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Editorial

The shock of the new, of an imagined future, or of horror as put forth in fiction *du genre,* evokes feeling and may intensify thought. In the aftermath of the enacted terror of 11 September 2001 Auden's poem '1st September 1939' was read on American national radio. Political leaders articulated a sense of threat – to civilization, to the western way of life, to democracy. The enemy to be affronted was Evil. Francis Fukuyama, the prophet of the end of cold war history, spoke again, and John Rawls, philosopher of liberalism, restated his case for a balance of conflicting claims under an impartial state.[1] Islam has been examined for evidence of *a priori* militancy, and Christians have been reminded of the excesses of the Crusades.

But what is to done for a world in which a fanatical individual with the outlook and training supplied by al-Quaeda, or who is resourced to produce anthrax spores, or has the skill to develop a virulent computer virus, can trigger immense catastrophe?

There's doubt whether democratic liberalism is sufficient for these things. Past successes notwithstanding, the need is being expressed for a bigger idea. Individual freedom is no longer the dominant issue, and the sense of injustice rooted in deprivation calls for a promise larger and more compelling than Socialism's. It may be the moment for a post-liberal big idea – or the discovery of latency in truth already revealed.

Elizabeth Jennings (b. 1926) died on 26 October 2001. Some of her poems were included by Robert Conquest in *New Lines* (1956) and so she ranked as a Movement poet, her Catholic faith notwithstanding. A collection, *The Mind Has Mountains,* appeared in 1966, and *Collected Poems* in 1967 and 1987. *Timely Issues* (2001) was her last volume. Here is an earlier poem, 'Answers'.

> I kept my answers small and kept them near;
> Big questions bruised my mind but still I let
> Small answers be a bulwark to my fear.
>
> The huge abstractions I kept from the light;
> Small things I handled and caressed and loved.
> I let the stars assume the whole of night.
>
> But the big answers clamoured to be moved
> Into my life. Their great audacity
> Shouted to be acknowledged and believed.
>
> Even when all small answers build up to
> Protection of my spirit, still I hear
> Big answers striving for their overthrow
>
> And all the great conclusions coming near.

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[1] *Justice and Fairness: A Restatement,* Harvard, 2001.

‘The Collapsing Canary’ – the Novelist and the Approaching End: Apocalyptic Imagination in William Golding and Flannery O’Connor

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A paper delivered at the CLSG conference, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 27 November 1999

Lois Zamora notes in *The Apocalyptic Vision* that ‘as the Year 2000 approaches and we become accustomed to thinking of crisis in global terms, references to apocalypse seem to be increasing steadily.’[1] As individuals we are constantly reminded of the significance of living on the point of change between times, and also warned to stay calm in the face of the impending terrors of the end. The apocalyptic novel exerts a morbid fascination for us as a fiction which

> teeters between the conviction that moral confusion and social chaos have progressed beyond the point of return, and the hope that it is not too late after all.[2]

I adopt a series of questions posed by Matty, William Golding’s saint/holy fool in *Darkness Visible* as an approach to apocalyptic fictions. Writing in a journal, characterised by literal-minded and naive expectations of the confirmation of his visions of the end time, he cries, ‘Who am I? What am I? What am I for?’ I offer some suggestions over the writer’s ‘Who am I?’ in relation to the mode, and consider the ‘What am I? What am I for?’[3] of the text, by looking at the use of the apocalyptic imagination in the work of William Golding and Flannery O’Connor.

The adoption of the apocalyptic mode may be used as a stratagem to bring a sense of coherence to narrative events; to suggest connections between the fiction and the division of history into significant epochs; to utilise typical patterns of decline and renewal, or to make connections between end and endings. We need to consider whether such novels are merely a reflection of the psychological partnership between reader and writer in making sense of our world, and following Kermode, as critics, to ‘make sense of the way we try to make sense of our lives’.[4]

Writing in the apocalyptic vein allows the novelist to suggest a larger order and significance for events. By adding a sense of purpose to linear time such fictions bolster our sense of living in a time of crisis which escapes chaos through its perceived cosmic significance, and for which there may be a final resolution – in doom if not in Millennial hope. They suggest that as people in the ‘middest’ (Kermode’s term) we are ‘related to a beginning and an end’ as we ‘make little images of moments which have seemed like ends; we thrive on epochs’ (*Sense of an Ending*, p. 7). Socially and economically, we too live in a culture which also intends to thrive on epochs (year end, century end, millennium end) and which will commercially generate a heightened sense of an ending to do so.

The need to escape from the randomness of life into the order of fiction can be seen as a writerly preoccupation, rather than simply a concern of the

apocalyptist. In his travelogue, *An Egyptian Journal*, Golding expresses this impulse to fictionalize, suggesting that it is as true of the historian or chronicler as the novelist: 'I sat in my bunk, therefore, and tried to bring some order into this at least partly crazy world' (p. 139). One of the frustrations of the journal comes from his perception of the shapelessness of 'real life' as opposed to fiction. We note how this comment in life reappears in his novels, particularly in Talbot's metafictional comments on the randomness of his journal in *Rites of Passage*.

Zamora notes the way recorded history exhibits apocalyptic patterns of crisis, judgement and renewal. The connection between 'historic disclosure' and 'narrative closure' may create a tension within the text between the end of textual time and the coming of the promised end, as the writer literally writes against time to reach disclosure and textual closure at the same point. In some novels, as in Golding's *The Paper Men,* closure comes before disclosure, setting up a structural irony which deflects back into the text. Is it only with the promise of future apocalypse, in the last text of the Canon, the Book of Revelation, that history and ending will completely coincide, and the significance of the whole plot of incarnational history become clear? But, conversely, the new beginning to supersede all new beginnings remains out of reach, and the text veils more than it reveals.

We find this tension between time and endings in Golding's fiction, not only in his earlier 'gimmick' endings where disclosure affects our understanding of elapsed narrative time, but also within his apparently realist historical fictions. *Fire Down Below* closes with a sequence which echoes apocalyptic patterns, as one stereotypical moment of potential closure is in turn overtaken by the next – the end of the voyage (p. 259),[5] the destruction of the ship in fire and explosion (p. 280), the arrival of the 'Fair Object of my Passion' (p. 284), their marriage (p. 310), these are finally replaced by a dream which undermines the confirmation of the apparent assumptions of coherence in narrative and voyage.

Kermode considers that 'literary plots' will mimic a different apocalyptic pattern – that of disappointment over the failure of the predicted end, quickly followed by readjustment and the emergence of a new and different end fiction. Such

> peripeteia depends on our confidence of the end: it is a disconfirmation followed by a consonance; the interest of having our expectations falsified is obviously related to our wish to reach the discovery or recognition by an unexpected route *(Sense of an Ending*, p. 18).

Golding adopts this technique in delaying expected ends in his fiction. But Matty's account in his journal of the disconfirmations of his expectations over the date 6/6/66, quickly replaced by a new belief in the judgement still to come, and his own place at the centre of things (*Darkness Visible*, p. 89–90), is also a deeply ironic comment on the processes of naive apocalyptism. Our final understanding of Matty as a prophetic visionary remains ambivalent, for the interpretation of his end as redemptive, comes only through the eyes of the pederast Pedigree.

Fiction attempts a coherence that events lack, and the use of apocalyptic devices is one strategy for creating a significant end. To see history as the unveiling of a controlling purpose suggests the existence of a quasi-religious ideological structure in the text, as its organisation suggests the concept of the End to which all endings point. In Kermode's words, 'The End is a fact of life and

a fact of the imagination' (*Sense of an Ending*, p. 58). In this respect, I suggest O'Connor's use of the apocalyptic imagination differs from Golding's in that the ends – for protagonists and texts, however monstrous – act as an ending, which encapsulates the End. In *The Violent Bear it Away,* Tarwater walks into the gathering night, consumed by a hunger that 'nothing on earth would fill' (p. 241).[6] He is burdened by his calling as a prophet, one of 'a line of men whose lives had been chosen to sustain it' (p. 242). O'Connor makes it clear that the context for his passing through the Terrors and reaching the beginning of grace is within an extreme Southern prophetic tradition of destruction, judgement and violence.

Does this apocalyptic vision come primarily from O'Connor's need to make a prophetic statement about her culture? Her fiction may be described as dramatised spiritual judgement, which functions as the precursor to the hope of individual renewal. On the other hand, although *Darkness Visible* is Golding's most noticeably apocalyptic novel, warnings of the decline and disintegration of the individual and society make a consistent theme in his work. But these are only two aspects of the answer to the 'who am I' and the 'what am I for?' of the novelist who uses the apocalyptic.

My title is derived from Walker Percy's 'Notes for a Novel About the End of the World'.[7] He asserts the purpose of the novelist in this context, is to write 'about the coming end in order to warn about present ills and so avert the end' (p. 101). But Percy does not consider this as a prophetic role. Instead

> the Novelist is less like a prophet than he is like the canary coal miners used to take down the shaft to test the air. When the canary gets unhappy, utters plaintive cries, and collapses, it may be time for the miners to surface and think things over (p.101).

Instead, he emphasises the novelist's 'insight' – able to read the runes and express 'his profound disquiet' in his work. But as Percy admits, since 'true prophets are in short supply, the novelist may perform a quasi prophetic function' (p. 104).

Zamora draws a distinction between the apocalyptist and the prophet, which may not be as firm as it seems:

> The prophet sees the future as arising out of the past … the apocalyptist on the contrary, sees the future breaking into the present (Zamora, p. 14).

In other words, the prophet focuses primarily on judgement, the apocalyptist on the birth pangs of millennial renewal. I suggest one of the distinctions between Golding and O'Connor in their use of apocalypse arises from these two complementary impulses.

Apocalypse, in Golding's work, comes from his 'disquiet'. In Percy's words, it serves to express his 'divergence from the usual views of denizens of the secular city in general, and in particular, from the new theologians of the secular city' (p. 104). In Golding's essay, 'Rough Magic', the 'better thing', which takes the novelist 'out of the run of the mill', is the quality of perception Golding names 'a passionate insight.'[8] Although we must be suspicious of the extent to which authorial intentions have any relevance to the text itself, Golding's portrait of Greenfield in *Darkness Visible* as an England in little, is contextualised by a conviction of contemporary society's being weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Conversely, the central impulse in O'Connor's work is the movement from spiritualised judgement to those moments of special revelation: the 'mystery' which breaks violently in her everyday Southern world of 'manners'. She believes:

> The fiction writer presents mystery through manners, grace through nature, but when he finishes there has always to be left over that sense of mystery which cannot be accounted for by any human formula.[9]

May, in *Toward a New Earth*, considers the use of the apocalyptic in her work is 'a response to cultural crises. It grows out of that sense of loss that results from the passing of an old world view.'[10] However, O'Connor's use of the mode may be primarily to challenge what she saw as the dominant humanist world view, epitomised in her presentation of the intellectual – Rayber in *The Violent Bear it Away* , or Sheppard in 'The Lame Shall Enter First' – against a background of devalued religious experience. As such, apocalyse denotes the incarnational principle of God breaking into human life; of the Kingdom coming by force. Here I note that May's discussion of the title of *The Violent Bear it Away* is derived from the Douai translation of Matthew 11:12, 'From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away'. Seen in this light, the Tarwaters are the 'mad fanatics carrying away the kingdom from its lukewarm heirs' (May, p. 141).

The term apocalyptic is often used non-specifically of any prophetic novel – utopian or dystopian – to indicate it has a certain visionary dimension. The text will incorporate many of the core strands of apocalyptic literature including patterns of disintegration and entropy, threats of imminent destruction, personal or social, use of numerology and typology, and the suggestion of a level of veiled reference to wider events. It will be constructed around these patterns of crisis and calamity, judgement and renewal, applied literally and figuratively to a society, or to a personal end. It may be limited to the process of disintegration without renewal. It may also demonstrate an elaborate structure of symbolic patterning contained within the linear sequence of narrative expectations, disconfirmation, and subsequent readjustment. As a text it will articulate its own significance, or suggest its mythic status, by either embodying a particular ideology, or more simply by its attempt to order our perceptions of our world.

We see the apocalyptic influence on Golding's early fiction, from the beginning of *Lord of the Flies* in nuclear war to its final closure with the ambivalent rescue by the naval officer. Equally, in *The Spire* and *Pincher Martin*, he presents the individual's end as personal apocalypse. *Darkness Visible* begins where *Lord of the Flies* finishes, with a scene of conflagration, 'the melted end of the world' (p. 13). In *Lord of the Flies* the conflagration is dystopian, located outside history, signalling the end of prelapsarian hope. In *Darkness Visible* the social and moral critique of sixties and seventies society is subsumed within a prophetic and visionary analysis of the nature of good and evil. To see the novel only as a condition of England novel, with social decline prophesying a 'promised end' fails to do justice to the poetic density of the text and its passages of heightened perception, visionary or grotesque.

Is *Darkness Visible* then an apocalyptic novel in its own right, or does it mainly use Matty's visionary experiences as a critique of the trope? These questions may be answered by assessing how far the text's apocalyptic concerns are derived from Matty (in which case *Darkness Visible* will function mainly as a critique), and how

far these are the concerns of the whole text. In order to argue for a reading of *Darkness Visible* as an apocalyptic novel, we must consider how the text engages with and uses some of the characteristics defined above through its allusive subtext, its sense of impending crisis, and its imagery of disintegration, destruction and renewal.

The opening of *Darkness Visible* is both located very precisely in time and place, and yet by implication, in a timeless and universal moment of disintegration. Golding takes advantage of the sense of impending doom at this point in the Second World War, to provide the text's apocalyptic terrors – the 'great fire', 'out of control', the men who have gone beyond 'saying how scared they were' (p. 11). There is the chaos, the disintegration as 'the very substance of the world … was melting and burning' (p. 11). War provides Golding with both narrative setting, and a powerful eschatological metaphor of judgement.[11]

Grand Narrative

But this is only the opening of the novel, and Golding moves from one apocalypse to another through his notion of entropy – the personal and social disintegration of post war society. But the final end is Matty's personal end, not that of society, for all Golding's foreboding and foregrounding of social collapse. There is no suggestion of an ending in a social sense, and this is part of the novel's own disconfirmation of the prophetic utterance. In a fragmented post-war world, Golding locates apocalypse in the personal, not the cultural and political, just as notions of salvation/redemption in his texts cannot be located socially.

The apocalyptic dimension to events in *Darkness Visible* is almost too overtly signalled by the novel's allusive network, largely based on the use of the Book of Revelation as a master discourse,[12] and therefore implying a level of prophetic significance. In the opening apocalypse we note the description of the holy/unholy city, the many references to fire and the implications of divine judgement related to society. But in contrast, as the inter textual references in the final chapters again point to the Book of Revelation, the allusions are primarily personal – to Sophy, as the 'woman in the Apocalypse' (*Darkness Visible*, p. 236), to Matty as the great and stern figure 'gold as the fire' (*Darkness Visible*, p. 265).

This allusive structure is extended by imagery of destruction and judgement. Kermode notes that earthquake, fire and flood are recurring figures in this trope, and Golding's symbolic use of fire, water and storm is evident throughout his work.[13] In *Darkness Visible*, the fire imagery is heightened, becoming conflagration and immolation, extending the range of potential reference from judgement (Sodom and Gomorrah), to cleansing (religious sacrifice), and not least, Matty's prophetic status in appearing out of a 'burning bush'.

