Words at War:

Liminality, revelation, and representation in apocalyptic literature

Submitted by Rosemary Elizabeth Beckham, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 27th October, 2008.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified, and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signed: Rosemary Beckham

Date: 27th October, 2008

Abstract

The focus of this study is revelation at the limits of communication. It considers the way in which (biblical) apocalyptic literature prominently figures the interconnection between liminality, revelation, and representation. The methodology asserts an indissoluble association between theology, philosophy and literature. As such it is interdisciplinary. A preliminary theory (and theology) of liminality interweaves the theological and philosophical contributions of, amongst others, Karl Barth, Graham Ward, Jürgen Moltmann and Jacques Derrida, thereby initiating a revised perspective on the constitution of literary apocalyptic text production and interpretation. Theorising the *limen* begins to describe the Trinitarian economy at work in Christian apocalyptic processing of scripture.

I begin with the idea that revelation (*apokalypsis*) is the experience of the *limen* itself (in a *coincidence* of opposites). Thus the *limen* (as an actively divine space) incorporates that which stands on both sides, in vertical and horizontal, linear and cyclical, spatial and temporal movements. I then propose that apocalyptic literature re-presents this complex economy in which the end is rehearsed simultaneously as limit, threshold, and rupture. Theologically, this complicates inter-relational notions of 'apocalyptic' and eschatology, and stimulates a debate on a metaphysics of violence in communication (between God, man and Creation). I conclude that, at the extreme limit of human understanding (where words fail), those with faith in God's love are opened out to revelation in the apocalyptic textual performance of the liminal economy, and thus to hope and forgiveness.

Stressing the importance of reading apocalyptically, I begin to demonstrate the relationship between Christian-canonical narratives and the broader western literary canon, the critical process having invited an exploration of those literary characteristics (of tone, mode and genre) shared by (biblical, modern and postmodern) texts. An important principle in the literary analyses is the association between apocalyptic text production and hermeneutics. Christopher Rowland's description of a 'visionary mode' explains how this process works. Thus the preliminary theory leads into a close reading of recent Russian and American works by Mikhail Bulgakov and Thomas Pynchon. These are compared to, and worked through, Mark's and John's gospels and the Book of Revelation. The interpretative approach widens the often self-limiting study of apocalyptic literature, and broadens theological debate on revelation. Thus it begins to show how the rhetoric of apocalyptic makes belief compelling.

Contents

Introduction

Part 1

Liminality, revelation, and representation

1. Revelation and Representation: Representation, apocalyptic and a theory of liminality

2. Liminality and reading apocalyptically

Part 2

Words at War

6. Words at war: apocalyptic genre and mode

7. Finding courage: Bulgakov's apocalypse

8. Domesticating terror: paranoia, resistance and revelation

9. Epilogue

Preface

The examiners' request for changes to my original submission encouraged me to interrogate and rethink several of its original assertions via the comments and suggestions made during the *viva voce* and in their subsequent report. The resubmission of this PhD thesis reflects this effort. In order to ensure that I have done justice to the critique received, I have included an additional chapter that attempts to reflect more clearly how I view the work of Graham Ward as a supplement to that of Jürgen Moltmann. As a result, it is longer than the usual prescribed length. The university procedures allow some leeway with regard to length and as the additional work is a clear indication of my having taken their comments seriously, this has been accepted by the examiners.

Copyright Material

Appendix 1 consists of lecture notes of Professor Christopher Rowland of the University of Oxford and has been removed by the author in all but the University of Exeter full submission version here for copyright reasons.

Introduction

i.   Revelation, liminality and representation

This thesis considers the nature of representation, revelation and mediation in relation to apocalyptic narratives of hope and despair. It affirms that liminality is central to apocalyptic literature as a performance of the uncertain, fluxional world-as-text, where in theological terms, with faith, the emergence of hope (as a movement towards the instauration of love) opens us to the promise of encounter with that which is ultimately other. Against this, we live in the time and space of the post-theological where feelings of despair, nihilism, and indifference dominate. In modern and postmodern discourses on representation, notions involving communication, between the self and that which is other and the return to right relationship, are often critiqued and rejected. In the consequent 'sense' of chaos (in which all belongs to the 'age of the sign') meaning is projected as 'local, community is tribal, society is pluralistic'. (Ward <u>Postmodern</u>, 585).[1] Thus despair (of always being in the middle), indifference (regarding endless deferral) and libidinous nihilism (as a result of being in perpetual flux) project, and derive from, the absence or death of God. As such, these apocalyptic variants of the end involve a rejection of the Christian liminal performance (in which the faithful are transformed through an encounter with the divine at the mediating interface between self and other) in favour of a negative alternative. It is in this closed liminal axis that the impact of detheologisation of language exposes how hope is defeated by paradigms of foreboding and despair.

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[1] Graham Ward,"Postmodern Theology". <u>The Modern Theologians: an Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century</u>. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997) 585 – 601. From within perceptions of a global 'marketplace', however, new theologies are emerging. They often involve kenotic economies of love and a new sense of God's mystery. Thus this study works between premodern, modern, and postmodern reflections on the revelation of the Word in words.

The choice of epigram sums this up: George Steiner's 'Saturday' as the 'longest of days' provides an evocative metaphor of liminality for our own times through which to read this thesis, and marks the movement from the sacred hope of fulfilment to the atomised despair of lack.[2] For, when stripped of its identification with Sabbath, Saturday dons the mantle of suffering identity as no-identity where concepts of rebirth to right relationship are fugitive or lost. In relation to the Christian narrative of crucifixion/resurrection, Saturday is the silent aporia into which all lack is poured, identifying a hiatus in which a critical moment of choice between death and life inheres. However, where courage is destitute, and *despair* becomes that dark moment of foreboding, hope is banished in indifference. Whether in the theologised or detheologised world-as-text, however, the fluxional, uncertain space we inhabit is, as such, liminal.

In view of this growing indifference, I propose that faith concepts of otherness and relations-in-difference are critical to the emergence of hope. For, these accept an analogical (and cosmological) worldview. The question is whether this reading of the apocalyptic scenario (as the dominant paradigm for New Testament textual form and content) can be usefully projected onto the recent crisis of representation (in which it is said that representation fails to communicate meaning and where correspondence falters at the limits of language); and whether, in an increasingly detheologised world, an analogy can be shown to exist between the crisis arising out of modernity and the theological concept of apocalyptic-eschatology that I present here. To what degree can it be asserted that the narrative content of the *via crucis* plays through the general form of representation, and will an exploration of the apocalyptic narrative performance in turn shed any light on the nature of representation to perhaps overturn the push to immanentism and atomism in modern paradigms?   Part 1 attempts two things therefore: first, to

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[2] George Steiner, <u>Real Presences</u>. (London: Faber and Faber, 1991) 232. C.f., epigraph. By 'post-theological', I mean the time in which secularism still dominates Western culture, and in which, although a search for religious meaning continues, it does so in terms which speak of a time 'after God'. Thus, for example, God may not be seen as an objective reality, but as a 'supernatural illusion', allowing Don Cupitt to write that the 'entire supernatural world of religion is a mythical representation of the world of language'. (Cupitt, xv). Don Cupitt, <u>After God: the Future of Religion</u>. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997). Thus, the postmodern *theologies* (of which there are many) encourage 'the deferral of meaning and the endless plurality of forces, political, cultural, physiological, economic, and psychological' tending to affirm that all is 'the construct of language'. (Ward 1997, 598).

present the Christian liminal process as evidenced in its apocalyptic-eschatological performance and production of scripture to show how hope, through faith, prevails as a manifestation of the divine will to creative goodness and love; and second, to explore and respond to the negative liminal paradigm of some modern and postmodern thinkers and writers, to consider its effect on (and perhaps infection of) the language of theology. Part 2 takes the ideas and conclusions from Part 1 into readings of two literary-apocalyptic texts which are emblematic of the problematic nature of representation.

ii.   Propaedeutic

This project grew out of a fascination with apocalyptic literature in and beyond New Testament scripture. When I first began to reflect on apocalyptic I naively took Christian scripture to be *self-evidently* so. Furthermore, I believed that I could identify (and thus usefully explore) a substantial body of writings and ideas in western literature shot through with Christian apocalyptic, in tone, mode or genre. As such, I had a preconception (or intuition) that: apocalyptic is simple to identify, its concerns easy to interpret, and its influence on our cultural views, rhetorics and modes of representation unequivocal. This 'innocent' perspective stemmed from the myriad of references made to the Apocalypse of John in our discourses (arts, politics, judiciary as well as society at large): to Armageddon and the final war between good and evil in the endtimes; to the last judgment; to the descent of God's eternal city and the restoration of creation; and to Christ's eschatological mediating role and message. Its symbols and imagery seemed to provide a grammar through which to debate things that matter most; and logically, therefore, a grammar that, given our Christian culture, must derive from and lie at the heart of Christianity and its scriptures. In the eight years that I have been exploring this thesis, I have not changed my mind but have come to realise that many complex and problematic issues and implications inhere in this grammar of extremes, forcing me to reflect seriously on the nature of language itself, its interpretation and thus also, the language of theology.

