical or otherwise, are no longer respected, and genres shift (for example, from instruction to entertainment). Thoughtful Christians such as Pippin may be revolted by John's eucharistic language, but latter-day "Goths" will not be.

The mechanism of canon has never worked very well, and I do not want to overstate the opposition between canonical and postcanonical readings. The biblical canon remains active today within the discourse of both believers and nonbelievers, but primarily as a totem or talisman, an increasingly empty gesture. It has become an icon of religiosity, a sign in its own right, apart from the texts that it contains and controls. Its value as a catalog of scriptures is coming to an end. Increasingly, the biblical texts must sink or float on their own in the secular, cultural currents of our times, just as noncanonical texts always have. The Bible has become hyperreal, and it can only simulate a canon. Like everything else in contemporary culture, the Bible has become virtual: a copy without an original, a map without a territory (Baudrillard 1994:123).

As the world becomes increasingly postcanonical, we need more attention to postcanonical recyclings of the Bible. Among other things, postcanonical readings might lead us to rethink salvation as not exclusively "spiritual," as Christian dogma and the canonical matrix would have it, but as "political," to use Nutu's terms—or in terms implied by *The Matrix,* as not merely mental but also material. This rereading of the Bible would not simply reverse the values of the mind/body opposition, but it would deconstruct that binarism and the Christian concept of salvation that accompanies it. Like angels and devils (so Smith), heaven and the gods must be embodied, and that is why they may be shared, and that may be where Marxism can still come into play, as both Nutu and Boer variously hint. Perhaps such postcanonical recyclings of biblical texts would provide not only instruction but also entertainment. Or must the stories that scholars tell always finally amount to instruction, never merely entertainment? Smith's article, like Boer's, is immensely entertaining, but he too does not fail to instruct, even as he complains about his failure to do so.

These remarks of mine are mostly unautobiographical. This is partly due to personal inclinations (like Black's) that generally find public confessions more boring than interesting, and partly because I share Black's, Boer's, and Smith's reservations about the false authenticity that often (perhaps inevitably) surrounds autobiographical statements. However, I readily grant that my own readings of the essays in this volume are thoroughly entwined in the particular web of intertextuality that "I" am (performance, construct, simulacrum), even as I doubt that I am significantly different from—or any more real than—the other I's that appear in or are hidden behind these essays. Yet even though I have my suspicions, I dare not confront the storyteller about this—for although she may turn out to be quite sincere, even she cannot finally know whether she speaks the truth.

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