The apocalyptic utterance is also distinguished by its reliance on elaborate patterning, and mystical numerology, and again, Golding utilises this in *Darkness Visible*. Matty's journal shows his overriding preoccupation with significant numbers, thus articulating his naive expectations of impending apocalypse. But the wider text has parodic echoes of this numerology, particularly in its foregrounding of seven as a mystical number (with Matty's name), and his Trinitarian interaction between the one (two single sections followed by 'one is one') and the three as a whole. I suggest this creates a tension between the serious mood of imminent catastrophe, and general foreboding, and the games with numbers, which draw attention to themselves, allowing Golding both to present

Darkness Visible as a modern apocalypse, and to examine the simplistic assumptions common to it as a trope. In the same way, the textual patterning is highly overt – the two sisters, the two halves of Matty's face, the contrasting experiences of the 'other' in Matty and Sophy, and the opening and closing conflagrations subsumed into sacrificial fire. *Darkness Visible* may be Golding's modern eschatology, but its self-conscious presentation is both mode and critique.

As we examine the concept of 'naive apocalyptism' which 'projects its neat, naive patterns on history' *(*Kermode's definition in *Sense of an Ending*, p. 16) in *Darkness Visible*, we see the novel as Golding's ironic examination of the prophetic text. A key characteristic is the lack of concern over any 'disconfirmation'– if the prophetic message appears to fail, it is reinterpreted, spiritualised and re-ordered. Golding exposes this process through Matty's journal entries. The promised judgement does not materialise, but Matty convinces himself of his relief that more time has been given for repentance, (p. 93). His enacted parables of judgement are also part of the related need for a satisfying and mythic explanation of the contingent. Both Sophy and Matty have the same need for consonance. With Matty it is in order to answer 'what am I for?' and with Sophy, it is to find an ending to purposelessness through outrage. Both relate to the kidnapping of the child as part of a preordained plan, in Matty's case for salvation, in Sophy's for destruction.

But Golding does not allow any sense of prophetic fulfilment for either perspective. The answer to Matty's question is left uncertain – the child may or may not be of cosmic significance. Matty's apotheosis is undercut by its presentation as part of Pedigree's dying vision. Sophy's outrage is subverted; she is only a pawn for terrorist activity. Matty's prophetic parables of judgement through holocaust are not confirmed by anything other than a personal apocalypse. Clearly there are two impulses at work here. The apocalyptic vein adds a strand of universal significance to an otherwise fairly lightweight plot, suggesting an underlying and supporting 'grand narrative'. It gives the novel a system of impression points, suggesting and directing its double level meaning. By locating them in a controlling metaphoric structure, Golding provides a point of reference for the text's own prophetic judgement. It suggests a level of coherence, the possibility of a totalising reading.

But the text also acts as an oblique discussion of the novelistic as well as prophetic desire for consonance, for the writer's need to construct explanatory myths. Golding appears to be driven by the need for such explanations, and yet to recognise that

> in the second half of the Twentieth century one has no surety, no safe solid ground on which to stand: one has to drag out of one's own entrails some kind of validity.[14]

However much we question this intentionality, his texts struggle with the need both to question the nature of such myths, and attempt to create them.
With *Rites of Passage*, Golding's apocalyptic impulse is less overt. The 'Sea Trilogy' is set on the cusp of historical, geographical and cultural change: from the Enlightenment to Romanticism, from sail to steam, from war to peace, from old world to new. The terrors of the ice cliff must precede the transition to the new world. The narrative structure of the novels around an emblematic voyage mirrors apocalyptic patterns of decline and disintegration (of the ship as a microcosm of

society, and of personal disintegration in Zenobia or Colley). In this context it is unsurprising that the physical world mirrors the historical and cultural drama, and the Trilogy has its share of millennial signs and wonders. Colley describes one such in his journal:

> What I saw as I stood, petrified as it were, will be stamped on my mind until my dying day. . . . On her right hand the red sun was setting and on her left the full moon was rising, the one directly across from the other.[15]

The voyage moves to an end as the texts move toward an end time, first in ice, then in fire.

In Flannery O'Connor's novels the apocalyptic is expressed within personal crisis. Her protagonists demonstrate, as Coles notes, 'a given centuries version of the continuing struggle between those who recognise and fear God, and those who have turned their backs on him in favour of themselves.[16] O'Connor explains her calculated distortions as 'returning my characters to reality, and preparing them to accept their moment of grace. Their heads are so hard that nothing else will do.'[17] Clearly, O'Connor, as a Southern Catholic writes from a different conviction of the metaphysical, and from a concomitant spiritual didacticism. The apocalyptic is connected to the way she uses the comic and the violent to give an underlying coherence to narrative development, allowing personal apocalypse to become an ending which reflects the End. We will not like the way judgement and renewal occurs, but we will not forget it, for, as in parable, she uses 'large and startling figures' to make her 'vision appear by shock'.[18]

The Need for Grace

The Violent Bear it Away is one of her two novels, but as Hermione Lee notes in the preface to *Everything That Rises Must Converge*:

> Ultimately her plot is always the same: characters who are "freaks" because "they have no sacraments" – but whose cast of mind makes them particularly susceptible to ideas of salvation and damnation – are violently introduced to the possibility of grace.[19]

The apocalyptic tone of the novel is set by its pervasive imagery. Fire, water, hunger, the harsh Southern landscape itself, are used to underline the spiritual judgement. The 'Bible haunted' Southern setting which draws on traditions of self-confessed backwoods preachers and prophets is the context for her dramatisation of the operation of grace in the individual. Tarwater, like Matty is called to be a prophet, but the development of the novel is centred around his battle between his great-uncle's conviction that he has been 'born again' not once but three times, because 'the Lord meant him to be trained for a prophet' (p. 41), and his own determination to 'pull it up by the roots' (p. 196). Tarwater as a boy may not see any burning bush, 'it had not done it yet' (p. 41), but the novel ends with the 'red gold tree of fire' (p. 242) he has ignited in the woods to cleanse the place of his violation. He has burned Mason's shack to get rid of the old man; but he walks into his future with the 'singed eyes' of the prophet.

Interwoven with the imagery of fire is that of water and baptism, and we note the connections, through the common Biblical imagery, between Tarwater and Matty's unexplained and mysterious baptismal experience in the Australian bush.

Baptism is central to O'Connor's theme of grace, as Mason tricks Rayber to baptize Tarwater as a baby, as the 'prophet to take your place' (p. 72). Tarwater in his turn, at the moment of drowning Rayber's 'idiot' son Bishop, finds the words of baptism 'come out of themselves … just some words that run out of my mouth and spilled into the water' (p. 209). As O'Connor implies, if the sacrament of baptism is real and effective then it cannot be an empty act, part of a devalued religious framework, but the point at which grace breaks into the individual life.

Tarwater accepts his 'appalling destiny', seen in 'his own stricken image of himself, trudging into the distance in the bleeding, stinking, mad shadow of Jesus, until at last he received his reward, a broken fish, a multiplied loaf' (p. 91). But the point at which he accepts the inevitable is after his own experience of evil through homosexual rape. Again in an image of hunger, his later hunger is then 'so great that he could have eaten all the loaves and fishes after they were multiplied' (p. 241).

Powerful as the novel is, O'Connor's short stories are her most compelling form. There are no extraneous details and the narrative driving force does not flag. The enigmatic effect of their unexplained presentation of character and events, their use of everyday Southern life, and the clear sense of both hiding and embodying a further level of meaning, has much in common with parable. Inevitably, there are the heightened effects appropriate to concentrating the weighty concerns of *The Violent Bear It Away* into a small-scale model.

An initial comparison of 'The Lame Shall Enter First' highlights the striking similarities to *Darkness Visible,* and *The Violent Bear it Away*. All three texts utilise the notion of 'convergence', of the coming together of characters in a preordained sequence of events, as 'realism' is subordinated to a hidden apocalyptic discourse.

The three main characters in the short story, Sheppard, Bishop and Johnson, a re-presentation of the three main characters in *The Violent Bear It Away*, are inevitably drawn together in a disturbing interaction, but remain alone. (In O'Connor this may be representative of the failure of community in a specifically Christian sense.) Again, we can see how the notion of convergence has resonance with that of Golding. The narrative structure of *Darkness Visible* draws together Matty, Sophy and Pedigree, but as the final section shows, 'One is one and all alone'. O'Connor defines good through the intensely focused concentration on its opposite, evil: Golding is deeply concerned with 'original sin'. But both writers share a common view of the disturbing nature of goodness. O'Connor considers that:

> Few have stared at that (the good) long enough to accept the fact that its face too is grotesque, that the good is something under construction. The modes of evil usually receive writing expression. The modes of good have to be satisfied with a cliché or a smoothing down that will soften their real look.[20]

In 'The Lame Shall Enter First', Sheppard must ultimately confront his own spiritual blindness. He 'may be good, but ain't right' *(Everything That Rises Must Converge,* p. 189). Obvious reactions to the normal perceptions of good and bad are overturned. The locus for the moral challenge in the story is Johnson, whose lame foot, ' a black and deformed mass' (p. 173), also epitomises his interior darkness; 'the black caverns of his psyche' (p. 199) in Sheppard's terms, but his soul in O'Connor's. There is an interesting contrast with Matty here. Both protagonists are physically deformed; both shock and repel the reader, both challenge perceptions of good and evil but from opposite positions. Paradoxically, it is Johnson's malign influence which gives Sheppard's son Nelson a spiritual understanding of his mother's death, denied

him by his rational father. Johnson's total conviction of the reality and spiritual consequences of behaviour make him closer to 'salvation' than Sheppard:

> 'The lame shall enter first! The halt'll be gathered together. When I get ready to be saved Jesus'll save me not that lying stinking atheist …'*(Everything That Rises Must Converge*, p. 200).

In contrast, Sheppard has 'stuffed his own emptiness with good works like a glutton' (p. 200). O'Connor's point here appears to be that full blown evil may be more aware of its own nature and potentially more open to redemption than a half hearted materialism and rationalism.

Both Johnson and Matty's particular vision demand a literal approach to the Bible. (Johnson eats a page of his Bible to experience the 'sweetness' of its words[21]). But what is missing in 'The Lame Shall Enter First' is *Darkness Visible's* questioning of the value of words and Word, of parable, prophecy or literary text.

Both authors use similar traditions of visual imagery. *Darkness Visible* opens with the child Matty's miraculous appearance: a small figure dark against the burning light of a contemporary apocalypse. 'The Lame Shall Enter First' ends with Johnson being taken away from Sheppard, 'a small black figure on the threshold of some dark apocalypse' *(Everything That Rises Must Converge,* p. 206).

Both Golding and O'Connor create their narrative effects in similar ways, and both do so using the particular characteristics of the grotesque through the 'freaks', the distorted characters who stand for our 'essential displacement' *(Mystery and Manners*, p. 45). Both texts suggest an underlying inner coherence, in spite of the dislocations and lack of narrative guidance. But Golding's use of the grotesque never quite achieves the same sense of moral outrage, of values being overturned, as that of O'Connor. This in part comes from his more diffuse style, but also relates to the more exploratory nature of his later fiction and his less certain religious perspective: more ironic and ambivalent; less hopeful and assured. For O'Connor, the nature of the vision is never in doubt, and the apocalyptic answers the need for strategies to express her particular conviction of the need for grace and repentance in the face of spiritual blindness.

The use of the apocalyptic in Golding's fiction demonstrates his 'insight' within a tightly woven allusive network and through an ironic detachment toward the prophetic function itself. In contrast O'Connor's texts are constructed around the Southern prophetic figure, but also function within the tradition of prophetic writing, whether or not their use of the apocalyptic imagination connects or divides them, these are powerful novels which play on our need for a sense of a significant end which explains our own, and the texts', endings.

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1 Lois P. Zamora, *The Apocalyptic Vision: Historical Vision in Contemporary U.S, and Latin American Fiction*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.1.

2 Ibid., p. 127.

3 *Darkness Visible*, Faber, 1980, p. 101.

4 Kermode, Frank, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, OUP, 1967, p.3.

5 Faber, 1990.

6 New York, Noonday Press, 1976.

7 Walker Percy, *The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man Is, How Queer Language Is, and What One Has to Do with the Other,* New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975, p.101.

[8] *A Moving Target*, Faber, 1982, p. 143.
[9] Robert Fitzgerald, Introduction to *Everything that Rises Must Converge*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1956, p. 24.
[10] May, *Toward a New Earth: Apocalypse in the American Novel,* Indiana, Notre Dame University Press, 1972, p. 19.
[11] Golding also makes use of the perception of war as a catalyst for social change to imply a kind of millennial hope.
[12] See particularly the final section of Matty's journal, pp. 235-240.
[13] See also Golding's apocalyptic use of fire and ice throughout the Sea Trilogy.
[14] John Haffenden, *Novelists in Interview,* Methuen, 1985, p.104.
[15] *Rites of Passage,* Faber, 1982, p. 233.
[16] Robert Coles, *Flannery O'Connor's South,* Athens, London, Brown Thrasher Books, 1993, p.144.
[17] Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners*, ed. by Robert and Sally Fitzgerald, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1957, p.112.
[18] Ibid., p. 34.
[19] Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1956.
[20] Quoted in Edward Kessler, *Flannery O'Connor and the Language of Apocalypse,* Princeton University Press, 1966, p. 95.
[21] There is a subsumed reference here to Ezekiel 3:3.

Who is my Neighbour?

Susan Glyn

I haven't got time . . .
to see you
read your article
read your book
get a job for your godson
find your mother a flat
get you off-the-hook.

Because I've *had* my time.
My time ran out.
I've been a has-been
since a while ago.
The high-ups just look through me.
But it mustn't get about.
You mustn't know.

I never did have time
for hangers-on and spongers,
people on my back;
people like you.
It took me all my time
to make it through;
paddle my own canoe.

But then there came a time
when I began to crack.
felt myself slipping;
went into free-fall.
I grabbed at anything
Trying to climb back.
– No hand held out at all.

Destiny

Susan Glyn

Like any soldier going into battle,
I made up my mind to it;
Death's all right if it's quick.
Might even be exciting;
(depends what you believe in).
Anyway an escape. From the grind,
the heat, the boredom. Life's all work.
And being kicked around.

It's awful being young. No wonder
people like me go off to wars.
Or jump off cliffs – but that's forbidden.
Better get dead in a good cause;
then they respect you.
'A noble sacrifice,' they say.
All right, I went!
Doesn't that count for something?

What a fool I felt when, after all,
it didn't happen and I'm still alive.
They called out, 'Back already, Isaac?'
You bet I never told anyone
I'd been in danger.
Just got on with milking the camels.
But I've been thinking, since. Was it some sign?
Is my life for something, which I can't see?

I suppose God knows His business.

Shandean Mirrors
Puzzles of the Master Analogy

Mary Douglas

A paper delivered at the CLSG conference, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 4 November 2000.

There is a kind of distorting mirror in which, seen from the door, the scale is normal, with all the familiar figure-to-ground effects. As you approach, the pattern changes. With every step into the room your own image becomes bloated, the ground shrinks, until finally the figure is all there is, but unrecognizable. Move away a little, or nearer, the image shudderingly corresponds. Which is the figure? Where's the background? Which is the real image? What is its reference? Which is the root, the base, the real source of the metaphor? Such questions are unanswerable, the mirror is like literature which jumps between analogies.