This interest has been further heightened by the realisation that since the Enlightenment a passionately divided (and divisive) ideological and theological debate has raged over what constitutes apocalyptic (more recently, differentiating its literary form from its content and function). Thus on a personal level, the purpose is to interrogate the mismatch between my own (initial and persistent) sense of the dominance of apocalyptic to Christian faith (and beyond in our culture) and the many resistances to this view that, in fact, reach back to the early centuries of the faith. To that end, I step back from the broader literature to engage first with that longstanding debate amongst theologians and biblical scholars about the constitution and meaning of apocalyptic and the apocalyptic text, before second attempting reader-response interpretations of that broader literature. In trying to understand the mismatch between positive and negative perspectives of apocalyptic, I attempt *inter alia* to highlight my own prejudices (of an intuitive resistance to some of the modern methodologies taken in this debate); and to approach the reading and interpretation of the New Testament with critical (diachronic and synchronic) integrity and sensitivity to its original author-believers and those later views that define apocalyptic negatively or too narrowly.

iii.   Aims and objectives

The main aims are to highlight the problematic interrelations between representation, revelation and the limits of language through an exploration of the apocalyptic text.

The arguments that I bring to the debate are: first, that theology, as the study of God's Word (*theo logos*), attempts to explain the Word, as revelation (*apokalypsis*), through human representation. Second, that this requires us to recognise that the relationship between knowledge of God and human knowledge is a complicated, unreliable and mediated process which, as an 'apocalyptic' experience, is performed in and through the limits of language. Third, that this process must be evident in, and predominantly constituted by the Christian narratives and paradigms defined herein as *apocalyptic*; because fourth, the

problematic of mediating God's irruptive Word is a central focus of the nature and purpose of Christ. Fifth, that mediation involves concepts of limit, boundary and threshold, thus of eschatology and incarnation, which I describe through notions of the *limen* and liminality (as the crisis point of communication and understanding). Sixth, that any notion of communication between God and man involves an analogical principle, and where human words (and actions) are understood to gain credit on the basis that they imitate the form of the divine Word itself. However, seventh, I attempt to show how that it is only through revelation of the Word that words have the potential to empower man disempowered. Thus finally, that the apocalyptic text presents a cosmological worldview (faith in divine-human relationality) in a self-aware, complex picture of how correspondence is mediated between unstable, inadequate human representation and the certainty of the Word.

Theologically, a main objective is to show that the nature and dissemination of *revelation* lies at the heart of the problematic issue of how we communicate between the self and the external other (between man and God, man and creation, man and man); but that it is also a major concern in secular discourses, where it is expressed as a crisis of representation, with outcomes in despair, atomism, misappropriation and indifference. The examination of apocalyptic through its engagement with this crisis belongs to the discourse on knowledge and leads to some fundamental questions about interpretation and representation. For, the term representation involves the way we communicate the world that, as *reading*, signifies our re-presentations through culturally-driven positions on knowledge and meaning. This study seeks therefore to highlight that the apocalyptic text exemplifies the complex way that we receive and interpret knowledge of the world as a grammar of extremes. Thus overall, this thesis interrogates how the Word of God is *made manifest* in apocalyptic texts (and through apocalyptic interpretation) and to what degree this understanding opens us to a deeper sense of the hope, love and forgiveness of the gospel.

iv.   Outcomes

The main contribution of this thesis to the field of apocalyptic is the exposure of the crisis of representation in the apocalyptic text, where it is experienced through the operation of the *limen*. To that degree, the main thread of the argument is presented first, as the experience of apocalyptic and the operation of the limen; second, the association of these two ideas and their relatedness to the crisis of representation and participation.

What distinguishes my work from many biblical and literary scholars is how I work between semantics, literary criticism and theology, the multi-faceted, self-reflexive methodologies opening out new approaches to biblical readings. In this sense, it moves behind at the same time as it complements the more specialist taxonomic approaches to reading scripture. Similarly, as the recourse to ideological criticism exposes and explores the critique and judgment embodied in Christian scripture, it shows how these tendencies and themes, intertextually and contextually, are carried into theological discourse beyond. It raises awareness of ideological positioning and the problematic of mediation in our will to meaning, and its close scrutiny of the apocalyptic tone of all language highlights the rationale behind the need to develop that awareness. Thus, for example, the chapter on Jürgen Moltmann adds to the more recent critiques of his theology in that it establishes a fault-line in his methodology that derives from a failure to take the problematic nature of representation (and its limits) seriously.

To conclude: as a (self-reflexive) exploration of language, the language of theology and the act of reading, this thesis takes a relatively novel approach and, although its outcomes are far from complete, the association of revelation with the liminal performance of reading is, I believe, original, particularly within biblical hermeneutics. Furthermore, the evidence of a highly influential reception-history of apocalyptic literature opens out new ways to review the scriptural texts through reception-history. It thus offers considerable scope for further engagement in the

discourse on apocalyptic literature and reading within different methodological fields: for example, biblical, literary-critical, cultural, philosophical and theological.

v.   Western views of apocalyptic literature

> Apocalypticism, broadly described as the belief that God has revealed the imminent end of the ongoing struggle between good and evil in history, has been a major element in the three Western monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. (McGinn, Collins and Stein ix).[3]

In an apocalypse, an interpreter/prophet *embodies the text* (often of a prophet from an earlier age) to experience and pass on a revelation about the future of astounding relevance for his own time and circumstance of crisis. This makes it temporally and spatially complex. Rich in symbolism, the narratives vividly paint a world in which supernatural forces of good and evil are locked in combat over the cosmos (including the human community and its representations), and where there is a continual, passing through and beyond our known limits. However, whilst the apocalyptic text is undoubtedly acknowledged as a formative constituent of Christianity and more broadly Christian culture, it has been reviled as much as it has been revered. In order to explore the relationship between biblical and modern apocalyptic texts and what they attempt to express, it is important, therefore, to note the depth and prevalence of the apocalyptic dialectic because the tension between extremes continues, in various guises, to affect all discussions of apocalyptic, reflecting thus its original war of words.

Let us look briefly at its history. Jewish apocalyptic literature is the primary western generic example of apocalyptic that flourished in the intertestamental period in a type of revelatory literature known as apocalypse. Many proto-apocalyptic texts exist in the Hebrew Bible, but there are few coherent, generic apocalypses. It is clear that in both testaments most apocalypses were deliberately

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[3] Stephen J. Stein, ed., <u>The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism</u>, Volumes 1-3. Eds. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins, Stephen J. Stein. Vol. 3. (New York: Continuum, 2000).

excluded from the final form of the canon.[4] This suggests a shift in values and understanding between early (heterodox) Christianity and a developing orthodoxy (and hegemony). Clearly, early Christians knew these texts because the apocalyptic voice modulates, and resonates in, Christian scripture. However, the fact that few clearly generic narratives survived the canonical process indicates that doubts over their scriptural authority existed at least from the third century, and that exclusion made it easier to deny the apocalypticism of the New Testament narratives and Pauline epistles.[5] In modernity, however, it was the rediscovery and publication of extra-canonical texts, such as 1 Enoch and the Ascension of Isaiah, which led Friedrich Lücke, in 1832, to complete a comprehensive study of the relationship between Jewish and Christian apocalypses and for a new debate to begin in earnest.[6]

Thus the degree to which the New Testament is constituted by the apocalyptic narrative has been hotly debated over the centuries. If many second-century figures, such as Irenaeus (who saw it as theologically critical), accepted the apocalyptic-eschatological outcomes of Revelation, interpretative shifts in understanding apocalyptic theology (as the driving force behind canonical Christian texts) took place around the third century. For example, Origen suggested that the Kingdom was not an historical event set in the future but was a form of salvation already active in the individual souls of men; and in the fifth century, Augustine proposed that Revelation should be viewed as a spiritual allegory, that the

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[4] Apart from Revelation, it is generally agreed that the only accepted apocalypse in the English Bible is contained within the Book of Daniel. For a consideration of the Danielic apocalypse, c.f., John J. Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature (New York: Crossroad, 1984): 85 – 115. Second Edition. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans and Dove, 1998). (I refer to the second edition except where indicated.)For a consideration of proto-apocalyptic and Jewish apocalyptic texts, c.f., P. D. Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975): P. D. Hanson, "Prolegomena to the Study of Jewish Apocalyptic", Magnalia Dei, the Mighty acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology. Ed. F. M. Cross. (New York: Doubleday, 1976): 389 – 413.

[5] C.f. Henry Chadwick, The Early Church. Revised ed. (London: Penguin, 1993):41 – 45. This gives a brief outline of the three grounds for orthodox authority: succession, the biblical canon, and, "the Rule of Faith": 41 –2; 42 – 44; 44 – 45.

[6] Friedrich Lücke, Versuch einer vollständigen Einleitung in die Offenbarung Johannis und in die gesamte apokalyptische Literatur (Bonn: Weber, 1832).

millennium events had begun with Christ's incarnation, and that they were being fulfilled in the life of the Church.[7]

Whilst it is commonly accepted therefore, that Jesus centralised an expectation of the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God, interpretation of his role in the apocalyptic narrative of the end of the world differs greatly, is often obfuscated or reinterpreted spiritually and allegorically rather than historically. In the process, it has been possible to segregate Jesus' gospel for the poor and Paul's ethical theology from the overarching apocalyptic-theological narrative, and to separate the vocalised debates and parabolic analogies from Jesus' urgent message about the end of the world and history. One reason for this has been the difficulty in explaining the delay of the promised Second Coming. Any affiliation to apocalyptic-eschatology has too often, therefore, been described as a sectarian tendency popularly associated with extremist millenarian movements.[8] Thus, whilst it is clear that apocalyptic literature has had a foundational influence on European culture (including its literature), western orthodox thinking mistrusts the apparent non-dependency on logic by the apocalyptic interpreter, writer or believer which has had dampened and undermined its influence.

