

○ INTRODUCTION

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In this issue of *The Bible and Critical Theory* the contributors examine David as machine, translations of the Bible into Arrernte and of Arrernte song-cycles into English, consciousness in John's Gospel, the question of whether the Parable of the Snubbed Host (Luke 14:15-24) has any 'good news' for the disabled and, finally, postcolonialism and prophetic literature.

Brian Britt, in his article 'Davidmachine', argues that recent studies of David by Baruch Halpern, Steven McKenzie, and others have cast doubt on the historicity of biblical accounts, replacing 'sacred' images of David with decidedly 'secular' ones ('serial killer,' for instance). But the biblical David is neither purely secular nor sacred; rather, he filters the horrors of warfare and politics into the heroism and ideals of the Deuteronomistic tradition. By analogy to Heiner Müller's 1979 play, 'Hamletmachine,' Britt considers the biblical portrait of David as a cyborg-like 'Davidmachine,' a hybridic figure compelled to embody and commensurate competing, if not contradictory, religious and literary demands. As machine, the biblical David illustrates the place of necessity in the canon itself, a necessity that illustrates the concepts of tragedy and tradition in Walter Benjamin's study of German tragic drama.

In 'Simulating the Sacred in Theodore Strehlow's *Songs of Central Australia*', Darren Jorgensen suggests that it may be impossible to reconstruct what it meant for the Arrernte people of Central Australia to have the New Testament translated into their language. The continuing practice of Christianity among the Arrernte shows just how powerful this wealth of stories was for this remote community. This translation was reversed by the son of the New Testament's Arrernte translator, Theodor Strehlow, who worked on rendering the song-cycles of the Arrernte into English. These are not so much translations as conversions, as Strehlow wrote them into a poetry of rhythm and cadence that was influenced by Greek and Norse myth. In doing so, Strehlow wanted to simulate his own conversion experience, his own experience of this desert people and their lives. To do so he was forced to turn to that which simulates the sacred in Western culture, in the language of poetry and literature. In reading Strehlow's *Songs of Central Australia* (1971) and the story of its composition, Jorgensen argues that we might begin to approach this conversion to Aboriginalism that took place in the desert of Central Australia, and subsequently reconstruct Strehlow's attempt to reverse religious imperialism.

Jonathan Bernier's article is concerned with the consciousness of John's Gospel. In 'The Consciousness of John's Gospel: A Prolegomenon to a Jaynesian-Jamesonian Approach', Bernier focuses on what he calls the 'cognitive form(s)' immanent within John's gospel, including consciousness, construed primarily through exegetical engagement with the prologue (1:1-18) and the Johannine Jesus' interactions with the Samaritan woman (ch. 4). The theories advanced by the late psychologist Julian Jaynes largely inform the understandings of cognition and consciousness presupposed in his essay, with Jaynes' theories brought into dialogue with Fredric Jameson's historical materialist hermeneutics. Bernier's essay is thus an experiment (what genuine exegesis is not?), an exploration of certain homologies between Jaynes' thought and Jameson's, wherein Jaynes provides a grammar for commentary upon Jameson and Jameson a grammar for commentary upon Jaynes, and with this commentarial dialectic in turn constituting a grammar for commentary upon John's Gospel in a hopefully innovative and enlightening fashion. It is thus a

prolegomenon (and claims to be no more than that) to possible future directions in the study not only of John's Gospel but also early Christianity and the history-of-religions more generally.

The Parable of the Snubbed Host (Luke 14:15-24), rendered by the interpretive tradition in glowing terms, is often enlisted to underwrite theologies of liberation and radical inclusion grounded in God's indiscriminate love as well as social programs that advance the interests of the poor and disabled. In his article 'Disability and the Marginalization of God in the Parable of the Snubbed Host (Luke 14.15-24)', James Metzger argues, however, that for disabled people the story may offer little if any 'good news' at all. Although it appears that the Lukan Jesus wishes to communicate God's preferential option for the poor and disabled, the parable fails rhetorically to achieve this objective, undermining in part his project of bringing 'good news' to Roman Palestine's 'poor ... captives ... blind ... [and] oppressed' while disclosing a latent frustration of his own with the deity. While the parable may fail to convince that God is favorably disposed toward the disabled, Jesus' own attitude is much more ambivalent, one that couples deprecatory paternalism and an ideology of similitude with profound empathy for disabled persons in pain.

In 'Prophets Postcolonially: Initial Insights for a Postcolonial Reading of Prophetic Literature', Steed Davidson offers a postcolonial articulation of what can be viewed as prophetic literature by way of descriptive markers of this type of literature. In the process treatment of the notion of prophetic literature as a genre is offered in order to outline spaces where a postcolonial reading of this literature can occur. Davidson first traces critical moments in the scholarly approach to prophetic literature and then maps the space that enables an engagement of postcolonial theory with prophetic literature as a genre. He then offers four aspects of prophetic literature, identified from a postcolonial perspective, that can lead to the development of postcolonial readings of prophetic literature.

Finally, we have reviews of the following books:

1. Thomas A. Carlson, *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and Creation of the Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008);
2. Matthew J. Marohl, *Faithfulness and the Purpose of Hebrews: A Social Identity Approach* (Princeton Theological Monograph. Eugene, Or.: Pickwick, 2008);
3. Marion Grau, *Of Divine Economy: Refinancing Redemption* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004);
4. Carole Fontaine, *With Eyes of Flesh: The Bible, Gender and Human Rights* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2004);
5. Roland Boer, *Political Myth: On the Use and Abuse of Biblical Themes* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009);
6. William John Lyons and Jorunn Økland (eds.), *The Way the World Ends? The Apocalypse of John in Culture and Ideology* (The Bible in the Modern World, 19; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009);
7. Victor Matthew, *More than Meets the Ear: Discovering the Hidden Contexts of Old Testament Conversations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008);
8. Ilana Pardes, *Melville's Bibles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008);
9. Lechion Peter Kimilike, *Poverty in the Book of Proverbs: An African Transformational Hermeneutic of Proverbs on Poverty* (Bible & Theology in Africa 7. New York: Lang, 2008);

10. Roland Boer and Jorunn Økland (eds), *Marxist Feminist Criticism of the Bible* (The Bible in the Modern World, 14. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008);
11. Burton L. Mack, *Myth and the Christian Nation: A Social Theory of Religion* (London: Equinox, 2008); and
12. Christine E. Joynes (ed.), *Perspectives on the Passion: Encountering the Bible through the Arts* (London: T & T Clark, 2007).

Enjoy!