I am particularly interested in certain writings which are organized by a master analogy, a self-referential microcosm. The composition does not point to anything in the world beyond the text: it points to itself and in doing so, fills the whole screen. A work that has produced its master analogy has muddled the figure-to-ground relation, it has collapsed the relation of container to contained. As the distorting mirror dissolves perspective it dissolves all structures except its own. To say that the effect is disconcerting is too mild. It is thoroughly disorientating. To write coherently about how it is done is exceedingly difficult.

My interest comes from studying the Book of Leviticus. Its structure is modelled on the proportions of the desert tabernacle as prescribed in Exodus (chapters 25-7). The tabernacle in this literary role is the obvious master analogy.[1] It assimilates to itself all the other analogies in Leviticus. It is able to stand iconically for the whole book, and the whole Torah. Since it is a theological book, its ultimate reference is to God's commanding presence in the tabernacle and in the cosmos. The written analogy commandeers all the senses, everything is invoked: eyes and ears supplanted, the sanctuary building visible without being seen, hands and feet do not measure the spaces, the ears do not hear the service of the cult. I borrow from Alastair Fowler[2] his own borrowing from Shakespeare for reinforcing the same point:

> O learn to read what silent love hath writ,
> To heare with eies belongs to love's fine wit (Sonnet xxiii).

The bold enquirer who wants to hear with eyes and tries to read the message of silent love is plunged into Renaissance Neo-Platonism and poetic theory.[3] The discussion has entered neo-platonic grounds, where 'the world is God's poem, no mere metaphor: the book of God's words and the book of his works were parallel texts in the most literal sense'.[4]

The theme is daunting, but not too grand for the Book of Leviticus whose artistry demands just this severely disciplined but inexhaustible literary context.

The project raises deep philosophical issues about metaphor, image, reality, but I plan to dodge them by confining myself to two examples, one sacred and archaic – the rhetorical structure of Leviticus and Numbers – and one modern and secular, the structure of *Tristram Shandy*.

I follow Nelson Goodman in his argument that symbolizing does not make images of the world but organizes it.[5] The master analogy organizes the text into a microcosm. Instead of pointing outwards from the micro to the macro, this tabernacle image points in, to itself, autopoesis, total metonymy. At the same time, by encompassing everything, it organizes the whole world. Perhaps parable might be the right word, but it does not pick out the formal pattern of resemblances. The unity of the poem derives 'not from any single element or groups of elements, but from the formal design whereby all the elements are integrated into a coherent totality'.[6] But here again, formal design does not cover all of what I am talking about either. It is about the formal design of the whole, standing in parallel to its own topic.

Regional Diffusion or Universal Parallelism?

The tabernacle and the book are analogous, they lie in parallel. Is parallelism a natural form, as the repetition of melodies is natural in musical composition? Or is it always to be historically located as a specialized literary tradition, starting perhaps in India, or in Asia Minor, spreading to the Mediterranean hinterland?

Roman Jakobson taught that analogic organisation is hard-wired in the human capacity for grammar and thought.[7] Analogical construction in parallels and crossed-over patterns is latent in any compositional work, indeed in any speaking. This being so, one question is whether elaborate structuring can be unconscious? Or is it always a deliberate convention developed regionally upon a primitive structure of mind? I will take the anthropologist's part and argue, following Jakobson, that some form of parallelism is natural, and liable to spring up anywhere, and then I would add that, having appeared, it will inevitably be elaborated in local literary conventions. Benjamin Harshav[8] has found the same Biblical patterns of rhetoric current in contemporary yiddish writing and in English written by Jews. Certainly Semitic conventions of parallelism are distinctive, similar to the Greek, but not in all respects. The differences have not been closely studied.

Jakobson observed parallelism from his student days working on Russian oral traditions, and more widely throughout his life, as he extended his study to Common Slavic verse and later to Indo-European versification. He said 'I was particularly astonished to realize that this important point [parallel construction] seemed hardly to interest the specialists in Russian folklore.'[9] He described parallelism more broadly as,

> a system of steady correspondences in composition and order of elements on many different levels: syntactic constructions, grammatical forms and grammatical categories, lexical synonyms and total lexical identities, and finally combinations of sounds and prosodic schemes. This system confers upon the lines connected through parallelism both clear uniformity and great diversity. Against the background of the integral matrix, the effect of the variations of phonic, grammatical, and lexical forms and meanings appears particularly eloquent.

In the same chapter he quoted with approval Gerard Manley Hopkins, who wrote in 1865:

> The artificial part of poetry, perhaps we shall be right to say all artifice, reduces itself to the principle of parallelism. The structure of poetry is that of continuous parallelism, ranging from the technical so-called parallelism of Hebrew poetry and the antiphones of Church music up to the intricacy of Greek or Italian or English verse.[10]

And he makes reference to millennia-old Chinese poetry. Jakobson had surveyed the literature on parallelism among the peoples of the Ural-Atlantic area, where Finnish oral poetry offers the classic case. James Fox[11] has collected further evidence of it in compositions round the world. Not surprisingly the nineteenth century missionaries who had been trained on the Bible provide much of the evidence. In 1858 A. Hardeland reported that the 'spirit language' of the Dayak of Borneo was based on parallelism. Another missionary linguist, J. Sibree, made a similar report in Madagascar in 1880:

> … in the more formal Malagasy speeches the parts of every sentence are regularly balanced in construction, forming a kind of rhythm very closely resembling the parallelism of Hebrew poetry.

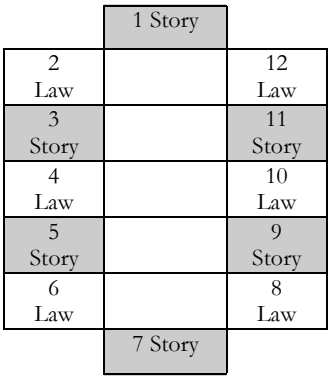
James Fox also briefly surveyed major collections of texts from the Austronesian peoples, central Rotinese, Celebes, the Hawaiian creation chant, the islands of eastern Indonesia – Papuan speakers in Timor and New Guinea. China also has a tradition of parallelism, shared in Vietnamese parallel poetry, and similar traditions exist among the Burmese and Thai. These widespread instances tend to uphold Jakobson's idea of a universal faculty of making analogical structures with parallelisms.

Before I knew anything of this background, I had been puzzling over the construction of Leviticus and Numbers. Each is a composition organized in parallelisms which cross-reference each other and embrace the whole work. That is, both books have a strong macro-compositional structure. The well-demarcated parallel pairs of text are arranged formally in symmetrical structures, with the end brought chiastically to match up to the beginning. So the books are in the same class of formal structures as Greek ring composition. In each case the internal structure is organised in a pattern of parallels, so it can be read across as well as linearly. As regards the organization of the text, the two books have in common the use of narrative sections as dividers. Knowing that this strong organizing principle has not been observed before, I have put much effort into the demonstration.[12]

Numbers' Formal Structure

By chance I happened to start with Numbers.[13] There I found a ring pattern whose distinct units of structure are arranged in alternation: clearly identifiable narrative sections alternate with equally distinctive legal sections. The book is divided into two symmetrical halves. As the composition goes on down one side of the ring, it comes to the halfway point, the mid-turn, and starts to go back to the beginning. Each narrative section has its match on the other side of the ring; the legal sections are also paired; even numbers are laws, odd numbers are narratives. It is a classic twelve-point ring, like those discussed in Homeric scholarship.[14] Like paragraphing or 'chapterization', the positioning of the twelve sections conforms to a clear organizing principle. Knowing it enables the book to

be read in the way it has been composed, synoptically, that is, across the ring instead of along its outline. But not surprisingly there is more to it than a clever literary conceit. Adopting a consistent organizing principle highlights a different set of emphases and brings out a different meaning.



The Book of Numbers as a Ring

It is important to note that the well-defined sections, which are the structural units for the Book of Numbers, are not equal to each other in bulk, unlike ring composition in Persian, Sanscrit and other poetry.[15] Through the twelve parts of the book the parallelism of the sections can be recognized because of obvious conventions for identifying the story and law sections respectively, and also by crude verbal repetitions.

The number twelve might have been chosen quite haphazardly for the units of structure. Twelveness has so many implications in the Pentateuch. A twelve-point rhetorical system suggests, perhaps too obviously, the twelve months of the year. At first, ready for anything, I thought the structure might be intended to appropriate the pagan zodiac for the religion of Israel,[16] but that interpretation is not supported anywhere in the text. The book commands the sacrifice of the new month/moon (28:11), but it says nothing about the stars so the zodiac has to be ruled out. Given the central theme of exalting the Aaronite priesthood, twelve might represent the twelve courses of the priestly families serving the altar according to the ritual calendar. But again, Numbers does not discuss their monthly relays of service, so this interpretation is also rejected.

I have proposed (controversially) that the twelve units of its structure refer to to the twelve sons of Jacob, who are conspicuously counted several times over in the course of the book, each census always resulting in twelve tribes. Admittedly none of the twelve tribes is clearly associated with any of the twelve literary sections. Conceivably, the twelve-part structure could imply all of them at once: the zodiac, the ritual calendar, the twelve tribes, but I have taken it as a political message.[17] On this showing the book is about the ideal solidarity of the sons of Israel in times when they were given to enmity and mutual exclusion. The result is that the work has got a structure, and it is governed by a master analogy, the twelve sons of Jacob, and the structure carries the meaning.

The experience with Numbers revealed a useful principle for identifying the

units of a ring composition. When the recitation or poem is very small, the simple verbal repetition is enough to indicate the structure. But for organizing a long text into parallel sections something more is needed. Defined sections have to be clearly marked to make it easy to recognize for each one which other section is its matching pair. The priest or poet is not going to leave it to chance, the listening audience expects some systematic form into which to pour its response. The latter-day enquirer can also be sure that the composer has used a simple formula to distinguish the units of structure. The Numbers example is a good demonstration. In order to make a structure of alternating narrative and law sections, it was first necessary to make clear when the sequence of narratives ended and the laws started. That provided an automatic principle to mark the switching from one to the other, so that law would be seen to match law and story to match story.

The principle that the poet can be expected to have organized an automatic switching system between structural units has great importance. It saves insoluble disputes on subjective 'semantic' criteria. One should expect any large-scale ring composition to have such markers. For example, the attention that Homer has paid to the change over from night to day in the Iliad is famous, but the rosy-fingered dawn is not just a beautiful image. At night certain activities take place, councils of war, collecting the dead and succouring the wounded, the day is for fighting; the story of the Iliad is organized through a chequerboard pattern of seven days and six nights. The switch from day to night and night to day is Homer's automatic marker for the separate parallel units for the ring structure. There is nothing subjective about it.[18]

Leviticus' Formal Structure

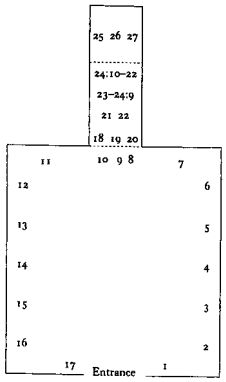
When I came later to study Leviticus I was still looking for similar alternating mechanisms but I could find no section markers at all. It has 27 chapters of laws, with only two stories. It seemed that it does not use the system of alternating story and law used in Numbers. The two stories, placed where they are in the text, divide the book into three unequal parts. After much puzzlement, it occurred to me that perhaps after all the story sections had a similar structuring role in this book as in Numbers, and that their placement deliberately divides the book into three unequal parts.

In effect, the two narratives are very punitive. The first, in Chapter 10, recounts how Aaron's two sons offered strange fire in the sanctuary and were killed for it; the second, Chapter 24, tells the story of the man who blasphemed against the name of God and was stoned to death for it. Poring over the resulting triple structure, and trying out the notion of a tripartite structure, I came to suspect that it could be a scale projection of the tabernacle's three parts. Working on the idea, I soon realized that the corresponding parts of the book describe the objects and actions which Exodus prescribed respectively for each of the three parts of the building. Thus, in the architectural design a screen divides the outer court from the sanctuary and a second screen divides the sanctuary from the Holy of Holies; while in the book the two screens on the ground plan (represented on the next page by dotted lines) are matched by the two narratives.

The outer court of sacrifice corresponds in architectural space to the largest ring structure of the book (Chapters 1-17). The diagram shows how this part of the text corresponds to the outer court, the part of the tabernacle to which the general public has access. Here the text describes the law of sacrifice and the laws

for a private person making an offering, so a semantic correspondence supports the correspondence between the construction of the book and the building: the text tells what would be happening in this bit of the building.

In the ground plan of the tabernacle, after the first screen we are looking at the holy place or sanctuary, which is reserved for the priests. Correspondingly, in the book's 'virtual sanctuary' which comes after the first narrative, the text again corresponds to the use of the building: this is where the duties and restrictions of priesthood are expounded.



After the second screen, the ground plan shows the very small space of the Holy of Holies, where lies the ark of the covenant, inside of which is deposited the testament itself, covered and protected. Correspondingly, after the second narrative, in the 'virtual Holy of Holies', the book's very short concluding section, Chapters 25-27, expounds the justice of God and the principles of his covenant, protected by terrible curses and honoured by amazing blessings. There is no need for a regular automatic switch between sections, as in the case of Numbers or the Iliad, because once it is seen as a projection of the tabernacle, the proportions of the sections of the book simply have to be scaled against those of the sacred building.

The upshot is that the book of Leviticus has one dominant structure, the book projects a micro-model of the tabernacle itself. But it is much richer than that, since the triple structure of the tabernacle traditionally projects a model of triply structured Mount Sinai: in both cases two sharp divisions divide the whole into three segments, ranked in ascending order of holiness. And the same tripartite pattern is carried through for living bodies: parallel rules govern what may be offered at the altar and what may be eaten by the mouth.[19] The living body, the altar, the tabernacle, the holy mountain, they all mirror the same structure at different levels. The result is an intermeshed microcosm of God's creation.

It may seem bold to say that the book, the mountain, the building and the living body, are projections of one another. Yet the parallel structures are described in the laws of holiness given to Moses on Sinai. The laws protect the tabernacle and the human body, images of one another, the structure of the book mirrors them all in the verbal medium. The laws for offerings for the altar are scale versions of the laws that govern what food may be eaten, the health of the body images the fertility of the land, and capping all the rings within rings is the idea of God's justice. Walking in his ways, keeping the covenant, ensures a happy and prosperous people. The interlocked analogies mesh all the laws of the book into the one grand design of the house of God, and parabolically, the grand design of the universe.

The Master Analogy

When I found that Leviticus is constructed on the proportions of the *mishkan*, the desert tabernacle, I thought I had stumbled on an antique genre. At this stage it seemed that I should be looking for other sacred texts constructed on the proportions of a sacred building. I never found one. Indian temples are constructed on the proportions of the human body, but that is not the same as a text modelled on the proportions of a temple.

I looked for more examples of texts projected on to physical space. The many poems constructed in what John Myres called 'pedimental composition'[20] do not fit the case because, though the formal structure of the writing corresponds to an architectural form, the concept of the pediment finds not even an echo in the subject matter of the text it organizes. No other Biblical prose or verse constructed on the design of a particular building has come to light. It is true that in Proverbs 1:9 Lady Wisdom built for herself a house with seven columns (or stanzas), but that text is fragmentary and impaired.[21] Frances Yates described the rhetorical training in Cicero's day according to which a speech was prepared by imagining a specific building and mentally associating the different parts of the speech with movement through the architectural space and out again by the same porch.[22] George Herbert's 17th century poem, 'The Temple', is a close example, but too derivative and modern.