Alongside this, a vigorous debate in modernity has set out to distinguish between 'apocalypticism' (social development of apocalyptic groups), 'apocalyptic' (definitions of an apocalyptic theology), and 'apocalypse' (literary genre) and the word 'apocalyptic' still elicits 'perplexity and embarrassment' amongst many scholars. (Collins Apocalyptic, 1). Collins writes for example, that

> "apocalyptic" is popularly associated with fanatical millenarian expectations, and indeed the canonical apocalypses of Daniel and especially John have very often been used by millenarian groups. Theologians of a more rational bent are often reluctant to admit that such material played a formative role in early Christianity. (Collins 1998, 1).

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[7] C.f. Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages (London, Pimlico: 1993): 29.
[8] C.f. Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus (New York: MacMillan, 1961).

This perspective cannot be ignored because it contains the seeds of ideological difference that associates apocalyptic with irrationality. To that degree, how one reads the apocalyptic text is of seminal importance.

In The Pursuit of the Millennium Norman Cohn suggests that misreadings of Christian apocalypses have often resulted in radical and dangerous social and political outcomes.[9] He blames much of the violence in modernity, including Nazism and Bolshevik Communism, on the irrational extremism of millenarian readings of apocalyptic literature, asserting thus that 'a quasi-apocalyptic phantasy' inheres in the work of Karl Marx. (Cohn, 287).[10] Thus he claims that in modernity, 'traditional norms and relationships are disintegrating' and medieval misreadings of Christian apocalypse have led us to a century of violence, culminating in 'the giant fanaticisms which in our day have convulsed the world'. (Cohn 288). This extremism continues to influence us today, for example in American neo-conservatism.[11]

Although Cohn's work on millenarianism stresses the *untypical* nature of attempts by sectarian movements to improve the lot of the poor, his extreme language leaves a residual sense of the millenarian activists' unschooled and *irrational* thinking that, according to him, result in a distortion and vulgarisation of the canonical texts and their subsequent interpretations. (Cohn 281). When the existence of these groups are linked to specific social conditions, the socio-political paradigms in which the demand 'to purify the world by destroying the agents of corruption' are constant. (Cohn 285). Accordingly, millenarianism is seen as a specific kind of salvationism with its roots in Revelation:

> Christianity has always had an eschatology ... a doctrine concerning 'the last times', ... and Christian millenarianism was simply one variant of Christian eschatology. It referred to the belief held by some Christians, on the authority of the Book of

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[9] Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium (1993).
[10] C.f., Cohn 281 – 288.
[11] Cohn's work, of course, does not reach up to the present time, in which the language of violence taken from apocalyptic texts from an earlier time continue to promulgate division and prejudice; e.g., in the language of contemporary fundamentalists, such as George W. Bush and Osama ben Laden.

Revelation (XX, 4-6), that after his Second Coming Christ would establish a messianic kingdom on earth and would reign over it for a thousand years before the Last Judgement. … Christians already interpreted that part of the prophecy in a liberal rather than a literal sense, in that they equated the martyrs with the suffering faithful – i.e., themselves – and expected the Second Coming in their lifetime. (Cohn 13).

What he fails to acknowledge is the apocalyptic tone of his own rhetoric. For without a deeper understanding of the attempts of the apocalyptic text to liberate the disempowered by means of divine revelation, words like 'desperate' and 'fanatic', which Cohn links together and repeats in a derogatory rhetoric, forge an picture of idiosyncratic extremism that lacks the counter-argument of apocalyptic theology's transformatory potential. Whilst millenarianism should not be confused with apocalypticism, let alone with apocalyptic literature, it is nonetheless hard to separate thoughts of one from the other. The sense that groups misread and vulgarise the canonical texts to whip a populace into revolutionary activity against the prevailing hegemony is, at one and the same time, true and ultimately misleading. Questions of interpretation as misinterpretation are thus central to the dialectic between those who approach apocalypticism from a position of disempowerment, and who misuse its central tenets from a position of power. Understanding these shifts in point-of-view is essential to any reading of apocalyptic texts, and requires a greater understanding of the inner workings of liminality. Thus the overall purpose of this study is to enhance the reading process.

vi.   Methodological approach

As noted above, a multi-faceted approach has been essential to make the necessary connections between apocalyptic, revelation, representation and liminality. The predominant methodology that I employ of reader-response criticism recognises two things: first that the nature and form of apocalyptic are not easy to identify, and thus that their meaning and intent have been disputed and fought over. Second, that it is disingenuous to pass off representation and the act of

reading as simple affairs. Through self-reflexivity, one objective here is to expose my own position through the prejudices of others.

It is, of course, clear that sociological approaches have usefully attempted to overcome a perceived imbalance in other methodological approaches: according to David Horrell for example, the 'existential and individualising hermeneutic' of Rudolph Bultmann and 'the antihistoricism of some more recent structuralist approaches' have undermined our understanding of early Christian communities. (Horrell 1).[12] And it is evident that, in focusing on 'a specific community and on change over time, social-scientific studies have broadened our understanding of the differences between early Christian communities' (Horrell 4). In the main, whilst taking account of historical and, in particular, social-scientific approaches to New Testament studies, I have opted to move away from them because a simple diachronic approach to specific historical communities, often unintentionally, detracts from the power and cohesion of the apocalyptic narrative as a *whole text*.

If redaction-criticism risks losing sight of the overarching apocalyptic plot in the Christian narratives, it also reduces the emotional impact (as a language of affect) which the reader derives from an active participation in the narrative whole. Understandably, social-scientific methods seek 'to put body and soul together again', thereby avoiding a form of 'methodological docetism'. (Scroggs 165 - 166).[13] But surely the ability to read the texts in their entirety opens the reader to renewed interpretative freedom without necessarily disuniting body and soul. Arguably, this freedom is similarly restricted in everyday religious practice, where again, a selective taxonomy of the texts directs the believer through orthodoxy. However, this loss is particularly evident in the taxonomic approach of biblical studies. Overall, specific scriptural extracts are scrutinised at the expense of the whole and, therefore, I propose returning to a more holistic hermeneutical approach to reading.

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[12] David G. Horrell, <u>The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement</u> (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996): 1-6.
[13] Robin Scroggs, "The Sociological Interpretation of the New Testament: The Present State of Research", <u>New Testament Studies</u>. 26 (1980) 164 – 179.

Accordingly, I have tried to bear in mind George Steiner's thesis that, in literary analysis, Plato conjoins the three semantic fields of 'the theological, or the 'trans-rational', the philosophical and the poetic'. (Steiner Grammars, 42).[14] With Steiner, I accept that 'it is this conjunction which affords his [Plato's] profoundly disquieted analyses of the creative their intellectual resonance and drama of feeling' because that resonance involves the acceptance, questioning, or even rejection of the revelation of the Word in words. (Steiner Grammars, 42). To that degree, critique is already embodied in Christian scripture, inheres in the literary works of western literature beyond, and requires us to recognise the inter- and intra-textual dialogism of texts.

Any doubt as to the 'fascination with the meaning of history and especially of historical transitions,' as central to the apocalyptic text, is overcome in Bernard McGinn's investigation of the reception-history of apocalypses beyond the intertestamental period. (McGinn *et al* ix).[15] He explains how apocalyptic texts have influenced our ideas on Satan's role in the drive to a cataclysmic end of history in the so-called Dark Ages and in the more settled culture of Medieval Europe.[16] Anglo-Saxon culture, for example, already had a proto-apocalyptic tradition of its own before the arrival of Christianity, which certainly suggests a natural affinity between its own generic examples and the apocalypses imported by Christian missionaries. Thus, we can see that the apocalyptic text has clearly had a profound influence with specific regard to English literature, which may help to explain the easy assimilation of Christianity into Northern paganism, because the synergy between Anglo-Saxon beliefs and Christian narrative lines and theological paradigms is arguably a natural one.[17] This is rehearsed in numerous plot lines of

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[14] George Steiner, Grammars of Creation (London: Faber & Faber, 2001).
[15] Stephen J. Stein, Ed., The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Volume 3 *op. cit*.
[16] Bernard McGinn, Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages (New York: Columbia UP, 1979); Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil (San Francisco: Harper, 1994)
[17] C.f., Edward L. Risden, Beasts of Time: Apocalyptic Beowulf (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

texts in Medieval and Renaissance literature, the latter taking us into the complex area of the subjective self.[18]

Finally, a predominant aim of this study is to open up the significance of the Christian apocalyptic paradigm to general literary-critical view. I have therefore looked for an approach that acknowledges how a loss of familiarity with the biblical texts reduces the ability to identify it. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode have somewhat exceptionally acknowledged 'a gap of ignorance' between our contemporary knowledge of general literature and the sacred texts which have influenced it. (Alter and Kermode 2-3).[19]

> It has been said that the best reason for the serious study of the Bible – for learning how to read it well – is written across the history of Western culture: see what happens when people misread it, read it badly, or read it on false assumptions. (Alter and Kermode 2).

This point is well made: little or no knowledge of the Bible impacts on our recent readings of the literary canon just as much as does biblical misreading due to ideological prejudice, or to the careless extraction of selected passages. Biblical allusions (intra- and inter-textual) that go unrecognised or unheeded lead as inevitably to misreadings as do extracts taken out of the context of the whole scriptural work. As a consequence, ignorance of the dominant literary-biblical paradigms arguably impoverishes our cultures, especially when there is a failure to understand that many of our theological, philosophical *and* secular doctrines are constituted by these paradigms.[20]

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[18] E.g. Piers Plowman and King Lear. C.f. Ed. C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich, The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984); Ed. R. K. Emmerson, R. B. Herzman, The Apocalyptic Imagination in Medieval Literature (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1992).

[19] Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, ed. "Introduction," The Literary Guide to the Bible (London: Fontana Press, 1997).

