

Review of Stephen D. Moore, *Untold Tales from the Book of Revelation: Sex and Gender, Empire and Ecology* Atlanta: SBL, 2014

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This volume brings together twenty years of Stephen Moore's negotiations with Revelation, and is created to act as a "freestanding companion" (9) to his collected essays, *The Bible in Theory: Critical and Post Critical Essays* (2010). For those familiar with Moore's work, there will be few surprises since, despite the title *Untold Tales*, each essay (barring the introduction), has appeared in previous publications. So here is the key appeal of this volume: to see Moore's essays on Revelation feed off and into each other, each prefaced with his own reflective introduction.

The book opens with Moore's own guide through his work, "What Is, What Was, and What May Yet Be," outlining the interconnectivity of the essays, his own history of fascination with the book, and the shifting sands of the field of biblical studies that he has trodden during his encounters with Revelation, including feminist, cultural, postcolonial, gender, queer, eco, and animal studies.

"Mimicry and Monstrosity," first appearing in Segovia and Sugirtharajah's *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (2007), sets the tone for the book, situating Revelation amongst the ruins where it is so often found, those of empire and anti-empire. In this chapter, Moore moves into the then-and-still-far-too-often undervalued realm of postcolonial scholarship, with Bhabha as a potent and elucidating dialogue partner. This exploration of empire deconstructs the overly simplified dichotomy of Good versus Evil Empire often projected onto Revelation, showing the dangers of believing ourselves to be made wholly new when we are still dressed remarkably like the old order.

This then takes us into "Revolting Revelations," an intimate interaction (from Kitzberger 1998), in which two competing dialogues wrestle with the theme of hyper-masculine nationalistic violence, ancient and modern. The text of 4 Maccabees, *Táin bó Cúailnge*, and the Apocalypse are explored and read, not as examples of divine justice and righteousness, but as very human violence, as a body-count-piling masculine spectacle.

"Hypermasculinity and Divinity" continues these gendered debates, taking us further back into Moore's first Revelation essay (1995). Through a beguiling movement into cultural studies, both body-building culture and make-over shows are explored, only to be Trojan horsed into the heavenly throne room to ultimately unpack the mirrored perfection and nigh-on narcissistic revelations occurring with the all-male realm of the great reveal.

All male though Revelation's loves may be, in "The Empress and the Brothel Slave" (co-authored with J. Glancy), the complexity of feminist engagements with the book are explored in relation to the figure Babylon. This 2011 *Journal of Biblical Literature* article is still the go-to place for the historical setting of what it meant to be a *pornē* in the ancient world, whilst also bringing this street-walking image into tension with her queenly manifestation. Such a synthesis raises important questions about the gendered and class-based assumptions projected onto this female figure.

"Raping Rome," originally appearing in 2009 as part of a Festschrift for Sugirtharajah (Liew 2009), continues in the same gendered focus, but with Judith Butler's gender deconstructions as the critical weapon, laying bare the idea of Roma/Rhōmē as a warrior. The history of queer studies is contextualised as Roma/Rhōmē's hypermasculine garb is stripped to show a female body that itself covers the virtue of an idealised male, before Revelation 1's risen, breasted, "one like a son of man" is shown to move between binaries.

"Retching on Rome," the latest penned of the collection (2014), takes these bodily encounters and puts them to full skin-on-skin effect, or more accurately affect. Drawing on affect theory, particularly that of Sara Ahmed, this chapter explores Revelation's disgust, emotion, abjection, and feelings which stick, interspersing its encounters with the words of figures such as Deleuze, Derrida, and Kristeva. This chapter gets to the heart of so much of Revelation's visceral imagery and lurid landscape, creating a porous encounter with what we would rather keep distant, yet find ourselves drawn into.

In "Derridapocalypse" (co-authored with C. Keller), textual encounters are the name of the game. This chapter initially sat alongside other Derridean negotiations in Sherwood and Hart's *Derrida and Religion: Other Testaments* (Hart and Sherwood 2004) and "late" Derrida was the topic of focus. Notions of apocalypse, the absolute secret, *différance* and messianic arrivals within Derrida and the Apocalypse are set into motion, and spiral, creating what can only be called a challenging engagement with the monstrosity of chaos.

With our Derridean minds fully-fuelled, "Quadrupedal Christ" continues these negotiations, but this time in relation to Derrida's animality theory as found in *Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008) and *The Beast and the Sovereign* (2009; 2011). This chapter brings an ecocritical lens to Revelation, focusing on its ovine-centre, whilst introducing the growing field of animal/animality/post human studies (first appearing in Koosed 2014). The sheepy nature of the figure who has hair white as wool, and who becomes an animal for most of the book is examined, as is the history of human/animal otherings, with quotes from Coetzee and Derrida brought in to further challenge perceptions of the lamb's sacrificial nature.

Finally, Moore brings us to "Ecotherology" (from Moore 2014). This chapter takes the beastly nature of the Apocalypse to its extreme, by examining its human/animal intimacy/indeterminacy, again in dialogue with Derrida. At this point we realise Moore has brought us to a shopping mall as our final destination, a big golden one called the New Jerusalem, not awash with a harmonious

ecosystem, but rather featuring one tree, a river/stream, and a sheep. How does this vision of ovine-sovereignty challenge conceptions of the other, of creation, and of anthropocentric world-visions? Moore leaves us gazing into the power of a future viewed on all-fours.

This is a volume to digest and chew on. It is not a quick read, nor should it be. Moore is a paragon of interdisciplinary scholarship and the sheer breadth of critical theory he engages with warrants detailed engagement, before you even venture into his negotiations with Revelation. Indeed, the volume acts as a guide through critical theory as much as it does through Revelation. As a result, Moore's readings are often a somewhat dizzying experience. Yet, this is the power of these collected essays; the multi-faceted encounters that are to be had with one of the most creative, slippery and revealing/concealing biblical scholars and biblical books. As a result, this is an essential volume for every library shelf that knows what is good for it, and a touchstone for those engaged in working with Revelation. These may not be untold tales in the usual sense, but they are tales which need to be told, and which should be re-told again, and again.

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