Easter-Wings

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poor:
With thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did begin:
And still with sicknesses and shame
Thou didst so punish sin,
That I became
Most thin
With thee
Let me combine,
And feel this day thy victory:
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

George Herbert, *The Temple*, 1633, 'Easter-Wings'.

So I was despondent. The identification of an antique sacred book organized upon the design of a sacred place seemed to be weakened for lack of other instances.

It was in preparing this paper that I realized that I had been looking for confirmation by focusing too narrowly the house/text parallel. When I came to our meeting, I found that literary criticism had prepared the field better, with

whole libraries about symbols that stand for themselves. All I needed to do was to place Leviticus within the class of books that have been organized by a master design which itself stands for the content. The Greek Bucolic tradition gives good examples: the syllables, words and lines are trimmed and arranged to make a visual pattern that points to the master analogy, the topic of the poem.[23]

The book as a house, or as a body, or the system of numbers, or the alphabet – the structure can be more than the way the book has been organized. In the case of Leviticus, the structure actually makes itself visible as an image of the house of God. The house sums and authenticates the meanings of the written book at another level of abstraction. And it does not have to be a house.

In the Biblical tradition, Psalm 119 is a brilliantly executed acrostic poem, composed on the model of the alphabet – a poem itself in honour of the alphabet.[24] For a modern example, Alastair Fowler shows *The Faerie Queen* to be ingeniously constructed on a numerological basis, using the ancient Greek symbolism of numbers, so the structure and the content correspond with each other.[25] The master analogy is much more what I need to find. It makes the idea of the tabernacle as the model for Leviticus less bizarre.

Parallelism that harmoniously engages the different faculties, hearing, seeing, mind, emotion, meets the artist's desire for coherence. I suggest that the author, in the process of writing, is likely to make the effort of matching half-consciously; then, turning round on what has been written, finding the beautiful thing half done, goes on to embellish it deliberately until the work is replete. The structuring having been made visible, and the total parallelism being made explicit, the master analogy enables the work of art to achieve reflexivity, something like self-consciousness.[26] I fancy this as parallelism at yet another level, the work of art is caught looking at itself in the mirror of its own structure.

This is not so strange as it sounds. The wish of the writer to parallel the theme in the structure of a composition is quite common. Anyone who writes over a long period on a complex theme, struggling for coherence, must feel the pressure to make the structure correspond to the content. The process of writing involves proportion, having an eye to the relative size of the constituent units, taking care to ensure a fittingness of style to topic, choosing metre and lexicon appropriate to the meanings. Examples abound.

I hope to develop my theme by taking a modern example, a novel which has the honour of sharing with the Book of Numbers the critics' belief that it has no structure.

Tristram Shandy[27]

The vast scholarship expended upon this novel provides a secular example of these very arguments about matching the theme to a metastructure. Many comments on the form and content of *Tristram Shandy* insist upon the roisterous, crazy lack of structure. One who finds it highly structured is William Freedman, who most admirably uses musical analogies to demonstrate his thesis.[28]

> '*Tristram Shandy* is about the way it is told. Form and content are one and both are present.'
>
> '*Tristram Shandy*, in other words, like a piece of music, is marked by a kind of concentric involution, a structure – to change the shape of the metaphor, like that of a Chinese box.'[29]
>
> 'Each segment of *Tristram Shandy* . . . is a synecdochic repetition of other parts, or a microcosm of the whole.' 'The synecdochic relation of part to whole is more than a

> matter of common musicality. For each part also says something else about the novel as a comprehensive unity, and something different. Each mirrors the room from its own special angle'.[30]

Laurence Sterne takes us back to the relation of figure to ground. He wrote boastingly about his many digressions, so that it is fair to ask if Tristram Shandy's autobiography is the main work and all the rest of the book a series of digressions? If the latter, the digressions take up most of the space and what we take to be the main work is swamped by the author's interruptions, his philosophical comments, miscellaneous stories and personal thoughts. One of the press barons used to insist that the function of newspaper copy was to hold the advertisements apart. Likewise, it could be a mistake to take the fragmentary narrative to be the main theme of *Tristram Shandy*. Turn our expectations around and we could believe that the scattered philosophy is the main work, and the narrative only a weak frame constructed to hold the thing loosely together. It would then be like a mannerist painting in which the frame has teasingly become more significant than the picture it surrounds. This was precisely the feature which caused the Book of Numbers to be dismissed by some serious scholars as 'chaotic' and disorderly.

In Sterne's day the absence of form was taken to be the sign of true inspiration, somewhat in the way that incoherent glossalalia is respected as a sign of spirit possession in ecstatic cults. In spite of his apparent disdain for convention, Sterne did want to achieve fame. He worked hard on the representation of carefree abandon. I argue that his structure also corresponds to his intent. In the same way as the architectural space of the tabernacle gives Leviticus its ordering, and as the twelve sons of Jacob make the overarching pattern for Numbers, the equivalent for *Tristram Shandy* could plausibly be the experience of interruption.

In practice, *Tristram Shandy* is much more tightly and richly structured than the critics allow. It is unified not by plot, nor by linear development of a causal chain or temporal sequence, it is unified by its structure. The technique is to repeat the various themes over and over again in a well-organised pattern of analogies. Instead of a coherent argument or plot, the book proceeds by offering one analogy after another, body for city, bodily ills and strengths corresponding to a city's fortifications, the front of a siege standing for the front of the face, the nose, the centre of the face, is now the groin, the centre of the body, now the vulnerable outworks of the city under military siege. The structure is strong enough to allow words to collide, hilariously verging on indecency, while never allowing one range of reference to overmaster the other. Sterne makes great play with substituting the language of military fortifications and the language of human bodies.

His story centres on two eccentric brothers living in Yorkshire, Uncle Toby, a war veteran, absorbed in military history, and Walter Shandy, a retired merchant, absorbed in ancient philosophy and science. To Uncle Toby almost any word suggests its specialised military register: when Walter says that auxiliary verbs are important, Uncle Toby agrees, praising the service that auxiliaries provide in battle. When Walter refers to the curtain round his wife's bed, Toby starts off about the 'curtin' that joins two bastions in a rampart. The conversation about the bridge of the baby's nose is mistaken by Toby to refer to a drawbridge. In the course of the book several narratives present elaborate parallels between the nose in the centre of the face and the groin in the centre of the body. We begin to

know that he is engaging us in a literary game when we find in the OED that groin can mean the snout of a pig and is also a stone pier built for a harbour fortification.

The glossary for military fortifications in my edition[31] is extremely interesting. Walter wants his wife to have a local scientific practitioner (a man) to attend her in labour, she refuses; Uncle Toby, trying to defend her preference for the licensed female midwife, is stuck for the right word. Trying to explain why modesty would stop her from allowing a man midwife to approach her, the narrator proposes that the word 'back-side' was in his mind, but that the modest fellow found that 'too bawdy'. He hesitates, and never finishes his sentence, though the narrator thinks that if he had not been interrupted he would have said 'her covered way'. We look up the glossary note on 'covered way' and find it is replete with innuendo. It is 'a space of ground level with the adjoining country, on the edge of the ditch, ranging quite round the half-moons and other works without-side the ditch' (Glossary, p. 668). The book proceeds joyously, with many a jump between bawdy, military and everyday correct language. Through these switches of focus the reader never quite loses direction. The sense of reality is strong, the military puns are never so distracting as to obscure the conversation about the woman in childbed. This is not the distorting mirror effect, it is normal punning and metaphor.

However, suddenly in Volume VII it is a shock to find the narrator has left Shandy Hall and is touring in France. It is an interruption allegedly necessary because of the author's illness. Here is the charming story about the two nuns in a carriage abandoned by their driver. It is an interlude, with nothing about noses, bodies, groins or fortifications, but it is not either a flashback to a relevant past event. Apparently it stands alone, nothing connecting it with the rest of the book at all, just a diversion. It just gives a little scope for an eighteenth century Protestant laugh against Catholic superstition. I will suggest to the contrary that this episode conforms to the idea of interruption as the microcosm, the master analogy which lies at the centre of the spiralling, and gives the book its unity.

The Abbess of Andouillets, accompanied by a novice called Margarita, is on her way to find a cure for her ailments (VII.20). Their carriage is drawn by two mules driven by a man who addresses them in colourful obscenities. At one point on the journey he stops for refreshment, abandoning his charges. The mules go on a little way, then they stop, and nothing the passengers can do will make them move on again. Panic strikes, they imagine themselves at the mercy of brigands and rapists. Margarita tells the abbess that she knows two words that will force any horse, ass or mule, up a hill, but alas, the words are sinful to pronounce, they cannot even contemplate saying them. The Abbess hits on a solution: the thing is to divide the words in half, repeating the first syllable and then repeating the second syllable. So they say: *bou, bou, bou* 100 times, and then *ger, ger, ger,* 100 times; then the same for the other word, they say *fou, fou, fou*, 100 times, followed by *ter, ter, ter,* 100 times. They have not sinned, they never said the bad words. The joke is based on the ambiguity of *bouger*, to stir, budge, move, with suggested allusion to *bougre* (bugger), and the indecency of *foutre*, to fuck. It must have been a successful strategy because, though the mules did not understand the words, the devil did, and presumably left the women in peace.

Interruption as the Master Analogy

We have learnt from the Bible how parallelisms are constructed and used to indicate structure and emphasis; we know that the chiastic model marks the

structure at the beginning, the middle and the end. We have also noticed that interruptions occur throughout *Tristram Shandy*. If they are randomly distributed, we can ignore them, but if they are arranged at the beginning, the middle and the end of this book, then we should look more closely. Immediately we see that this passage in Volume VII is not unprepared. At the beginning of the volume the narrator declares that there is nothing that he abominates worse than to be interrupted in the middle of a story. We have heard this somewhere before, and indeed the very opening of the whole book is about an untimely interruption of business in hand. Just as Walter is trying to concentrate on their Saturday night sexual duty, Tristram's mother reminds him that he has forgotten to wind the clock. 'Good God! … Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?'

So we go straight to the end of the whole book, where we find in Volume IX, Chapter 32, Walter's philosophising soliloquy interrupted by the farm hand, Obadiah, who rushes in with the news that the cow has calved. Because it matches the first, this last interruption makes what the Bible scholars call an *inclusio*, or an envelope wrapping up the whole book. The cow had been so long in giving birth that a false pregnancy was suspected, but the good news exonerates her and the bull who was her stud is not discredited. These minor interruptions recall a false pregnancy at the start of the story. Tristram's mother had to lie in at Shandy Hall instead of London, as she would have otherwise been entitled, because before she conceived Tristram she had gone to give birth in London, a journey for nothing, a false pregnancy. So the book is a 'cock and bull story'.

The test of a true ring composition is the middle, the turning point. This place in the composition recapitulates the beginning and anticipates the end, marking unequivocally the way the book is to be read and its key analogy. On this test, *Tristram Shandy* should be read with the infamous Peace of Utrecht as the moment of transition, the episode which connects the beginning to the end and the middle. It is mentioned at the beginning, (Vol. 2.7), when Uncle Toby refers to it in connection with the shock he received in the middle of the courtship with Widow Wadman. It is a crucial element of the narrative. Volume 6 describes Toby's deep chagrin and sense of betrayal after the Peace of Utrecht and the perfidious order to demolish the fortifications. There can be no denying that these events interrupt the war as well as the military games on the bowling green, nor that the book is constructed around them.

By this test I would take seriously the notion that the meta-structure is the idea of interrupton, the concept of the false start, of which a false pregancy is the model. All the many interruptions with which the narrative is replete gain meaning from this central theme. We have caught Sterne in the act; his book is nothing like so unstructured as his rollicking style and many diversions would pretend. This result encourages us to go on to the next test. There can be no meta-structure without structure. The next stage is to examine the text closely for parallelisms. After a short study of the 9 volumes and their contents, I find it easy to arrange the whole book in a ring, with the ending matching the beginning, as we have just seen, and with the mid-turn flanked on either side by two matching sections, and both of these pointing back to the beginning. So it is true, as he affirms, that the diversions and digressions are part of the scheme. The next question is what sort of general meaning does the structure convey? If Leviticus knots together by honouring the holy place, and other poems honour the alphabet or the scheme of numbers, what does *Tristram Shandy* honour or what moral or theological point

does it make?

There are theories about Sterne's main theme, such as the idea that *Tristram Shandy* promotes the theological argument from design of the universe.[32] This would only work if we discard all the dotty interruptions, like the nuns' tale and other messages about interrupted projects. If the false start is the model analogy for the book, does it have a simple consolatory meaning? Is the key to it all a pious sigh about the best-laid plans going amiss? Sterne's own sermons give a better expression to the concept. In the sermon on 'Trust in God' he rebukes us for attributing any success to our own foresight and penetration: 'whoever coolly sits down and reflects on the many accidents (though very improperly called so) which have befallen him in the course of his life … the unaccountable manner in which he has been enabled to get through difficulties … sufficient proofs of God's power and his arm over him.'[33]

Again, in 'The ways of Providence Justified to Man' he harps upon the impossibility of interpreting 'the measures of the Almighty': 'Go then and take a full view of thyself in this glass – consider thy own faculties – how narrow and imperfect – how darkly and confusedly thou discernest even that little as in a glass. . . .'[34]

Light-hearted and profound, mundane and transcendent, this book hits both poles of order and confusion at once. If the meta-structure's meaning is that interruption is continuous and creative, if that is the topic that points to the book and draws together everything in it, it reminds me of a great comedian's theological one-liner. Woody Allen said there is one sure way to make God laugh: 'Tell him your plans for the future.'

Conclusion

Sterne was an ordained minister and a formidable scholar. He could have learnt the system that he called 'one wheel within another' (1:22.73) from his Bible studies. The knowledge that much of the Bible was written in the style called parallelism was widely known before Bishop Lowth delivered his lectures on the structure of Hebrew Poetry. As they were originally in Latin, in 1753, and only translated into English in 1787, Sterne would have had to read them in Latin. Several of the themes of *Tristram Shandy* come very close to Lowth's writings, for example, the Sermon 42, 'Search the Scriptures'. *Tristram Shandy* is too complex, and too regular, and too conformable to the antique structures for it to be reasonable to suppose that he invented this form from scratch. However, the opposite idea, that Sterne could have thought up the structure of his story without prior knowledge of similar forms is another good reason for studying literary structure: to use parallelism as a link to the ordering of the mind. The magisterial figure of Jakobson still stands in the background teaching us that speech itself, with grammar and syntax, depends on the capacity to recognize parallelism.

The gift of speech carries with it the capacity to make analogies, and with that goes the experience of wildly boisterous double and triple meanings. Words interpenetrate, their meanings tumble merrily through the sounds and mix together incontinently, leaking, laughing, breaking bounds.[35] The scope of words for making equivalences is a fabulously rich endowment. Since any thing can mean almost anything, communication is at risk, there has to be some way of firmly capturing meanings and setting them in order. The creative process needs to be constrained, and parallelism does just this. At the same time as exploiting and honouring the multiple powers of words, it restricts them. That is what structure

does, and Sterne uses structure to pretend that his work is not structured.