[20] Against this, a rare postmodern example of genuine engagement with the apocalyptic paradigm is found in the work of Jacques Derrida, who asserts that *all* writing is apocalyptic, thus marking its place in the philosophy of language. Jacques Derrida, '"Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy," Semeia 23 Derrida and Biblical Studies. Robert Detweiler, Ed. (1982): 63 – 97. C.f., chapter 3.

vii.   Apocalyptic theology

I have already suggested that in systematic theology the centralisation of apocalyptic has been resisted. However, there are some notable recent exceptions: for example, Jürgen Moltmann who, in <u>Theology of Hope</u> and <u>The Crucified God</u>, expands and reworks the assertions of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer via later German theologians such as Ernst Käsemann, Martin Kähler and Wolfhart Pannenberg, all of whom interpreted the New Testament apocalyptically.[21] Moltmann's re-reading of apocalyptic-eschatological theology attempts to radicalise the concept and nature of hope in the promise of the Kingdom of God in the face of the despair and indifference induced by man's inhumanity to his fellow man in modernity (the *Shoah*, in particular); induced too, by the seeming failure of human autarky to succeed in changing the world for the better without, or in the absence of, God. As such, he engages with secular/secularising views. This is important because the debate about apocalyptic-eschatology is external and internal to the discipline and has had an important cultural impact on western thinking. For different but associated reasons, in secular-driven texts, it is often emerges as a resistance to God. Moltmann sees dehumanisation as an inevitable outcome of natural theology and the deism of Enlightenment thinking, arguing that a particular view of a perfect but distant God with its roots in Greek metaphysics has infiltrated the God of the Bible to the detriment of hope in the promise. His work aims to bring Christianity back to its apocalyptic roots, and thence, to hope within history.[22] This engagement with the ideas of modern (and postmodern) secularism with apocalyptic will, therefore, be another focus of this study.

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[21] Jürgen Moltmann, <u>Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology</u>. Trans. James W. Leitch. Preface to 2002 edition. Richard Bauckham (London: SCM Press, 1967, 2002); first published as, <u>Theologie der Hoffnung</u> (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1965); <u>The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology</u>. Trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden. Preface to 2001 edition. Richard Bauckham (London: SCM Press, 1974, 2001); first published as <u>Der gekreuzigte Gott</u> (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1973).
[22] C.f. J. Moltmann, <u>Hope</u>: 13f; <u>Crucified</u>: chapter 6.

viii.   Literary readings

Part 1 considers the complex interplay between revelation, liminality and the crisis of representation as evidenced in the apocalyptic text, and reflects on the relationship between hope and despair, the conclusions of which establish some parameters for an exegesis of two literary texts in Part 2. There is no lack of apocalyptic texts in our own times and I have selected two authors from Russia and the United States to demonstrate the pervasiveness and centrality of apocalyptic literature in our own times. Between these two extremes, the works of many western European writers can be inserted: Joseph Conrad, H. G. Wells, D. H. Lawrence, Franz Kafka, George Orwell, Albert Camus, T.S. Eliot and Samuel Beckett immediately spring to mind. The readings play Christian apocalyptic texts through the respectively modern and postmodern works of Mikhail Bulgakov and Thomas Pynchon, in which allusions to the Bible are prolific and richly textual. Bulgakov has arguably produced a rare example of the generic form whereas Pynchon works in a clearly literary apocalyptic mode. For this reason, they exemplify both the form and content of apocalyptic literature (and in Bulgakov's case, its function), and help to broaden our understanding of an apocalyptic worldview.

ix.   Structure

Part 1 consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces key concepts and terms in relation to the problematic relation between revelation and representation. Chapter 2 looks at liminality in relation to apocalyptic interpretation. Chapter 3 focuses on the modern/postmodern crisis of representation. Chapters 4 and 5 form the theological heart of the thesis and focus on apocalyptic-eschatology and liminality through the cross and the suffering body. As a whole, Part 1 aims to establish the nature and significance of the apocalyptic text through a theory (and theology) of liminality, and of a Christian apocalyptic performance against that of the truncated, liminal readings of modernity. Part 2 narrows its focus to concentrate on comparative readings of specific literary texts, from however, the broader literary canon beyond scripture.

x.   Chapter summaries

Chapter 1 looks at the language of theology and definitions of revelation, establishing and defining some key terms and how they will be used to set up parameters for recognising and reading the apocalyptic text. It works predominantly through Aquinas, Karl Barth and to a lesser degree, Graham Ward. It suggests that in the modern age, the tendency arising out of modern discourse to favour reason over affect forces prejudicial distinctions that are reflected in a hegemonic methodology. The chapter thus considers the context and need for a greater understanding of apocalyptic interpretation, before proposing that revelation always presents itself through a liminal economy that negotiates between the Word and our words. The chapter concludes with a theory of liminality that extends that of Victor Turner into notions of representation.

The focus of chapter 2 is on liminality in relation to reading as a response to and performance of revelation (i.e., God's self-disclosure). It works predominantly through Christopher Rowland, Ernst Käsemann and Elisabeth Fiorenza.[23] The chapter ends with two readings of the creation narratives that focus on analogical relations, representation and the liminal paradigm. The overall aim is to show the complex nature of the *limen* (as apocalyptic-eschatology), and thus distinguish between representation as the crisis point between self and other (and the end of representation), and Christian apocalyptic grammar and scripture (an opening to hope and divine promise). Not only does this chapter give a closer sense of what apocalyptic is and how it works, but provides two templates (positive and negative) of liminality through which to consider the crisis of representation in chapter 3.

Chapter 3 explores how the association of apocalyptic and liminality can usefully inform the epistemological (and affective) crisis of subjectivity and representation in late modernity. It questions how we can say that we 'know' God (through Augustine), and compares this to post-theological attitudes. Through

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[23] The appendix which accompanies this chapter consist of unpublished teaching notes kindly given to me by Christopher Rowland on *merkabah* interpretation.

Adorno, Massumi, Derrida and Barthes, it considers subjectivity in relation to the crisis of representation and liminality to show how these perspectives reflect and play through the post-lapsarian liminal paradigm described in chapter 2. It concludes that language never quite rids itself of the notion of the *limen* as an opening (*apokalypsis*) to encounter and thus to transformation. At the heart of this view stand relationship, responsiveness, and responsibility, and the analogy of faith.

The notion of analogy establishes the theological discourse of chapters 4 and 5 on Moltmann and Ward. Chapter 4 reflects on how, when played through modern theories of subjectivity and dialectics, the profound theological message of hope and the cross of Jürgen Moltmann are attenuated by his use of dialectics and an inability to recognise his own prejudicial, universalist rhetoric. It looks closely at Moltmann's use of Ernst Bloch's work on hope and despair, and his own (unintentional) dualism that arguably arises out of modern thinking and being caught up in a polemic against the analogy of being. Chapter 5 considers important aspects of Ward's work on analogy and participation. It aims to show: first, how his approach to analogy supplements that of Moltmann; and second, how relations-in-difference has helped me to deepen my development the beginnings of a theology of liminality. It reflects on his theology of meaning and the sign; participation with regard to the body, desire and difference; the body of Christ and displacement; the performed (analogical) negotiation of relationship-in-difference through the body (of Christ): and the eucharist. It concludes with a tentative theology of liminality read through the tenets of faith.

Part 2 consists of forensic readings of apocalyptic works by two authors (Mikhail Bulgakov and Thomas Pynchon) who respectively exemplify modern and postmodern apocalyptic literature beyond scripture. The aim is to present reader-response analysis of non-scriptural apocalyptic forms through scriptural interpretations that demonstrate the performance and experience of apocalyptic through the *limen*. As such, it illustrates how the two liminal paradigms influence and direct our views of the broader cultural text; and shows how some works of

fiction take up the ideas, form and content of apocalyptic, that once seen, open the reader to a new awareness of well-known, influential texts that have not previously identified as apocalyptic by the dominant literary-critical strands.

Chapter 6 sets up the two close readings by adding literary to the theological parameters of Part 1. It examines the apocalyptic mode and genre in order to facilitate recognition of the characteristics of apocalyptic, thus opening the texts' liminal paradigms to view. There is also a brief explanation of my own position within reader-response criticism.

Chapter 7 considers how eastern orthodox apocalyptic plays into the work of the Russian author and playwright, Mikhail Bulgakov who, in the midst of Stalinist persecutions, writes a Christian apocalypse of the most intensely complete kind. It shows how, in performing through the Christian apocalyptic narratives (in particular, Revelation), he foregrounds apocalyptic-eschatology and the liminal paradigm; and thus, against the project of modernity, is able to provide a legacy of hope for a nation deprived of its faith and freedom.[24]

Chapter 8 considers the apocalyptic worldview of Thomas Pynchon that, in his deployment of a strategy and narrative of paranoia, reflects Jacques Derrida's nuclear discourse and a pessimistic, almost-closed liminal paradigm. It considers Mark's gospel through negative liminal and apocalyptic-eschatological readings that reference and contrast Pynchon's closed liminal paradigm with that of Christian scripture.[25] As such, it demonstrates and draws together the close relationship between the two liminal paradigms presented in Part 1.

Part 2 concludes with a brief epilogue that gives a view on where this thesis is culturally situated, and how and in what areas it could be developed further.

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[24] Mikhail Bulgakov, The Master and Margarita. Trans. Michael Glenny. (London: The Harvill Press, 1996). Two appendices provide respectively an outline of Bulgakov's polemical anti-modern logic, and a structural analysis that shows the close affinity with Revelation's montage technique of cycles.
[25] Thomas Pynchon, Gravity's Rainbow. Jonathon Cape 1978. (London: Picador (Pan), 1975).

Revelation and Representation

Representation, apocalyptic and a theory of liminality

I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open…"Come …and I will show you what must take place."

