

# Editorial

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Well, finally, we are back! Due to the delays involved with changing server, delays out of our hands, we have decided to present a bumper issue for the year, with seven articles and 21 book reviews. We apologise for the inability to access previous issues for most of the year, but all are now available for your reading pleasure on the University of Newcastle server. We particularly wish to welcome Chris Meredith to the role of book review editor (and journal site redesigner). It is a crucial role and yet not always recognized as it should be. He takes over from James Harding, who guided the book reviewing process for the last couple of years with his wisdom and sure hand.

In this issue, George Aichele, Tina Pippin and Richard Walsh explore the strange, intersecting worlds of the movies *Inception* (Nolan 2010) and *eXistenZ* (Cronenberg 1999), and the biblical Apocalypse of John (Book of Revelation). In “Revelations of the Dream”, they argue that “(i)n each of these, inescapable, labyrinthine, and finally unmanageable dreams or virtual realities both undercut the reader’s sense of reality and challenge the dominant modernist epistemology, for which the fantastic must always be secondary to waking reality”.

In “Probing the Homelessness of Jesus with Žižek’s Sublime Object”, Robert Myles points out that, while a connection between Jesus and homelessness is well-known, “an investigation into both the ideological and interpretive ramifications of such a connection remains underexplored”. Here, he argues that the image of Jesus as homeless is a romanticized one that “divorces it from the marginalizing reality of homelessness and the reduced capacity for agency that homeless persons typically possess”. Focusing on the Jesus simulacrum of Matthew’s gospel, with some help from Slavoj Žižek, Myles suggests that Matthew’s Jesus simulacrum is able to destabilize the binary constructs that “continue to pervade our thinking on homelessness, particularly when it comes to Jesus”.

Tim Stanley gives us a fascinating essay on the Coen brothers’ wonderful film *A Serious Man* (2007), noting, as many have before, its seeming debt to the Book of Job. However Stanley, with the help of Slavoj Žižek, argues that “the film stands in a long tradition of commentary on the book, and, in so doing, provides a radical interpretation of theodicy in the after-math of quantum mechanics”.

Dermot Nestor’s “We are Family: Deuteronomy 14 and the Boundaries of an Israelite Identity” challenges the constructivist perspectives that have dominated recent reconstructions of Israelite ethnic identity. He does so by engaging with the dietary prohibitions of Deuteronomy 14, along with theories from the field of cognitive psychology and with the work of Pierre Bourdieu, to argue “that the Priestly vision of ascribed membership in the entity Israel is framed by an essentialist mode of ethnic cognition which was widely diffused within Israelite society”.

Ed Conrad’s “God’s Visions and God’s Eyes in Ezekiel’s Surrealistic Imagery” is the beginning of a larger project that he and his wife Linda are currently working on: a surrealist reading of Ezekiel. Instead of reading the phrase מְרֵאוֹת אֱלֹהִים as “visions of God” and interpreting Ezekiel 1:4-28 as a “vision of God” that Ezekiel sees, Conrad’s “alternative reading sees them as a depiction of God’s vision – what God sees”. He also “highlights the significance of the recurring use of ‘eye’ (עֵינַי) and ‘eyes’ (עֵינַיִם) in 1:4-28, routinely overlooked by commentators. When Ezekiel says that he sees מְרֵאוֹת אֱלֹהִים, his claim is that he sees God’s visions; he sees what God sees. This accounts for Ezekiel’s capacity to see what is happening in the temple in Jerusalem while resident in Babylon, something that has troubled traditional critical scholarship”.

In “A Big Room for Poo: Eddie Izzard’s Bible and the Literacy of Laughter”, Christopher Meredith challenges the idea that biblical literacy is in decline. Indeed, instead he argues that when we examine Izzard’s use of biblical material in his stand-up tour, *Glorious*, it seems to be that “audiences in the global North are on the contrary so familiar with biblical texts, and so disquieted by this familiarity, that they need strategies to cope, laughter chief among them”. Through a critical engagement with Izzard’s version of Genesis 6-9 and Kristeva’s work on abjection, Meredith “calls into question the paternalistic metaphors that have underwritten discussion on the Bible’s role in popular culture and posits new avenues (and attitudes) of approach”.

And finally, in his essay “Barth, Žižek & the Cold War: Defending Radical Politics against the Totalitarian Concept”, Michael Jimenez argues that “the twentieth century theologian Karl Barth is a forerunner to [Badiou, Negri and Žižek] in his important critique of the totalitarian paradigm, which came by his life-long commitment to radical politics”. Putting Barth in dialogue with Žižek illustrates “a careful suspicion of the binary religious-political language behind some of the critiques of leftist thought” and compels us “to instead ask about the problems of the actual historical socialist states than to simply declare the goodness of liberal-democracy.”