In the end my proposal that *Tristram Shandy* has a master analogy, the experience of interruption, has to be qualified. I have said that the conceptual structure of Leviticus is projected upon one verbal exemplar and three physical ones, the tabernacle building, the mountain, the living body. Four exemplars altogether – so why did I privilege the tabernacle? The metonymic structure works through the principle of parallelism, without limit. Each exemplar is placed in parallel to the others. My own focus on the book projected on the tabernacle was only due to the history of the research. Instead of privileging the parallel between the book and the building, it is more reasonable to assume that all four images are necessary to make this work of art replete.[36] A model from crystallography would have done well. The same applies to the other structuring analogies in *Tristram Shandy*. I should have learnt not to favour just one master analogy. In this book the theme of interruption absorbs or carries everything along with it, but so do the incorporated themes of the hobby horse, the modelling of fortifications, and of fate and character upon the body. The triumph is their burning-glass focus on each other.

Mutually reflecting in different lights, each image of the whole shines its own light upon the other three. The patterns confirm and define each other, as Seamus Heaney has said:

> Did the sea define the land or land the sea?
> Each drew new meaning from the waves' collision.
> Sea broke on land to full identity.[37]

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3 Maren-Sofie Rostvig, 'Structure as prophecy: the Influence of Biblical Exegesis upon theories of Literary Structure', in *Silent Poetry,* p.33.

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10 Op. cit., p. 103.

11 James Fox, *Roman Jakobson: Echoes of His Scholarship*, Lisse, 1977.

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13 Douglas, *In the Wilderness*, 1993.

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17 *In the Wilderness*, 1993.

[18] Mary Douglas, 'The Glorious Book of Numbers', *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 8, 3, 1993/4, pp.193-216.
[19] This analysis is condensed from my *Leviticus as Literature*, OUP, 1999.
[20] J.L. Myres, *Herodotus, Father of History,* Clarendon, 1953.
[21] Convincingly identified as such by the late Patrick Skeehan, 'The Seven columns of Wisdom's House, in Proverbs 1-9', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 9, 1947, pp. 190-198.
[22] Frances Yates, *The Theatre of the World,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.
[23] J.M. Edmonds, *The Greek Bucolic Poets,* Heinemann, 1912.
[24] Freedman, David N., 'The Structure of Psalm 119', ed. Freedman, *Pomegranates and Golden Bells, Studies in Honour of Jacob Milgrom,* Eisenbrauns, 1993.
[25] Fowler, *Triumphal Forms*, Cambridge University Press, 1970.
[26] K. Gutzwiller, *Theocritus' Pastoral Analogies, The Formation of a Genre*, Wisconsin U.P., 1991.
[27] The references to *Tristram Shandy* are from the Penguins Classics Edition, 1978, edited by Melvyn New and Joan New, with an introductory essay by Christopher Ricks, and notes and introduction by Melvyn New. It has an invaluable glossary of terms for military fortifications.
[28] William Freedman, *Laurence Sterne and the Origins of the Musical Novel*, University of Georgia Press, 1978, p.29.
[29] Freedman, op.cit., p.146.
[30] Freedman, op.cit., pp 146-47.
[31] Penguins Classics Edition, 1978, edited by Melvyn New and Joan New.
[32] Mark Loveridge, *Laurence Sterne and the Argument about Design*, Macmillan, 1982.
[33] Sterne, 'Trust in God', edited Melvyn New, *Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne,* vol.4, *The Sermons,* Sermon 34, pp. 322-330. 1996.
[34] Sterne, Sermon 44, 'The Ways of Providence Justified to Man', pp. 408-424.
[35] Jean Starobinski, *Les Mots sous le Mots, les anagrammes de Ferdinand Saussure*, Gallimard , Paris, 1971.
[36] Repletion is a concept central to Nelson Goodman's aesthetic theory. Particularly the case fits 'multiple and complex reference, where a symbol performs several integrated and interacting referential functions, some direct and some mediated through other symbols,' *Ways of Worldmaking*, 1978, pp. 67-68.
[37] 'Lovers on Aran', Seamus Heaney, *Death of a Naturalist,* Faber and Faber, 1966.

Inclement Weather

David Barratt

Equipoise of age, as across the bay
With muscles throbbing reds and yellow
A plane descends, whilst another rises
Flying home. That is another country,
Where drums beat in time, ghettoes
Are blasted, referees damned, alternate
Current rules O.K., everything is minibabble.

Equanimity of noise, as the sea
Driven hard by the music of the discs
Brakes on the soft sand
Dumped here to make the landing soft.
In the discordant echoes of the future
As time spins backwards in the vortex of my age.
So the crisis of the spirit, it is said, revolves.

Equivalence of state is not by nature barred,
Nor are fortunes or loves so starred.
But rhymes say little, meter sprints its hundred
Or, false-started (twice) is disqualified.
So I, believer, free; ageing, bound, am
A cipher of the word I wright; my equality
Subsumed to a responsibility I am not given.

Am I to usurp such droite? Too gauche,
I circle round the broken egg, spill the yoke
That is not hard, hear cries of dereliction
That must be heard, even at Dover,
Even by tunnel-stranded travellers
Who go beneath the sea to that which
Never can be, has been, home,
Since always, in Denmark, we ask, must ask, whether.

Reviews

Elizabeth Clarke, *Theory and Theology in George Herbert's Poetry: 'Divinitie, and Poesie, Met'*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997, 299 pp., £42.
Philip Sheldrake, *Love Took My Hand: The Spirituality of George Herbert*, Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000, x+117 pp., £7.95 pbk.
Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions*, Durham & London, Duke University Press, 1998, xii+193 pp., £11.95 pbk.

Religion is back on the agenda in Early Modern Studies, literature in particular. Where once New Historicism seemed to be anthropologising as well as politicising religion away, the precise understanding of religion is now close to the centre – Stephen Greenblatt's new book, just published, is on *Hamlet* and Purgatory, and Richard Wilson of Lancaster, a prominent Cultural Materialist (the English, rather more Marxist, version of New Historicism) is also writing about Shakespeare's Catholic affiliations. For a while, even the purity of George Herbert's Christianity (private, devotional, plain style, turning its back on the world) seemed under attack. Two studies in particular, Michael Schoenfeldt's *Prayer and Power* and Marion White Singleton's *God's Courtier,* showed how Herbert's dialogue with his God was imbued with the very particular historical circumstances of the 1620s and 30s – the change in the ideal of the Renaissance courtier, and the controversy over the Divine Right of Kings, for example. To 'plainly say, My God, My King' when James I has asserted that Kings are like Gods in their own kingdoms is not, actually, quite such a plain statement as we might at first be led to think, as Schoenfeldt demonstrates.

Of the three books under examination here, each represents a different style of reading religious poetry with its own rewards and omissions. Each is valuable.

If she would take it as a compliment, Elizabeth Clarke's book is a very ecumenical achievement. What this means, firstly, is that she has followed Herbert's own eclectic reading across the Catholic/Protestant divide. In doing so, she has opened up the Protestant and Catholic sources and affiliations of Herbert's poetry, and set a firmer foundation for the appreciation of the Christian roots of his poetry in Biblical and reformed (small 'r') thinking and devotion of the early modern period. She has also succeeded in charting a largely inclusive critical path through the various academic approaches to Herbert in recent years, while remaining firmly critical herself of those who, as she demonstrates, ultimately can't take Herbert's Christian beliefs seriously enough. Stanley Fish is tartly and satisfyingly brought to task here. Philip Sheldrake, by contrast, is much more openly ecumenical in the contemporary sense, as a Catholic approaching someone he sees as a very Anglican poet, aware that he does not share certain assumptions and habits of belief and Christian practice, but sympathetic, concerned to let Herbert speak. Nor is he a scholar of the period, or of literature. Yet, by the end of the book, one is more aware that he has become very inward with the poetry in a way that puts such matters to one side. Richard Rambuss does not approach the devotional poetry of the period from an explicitly Christian standpoint; indeed, he might even be found shocking and scandalous in the way he insists on our acknowledging homoerotic material in the passion of devotional poetry. But this is a book to persevere with (and, occasionally, become annoyed with) because he notices things that are usually ignored, or explained away.

The starting-point of Clarke's study is Herbert's reading of continental works

by Savonarola, Juan de Valdes and François de Sales, each of them both theologians and men of letters. While some of this will be familiar to those who have read Louis Martz and Barbara Lewalski on the Christian poetry of the period, Clarke's approach manages to be both systematic and refreshing in its opening up of the purposes of devotional poetry in Herbert's time. For example, she stresses the affective side of devotion, the 'motions' of God's spirit and 'ejaculations' that form an important mode of prayer and poetry, while linking them to the rhetorical and poetic tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Her work on Savonarola results in an important recasting of the question of Herbert's perceived plainness and simplicity. How can Herbert be so convinced of the virtues of plain speaking, those one or two words from God at the end of some poems that appear to silence and invalidate all that has gone before ('copy out only this, and save expense')? Can the claims to plainness co-exist with the witty performance that is the Herbert lyric? Read Clarke's chapter on 'The Rhetoric of Radical Simplicity' and understand the tensions in a new light, not least because of the influence of his mother. While the book is structured around Herbert's encounter with the problems of devotional poetics in the Reformation period, it is constantly enlivened by analyses of the poems themselves, and not just the usual anthology pieces either. The contents page might appear to say 'Oxford monograph: specialists only', but my students have found that the book does more than adjudicate in academic argument; it helps us read the poems.

Philip Sheldrake's book begins rather nervously, with chapters attempting to set Herbert in his historical and devotional context. While general readers might find some of this helpful, particularly the links between Bible and Common Prayer Book as foundations for some of the poems, others might find his allusions to 'much argument' neither one thing nor the other, neither popularising scholarship nor a considered judgement on it. There are exceptions – the comparison with Augustine, another rhetorically trained Christian autobiographer, for example. However, it is not until the third chapter, on the image of God in Herbert's poetry, that the book really gets into its stride. There he develops an argument, largely through quotation, of the mixture of majesty and intimacy in Herbert's sense of God. We might argue about how obviously 'sacramental' this is, as Sheldrake thinks, but he covers the contrasts well. He is equally judicious in characterising Herbert's interest in everyday things and actions, as opposed to the emphasis on nature we find in Vaughan and Traherne. This is followed by shorter chapters on discipleship, prayer and service, these more anchored to a small number of poems and extracts from the prose *Country Parson* than to the wide range of the earlier chapters. The discussion of the prayer sonnet is a good example of Sheldrake's more homiletic style, further along the line of description, recommendation and exhortation than he usually goes. I hope this book will find new readers for Herbert among the wider Christian public; they will have to be happy with the description 'Anglican' as a term of approval, though.

No one will read Richard Rambuss for devotional purposes. There is a polemic edge to his book that reaches beyond the academy to the Christian Right in America. I could try to summarise, but a quotation will give a better sense of the flavour:

> …by imbricating a reading of the canonical religious literature with a variously fetched ensemble of contemporary cultural texts, I look to stage a historical salvo in Christianity's own terms – in Christianity's own canonic perversities – against its

> mobilization on behalf of a censoriously normalizing social and cultural vision, whether that comes in the rigidly uncompromising guise of traditional orthodoxies and fundamentalisms or through the mainstreaming religiosocial tactics of the New Christian Right. (p.6)

Don't say I didn't warn you. For a polemicist, Rambuss needs a good deal of decoding. This is the hardest of these three books to read. Some of it is more obvious. By the time he quotes the evangelical bumper sticker 'Real men love Jesus' we have been made aware that a certain Christian view that condemns same-sex love has a considerable section of its own tradition to explain away. Whereas Sheldrake has a rather calming view of incarnational spirituality as making sure devotion is anchored in the everyday, Rambuss has a more challenging approach. If everything the soul does on earth it does with the body (as Donne preached), there is no escaping the homoerotic tinge of the language of ecstasy in this period, and in the Christian tradition more generally. Understandably, Rambuss is less concerned with Herbert (though he does have some interesting pages on him) than with the more openly ecstatic religious writers. He is most convincing on Donne and Crashaw. Of Crashaw he says, rightly, 'no English poet was more enraptured by the image of God enfleshed, uncovered, and rendered corporeally vulnerable' (p.26). The 'spectacular exposure' of Christ's body in Renaissance painting, as well as the startling contemporary examples (you will not enjoy some of them) is also germane to his case. From Christ as sexed male to sexy male, though, is a short journey weighed down with considerable cultural and theological baggage, and there Rambuss' argument sometimes totters. But it is not the sort of argument that a Christian seek and destroy apologist should be despatched to shoot down. On the one hand, 'Batter my heart' as 'a Trinitarian gang-bang' is just silly. On the other, the material on God as a passionate wooer in a range of Christian writers of the period, and the growth of the closet as a place for private devotion, is something most serious students of the period will appreciate. Rambuss' larger challenge to Christians to reassess their analysis of perversity as something inside as well as shockingly outside will need a correspondingly larger act of imagination to respond to.

Roger Pooley

John Schad, *Victorians in Theory: From Derrida to Browning,* Manchester University Press, 1999, x + 180 pp., £40.00.

In 1979 Jacques Derrida published an essay entitled 'Living On: Borderlines' in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, a collection of papers by several Yale critics. The editor's idea had been that everyone would write on P. B. Shelley, and while things did not turn out quite so neatly, the collection nonetheless served to cement relations between deconstruction and Romanticism. 'Living On' shows only a trace of the original project, the title of Shelley's 'The Triumph of Life', and focuses instead on Maurice Blanchot's *L'arrêt de mort*. Critics who were suspicious of Derrida's work saw it as symptomatic that he talked only about the title of Shelley's poem. They might have been surprised by his later musings in an interview with Imre Saluszinsky. 'I would like to live two hundred years and really enter the English literary tradition', he said. 'I'm fascinated, for instance, by English Romanticism, and I know that if I had time I would be totally captured by it'. Indeed, becoming interested in Romanticism was, for Derrida, 'a dangerous experience, because it distracts me from my "own" (so to speak) "path"'. At the time, that path went through a set of questions regarding titles and signatures, quotations and folds. 'Living On' addressed itself to how a text needs a context yet survives any and all attempts to contextualise it.

One of the contexts surrounding 'Living On' was what Derrida called 'a more systematic reading of Shelley, a reading oriented by the problems of *narrative* [*récit*] as *reaffirmation* (yes, yes) of life'. It turns out, Derrida thinks, that these problems are condensed in the very title of Blanchot's *L'arrêt de mort*. After that, it comes as no surprise to learn that 'Each "text" is a machine with multiple reading heads for other texts'. Derrida's point is not that themes provide the basis for comparisons and contrasts, but rather that questions of theme are twinned with questions of structure. James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, for instance, not only cites the story of the Tower of Babel but also uses it to justify an affirmation of equivocity. This elevation of equivocity sets Joyce against Edmund Husserl, for whom absolute univocity was a high ideal. Yet, as Derrida argues in his introduction to Husserl's 'The Origin of Geometry', Joyce's affirmation of equivocity does not eliminate univocity but projects it as a horizon. Without that horizon, all of Joyce's babelising would be strictly unintelligible. There is a sense, Derrida suggests, in which *Finnegans Wake* 'reads' phenomenology.