1. Chapter summary

Chapter 1 looks at the language of theology and ways of reading through notions of apocalyptic and liminality. In a turn away from the quasi-scientific methods of modernity, it establishes the parameters for reading apocalyptically. It begins first with establishing and defining how the key terms will be used throughout. Second, it considers the relation between language and the language of theology, turning to theological definitions of revelation and the distinctions made between revelation as apocalyptic and as disclosure from reason. It works through Aquinas, Karl Barth and to a lesser degree, Graham Ward. I will propose that in the modern age, there has been a tendency to favour reason over affect because the methodologies arising out of modern discourse force these distinctions. Third, in order to establish a theory of liminality, it moves to consider the context out of which a desire arose to advocate the need for a greater understanding of apocalyptic interpretation, before, fourth, proposing that revelation always presents itself through a liminal economy that negotiates between the Word and our words.

2. Introduction:

Few question the disturbing yet often profoundly hopeful influence and effect on Christianity and western culture of Jesus' Revelation to John in the Book of Revelation. The narrative, in which Christ and Antichrist fight the final battle of and at the end of history, plays through prophecies of warnings and comfort, life and death, despair and hope, to reveal the promise of final victory for good over evil in what seems to be a dialectics of polar opposites. At the same time, it effectively describes the operation of revelation (as the rupture of God's Word, as *Logos*, into words) as it is received by and relayed in the words of a prophet-believer. Many have questioned the concept of apocalypticism both as interpretative means to and dominant message of Christian theology, seeing the literary and theological manifestations of this apocalypse as inconsistent with much of the form and content of the other New Testament texts. Instead of concentrating on inconsistencies and differences, however, I aim to mark out their literary and thematic commonalities through a liminal paradigm that, in my view, draws together apocalyptic and eschatology through a crisis in representation. This, in turn, aims to show how this can be usefully applied more broadly to our own cultural context, in particular, to the form and content of some of our modern and postmodern literary texts.

The thesis presented is that the Christian apocalyptic experience represents a liminal rupture of the divine into the world *as text*. For, although the notion of revelation drives the belief in all sacred scripture, in the New Testament, it achieves symbolically new heights: Christ *is* the Word mediating meaningful relationship between God and believers (as, for example, in John's Gospel, where Jesus Christ is represented as creative *Logos*). He is medium and message (his name, Jesus Christ, tells us this), and I argue that this very notion opens us to the debate on language. As such, I view biblical *apokalypto* as a hermeneutic production of Christian grammar that reveals a secret truth about God and the world through the performance of *Logos* and the scriptural world-as-text, and *apokalypis* as a genre of prophecy arising out of such a revelatory process. Furthermore, that by advocating the importance of liminality to apocalyptic models of revelation in the world-as-

text, I assert that a greater awareness of the interpretative techniques in tandem with an understanding of the apocalyptic tone, mode and genre helps to deepen our reading experience to fully expose the problematic of encounter between the self and other in the crisis of representation.

A problem of representation is the way that analogical language is viewed as either univocal or equivocal. In either case, communication between God and man is bound to falter. With this fault-line in mind, I argue that it is only through the development of a theory of liminality, which clearly links apocalyptic through the protological and eschatological *limen*, that the possibility of access to God – and arguably thus to a sense of what reality can be - can be considered in our representations. As such, the experience of apocalyptic in the operation of the *limen* – herein a term used to express the limit of communication –aims to provide a template which can be mapped on to the recent crisis of representation and participation. For, I have observed that both the eschatological warnings in the apocalyptic narrative and the notion that, ontologically, all language only ever speaks, or perhaps better *narrates*, itself resonate in recent notions of representation, where the liminal operation is described as either the violence or the end of discourse.[26] At the same time, as Christian grammar, liminality focuses revelatory experience of knowledge of God *at the limit* of understanding to present the opening to God's Word as hope in the promise of a world transformed. The liminal paradigm aims thus to be a theological and literary template through which first to interpret the New Testament texts and, second, to open the crisis of representation to the theological problematic of analogy to language.

Theologically, apocalyptic concerns God as the mysterious and revealing Word and, arguably, many of the scriptural and western literary texts, although not apocalypses, display aspects of the literary tone and mode in which the desire for revelation at times of (eschatological) crisis is embedded. Indeed Jacques Derrida

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[26] C.f., Walter Benjamin. <u>One-Way Street and Other Writings</u>. Trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1985). 109: "All language communicates itself".

has gone so far as to argue that all language is apocalyptic in tone.[27] Whilst not all apocalyptic paradigms are positive, all manifest attitudes of engagement with, refusal of, or indifference to the limit, or *limen*, as the interface between self and other. That is why I extend the notion of eschatology to mean not only a concern with endtimes as subject matter for Christian narrative but also as the end of meaningful, communicative language. It is thus that the exploration of apocalyptic as a liminal process sets up the possibility of a comparison between the crisis in Christianity and the recent crisis in representation and cognition – where both are seen as eschatological.

For me, the liminal process signifies the conjoining of apocalyptic (the Word incarnate) and eschatology (the limit of language) that is arguably the hermeneutic driving force of early Christian followers/text producers who, in their disparate communities of faith, perform through the axial point of the crisis of crucifixion in a move from despair to faith, hope and all-forgiving love. This faith-driven process is grounded in participation and provides, in effect, the means to uncover the meaning of Jesus as *Christ* incarnate, kenotic and eschatological. The process is two-fold. For, at the same time as it brings meaning to his story, it narrates the nature of participation in and relationship to that story in its various forms (gospel, apocalypse, theological epistle, doxology and liturgy), though which to inculcate and perpetuate the community of faith. This is highly significant to any theology of reading and response.

All Christian narrative is driven by the interpreter-authors' sense that prophecy is given to them because, in faith, they are living the endtimes.[28] Their witness is a w*ritten* witness. Arguably, the apocalyptic-eschatological story in the Revelation to John, when used as a template, gives pointers to how apocalyptically-driven readings dominate all Christian text-production. It exposes the unfolding God-driven revelation of and *as* scripture by describing the nature of Jesus as

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[27] Jacques Derrida, "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy." Semeia 23."Derrida And Biblical Studies" (1982): 61 - 97. C.f., Chapter 3, Section 5.
[28] C.f., 1 Cor. 12, 7-10; 28; 13, 3-5.

anointed saviour of humankind within a narrative inspired by the community's eschatological experience of loss combined with expectations of judgement, salvation, resurrection and the coming kingdom, and hermeneutically interpreted through both their life-experience and their experience of existing sacred texts. This text, perhaps more than any other, exposes how the performative process and resulting narratives are concerned less with historical record than with gospel witness as an expression of faith performed through *divine* encounter. That witness proclaims the good news that Jesus is Christ and asserts a guarantee of enlightened encounter with the trinitarian Godhead: God the Father is encountered through his relationship to the Son and the nature of that relationship is interpreted in a processional movement through the Spirit. This witness to and participation of trinitarian relationship is made possible, and in part comprehensible, by the textual interpretation of paschal events (reinforced and experienced in the rituals of baptism and eucharist). Thus, it is unsurprising that John gives primacy to Christ as *Logos* because God-*as*-Word provides the means to express how a sense of presenced encounter arises from the words, experienced through the *limen*.

Throughout the New Testament, what I call the liminal paradigm is represented through the crisis elicited by Jesus' life and death presenting as it does, at one and the same time, an endpoint (or barrier) to faith and an opening to new faith and hope. In that sense, the paschal events are describing the (apocalyptic-eschatological) experience of loss and the radically new. This is why, through the development of a heightened awareness of form and content, our understanding can be deepened through the inextricable connection of the crisis of the narrative played out *in* a parallel crisis *of the text*. However, in order to fully appreciate the nature of this parallel crisis in and as apocalyptic literature, it is necessary to recognise that the cumulative, complex narrative of Jesus Christ (as mediator between God and humanity) takes place within a world of textual representation. Furthermore, to appreciate it as hermeneutically driven by a scriptural interpretation of the life events and sayings of Jesus as fed through the performances of his near-contemporary followers. It is in this sense that Jesus emerges as Christ from these inter-textual and trans-textual performances. Just as

in the Easter events, Jesus both dies and is resurrected. And in presenting a liminal theory, I will argue that it is at the limit of language (a space in which words fail) that the Word presents a trace of itself as both fugitive and present, and where the paschal events thus symbolise the liminal space and operation as they are embodied in Christ's own body.

A question remains, however, as to whether this reading of the apocalyptic scenario (as the dominant paradigm for New Testament textual form and content) can be usefully projected onto the recent crisis of representation (in which it is said that representation fails to communicate meaning and where correspondence falters at the limits of language); and whether, in an increasingly detheologised world, an analogy can be shown to exist between the crisis arising out of modernity and the theological concept of apocalyptic-eschatology that I am presenting here. To what degree can it be asserted that the narrative content of the *via crucis* plays through the general form of representation, and will an exploration of the apocalyptic narrative performance in turn shed any light on the nature of representation to perhaps overturn the push to immanentism and atomism in modern paradigms? This question is, of course, a theological one that, in turn, implicates both the language of theology, as our (inadequate) means of speaking about God, as well as secularised language where, when the limit becomes a barrier to meaning, not only is God posited as dead, but so too is any notion of communication, participation and relationship. The investigation of the text, as an apocalyptic performance of the complex nature of limit as barrier and/or threshold, must therefore look at the *limen* as the interface between self and other, man and God, and this necessitates presenting an analogical view that plays *between* univocity and equivocalness. One way of exploring this is to look at how the liminal operation of the scriptural texts affects and plays through the language of theology. Another is to reflect on the broader canon of western literary apocalyptic texts.[29]

The methodological approach I take throughout is, therefore, to attempt imaginative readings of selected scriptural and literary texts in order to reflect on

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[29] Chapters 1-4 do the former, whilst Part 2 does the latter.

whether the theme of crisis (as content) plays into the form. Hermeneutics, ideological- and reader-response criticism provide supportive methods. So, for example, in this chapter, I consider the debate on language and the language of theology through crisis and liminality, and finish with a reading of Genesis 1-3 that aims to sum up the importance of a grammatical logic of liminality to Christian representation and interpretation. Here, I explore the *limen* in order to mark three interrelated aspects of representation: God as the performative, creative Word, the analogical play between God's and human representation, and the effect of disobedience on the correspondence between the word and the thing.

