

Editorial

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Let me begin with an update on The Bible and Critical Theory Seminar, now in its fifteenth year. The 2012 meeting will be run from somewhere in central Auckland (exact location TBA) on the 1st and 2nd of September. A call for papers will be posted soon on the following blog site: <http://aucklandtheology.wordpress.com/>. For those interested in hearing more, or keen to submit an abstract, please contact either Robert Myles (r.myles@auckland.ac.nz) or Caroline Blyth (c.blyth@auckland.ac.nz). This seminar is always enjoyable, namely because of the relaxed atmosphere (the seminar is run in a pub) and the critical discussions that inevitably start rolling. Alcohol helps.

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We open this issue with George Aichele's "The Hidden City". Here, Aichele provides a fascinating intertextual reading of the kingdom language in Mark's gospel and Italo Calvino's strange novel, *Invisible Cities*, wherein Marco Polo provides descriptions of fantastic cities. Aichele argues that "this approach illuminates a different way to understand the Markan kingdom of God, for which that kingdom is neither realized nor imminent, indeed not eschatological at all. Nor is the kingdom a symbol. Instead the mysterious kingdom is comparable to (in Marco's words) 'a crack [that] opens' and 'all spaces change, all heights, distances; the city is transfigured, becomes crystalline, transparent as a dragonfly' – and yet even that, as Calvino's story implies, is but one of many possibilities".

In "Remembering Esther: Anti-Semitism and the Conflict of Identity", Jeremiah Cataldo demonstrates that when we read the narrative of Esther against more recent testimonies and accounts of anti-Semitism, common patterns in social, political, and religious responses to conflict emerge. Furthermore, he argues that "when studied carefully, these patterns support a common model capable of cross-cultural application. This model supports the fundamental thesis that anti-Semitism is not simply a belief but a conflict over identity that produces beliefs and behavioral patterns consistent with deep-rooted prejudices. Moreover, this conflict is typically an 'absolute conflict' disguised as an 'institutional conflict'... and is usually triggered by perceived interruptions to institutionalized power".

Fiona Black explores the connections between the lamenting subject in the Complaint Psalms and the Ursuline nuns in the Possession at Loudun. In "Lamented or Demented: The Psalmist-Subject of the Complaints and the Possession at Loudun", Black argues that both "texts" reveal the means by which alterity (madness in the case of the nuns and hysterical lament in the case of the psalmist) is created, controlled and managed by others. Her essay considers "the psalms' alternative reality as the locus of a balancing act between the subject's complicity and annihilation. This, in turn, is pondered within the context of poetic discourse, which might be viewed as an impulse to showcase—and manage—'possession'".

Maia Kotrosits' "Romance and Danger at Nag Hammadi" argues that the famous story of the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts is more than just an interesting and quirky tale about an Arab peasant who discovers "the buried secrets of early Christianity". The story itself is demonstrably a colonialist relic that "represents and perpetuates the orientalist epistemological tropes that have since been fixed onto the individual texts themselves: seeking/finding, secrecy/unveiling (esoterism), and sexual taboo/sexual excess (asceticism/libertinism)." Drawing upon recent cultural studies interests in affect theory, she asks a very interesting question: "what is at stake in casting what is

called ‘Nag Hammadi literature’ as the romantic and dangerous ‘East’ to the Bible’s domesticated and rational ‘West’?”

The fifth essay in this issue concerns Dostoevsky’s notations in his copy of the Bible. In “Dostoevsky’s New Testament: The Significance of Random Reading”, Kristian Mejrup challenges the analysis of these markings by the Norwegian professor in Russian literary history Geir Kjetsaa, arguing that he neglects to focus on the importance of random reading. He asks how “we approach Dostoevsky’s use of the Bible in the light of his annotations to the New Testament”, particularly “when numerous voices clamour to inform us how they should be read”.

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Finally, we have seventeen book reviews in total for this issue. Apart from thirteen standard reviews, we also have a special section of four review essays focused on Antonio Negri’s book *The Labor of Job: The Biblical Text as a Parable of Human Labor* (2009). The reviews are as follows:

1. Philip R. Davies, *On the Origins of Judaism*. BibleWorld. London: Equinox Press, 2011 (Peter Miscall);
2. Robert P. Gordon, *Hebrews*. 2nd ed. Readings: A New Biblical Commentary. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008 (Philip Church);
3. Stuart Macwilliam, *Queer Theory and the Prophetic Marriage Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*. BibleWorld. Sheffield: Equinox Press, 2011 (Chris Meredith);
4. Coleman A. Baker, *Peter, Paul, and Recategorization in the Book of Acts: Memory and Narrative in Early Christianity*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011 (Anthony Rimell);
5. George Aichele, *Simulating Jesus: Reality Effects in the Gospels*. BibleWorld. London: Equinox, 2011 (Scott Elliott);
6. James G. Crossley, *Reading the New Testament: Contemporary Approaches*. London: Routledge, 2010 (Scott Elliott);
7. Lynne Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010 (Michael Carden);
8. Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005 (Roland Boer);
9. Alejandro F. Botta and Pablo R. Andiñach, eds., *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation*. Semeia Studies 59. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009 (Roland Boer);
10. Philip Culbertson and Elaine M. Wainwright, eds., *The Bible in/and Popular Culture: A Creative Encounter*. Semeia Studies 65. Readings: A New Biblical Commentary. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010 (Eric Repphun);
11. Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera, eds., *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011 (Christina Petterson);
12. John F. Sawyer, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006 (Richard Walsh);
13. Roland Boer, ed., *Secularism and Biblical Studies*. Biblical World Series. Sheffield, England, and Oakland, CT: Equinox, 2010 (Mark K. George).

The titles and reviewers in our focus section on Negri's book are:

1. "Review of Antonio Negri, *The Labor of Job*" (James Harding);
2. "Gutiérrez and Negri on Job: Between Theology and Materialism" (Adam Kotsko);
3. "Review essay on Antonio Negri, *The Labor of Job*" (Erin Runions);
4. "The Eye of Flesh: Negri's *The Labor of Job*" (Hugh Pyper).