Only when this set of contexts is put in place does John Schad's *Victorians in Theory* come sharply into focus. Without it, one might think that his couplings of English authors and French theorists are at worst arbitrary and at best happily fortuitous. When he allows Matthew Arnold and Michel Foucault to engage one another, thematic and structural issues come into play in the one movement. 'Dover Beach' evokes the 'sea of faith' that withdraws from modernity, leaving the figure of secular man, while *The Order of Things* concludes by picturing an advancing sea that will wipe away man as a subject. Foucault is not simply used to read Arnold, as though his insights into 'we other Victorians' in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* give him a special purchase on the Victorian sage. Rather, the two writers are placed in conjunction, so that Foucault is positioned, questioned and finally illumined by Arnold as much as the other way round. The same pattern holds true with the other conjunctions: Christina Rossetti and Luce Irigaray, Robert Browning and Jacques Derrida, Gerard Manley Hopkins and Jacques Lacan, *Aurora Leigh* and Hélène Cixous.

Seen in this way, Schad might appear to host a series of 'dangerous experiences' for his English and French guests. That he is not quite so neutral is suggested by his subtitle: *From Derrida to Browning*. Derrida is a privileged figure for Schad because he gives philosophical warranty for seeing each text as 'a machine with multiple reading heads for other texts'. Derrida not only underwrites Schad's way of proceeding but also can field the question we are bound to ask: 'Why *this* pairing and not another?' Schad is disarmingly open when responding to this inquiry, admitting that 'nothing absolutely insists' (p. 3) on joining this English and that French writer, and that his chapters are 'haunted by the fact that they might have been otherwise' (p. 3). Immediately, one starts to imagine alternatives within Schad's groupings (Hopkins and Bataille) or fresh duos: Emily Brontë and Maurice Blanchot, Lewis Carroll and Gilles Deleuze . . . For as long as the pairings are plausible, this exercise serves Schad's purposes, although it is hard entirely to suppress ludicrous combinations. Imagine a chapter linking Edward Lear and Emmanuel Lévinas, or John Davidson and Jean-Luc Nancy!

Such Pythonesque possibilities lead one to wonder why Schad did not argue more forcefully for the aptness of his conjunctions. There is a 'quantity of connection' between them, as Derrida would say, and perhaps a meditation on that expression in *The Archeology of the Frivolous* would have made both author and reader less anxious about arbitrary connections. As it happens, I was not particularly worried by any unmotivated goings on. Taken individually, each chapter provides ample insights into the English and the French. I was more puzzled by Schad keeping exclusively to the French, and then – once that concern had started to niggle me – I began half-asking why the schema had to be so tidy in the first place. In the end, I found myself not so much wanting a chapter on, for example, Tennyson and Heidegger, as one on, say, Richard Howard's *Untitled Subjects* and Roland Barthes.

Many of the concerns of contemporary literary theory first came to light in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was perhaps inevitable that Romanticism became the testing ground for theory in the 1980s. In those days theory was often wielded against theology when, on reflection, it stood to learn a good deal from it. Nowadays people speak about a 'turn to theology' in the humanities. If such a turn is made, those making it must not forget what was learned about close reading in the 1980s. John Schad's careful and evocative readings of 'looking-glass theology' in Rossetti and Irigaray, his meditations on God and the unconscious in Hopkins and Lacan – to name only a couple of his two-part inventions – indicate that he has retained the lessons of two decades ago. His book is by turns whimsical and insightful, challenging and rewarding.

Kevin Hart

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Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Power and Prejudice: The Reception of the Gospel of Mark*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1999, 201pp., $34.95, ISBN 0 8143 2785 0

This work joins a growing number of recent studies which fall under the banner of 'reception history', or 'effective history' – the study of the history of a text's 'influences' or 'effects'. As expected, the Germans have a word for it – *Wirkungsgeschichte* – and it is currently enjoying increasing prominence.

It's not just a study of the history of interpretation (although it includes this), but is a study of the history of a text's influence on art, architecture, literature, prayer, hymns, etc., as well as commentaries, lectionaries, and liturgy. As such, Biblical scholars have been encouraged to consider how it might build bridges between diachronic approaches (it preserves a concern for historical study) and synchronic approaches (its interest in the reception of the text by readers means it finds an ally of sorts in the arms of reader-response criticism). It is also praised as a way of helping us understand how the 'post-history', or afterlife, of the Biblical text has shaped us, and how this tradition might act as a 'conversation partner' with the contemporary community of faith in the re-actualisation of the text. It's little surprise, then, that some hold it out as a potentially fruitful area for dialogue between Biblical scholars and theologians.

That Schildgen doesn't explore in detail these various theoretical tentacles is not a weakness of the work; on the contrary, it's more an indication of the significance of her study in the larger currents flowing through contemporary discussion. The author describes herself as a 'medievalist', poaching on the territory of Biblical scholars (p. 11). However, Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Davis, Schildgen (who has elsewhere published a literary treatment of 'time' in Mark's gospel) offers an important interdisciplinary study which will be suggestive to Biblical scholars as well as to those interested in hermeneutics and literary theory more generally.

After a very helpful scene-setting introduction, the bulk of the book is devoted to a historical study which traces the status of Mark from the Patristic to the Modern era, each chapter dealing with successive periods. In fact, much of this tells the story of how Mark *wasn't* received! Comments made by Papias (that Mark was Peter's amanuensis) and Augustine (that Mark was Matthew's abbreviator) got it off to a bad start, and led to Mark's gospel being conspicuous by its absence from commentaries and lectionaries through much of the first eighteen centuries of Christian history.

Having thus apportioned some of the blame in the first chapter, Schildgen moves in Chapter 2 to a more extended study of the Patristic period where she outlines the cultural and institutional factors which affected the reception of Mark. The church needed uniting in the face of heresy, the gospels needed harmonising in the face of critics, and (with few exceptions – Schildgen cites the Easter liturgy in Rome) Mark contributed little to those concerns. Its low christology, lack of proof texts for doctrinal formulations, not to mention its rough, colloquial style, led to it being the least favoured of the gospels. The concern for gospel harmonies also meant Mark was marginalised – because the majority of the gospel appears in Matthew and Luke.

The pattern is the same in the Middle Ages (Chapter 3) in both the scholarly commentaries and the more popular genres, not least now because Mark's lack of interest in Jesus' mother (and lack of birth narratives) didn't fit the increasing

attention devoted to Mary.

The next three chapters trace how the rise of philology, the invention of the printing press, and the distribution of translations all contributed to a move away from centralised authority in the church and to a pursuit of historical study. The exegesis of Reimarus, Lessing, and Griesbach in the eighteenth century testifies to the suspicion of tradition and the rise of rationalism, culminating in nineteenth-century studies on the search for the historical Jesus, relationships among the gospels, and text criticism (and, subsequently, form and redaction criticism). Gospel synopses were particularly crucial to this development, showing the weakness of harmonious readings, and the standard features, now studied by every A-level Religious Studies student, which indicated the plausibility – nay, likelihood – of Markan priority. Ironically, the very factors which made previous generations of interpreters ignore Mark became reasons for it being made prominent.

The book thus stands as an impressive, carefully-researched, historical survey. More than this, however, it encourages reflection on 'reading-interpretive habits' as 'the product of changing historical circumstances and interests' (p. 17).

> 'The Gospel of Mark's reception shows that there is a canon within the Biblical canon; that ways of reading or dominant hermeneutical interests in certain periods direct how any text will be received, even or especially "sacred scripture"; that distinctions between high and popular culture have had a profound role on the text's reception; and finally, that the history of Biblical scholarship is a story of widely divergent interests and prejudices that have directed and controlled the gospel's fortunes' (18).

The title of the volume raises the spectres of 'power' and 'prejudice' – of those in authority, the decision-makers – and so the expectations which have influenced interpretation.

Sticking with Mark, we can see this, for instance, in the way Markan priority functions as a paradigm for much gospel criticism today. Whether or not the hypothesis is correct (and there are some vocal detractors), it is nonetheless *dominant*, and its dominance is seen in the way that major studies are undertaken on the gospels. It sets the agenda for the kind of evidence that will be considered, the kind of results that will be expected, the kind of scholars that are worth listening to, and even the kind of books that are worth publishing.

Shifts in academic, political, ecclesial, and technological power (and frequently some combination of these factors) all make a difference to the interpretation and appropriation of a Biblical text. Small wonder, then, that a study such as this is extended beyond mere historical interest to literary and cultural studies, and becomes good friends with recent postmodern concerns which emphasise the significance of the social location of real readers, and which seek to make us aware of what we are doing when we interpret Scripture, not least for an 'ethics' of reading.

In addition, pertinent issues are raised on the reception of the Biblical text in the light of communication technologies, such as hypertext commentaries. Schildgen notes, as others have done, how hypertext not only allows us to manipulate the text, but to become its co-authors (p. 135). And the study ultimately forces us to face tough questions about the future of contemporary scholars patronised by universities, whose work on the Bible Schildgen describes as a 'complex modern leisure activity' (p. 29), and whose influence on religious

issues is marginal and carries little ecclesiastical authority.

Thus, while only the most devoted will be rushing to buy a copy of this book for their own shelves, all should be interested in the relationship between 'power and prejudice' and Biblical interpretation.

Antony Billington

For a Change

Walter Nash

A change of direction – something new,
– 'not dragging *God* into it' –
new angle of vision, askance, askew,
with a colour of fantasy, a few
spangles of wit, so a tune with a true
secular spin to it.

Dancing flat-footed, walking slipshod,
– or something akin to it –
flaunting the rhythms and flouting the rod
in original measures – yes, but what's odd
is the sense, whatever I try, that God
keeps dragging *me* into it.

L. William Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination: An Anglican Spiritual Tradition,* Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999, 214 pp., £8.95, ISBN 0 232 52267 7.
J. R. Watson, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study*, Oxford University Press, 1999, x + 552 pp, £25, ISBN 0 19 827002 X

Despite superficial appearances of similarity, these two books are markedly different. Countryman hardly touches on hymns and prefers to deal with the spiritual qualities of lyric poems in a thematic rather than historical fashion; Watson's focus is the literary, historical and theological aspects of hymns, and though he touches on spirituality, it is very lightly. These observations highlight what I think are the main weaknesses of the two books: Countryman's is somewhat decontextualised, and Watson's does not often face the fact that literary criticism has dramatically changed direction in the last thirty years or so.

In the introduction to 'Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series' which prefaces Countryman's book, Philip Sheldrake writes of the need for the books 'to provide accurate and balanced historical and thematic treatments of their subjects', but at the same time 'to make connections with contemporary experience and values' (p. 9). In the first pages of the book, it becomes clear that Countryman prefers the latter emphasis, and he scatters capitalised abstract nouns in several directions rather than attempt to give a contextualised historical focus to Anglican theology. So God is 'the Holy', 'ultimate Truth or Absolute Reality', 'that Mystery that lies at the foundation of all that is', and so on. This is simply inadequate to deal with most early Anglican spirituality, though it might be noticed that Herbert uses a similar technique. But if we compare Herbert's 'Love' in 'Love bade me welcome' and elsewhere, with 'the Holy', the difference in content between the two abstract nouns is immediately apparent. However reductionist this approach might seem at the outset, though, it allows Countryman to deal with Blake, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Owen, Auden and others where traditional theological categories hardly fit.

The thematic focus of the book subordinates particularity and definition to emotional impact and a generalised notion of spirituality. For example, Countryman spends a long time not defining Anglicanism and spirituality, but the former comes down to 'a *community* and a *conversation*' (p. 33, Countryman's italics), the latter to 'meaning and values' (p. 18). This results in some very stimulating thematic treatments in the middle chapters of the book, where universal experiences are treated. Chapter 4, 'Living by grace', in particular deals seriously with things like sin and death, friendship, sex and love. The idea of incarnation forms the backdrop to this chapter but it remains 'something understood'. It is hard not to feel uneasy, however, when in chapter 2 ideas of nature or childhood from Herbert and Vaughan are treated alongside those of Wordsworth and Christina Rossetti without significant reference to the history of the ideas. It is only in the fifth and last chapter that the historical development of Anglicanism and literature is really dealt with, and by then it is too late to make sense of what has gone before. Perhaps the writer and editor decided that too much theory at the beginning would put people off.

Countryman takes the reader through many poems, expounding the themes, and elucidating the ideas. His observations are usually stimulating and apposite. Although he makes frequent reference to the Bible, as no doubt an Episcopalian Professor of New Testament should, his preference for the general rather than the

particular means that sometimes his biblical reference lacks subtlety. Commenting on Herbert's *Discipline*,

> Then let wrath remove;
> Love will do the deed:
> For with love
> Stony hearts will bleed.
>
> Love is swift of foot;
> Love's a man of war ...

Countryman writes, 'Here the reader may well be reminded of Paul's paean to love: '[charity] beareth all things ...' (p. 38). Later, he properly identifies the references to the Song of Moses and other scriptures, but the Pauline idea seems to me to confuse the matter. The poem contrasts two aspects of God's action and character, love and wrath. Love, as so frequently in Herbert, is the personification of God himself, and it is not really the Christian virtue of love that Paul is concerned with.

By contrast, Countryman leaves the intensely biblical language and reference of Owen's poem, *At a Calvary near the Ancre*, without comment, observing only, 'In the desperate realities of the war, true access to the presence – and absence – of God belongs to those most deeply implicated, to the soldiers who incarnate the present human distress, not to the professional servants of religion' (p. 116). But the point here is not especially the presence or absence of God. It is the contrast between the 'disciples' who hide, the priests who 'stroll' near 'Golgotha' proud of their minor wounds 'flesh-marked by the Beast' and deny 'the gentle Christ', whose crucified image is broken by shells – and the men who 'love the greater love' and, Christlike, 'lay down their life'. Priests in their hypocrisy bear the mark of the beast of Revelation 13:16 because they support the war, whereas the soldiers lay down their lives for their friends (John 15:13). The question for Owen is 'who is truly Christian here?'

That is also a question that Countryman turns to in the last pages of the book. And, superficially like Owen, he wants to back away from a definition of Christianity focused on doctrine, idolatry and fundamentalism (which are pretty much the same thing to him): 'If Anglicanism survives, it will be by the grace of God communicated through the spirituality of the poets' (p. 189). Stated baldly like this it sounds silly, but Countryman's prospect for Anglicanism takes something from both its biblical and Reformation roots and the *Zeitgeist* of 'spirituality': if the Anglican church does not accommodate both, it will surely lose its way. One of the delights of the book for me was the discovery of the poems of Judith Wright, a contemporary Australian writer whose work seems to marry the two especially well.

The Poetic Imagination is a flawed book in that it lacks historical rigour and theological definition. It also falls between two stools in that it is neither an introduction for complete novices (the first chapter is especially dense and contains a lot of jargon), nor sufficiently detailed or theoretically aligned for the specialist; it does not interact at any depth with the critical work on the subject. But it covers a good range of material, and the writer is sensitive and enthusiastic.

J. R. Watson's book is full, scholarly and detailed. It not only covers the language, metre, music and theology of the mainly Protestant hymns it treats, it also attempts to set them against their political, social, historical and religious background. I came to this book as a 'consumer' of hymns, one whose spiritual experience has been in part shaped by the hymnal; I left it with a deepened

appreciation of the discipline, compression and accessibility of the best hymns — their true artistic and spiritual genius. This is where Watson's book excels: the old-fashioned kind of literary criticism which used to be called 'appreciation'; and despite nods in the direction of Bakhtin and Derrida, Ricoeur and Foucault in the early pages, the staple of the book is (quite properly, in my view) appreciation.