3. Key definitions:

In the introduction, I have already begun to use some terms untypically. The following descriptions aim to briefly clarify the way I will apply keyword terms and themes, each of which will be more fully discussed as the thesis unfolds.

Representation:

The term representation is interpreted as the way we communicate the world in/as language. It expresses the dialogue between the self and that which is external and other (theologically, between man and God, man and creation). This involves knowledge, cognition and meaning. In one sense, a bringing-forth, presenting, or more exactly, a presencing to the mind of an idea, concept or thing, in its articulation is a re-presentation, or re-presencing, of that idea, concept or thing. As such, a discourse is taking place (a dialogical relation) between thought and expression. In another, the concept of correspondence further complicates the process by providing a conceptual key to how each aspect of language is translated, or converted, as if from one language to another (perception, thought, expression etc). In this way, all representation bears upon identity: likeness, belongingness and difference as they relate to and participate in the world. The relation between the parts is grammatical - modally and morphologically dynamic. In relation to

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theology as talk about God, representation might be further described as the articulation of knowledge of God experienced *in faith* and to some degree *in being*.

Scripture:

Scripture is defined as sacred writing, that is, it is writing that is set apart for worship. Within that sacred space, readers receive God-driven revelation of God to humankind. As such, scripture reveals God's nature and, for this reason, is canonised (separated out from the profane as a sacred space) in the Bible. In Christianity, the notion of scripture goes a lot further, for here, the Word of God is embodied in Christ as *Logos*. In Christian scripture, therefore, revelation (as knowledge of God) is symbolised as the Word that mediates God's self-disclosure to believers who perform through the scriptural (written) representation. As such, God's Word is inscribed on the body of Christ that, in turn, inscribes Christian grammar.

Eschatology:

This is a complex area of theology arising from nineteenth-century Christian understandings of '*ta eschata*', or 'last things'. It brings together the concept of the end of history with the beginning of God's kingdom in a process which most argue is linear, not cyclical.[30] In the doctrine of eschatology, revelation is understood as a constituent part of God's loving plan and is driven by expectations of judgement, resurrection and salvation, and inculcated by faith and hope in the promise of God's kingdom on earth. As such, eschatology presents a story of redemption and reconciliation between God and his creature through Jesus *as* Christ, the mediator between heaven and earth, good and evil, God and man. I argue that the eschatological message is presented apocalyptically through the tension of the

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[30] It may be that the view of history as linear coincides with the development of modern history since the Enlightenment and a drive to the secularism of history. Part of that influence is the Marxist view. C.f., Jürgen Moltmann. Theology of Hope. (SCM Press: London, 1967), Another is the influence of Hegel's philosophy of history. C.f., Graham Ward. Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory. 2nd edition. (MacMillan Press: London, 2000) 43.

limen that in some way brings time and eternity, and the linear and cyclical aspects of space, together.

However, in secularised language, a negative liminal paradigm presents eschatology as the end of the Word in words. This follows the etymological logic of joining *eschata* (as the end or boundary) to *logos* (as language, logic or grammar). In this sense, eschatology signifies the end of correspondence and meaning in language, or of the end as the perpetual deferral of meaning.[31] In its complex form, the liminal paradigm conjoins ending with beginning to expose the hope and promise of the new creation, i.e., a fully presenced revelation of God.

Apocalyptic:

Until recently apocalyptic was associated with, if not defined as, eschatology. Now, apocalypticism is viewed as a particular theological worldview. Apocalypse is seen as a literary type (though not always as a genre). Both worldview and form were prevalent in the intertestamental period in which the New Testament was produced. Often pseudonymous, the (usually) eschatological narratives describe the time in the lead-up to the end of history and the end of human meaning through the experiences of a community of faith.[32] Apocalypticism claims that contemporary crisis heralds God's imminent intervention to deliver and reconcile righteous humanity after a struggle between the forces of good and evil, and to usher in a world transformed by his actual presence. To recognise the distinction that has been drawn between eschatology and apocalyptic, I use the term apocalyptic-eschatology to draw the two together again.[33]

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[31] C.f., <u>Paul Fiddes. The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature</u>. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 31ff, for a brief outline of Jacques Derrida's view of eschatology.

[32] On pseudonymity, a typical example is the Books of Enoch. Many of the proto-apocalyptic texts assume (by embodying) the authority of a prophet or notable figure from a previous time, e.g., 2 Isaiah, parts of Daniel. It draws a community together through the legitimising name.

[33] C.f. Jürgen Moltmann's use of this term in chapter 1: *What is the 'Logos' of Christian Eschatology?* in <u>Theology of Hope</u>. For an excellent outline of what I call apocalyptic-eschatology, c.f. Klaus Koch. <u>The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic</u>. (London: SCM Press, 1970).

However, apocalypticism also denotes the mystical practice of hermeneutic exegesis of the present world in crisis through the performance of scripture in which the Word is revealed in words. The narrative is often described in terms of a transcendental journey with angel-guides or divine messenger/interpreters. This is transmitted in a new scriptural text. Some apocalypses are written pseudonymously, as if by a prophet living in a previous time.[34]

Limen:

This is another nineteenth-century concept marking an initial stage or threshold. This idea will later lead us to Victor Turner's anthropological paradigm that provides the starting point for discussing the liminal economy that I develop to describe the apocalyptic process. In anthropology, limit and threshold conjoin to mark a ritual of transition in a movement from lack to transformation, thus through and beyond the limit. From Frederic Myers, in psychology, it pertains to the *sub*liminal interface between the conscious and unconscious and thus marks out the *limen* as margin and boundary to perception. More recently, in science, it has come to signify the occupation at or *on both sides* of a boundary or threshold.[35] I mention this third aspect because it is an important constituent to the theory of liminality in which the layering of associated meanings within the word *limen* forms itself into a complex economy. For, paradigmatically, I am proposing that it is in holding all three together that the profundity of the apocalyptic text finds its character. Notions of apocalyptic and eschatology are drawn ineluctably together through the problematic *limen*.

Revelation:

I consider revelation as three associated aspects as defined by Graham Ward who writes

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[34] Christopher Rowland. The Open Heaven: a Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity. (Crossroad: New York, 1982). John J. Collins. The Apocalyptic Imagination, *op. cit.*
[35] C.f. Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

We understand the nature of revelation as punctuating the world with its violent intervention, or as ever-present in the world despite our blindness, or as some dialectical mediation between the poles of transcendence and immanence. (Ward 2000, 1).[36]

I use the term apocalyptic to specifically express the dual process of rupture and disclosure of the transcendent into the world. Unbidden, it has strong associations with affect in that it is an uncalled-for eruption into consciousness. In this, I wish to clearly mark out a directional movement from God to man for, as punctuation, this type of revelation describes periodic disturbances from the divine that transform any previous perspectives of the world to *form* a new knowledge. Whilst the concept of being blind to God's knowledge, and dialectical mediation cannot be entirely separated out of this process, I see apocalyptic as a performance of the complex boundary between God and humanity. In this sense, it is revelation as apocalyptic-eschatology in that it interrupts and disrupts the limits of human knowledge with knowledge from beyond those limits. In relation to representation and language, it is this understanding that plays most clearly between non-negotiation and responsiveness, to make visible the relationship between self and that absolute other in the economy between event and representation (Word, interpretation and proclamation).

This definition distinguishes it from two other forms of revelation but this is not to say that they do not, in turn, reflect aspects of the *limen* or limit. The aspect of 'blindness' conceives God in everything around us but that we cannot break through to his presence. This expresses boundary between perception and knowledge of God as impermeable, reflecting eschatology as either lack of response or of mediation. As such, blindness plays into the crisis of representation as textual illiteracy or disability. The third aspect presents an economy through which to accept a difficult but possible process of mediation

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[36] Graham Ward. Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory. 2nd ed. (MacMillan Press: Basingstoke, 2000) 1.

and transmission between the transcendent other and the world. This notion of dialectical mediation reflects the idea of the *limen* as a permeable interface between God and man. It reflects revelation as a form of reasoned enquiry about the world that directionally moves from man to God. Thus, all three aspects mark the liminal interface in terms of interactions and transactions between knowing and representation. In apocalyptic, the boundary between God and man is punctuated by God, its unexpectedness creating a cathartic emotional and intellectual crisis induced by a metaphysic of relations-in-difference *and* relations-in-opposites. In blindness to God's presence, the boundary seems to be impenetrable, thus reflecting a crisis of absolute difference between self and other. In the logic of reasoning knowledge of God from knowledge of the world, there is a risk that synthesis would remove or collapse the *limen.* Thus, all three aspects share the problematic of the *limen* as a critical axis, that is, as a point of crisis.

