

○ EDITORIAL

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As many of you know, *The Bible and Critical Theory* journal is named after the annual seminar, established back in 1999 and run by Roland Boer. Since the last issue of *BCT*, we have had another very successful meeting in Newcastle, Australia (see Roland's comment upon and photos from the seminar here: <http://stalinsmoustache.blogspot.com/2009/07/bible-and-critical-theory-rocks.html>). The great success of the meeting, I think, was due to the breadth of topics covered by individual papers, all of which included matters biblical, though mostly through a non-conventional biblical studies lens. The next session of *BCT* will be held in Dunedin on the 7–8 February 2010. You can find the call for papers here: <http://dunedinschool.wordpress.com/2009/09/15/bible-and-critical-theory>.

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In this issue, we have five very different though equally interesting articles. First we have the eminent philosopher Hent de Vries' 'Timeless Allegory and Temporal Ascension in Philo's On Mating with the Preliminary Studies (De congressu quaerendae eruditionis gratia)', translated by Jack Ben-Levi. De Vries offers a close analysis of Philo's allegorical reading of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar, arguing that Philo's reading of Abraham's relationship with Hagar anticipates the *philosophia ancilla theologiae* motif that has informed much of Western Christian and philosophical thought. Much attention is given to how this gives new meaning to the ancient Greek curriculum of the *enkyklios paideia*, a curriculum that would remain decisive for the idea of the *artes liberales* and the *humaniora*, from early modernity up until Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.

In his article, 'Only Agamben Can Save Us? Against the Messianic Turn Recently Adopted in Critical Theory', Matthew Sharpe argues that Agamben's recent political texts bring to fruition a larger, contentious trend in the theoretical academy coupling one-dimensional, pessimistic accounts of modernity with strands of messianism. Since the political prospects of messianism, as Agamben's analyses show, are very thin indeed, Sharpe reflectively questions the presuppositions that lead him to this prescriptive juncture.

Judith McKinlay provides a gendered and postcolonial reading of Achsah's request for watered land in 'Meeting Achsah On Achsah's Land'. McKinlay also provides an imaginary conversation between Achsah and the reader. Those familiar with McKinlay's work will know that her creative approach to biblical criticism enables new positions to be taken in response to the texts, as well as providing a thoroughly enjoyable aesthetic experience for the reader.

Deane Galbraith's 'Would you condemn me that you may be justified?' Job as Differend' examines Jean-Francois Lyotard's well-known concept of the differend and argues that it can provide new insights into the book of Job: 'When we read the story of Job in the light of the differend, we uncover, in addition to the more visible injustice of God's physically excessive and arbitrary mistreatment of Job, a radical or absolute injustice operating at the heart of the narrative'.

In 'What is Inscribed in the Book': The Book Motif as a Productive Force in the Apocalypses of Daniel' James Leveque uses a Marxist framework of productive forces to examine the function

of the image of the book in the visions of Daniel. Leveque argues that ‘through the repeated use of images of celestial and terrestrial books, an understanding of history alternative to the normative social relations is developed’.

Finally, the following books are reviewed in this issue:

1. Mieke Bal, *Loving Yusuf: Conceptual Travels from Present to Past*. Afterlives of the Bible. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008 (Roland Boer).
2. Musa Wenkosi Dube, *The HIV & AIDS Bible: Selected Essays*. Place??University of Scranton Press, 2008 (Michael Carden).
3. Luke Gärtner-Brereton, *The Ontology of Space in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: The Determinative Function of Narrative ‘Space’ within the Biblical Hebrew Aesthetic*.
4. London and Oakville: Equinox, 2008 (Deane Galbraith).
5. Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008 (Christine Mitchell).
6. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007 (V. Henry T. Nguyen).
7. David Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio: Subverting Imperial Myths*. Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2008 (Eric Repphun).
8. Adrian Thatcher, *The Savage Text: The Use and Abuse of the Bible*. Place??Wiley-Blackwell 2008 (Michael Carden).
9. Yung Suk Kim, *Christi’s Body in Corinth: The Politics of a Metaphor*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008 (Daniel L. Christiansen).
10. Norman Whybray, *Job*. Readings: A New Biblical Commentary. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008 (Peter Miscall).
11. Jeremy M. Schott, *Christianity, Empire, and the Making of Religion in Late Antiquity*. Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion. Place??University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008 (Ellen Muehlberger).
12. David A. Berant and Jonathan Klawans, eds., *Religion and Violence: The Biblical Heritage*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007 (Anthony G. Rees).
13. L. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed, & Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today*. Revised Edition. Gender, Theory, and Religion. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007 (Gillian Townsley).

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