As such, the book can be heavy going: details of the metre and rhyme scheme, the variations of rhythm and syntax, the analysis of language and imagery might be easier to assimilate if one were to use the index and find one's favourite hymns. But then one would miss the sense of historical development, which is painstakingly and clearly outlined. One would also miss such true and monitory gems as this hymn written by Joseph Hart:

> Ye Drunkards, ye Swearers,
> Ye Muckworms of Earth,
> Repent and be Sharers
> In this blessed Birth....
>
> Oppressors, Transgressors,
> Of ev'ry Degree,
> And formal Professors,
> The worst of the Three,
> With Tears of Contrition
> Your Foolishness mourn;
> To give you Remission
> Immanuel's born.

Professor Watson comments wryly, 'Even the sweet relief of the last line cannot make up for the violence of the earlier ones' (p. 273). Sometimes, the wry observation beautifully captures an important aspect of a hymn or hymns in general: on Cowper's hymn, *The contrite heart*, Watson writes, 'It is a rare example of a penitential hymn that does not at some point become pleased with itself for being penitent' (p. 290).

There are things in the book with which to quibble. The notion that *sit* is 'from Old Frisian, Dutch and German' and *hold* is from 'Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse' (p. 140) and thus shows Isaac Watts's 'interest in etymology', is absurd since both are from Common Germanic through Anglo-Saxon. Similarly 'the idea that idle and selfish men are responsible for the degeneration of a society is one that goes back at least as far as *Paradise Lost*' (p. 229 fn. 23) is to pin on Milton an idea that had much wider currency (not least the Epistle to the Romans). Watson wishes to identify the lines of *O Thou who camest from above*,

> Still let me guard the holy fire,
> And still stir up thy gift in me

as dependent on the collect, 'Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people ...' (p. 243). But the reference is far more clearly to 2 Tim 1:6, 'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou *stir up the gift of God*, which is in thee ...' (my italics). And the idea that Wesley used Watts's 'Begin, my tongue, some heavenly theme' and multiplied it 'a thousandfold' in 'O for a thousand tongues to sing' is a bit fanciful. Watson notes that a Moravian source is commonly quoted for the Wesley hymn (p. 244 fn. 11), but maybe the notion was even more widespread: Bach's cantata BWV 69a has a recitative, 'Ach, daß ich

tausend Zungen hätte' (and Wesley's line is nicely ambiguous as to whether he wishes himself to have a thousand tongues, or whether he wants to be part of a thousand-strong choir). The suggestion that German *dreimaleinen* in Rinckart's *Nun danket alle Gott* is an example of the 'three-syllable words' used 'to give stability to the line' (p. 418) is surely a slip of the pen. And one last quibble: Watson's style is sometimes ugly and repetitive. In the first chapter he tells us repeatedly what the book is about; and at the end, commenting on Bonner's *Child Songs*, he writes, 'The book itself was an extremely odd mixture, an extreme example of the uncertainty that affects all these books. . . . This is an extreme example of the confusion of aim and failure of understanding that affected nineteenth-century hymn-books for children' (p. 509).

Watson has his own views about most things, and does not generally approve of the more emotional style of hymns. James Montgomery 'rescued hymnody from the "blood of the Lamb" school' (p. 307) writes Watson, dismissing the evangelical and Romantic trends of the early nineteenth-century. But the intellectual suppleness and disciplined vigour of Montgomery's hymns do genuinely mark them out, in contrast to the raw emotional appeal of the 'blood of the Lamb' type of hymn. Again, 'Threatening, sadistic, bullying, regressive, self-centred' are some of the epithets Watson applies to Sankey and revivalist hymns like 'I am so glad that Jesus loves me' and 'Tell me the old, old story' (p. 493), though I know my parents found them personal and real. By contrast, he refers to the 'nobility' of the slave songs, and the 'incantatory and repetitive' rhetoric which they added to the tradition (pp. 500-501), and which fed into charismatic hymns. The circumstances in which these hymns were composed elevates them. He does not pursue it, but if he is right, this 'incantatory and repetitive' rhetoric is contributing to the destruction of the hymn tradition, to the great impoverishment of modern Christianity.

When all minor irritations and disagreements have been registered, this is never less than a most satisfying book. The analysis is lucid and incisive, the background used and documented well. The author writes at the end,

> I have written this book in the hope of earning some respect for the hymn while it is still a part of a popular culture, before it becomes a subject of study for Church historians and antiquarians. And if this book does anything to preserve the serious appreciation of hymns as literary texts and as aids to worship, and as poems that are beloved by people for whom religion is often foreign and abstruse, if it manages to slow down their disappearance in an age of neglect from outside the Church and from within it, then it will have been worth while.

Certainly the respect has been earned. It is unlikely that the hymn will receive more careful and thoughtful treatment. But on the basis of simple observation I still fear for the future of the hymn, and dread that this book will be an elegant and scholarly epitaph.

Paul Cavill

John Fuller (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Sonnets*, Oxford University Press, 2000, 362 pp., £12.99. ISBN 0 19 214267 4

John Fuller's anthology is broad, witty, and up-to-date, covering a wide range of modern poets as well as previously neglected earlier writers. He has handled his selection with the understanding of the poet as well as the critic.

There are 328 poems here, written by over 170 authors, sensibly ordered in chronological order by author's date of birth. Fuller states that he has tried to avoid translations (xxxii). The sonnets he does include, then, are composed in English, from Sir Thomas Wyatt's 'Whoso list to hunt' in the early sixteenth century to Alice Oswald's 'Sea Sonnet' published in 1996 (and others published in 1997). There are also a few sequences, among them Chapman's 'Coronet for Philosophy,' Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind,' and Christina Rossetti's 'Monna Innominata.'

'The sonnet', proclaims the colourful dust jacket, 'is the best-loved and most versatile of poetic forms.' In recognition of the wide audience for sonnets, each is given a page to itself, below the title is an ornamental device, and the poet's name appears at the bottom. Spelling is modernised. Unlike many anthologies, Fuller keeps his selections from each author short, and the subject matter varied, so that browsing never becomes wading. Shakespeare and Milton have eight sonnets each, and the largest grouping is Christina Rossetti's fourteen-sonnet sequence or 'sonnet of sonnets.'

Fuller's anthology is admirable in its compass and in the balance he achieves in his choice of sonnets, providing the text-book favourites and also presenting us with the deserving but obscure, including a substantial number of female writers (twenty-six of the authors are women, claiming fifty-five sonnets). As might be expected, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are well-represented, with nearly eighty sonnets between thirty authors from Wyatt to Milton, including 'minor' writers such as Gorges, Constable, Sylvester, Barnes, and Barnfield. The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries Fuller characterises as a 'sonnet-desert' (xxvii) and he is hard pressed to give us seven sonnets between Milton and Gray, which include Cotton's 'Resolution in Four Sonnets' and Aphra Behn's 'Epitaph on the Tombstone of a Child'. In the later seventeenth century and onwards, the fresh proliferation of the sonnet allows much more choice. Anna Sewell, Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson and Helen Williams are, as promised, given eight sonnets between them in token of their having revived the sonnet form. The sonnet's capacity is expanded in these later periods to include discussion of the large, 'public' themes of war, nature and humanity, as well as minutiae, seriously or in fun – the strawberry, the bee. Fuller finds the best Victorian sonnets to be 'utterly luminous, direct, and simple,' best displayed by female writers – Christina Rossetti, 'Michael Field' or Alice Meynell (xxix), but this is certainly not the whole story, as Hopkins' complex syntax and rhythms, or George Meredith's harsh 'Camelus Saltat', demonstrate. After Auden, there are forty-one modern poets represented by one sonnet each. Frustrating though the limitations of copyright may be to an editor, this approach gives a dazzling variety to the end of the volume.

It does seem strange, considering the scope of the sonnets gathered here, that the supporting critical apparatus is not similarly generous. Fuller's ten-page introduction is divided into three sections, the first discussing the sonnet from a historical perspective, followed by two shorter sections, one on the structure of

the sonnet and one on editorial choices and practice. Cramming his points into the tiny pages, Fuller seems to be mirroring the sonnet's famous struggle of form against content. In his second section, as if admitting defeat, he lists nearly ninety of the sonnets by their anthologised number as examples of different types of closure (xxxi-xxxii). Sources and notes are mixed together at the back of the book in a mere six pages of text, closely written with no paragraphing, with the result that they are rather difficult to use and necessarily inconsistent. The acknowledgements take up seven pages, a testament to Fuller's commitment to representing modern poets.

There is an index of first lines and titles, but (surprisingly, for a book with such an obvious appeal to the general reader) there is no index of authors. In this it departs from the practice of most of the other 'Oxford Books'. Since authors are arranged chronologically rather than alphabetically, one would need to know the date of birth of an author in order to find them.

This anthology is a treasury, a book of 'beautiful inventions', rather than a reference work. But the sonnets are so well-chosen that they stand as an education in (or on) themselves.

Jill Seal Millman

Nothingarian

Walter Nash

For more than forty years I held a pose
familiar to the enlightened Englishman,
following my discriminating nose,
calling myself a Nothingarian –
someone, that is, with no religious stance,
seeing some good in all, being sincere,
and pleased to show a leg in church, just once
or twice in a year.

This was respectable, a frame of mind
not positing much work of intellect,
granting each faith its merits, in its kind;
treating the prophets 'with all due respect,'
grateful at times for sermons 'throwing light'
on this or that or t'other – well, indeed,
something of nothing adds up to a quite
considerable creed.

But 'Nothing will come of nothing – speak again.'
I hear those words, the angry words of Lear,
when in bewilderment of soul and pain
of heart, I look for my relief in prayer.
Nothing will come of nothing when we pray
to No One's deity, and I am dumb,
for want of an address, to ask the way
to Kingdom Come.

'Give me,' I say at length, 'a place to stand,
faith being a lever that can move the earth,
so I shall learn what power may come to hand
as I persist, and what the effort's worth.'
Then here's my Bible, where I turn the leaf.
Poising that mass of fractured evidence
takes nothing out of clever non-belief
but makes better sense.

Mark Pryce (ed.) *Literary Companion to the Lectionary: Readings Throughout the Year*, SPCK, 2001, 143pp., pb 0 281 05345 6 £9.99 (also in hb).

This book offers poems and prose passages to accompany the Anglican lectionary readings for Sundays, Principal Feasts and Holy Days throughout the Liturgical Year. Each literary selection is intended to relate to an aspect of the scripture readings given for the eucharist in the Revised Common Lectionary, which, for those not familiar with it, is essentially a three-year Bible-reading programme. The brief introductory notes which preface each selection sometimes draw out a theme in the scripture passages which seems to thread across the three-year cycle of the lectionary, but more frequently suggest that the literary text be approached as a response to an idea or an image or a story found in a single Biblical reading or a seasonal theme.

There are about ninety literary texts collected here and all but ten of them are poems or portions of poems. The prose on offer ranges from *The Compleat Angler* to *The Color Purple*, from Traherne to Tolstoy. Of the poets represented, Herbert, Lawrence and R.S. Thomas figure most often (three times each). Writers of the twentieth-century supply half the pieces selected. The Welsh Marches origin of the compiler perhaps helps to account for the unexpectedly prominent showing of poems originally composed in Welsh (but appearing here in English translations). The poem 'Ascension Thursday' by Saunders Lewis and translated by Oliver Davies is one of these and a thing of rare beauty. Welsh writers working in English (including the provider of the foreword, Archbishop Rowan Williams) and carefully distinguished 'Anglo-Welsh' writers (such as Vaughan and Herbert) also prosper.

Mark Pryce in his introduction admits that 'inevitably individual readers are bound to come across absences which will seem to them unhappy omissions'; and to confirm that inevitability, this reviewer records his disappointment at finding nothing by Patmore or Pitter, nothing by Chesterton or C.S. Lewis. But more seriously, I was disappointed by certain inclusions. Pryce declares his intention of going beyond 'explicitly Christian writers where appropriate', but the criteria of appropriateness were hard to work out. What is it that makes the impersonal pantheism of the Alice Walker excerpt 'appropriate' to any of the cited lectionary readings? Tolstoy's struggle for the 'life-force' seems to be not especially relevant to the religion taught anywhere in the New Testament passages under consideration. Dennis Potter's God-ignoring celebration of 'nowness' did not help me to reflect on the given Advent readings, however much they were said to 'urge us to fashion a life which is lived in the expectation of finality'. There is an obvious Christian *use* to be made, for example, of Lawrence's poem about the phoenix (positioned for Tuesday of Holy Week), but appropriation is different from appropriateness.

The selected texts work better when there is a genuine and discernible link with the lectionary reading. Sometimes the link is made to a particular Biblical passage (e.g. Tennyson's poem about the parable of the bridegroom shutting out latecomers); sometimes the link is forged more generally with the seasonal theme (e.g. Herbert's 'Discipline' for the Third Sunday of Lent). But the book works best where the link is not apparent at first sight, but requires close reading of the literary text. For instance, under the heading 'The Baptism of Christ, the First Sunday of Epiphany' we are given R.S. Thomas's poem, 'The Coming'. As the title suggests, this poem is about the Incarnation, about Christ choosing his mission as

it is outlined to him in heaven by his Father: crucifixion features within it, but not, it seems, baptism. But then, on closer examination, one notices that the heavenly Christ is shown looking down on the world 'as through water'. What is this water? Tears? A symbol of ontological difference: man living in a different element from God? Or a kind of baptism? One reads on and finds that Thomas's Christ observes how, on earth, 'a bright/Serpent, a river/ Uncoiled itself, radiant/With slime'. The devil's tail? Sin? The Jordan? All three? Christ's baptism by John is suddenly given a far larger context than the one which the relevant gospel passages would usually evoke. This enlarging of frontiers, this awakening of theological imagination, is precisely what you want a companion like this to do for you.

Occasionally the volume serves its reader less well. While Pryce deems it necessary to footnote the meanings of words like phaeton ('a carriage') and swains ('young men, lovers'), other (surely more difficult?) terms such as 'flocculent' and 'boreas' and 'spinks' go unexplained.

On a similar note, I wonder how many readers would be so familiar with the lectionary as to know exactly what is meant by 'Proper', 'Rogation Days', 'Ordinary Time'. Most Anglicans of my acquaintance would be hard pressed to define these terms; and I presume this volume is designed to attract a readership wider than simply Anglican. Some explanation of how the lectionary works and what it is meant to achieve would have been welcome. It would also have been useful to have been provided with actual citation of the scriptural passages – if not full quotations, then at least by means of chapter and verse. Most people who use this book will not, I suspect, have a lectionary open by their side, and many may well not have easy access to one. To flesh out its devotional utility, the volume would benefit greatly from a little more user-friendly apparatus. Could not the relevant Collects have been included, for example?

In conclusion, this collection will be exactly suited only to a tiny readership. As a compilation of religious (and occasionally irreligious) writing, it passes muster for the general reader.