Analogy:

This is a critically important concept for the clarification of the problem of representation, revelation and limit. I take it to be the process of representing knowledge of one subject by another that expresses the relation between them in terms of similarity and difference. Analogy embeds notions of attribution, correspondence and proportion. It is as important to understandings of faith and its relation to apocalyptic revelation as it is to language. This is because, through a performance of the inherently paradoxical nature of the *limen* as barrier and threshold, analogy recognises the necessary negotiation between sameness and difference to arrive at (shared) meaning. This sense of negotiation plays into the debate on two views which have dominated the discourses on the language of theology: the *analogia entis* and the *analogia fidei*. The distinction between them is important and I will, therefore, discuss it in the next section on language and the language of theology.

4. The language of theology

How we know God involves how that knowledge is mediated in language, the main problem being how we can ever assert that God's Word can be understood and experienced in human terms. The distinction I made above between the aspects of revelation shows a difference in how we view access to God's Word when it is mediated in language; for this study, this means reflecting on the liminal process between God and creation. What is critical is the way we view limits. The *limen* as barrier prevents, defers, denies or rejects relationship and, theologically, tends towards negative theology or agnosticism. As permeable boundary, however, it tends to dissolve God into the anthropomorphic. In the language of theology, analogy attempts to offer a third way that negotiates between equivocal and univocal meaning in language. The fact that it constantly references the limit as it moves between barrier and threshold means that it involves a liminal performance.

Epistemologically, theology concerns the 'what and how' of any relationship between God and the world in terms that are possible and real in relation to human understanding. Graham Ward talks of two founding principles: first, 'revelation itself – what has been given to us and which, by faith, we receive as divine' and second, the language we develop in order to interpret and share our talk about God. (Ward 2000, 1). Theology recognises the rupture of revelation as divine, thus appropriating the event for itself because its discourse concerns the 'word given and the word received.' (Ward 2000, 2). Knowledge of God is always conditional because it is always relational. Because relational, it is, therefore, analogical.

Taking this logic forward, four principles should be borne in mind. The first is the presupposition that we are made in God's image and that communication between God and man is both possible and necessary. Second, there is a distinction between analogies of being and of faith. This is important because an emphasis on one or the other has created theological divisions about man's essential relationship with, and relation to, God. Third, arguments arise over whether to conflate or

distinguish between analogy and metaphor.[37] Fourth, is the problem of equivocalness and univocity. All inform the philosophical debate on language but this section focuses on analogy in relation to being and faith.[38]

In simple terms of faith, knowledge of God is in its essence revelatory. As relationship, it is dialogue: we pray and God responds; the Word punctuates our understanding and we witness to it. We question the 'reality' of revelation less than its meaning and effect for and on our actions. For, in relation to human power, the interpretation and application of revelation is a potent and dangerous weapon that demands an ethics of rhetoric and reading.[39] The early Christian churches constantly questioned the truth of prophecy amongst their members,[40] the eschatological communities talked a lot about betrayal;[41] and the Bible and tradition provide ethical-theological guidelines against which to test the veracity of interpretations. Ideological critique is thus as important to the theological account as it is, let's say, to the context of the post-theological through which the global apocalyptic narratives of 9/11 or environmental destruction flow.

In other, secular, forms of knowledge arising out of modernity, reasoned explanation or proofs differ from theology precisely because they assert an abstraction of faith. Thus, although theology is fundamentally interdisciplinary, its declared recourse to and consideration of faith sets it apart. Within this context, awareness of how to argue theologically with, and by using methods arising from, other disciplines is important. Perhaps more than any other discourse theology

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[37] I have chosen not to discuss this particular area but the debate essentially involves the differences in dynamic potential between metaphor and analogy. C.f. Dan R. Stiver, The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol & Story. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), ch. 6. Sally McFague and Janet Soskice are the main proponents of this view. C.f., Sally McFague. Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982). Janet Martin Soskice. Metaphor and Religious Language. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

[38] In chapter 4, we will see that this distinction is important to the work of Jürgen Moltmann.

[39] For an excellent outline and review of the dynamics of power in modernity, c.f., Stewart Clegg. Frameworks of Power. 1st edition 1989. (London: Sage, 2002), ch 1. E.g., Clegg differentiates between Hobbes' legislative and Machiavelli's interpretative models of power that stand between order and flux.

[40] E.g., Didache xi: "But not everyone who speaks in the spirit is a prophet; he is only a prophet if he has the ways of the Lord." Henry Betteson, ed. The Early Christian Fathers: a Selection from St Clement of Rome to St Athanasius. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[41] E.g., Mark 13, 21-22; 2 Cor. 11.3-15; 2 Peter 2; 1John 2, 18ff; Rev. 2.20ff

involves crossing boundary lines between the internal and external, self and other. As Graham Ward writes

> Theology's business has always been the transgressions of boundaries. It is a discourse which requires other discourses for its very possibility. In article five of the opening *quaestio* of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas observes the way the science of theology has to make use of the other sciences … 'not due to its own defect or insufficiency, but to the defect of our intelligence, which is more easily led by what is known through natural reason … to that which is above reason.' (Ward 2000, ix).

As such we are faced with a double dilemma: that of negotiating between God's Word and man's and between a language of theology and profane languages. In both, however, the problem of the interface between perception, cognition and representation, where language is seen to be 'slippery' and inadequate to its task, is evident in the work of many theologians - in Augustine, Aquinas, and more recently, Karl Barth. They present the struggle with how we know what we know from God and via representation as forming part of a well-trodden path of faith. Certainly, Aquinas' play through reason articulates as much about the inevitability of theology's recourse to other forms of representation as it does a desire to articulate a particular aspect of knowledge of God.[42] And Barth's acknowledgement that any articulation of knowledge (of God and the world) can only ever be partial, and an expression of possibility, insists not only on a clear recognition of the problematic of human representation and cognition but also an insistence that theological discourse must try to work through its problematics.

In our representations, difficulties arise at the limits or margins of language, and how we view the negotiation between or through them is critical in the determination of any theological position. For example, Aquinas attempts to understand how the negotiation process works through the principle of analogy grounded in an *analogia entis*: man made in God's image. His account asserts that,

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[42] Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiæ,* Vol. 1.1a.1. Trans. Thomas Gilby (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1964). C.f., Stiver, *op cit.,* 23-24; 28. This section is on analogy as a third way between language as equivocal or univocal.

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through reason (what I call *disclosed revelation*), we can say that we know something of God *analogically,* in language that negotiates between univocity and equivocalness. He also argues that because we know that God is not a being like other beings we can begin to explain what he is by saying what we know him *not* to be. This concerns relations-in-difference. Aquinas thus uses the analogical principle to attempt an explanation of the process or performance of knowing how we know God. His primary concern is an understanding of how our reasoning may disclose God in the face of the created world.[43] It should, however, be remembered that he applies the analogical principle creatively, not as a scientific proof; he remains aware of God's mystery.

Aquinas describes reasoned knowledge as 'a sure knowledge inspired by God'. This does not stem from inspiration nor from '[d]ivinely inspired Scripture', which are directed from God to man. Rather, in reasoned knowledge, the movement goes from the human to the divine, from the world we know towards God as first principle of creation.[44] Reason reflects the natural human impulse towards God. In this sense, he reviews the natural sciences theologically in 'the light of reason' *and* 'in the light of divine revelation'.[45] This is informed by the human freedom to respond to God from the centre of God's (ordered) world.

Equally, what we know from God directly through the Spirit and indirectly by doctrine balances our reasoned, empirical knowledge. Thus, first, his theology throws down a challenge to the way in which rational science views itself, whilst, second, it recognises that all processes, whether inspirational, mysteriously revelatory or rational, are of necessity adjudged by our cognitive processes.[46] This point is particularly pertinent because it means that the 'unreason' of revelation engages with reason at the point at which we seek to represent and interpret it. As such, in the theologising process, reason provides a sort of interpretative tool kit

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[43] Arguably, in scripture, some of the Wisdom tradition stand closer to reasoned disclosure than to apocalyptic revelation. E.g. Ecclesiastes and Proverbs.
[44] <u>Summa</u>. 1a. 1,1, pp5, 7, 15.
[45] <u>Summa</u>. 1a. 1,1, p9
[46] <u>Summa</u>. 1a.1, 7, p25.

'for the greater grasp' of what we already know from scripture and authority.[47] It is only in the sense that reason is a secondary, interpretative tool that we find ourselves able to speak what we know about God. In this, Aquinas' sense of what reason is takes us from perception through cognition to representation. On these grounds, when considering God, man and the world through the lens of reason, it is not to define God as the first cause of the natural world but to demonstrate something of the cause through its effect on us. Arguably, however, this view can present a problematic to the mediated process in that it risks bypassing God's direct intervention. This is because anthropocentric models risk immanentism by conflating God with man and creation – a point that led Karl Barth to the opposite extreme.

However, it is clear that Aquinas well understands the difference between reasoned knowledge and a revelation such as that of Moses. The recourse to reason is a complementary strand to the analogy of faith. As Aquinas reaches out to God, reasoning knowledge of God from observation of the created world, he aims to complement narrative theology whilst, at the same time, narrating its own process of cognition (as interpretation). Furthermore, when Aquinas states that, 'by natural reason we come to know God', it is still knowledge of God *without* 'knowing what he is'; in other words, all forms of knowledge are necessarily inadequate and faith-dependent.[48] However, to the extent that his argument of natural reason works through the analogy of being, Aquinas lays himself open to criticism. It risks falling into what is known as a theology of glory because an inflated view of proportionality risks the misappropriation of God by diminishing difference.[49] However, this criticism arguably arises out of modern theories of identity and difference through opposites, something that is centralised in the crisis of representation.[50]

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[47] <u>Summa</u>. 1a, 1, 3, p13, 15; 1a. 1, 5, p19.
[48] <u>Summ*a*</u>. 1a, 12, 13, p43.
[49] This is touched on in the discussion about the theology of Jürgen Moltmann in chapter 4 below.
[50] I discuss this further in chapters 3,4 and 5.

