

○ EDITORIAL

Roland Boer, University of Newcastle

Julie Kelso, University of Queensland and Bond University

One of the things that has happened in the years since *The Bible and Critical Theory* was first launched back in 2004 is the biblical studies blog, or biblioblogs as they are known. ‘Blog’ is short for weblog. It is a basic internet site that lists your latest entry in reverse order, archiving earlier entries by date. Even the most fervent Luddite can manage, since all you do is write and click – all the management issues are covered by popular blog managers like Blogger or Wordpress. Blogs, of course, can deal with any matter under the sun or moon. Travel impressions, Icelandic weather reports, what you can do with baked beans, political commentary ... the possibilities are endless. They might be written by one person or a group of people, they may be anonymous (which then generates the search for the real, historical author) or they may have the author’s pictures and information splattered all over them. Some will allow free discussion, with the risk of getting the odd crackpot firing off, while others moderate comments, censoring what does get up in response to an entry.

So also with the biblioblogs. You’ll find a good number of conservative biblioblogs around like Euangelion, which is very popular among a certain clientele. Then there’s the Musings of Thomas Verenna, which sets out to offer a good dose of suspicion on conservative claims about the New Testament and the figure of Jesus. James Crossley’s Earliest Christianity is a combative blog that doesn’t mind taking on his critics. The site called Biblioblogs offers a monthly interview with a biblioblogger and can be quite a bit of fun. The better blogs are the ones that make you laugh, provoke thought and trigger a response of your own. I might disagree with him at times, but I always read Jim West’s blog, as well as the one he set up called The Guild of Biblical Minimalists. Jim spares no-one, but he skewers you in the most enjoyable fashion.

I have a blog too, called Stalin’s Moustache. It has connections to other blogs I like (some of the ones I listed above are on the links section) and allows me to experiment with all sorts of writing – travel, politics, personal reflections, quotes and every now and then biblical matters. Sometimes what I post is thought in progress, and I enjoy the discussions with those who care to comment. But I have found that for every person who comments there are scores who read and don’t comment. Sometimes I meet some respectable person from my past who mentions that they are reading my blog, and I desperately try to remember whether there’s anything there they shouldn’t read.

What I like best about blogs is that they carry on discussions with people from anywhere in the world on matters biblical (or anything else for that matter). You don’t have to wait for conferences, or put up with colleagues/friends/significant others whose views you know anyway. But if you are planning a blog, make sure you say what you want to say succinctly and clearly. A few swear words can help, but only if it’s you. And regular posts help.

RB

* * *

In this, the first issue of *The Bible and Critical Theory* for 2009, we kick off with Lars K. Brun's 'Back to the Future: Reading Heidegger Reading Paul.' Here, Brun provides a close reading of Martin Heidegger's lectures on Paul from 1920-21. He focuses partly on Heidegger's early phenomenological philosophy, partly on his interpretation of 'primordial Christian experience of life', including his discussion of *parousia* in Paul. Brun argues that these early lectures in the phenomenology of religion demonstrate Heidegger's movement away from the Kantian philosophy of mind towards phenomenology: 'Heidegger's reflections on Paul and early Christianity are in other words opening shots in a tremendous philosophical showdown.'

Heidi Epstein's essay, 'Sour Grapes, Fermented Selves: Musical Shulammites Modulate Subjectivity,' introduces the theoretical insights of New Musicology to the Song of Songs. She places two popular songs that make use of the ancient song (Steeleye Span's 'Awake, awake' (1977) and the Pixies' 'I've Been Tired' (1987)) into conversation with the now well-known recent debate concerning the erotic content of the Song (Boer, Moore and Burrus), adding 'nuance, complexity, and discursive breadth to the latest biblical critical conversations about the Song's thematics.'

In his timely 'How to Read an Interpretation: Interpretive Strategies and the Maintenance of Authority,' Craig Martin argues that biblical scholars and instructors need to move beyond the simple cataloguing of various interpretations. Rather, we need to show just how interpretations are strategic, often in the service of various social agendas. Furthermore, he demonstrates just how 'certain modes of interpretation are questionable either insofar as they are misleading in some way, or insofar as they reinforce the unquestioned authority of the text under consideration.'

Michael Carden's 'Atonement Patterns in Biblical Narrative: Rebellious Sons, Scapegoats and Boy Substitutes' provides both an overview of Atonement ritual patterns and symbolism and an examination of how Atonement elements are played out in a number of narratives from Genesis, Joshua, Judges and 1 Samuel. He then explores the atonement patterns in the story of the rebellion and death of Absalom (2 Samuel 15-18), arguing that the story may be read productively through the homoerotic framework of the Hylas myth.

And in 'Bobbittizing God: On the importance of the divine genitals remaining unManageable,' Philip Culbertson muses on the genitalia of his God, exploring new metaphors for speaking about this God based on 'the character development of an Auckland drag queen called Ophelia Sphincta, as she learned to separate her biological sex from her performed gender' and on the Samoan third-gender called *fa'afafine*. He argues that we need to 'Bobbittize' this God and make him 'unManageable.'

Finally, books reviewed in this issue include:

1. John Jarick, *1 Chronicles*. 2nd Ed. and *2 Chronicles*. Readings: A New Biblical Commentary.
2. Jeffrey L. Staley and Richard Walsh, *Jesus, The Gospels, and Cinematic Imagination*.
3. Maijastina Kahlos, *Debate and Dialogue: Christian and Pagan Cultures c. 360–430*.
4. Kimberly B. Stratton, *Naming the Witch. Magic, Ideology, & Stereotype in the Ancient World*.
5. J. W. Rogerson, *According to the Scriptures: The Use of the Bible in Social, Moral, and Political Questions*.
6. Allan Stoekl, *Bataille's Peak: Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability*.
7. Gale A. Yee, ed. *Judges & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*.

8. Joy A. Schroeder, *Dinah's Lament: The Biblical Legacy of Sexual Violence in Christian Interpretation*.
9. Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy*.
10. Antonio Calcagno, *Badiou and Derrida: Politics, Events and their Time*.
11. Bruce Lincoln, *Religion, Empire and Torture: The Case of Achaemenian Persia, with a Postscript on Abu Ghraib*.
12. Julie Kelso, *O Mother, Where Art Thou? An Irigarayan Reading of the Book of Chronicles*.

JK