Michael Ward

Nick Hornby, *How to be Good*, Viking/Penguin, 2001, 244pp., £16.99, 0 670 88823 0

At 37, Katie Carr experiences a life crisis which threatens her marriage, her home and her own identity. Married to David, who writes for the local newspaper but has no proper job, and with children of 10 and 8, Katie is a GP and breadwinner.

Her work defines her, not only socially but as a person, morally. She's 'a good person, a doctor.' By contrast David is writing an acerbic novel; in his column he has attacked elderly people who won't take the seats allocated to them on buses. Suddenly things change. David's chronic back problem is banished not by a doctor but by a faith healer, DJ GoodNews. An aroused social conscience replaces his indifference and cynicism. Katie, who had dreamt of being loved again by her husband, is loved – along with the rest of the world. Money (hers) is given to the homeless; a computer (the children's) goes with other possessions to the women's refuge in Kentish Town. DJ GoodNews comes, like salvation, to live in their house. He and David undertake a series of projects beginning with a party to get every one in their street to invite a homeless kid into their home for a year.

This is a comic novel of fertile invention and close observation of middle class urban life, which also explores important themes like family, divorce, and self worth. Conscience has a major part, though the word is not mentioned. What changes should follow a 'Damascene conversion' like David's? Does some one with a sense of humour need to lose it when they are converted? What has Katie compromised with her extramarital affair? Why and how should the children be affected (Tom turns to serial theft at school when his radio-controlled car is given away)?

David's is 'not a Christian' conversion, though it's a lookalike. When he sees how things are with his father, Tom supposes the family will start going to church. They don't, but Katie and Molly do make a one-off Sunday morning visit to the parish church round the corner. There they join 'the last WASPs in Holloway', 'sad, exhausted, defeated,' and despite the sermon of the 'kind lady' vicar, Katie makes some resolve to 'let God into my heart,' if only as a 'vicious weapon in the marital war.'

When the kind lady turns up in her surgery Katie, unprofessional because she is desperate, insists on a ruling about her option of divorce before she will hand over a prescription. It makes a good comic scene: 'You do your job and I'll do mine,' she insists to the reluctant cleric. 'It's no wonder the churches are empty when you can't answer the simplest questions.' 'Stay,' the vicar decides, she too becoming desperate. They are both embarrassed, but the Church has spoken at last, and the Carr family will not face divorce.

Roger Kojecký

Phyllis Thompson, *Madame Guyon: Martyr of the Holy Spirit* [1986], 191pp., in *The Phyllis Thompson Trilogy* (with *A London Sparrow* and *Pilgrim in China*), Paternoster, 2001, £5.99 from Wesley Owen 1 85078 379 9

The prayer 'Your will be done' will mean different things in different circumstances. You may pray it with an intention to serve God and change the world. Or, like Madame Guyon, or St Paul, you may by that prayer express a desire to put down everything in yourself that is of the natural self, so that the love of Christ can take over.

Jeanne-Marie, Madame Guyon, was born into an aristocratic family. When as a teenager she discovered the Bible, she read it for whole days at a time. She was also extremely attractive, afterwards admitting to an ambition 'to make myself loved without loving anybody.' But at 16, in 1664, she was married off by her father to Jacques Guyon, Lord du Chesnoy, who was 20 years older.

For 12 years she endured the abuse of her mother-in-law, who ruled the ancestral home. The choice was to resist or to submit. But her way was confirmed by a monk's counsel: 'Seek God in your heart and you will find him there.' This simple word came with the force of a personal revelation, turning her life in a new direction with what she described as a wound of love, 'so sweet I desired never to be healed of it.'

In a Paris street a mysterious stranger, who though poor refused her money, commended her piety and good deeds, adding that there was yet one thing against her: 'You love your beauty.' Already struggling, Jeanne prayed to lose her vanity – or her beauty. Soon afterwards she caught her daughter's smallpox. Her face was ruined, though her peace was not.

When her husband died in 1676 Mme Guyon had a dream in which God told her she was to move to Geneva, the centre of Protestant Reformation and the city where (Saint) François de Sales, author of *The Devout Life*, had been the Roman Catholic bishop. Leaving behind all but one of her children brought criticism; although she saw to it they were cared for within the family.

Travels, persecutions, imprisonments followed. She helped the poor, founded hospitals, gave away her fortune, championed the oppressed. During two golden years in Grenoble she organised skills training for disadvantaged girls, and helped apprentices with business startups. A succession of people came to speak with her about the things of God, and she found she had the gift of discernment of spirits, an astonishing insight into needs, with words which came to the hearers as directly from God. 'I had no book except the Bible,' she wrote.

Phyllis Thompson, an OMF missionary who wrote numerous books, recounts the antagonism which Jeanne Guyon's faith aroused among the power elite of 17th century Paris. Some scenes bear comparison with the narratives of opposition and conflict in the book of Acts. Jeanne Guyon was imprisoned in the Bastille on suspicion of heresy and sexual misconduct. She was innocent, but as when modern totalitarian regimes feel threatened by Christians who own a higher authority, so the RC Church in France attacked as 'quietism' the way of seeking God's inward presence and love through self-denial and acceptance of suffering.

After her unexplained release Jeanne Guyon lived sequestered at Blois with her married daughter for 14 years. Visitors from all over France, and then England and Germany, called to benefit from her personal ministry. Her book *A Method of Prayer*,

which had passed through the fires of inquisitorial investigation, was already read widely. In England John Wesley and William Cowper published her.

Phyllis Thompson has based *Madame Guyon* on the autobiography written in her last years and published in 1720, three years after her death. The reader looking for more historical contextualisation might turn to Joseph Beaude, *Rencontres autour de la vie et l'oeuvre de Madame Guyon*, Thonon-les-Bains, France, 1996 (which has a bibliography), but the essential, and rather moving, story is here. The autobiography is in the public domain as an etext in English at *http://www.ccel.org/g/guyon/auto/autobi.htm*

Roger Kojecký

John Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science and Understanding,* SPCK, 2000, 208pp., £11.99.

If theology consists, on a crude definition, of formulations concerning God, natural theology, derived from the natural world, brings one God into view. It takes revealed theology, deriving through the canonical scriptures from inspired prophets, to disclose God as Trinitarian. F J A Hort, a predecessor of Polkinghorne at Cambridge a century ago, saw it as axiomatic that man should study equally 'to know God above . . . and the world below.' But is there any longer a consensus about such an equipoise when the existence of anything beyond the material universe, or even mind itself, is ruled out of consideration if it cannot be subject to the beliefs and laws of scientific knowledge?

A lot depends of course on what you, as subject, bring by way of assumptions. The world 'always overflows with surplus meaning,' but according to the principle of the epistemic circle, 'how we know is controlled by the nature of the object, and the nature of the object is revealed by our knowledge of it.'

How necessary are the laws of mathematics and geometry? How possible is it for them to be other than they are? If your assumptions are theological the questions come to rest upon God. Without them, 'rational' speculation can lead to absurdist postulations about the universe as just one among an infinite number of quasi-actual alternative universes (Hugh Everett III).

When you consider the world, do you marvel at intelligent design and infer an Anthropic Principle making possible human life and consciousness, or do you recoil at nature's cruel indifference and mankind's penchant for injustice? When you experience life in it, do you perceive God, or evil (described by Thomas Aquinas as the absence of good)?

Polkinghorne's project is to throw a 'chain of connection' between science and theology, arguing for its admissibility, if not actually forging its links. 'The links will not be the tight links of logical entailment, but alogical links of consonant relationship.' Part of this involves what he calls Dual Aspect Monism, broadly a model in which the material and the mental are complementary. Relativity theory integrates matter and energy, and Polkinghorne's hope is for a 'discovery' to integrate the triad: matter-energy-information. Consciousness would thereby be explained, human nature accepted as 'amphibious' between material and mental, and a place would even be found for the spiritual with 'non-embodied spiritual beings, such as angels, if such there are.' Time and eternity would also feature in this version of a Grand Unified Theory.

The book's concern is largely with natural theology, with revealed theology sitting somewhat loosely alongside. While a too easy belief in miraculous interventions in the natural order is suspect, the resurrection of Jesus is 'the seminal event from which God's new creation has begun to grow . . . as redemptive fulfilment.' So far so Paul. From the same quarter an argument named Kenotic Creation goes further, surely, than the apostle would wish, to say that God's self-limitation in allowing human freewill entails self-limitation to the point where 'even the Creator does not know the future because the future is not there to be known.'

Sir John Polkinghorne, FRS, formerly holder of a Chair at Cambridge in Mathematical Physics, has now produced a stream of books on science and theology. His Gifford lectures were published in 1994 as *Science and Christian Belief/The Faith of a Physicist,* SPCK/Princeton. An introductory textbook, *Science and Theology*, was followed by further *tours d'horizon,* including the present book which resumes arguments and proffers replies to, for example, Thomas Torrance and Paul Davies. Polkinghorne begins a section entitled 'Significant Thinkers' thus: 'In my book *Scientists and Theologians* I surveyed the thinking of three scientist-theologians, Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke and myself.' Throughout the book most of the footnotes are self-referential.

Roger Kojecký

At Moor Close

Walter Nash

Newbold College, Berkshire, May 2000.
For my hosts, Brad Haas, Penny Mahon, Phillip Whidden.

The house takes kindly to the late afternoon:
Tudor-cum-Jacobean style, known
to some Edwardian wit, a masterpiece
of weathered brick (cavalry-colonel-puce);
a college now, where I, as sage-elect,
have come to do my professorial act;
a monument to mercantile success
and quaint, devout, Elgarian Englishness.

Its gardens lure to a reflective hour.
Tread warily, the signs advise us, here
where elegantly fallen summers muse
along the freckled walks; lichen and moss
crust paving slabs a-tilt; the terraced stone
holds time remembered like a dappled stain,
and subtle wraiths of yellow muslin light
sprigged among tangled boughs, entrance the sight,

but shrewdly taunt the soul. The past can hurt;
its pain, a sweet greensickness in the heart.
Et ego in Arcadia vixi – all
of heaven's face I knew (and saw the skull)
in my own tulip time, those college years
when heart informed the head, 'The world is yours.'
Pray for me now, sepulchral comrades, pray,
you hopes and certainties of yesterday.

Past praying for, I guess; but in its gross
persistence, certain as day seven, grass
prising between the fractured stones, foretells
the advent of a chance renewed; all tales
return to this, all failures rise again,
greening the chronicle of past and gone,
and plays are not played out, or songs quite sung,
until the rubric speaks. 'Enter the young,'

that bluebell-bonny, dandelion-daft
crowd of foregone conclusions, all the deft
and timid charmers, genius or dunce
alike, whose timely gift of confidence

excludes the melancholy of the old.
Seen in this light, my darkness is revealed –
but shall I call them happy? They know well,
as we knew once, at eighteen life is hell,

though never quite so heavenly, so sweet
again. Do they know that? But they will sweat
obsessively over their loves and grades
and learn the fear of unsuccess that girds
at wakefulness in the repentant nights,
brooding over dead sonnets and class notes.
They learn to fear to fail; but then, in turn,
'fail better' (Beckett). That they must also learn;

a knack of living, best caught here and now
in the bold dawn of youth, the always-new
morning of possibility. To fail
is what, after all, we are born for, but to feel
the greatness in ourselves, how we are weak
and half asleep till by God's grace we wake
to heaven's service – these are timeless themes
that build the college of our prayers and dreams.

A knack of praying – give us our daily bread –
makes our curriculum strong. Walking abroad
in a crass pantomime of fools and knaves
the murderous temptations whet their knives;
but here is safety, here the watchful Christ
waits in a place where many lives have crossed,
a youthful, morning-lightsome place, where none,
as yet, suspects the weight of afternoon.

Notes on Contributors

David Barratt* with Roger Pooley and Leland Ryken edited *The Discerning Reader: Christian perspectives on literature and theory*, Apollos/Baker Books, 1995.

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

Honorary research Fellow at University College London, **Mary Douglas** is the author of *Purity and Danger* (1966), and *In the Wilderness, the Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers* (1993). Her most recent book, *Leviticus as Literature*, was published in 1999. The two latter books are available in OUP paperback.

Susan Glyn was an anti-aircraft gunner, philosophy student and barrister before moving to Paris with her novelist husband Anthony Glyn. *New Christian Poems* (2001) is her fourth collection.

Kevin Hart, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Monash University in Melbourne, is the author of *Trespass of the Sign* (1990), *A. D. Hope* (1992), *Samuel Johnson and the Culture of Property* (1999), and editor of *The Oxford Book of Australian Religious Verse (*1994). His most recent book is *Flame Tree: Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe Books). He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities.

Dr Margaret Keeling completed research on Golding's later fiction and gained her PhD at Keele University in 2000. She recently moved to Essex to take up the post of Head of Libraries, Information, Heritage and Cultural Services for Essex County Council.

Roger Kojecký,* author of *T S Eliot's Social Criticism,* has reviewed in the *TLS, THES,* and *Common Knowledge* (Dallas, OUP) . He is among the contributors to the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* and the *New Dictionary of National Biography*.

Jill Seal Millman completed her doctoral thesis on the subject of religious poetry of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in 1997. She now works at Nottingham Trent University as a researcher on the Perdita Project, a project to create a comprehensive global on-line catalogue of manuscripts written or compiled by women, 1500-1700 – *http://human.ntu.ac.uk/perdita*

Walter Nash is Emeritus Professor of Modern English Language at Nottingham University. His poems in this issue appear in *A Heart Prepared* (Feather Books 2000). He has authored several collections of poems and numerous books and articles on language and rhetoric. More information and a bibliography are on *www.mwsc.edu/~nash/*

Roger Pooley's* publications include *English Prose of the Seventeenth Century*, and he is co-editor of *The Discerning Reader*, Apollos, 1995. He is Lecturer in English at Keele University and a former Chair of the CLSG.

Michael Ward read English at Oxford and Theology at Cambridge. He is currently training for the Anglican priesthood at Ridley Hall in Cambridge and studying for a PhD through the Institute for Theology, Imagination and the Arts at St Andrews University.

* Contributor on the CLSG website Reading Room at *www.clsg.org*.

News & Notes

Autumn conference

At the 2001 conference Professor Valentine Cunningham showed the indebtedness, even in attack, of many Thirties writers to the Christian tradition. Colin Duriez described the earliest days of the Inklings, and Richard Brewster looked at some issues for a Christian poetics in relation to some 20th century poets.

Colin Duriez has recently published *Tolkien and* The Lord of the Rings, and co-authored with David Porter *The Inklings Handbook*. Valentine Cunningham's *Reading After Theory* appeared in December 2001 from Blackwell.

The CLSG remains aligned with the objects of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, but we are now associated rather than affiliated, and our committee takes responsibility for all aspects of our proceedings. A new leaflet 'Introducing the CLSG' is available from the Editor.

2002 Conference

The next CLSG conference is planned for Saturday 2 November, 2002 at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Offers to present papers are welcome. Details will be mailed to paid-up members (who can benefit from a special rate conference fee) and posted on the website. Contributors of conference papers attend free of charge with reimbursement of expenses.

Keep in touch

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

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Contribute

Contributions for *The Glass* should be sent to the Editor, Roger Kojecký, at 10 Dene Road, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2AA, email *editor@clsg.org* . The optimum length for articles is 5,000 words; reviews 450 – 1,000 words. There is not a *Glass* style sheet, but contributors are asked to study the form, e.g. for the punctuation of endnotes, in the most recent issue to hand.

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