Karl Barth seeks to avoid a theology of glory at all costs. In his introduction to *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, he writes that, 'I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of Antichrist, and think that because of it one can not become Catholic'. (Barth 1960, x).[51] Barth's primary aim is to stress the otherness of God to his creature. He does this in part by marking the *singular* direction of revelation *from* God *to* man. In this way, Barth prioritises the analogy of faith. He writes that

> [In that t]he completion of the knowledge, the event of human action, the appropriation corresponding to this adoption, right from the intuitive grasp to the conceptual formulation in speech, in which the opening up of the *analogia fidei*, with the clearness in dogmatics resulting from it … gains creaturely form – this is frankly a secondary item as compared with the event proceeding from God, made one indeed with it in faith, but also in faith emphatically to be distinguished from it".(Barth 1960, 12).

He goes on to say that

> [Whilst] there really might be and should be no profane language … all serious reflection upon human language about God must start from the fact that actually everything is quite otherwise. (Barth 1960, 51).

For him, a division exists between sacred and profane that resembles a 'divorce' and is 'continually the lot of man's language'. (Barth 1960, 52). Barth thus invites us to direct our lives back to God within the ring-fence of the church because profane language beyond refuses God's active Word. For, we 'stand under the sign of a decision, repeatedly imposed on us, between the profanity and the sanctity of our being.' (Barth 1960, 51-52). In this sense, in relation to faith and the language of theology, Barth is describing the liminal axis of that decision as locus of faith. Thus Barth, apparently against Aquinas, asserts that the language of theology can never

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[51] Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics. I.I. *The Doctrine of the Word of God*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960).

put itself in a systematic relationship with the other sciences …[because it] absolutely cannot regard itself as a member of an ordered cosmos, but only as a stop-gap in an unordered one. (Barth 1960, 9).

This is helpful, as it begins to deepen the articulation of the provisional, inadequate nature of human representation. Contextually however, Barth's engagement with the language of theology clearly stands at the far end of modern (and postmodern) debates on representation whereas Aquinas stands closer to its beginning.[52] Although, as in science, systematising is clearly required to construct theological models, Barth's notion of the disordered reality of our cosmos emphasises both the provisional nature of theological enquiry and the impossibility of engaging with scientific enquiry. Of course, science often fails to recognise the inadequacy of our means to *know* just as it demands evidence-based proofs without any recourse to faith (in God's existence). However, both Aquinas and Barth understand that theology has to deal with our world as we experience it in concrete as well as *affective* terms. Theological language is driven to represent the world as best it can but, as with all language, it is inadequate to the task. We are obliged, however, to make the attempt – as this is a manifestation of our responsiveness to God that, as such, cannot avoid notions of analogy. Barth's demand that we see the world as fluxional, where human reason *fails,* however, more clearly recognises an eschatological crisis in representation against Aquinas' work on analogy, which attempts to overcome its inadequacy through recourse to the logic of the created order. It is a question of emphasis.

Furthermore, Barth's suggestion that theology is *inadequate* to its task marks it as only able to partially speak the reality of God's Word in words because

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[52] C.f., Graham Ward. <u>Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology</u>. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 2 on the context for Barth's engagement with representation.

> We know ourselves only as man, met in his fallen, lost and damned state by mercy, man in the realm of grace, man of to-day, between the times of creation and redemption ...under the sign of decision ... between a human existence that forgets God ... and the same existence awakened by God in His revelation through faith ... to a hold upon His promise. (Barth 1960, 51-52).

He thus orients us to the liminal point in the fallen world of humanity between the created order and its provisionality, which is predicated in images of crisis and the sense of an imminent collapse into absolute disorder. This state of being in-between (Steiner's Saturday) reflects a permanent condition in our representations where chaos is, as such, *immanent*, whereas order can never be more than imminent. This both informs and is informed by the Christian grammar of revelation and the end. It reflects a clearer sense that, in this world of flux, we live in a disempowered state (of fear) that teeters on the edge of crisis and through which we need to move *in faith* to a point of decision and change. By playing on the tragedy of the human condition, it is Barth, therefore, who leaves us in no doubt of the flawed nature of human understanding; we will only ever be reconciled to God by turning back to, and by recognising our utter dependency on, his active Word.

However, it must be said that for Aquinas, although reason itself is a gift from God, he too recognises that ultimately all human knowledge comes down to God's grace. And, whilst knowledge of God helps us to know reality, inadequacy in understanding derives not from God but from our imperfections and lesser nature.[53] Thus, Aquinas perhaps stands closer to Barth than may at first seem, and that Barth would never acknowledge. The main difference between them is that, whilst Aquinas readily accepts the reality of the type of revelatory experience that is inexplicable and mysterious, he wishes, at this point in the *Summa,* to explore logic and reason *anthropocentrically*. Here, he moves away from Barth who rejects any anthropocentric perspective.

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[53] Summa. 1a, 12,12, pp41-2.

In the end, in relation to the apocalyptic text, it is Barth's sense of the reality of the fluxional world we inhabit that most clearly brings to mind the eschatological struggle between order and chaos in the Revelation to John, as well in the creative act that issues out of chaos and void in Genesis 1 – a reorientation that demonstrates the movement to the future from the present through the past. It is this aspect of the theologising process that is central to the theory of liminality.

So far, I have presented a definition of certain key words to my study of liminality and apocalyptic-eschatology, and have considered some of the problematic of representation to any talk about God. In the next section, I would like to set in context my interest in the concept of apocalyptic, because, as with the debate on analogy, negative interpretations of apocalyptic derive from the rise of redaction criticism in modernity where, arguably, the concern for historical reality plays through the problematics of identity and revelation.

5. Context for an advocacy of apocalyptic interpretation

The context out of which this study emerged was a passing prohibition from a tutor in redaction-criticism who suggested that we (undergraduates) must, on no account, speak of Jesus and apocalyptic in the same breath. The consequent association of the second historical Jesus movement, with its rational-historical methodologies, and proscription made me seriously question what lies behind our choice of methodologies.[54] Do methods disguise ideological prejudice? If so, does this inevitably lead from presupposition to confirmed answer?

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[54] They are redaction-critical, sociological and anthropological methods. With the discovery of non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic texts in the nineteenth-century, scholars set out to investigate and differentiate prophetic eschatology from apocalyptic-eschatology. The antipathy to 'apocalyptic' was grounded in the conviction that it was different from and inferior to prophecy. This antipathy is evidenced in the work of many scholars from, for example, Luther, through Lücke, Wellhausen to Foot Moore, Fuchs and Ebeling. Ebeling, for example, states that Protestant tradition has always believed that apocalyptic 'is to say the least a symptom of tendencies towards heresy' (Ebeling, 1969, 51). In brief, this view states that prophecy expresses eschatology as immanent, ie, taking place in history; prophets use their own names and speak out publicly. Apocalyptic is said to forecast a new world *after* this world 'in which the just will take part through the resurrection of the dead' according to a divinely-historical 'determined plan'. Apocalyptic prophesies are produced in pseudonymous texts, the secret revelations of which are said to have 'come to light in the present' (Theissen and Merz, 1998, 249). In relation to Jesus, the antipathy plays into the desire to separate the historical Jesus (and his continuation of the prophetic strand) from that of the early Christians who produced the texts in the

Of course, sociological and redaction-historical critical methods belong contextually in modernity and the proscription began principally with Reimarus, who decried the followers of Jesus as manipulators and distorters of the events surrounding Jesus' life and death.[55] The quest for the historical Jesus has been a brave attempt to refute these claims by distinguishing and authenticating the voice of the physical, historical Jesus from that of the resurrected Christ, with the aim of separating out the voices of the early church communities who proclaimed him to be so. In that way, his teachings can be compared to those of the early churches. However, there is a strange and paradoxical circularity to the logic of attempting the study of avowedly sacred, faith texts *as* history in terms of evidence and proof for faith and knowledge of God. For, if primary witness is the ideal of any historical account, it is clear that none of the biblical accounts are contemporaneous to the events described. The most that can be said in modern historical terms is that Jesus lived as one of many self-espoused prophets.[56]

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canon and the apocrypha. It is a debate that plays *through* the nature of Jesus. C f., Klaus Koch. The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic. (London: SCM Press, 1970), Gerd Theissen, Annette Merz. The Historical Jesus: a Comprehensive Guide, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1998). Gerhard Ebeling. The Ground of Christian Theology, *Journal for Theology and the Church, Special Supplement: On the Topic of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic*, 1969 47-68.

[55] Reimarus was an apologist for natural theology. His work on the New Testament was not published in his own lifetime but Kümmel cites a letter by Reimarus in which he states that he set out to, "completely separate what the Apostles present in their writings from what Jesus himself actually said and taught during his lifetime". W. G. Kümmel. The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems. Trans. S McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee. (London: SCM, 1973). 89. It was the work of D. F. Strauss, who published his 'fragments' in 1862 who, after Lessing, again brought to the fore Reimarus' views on the disciples and early followers, this time, as fraudsters. D. F. Strauss. H. S. Reimarus und seine Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes (1862, 2nd ed. 1877).The story, in particular in relation to the historical quest and their search for, the physical, prophetic Jesus, and in which immanence is a central concern, and the resistance against this approach from scholars with whom the notion of apocalypticism sits more easily, is recorded in, Albert Schweitzer. The Quest of the Historical Jesus. Trans. W.Montgomery (London: SCM Press, 2000). C.f, - The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity. Trans. L. A. Garrard. (London: A & C Black, 1968), Luke Timothy Johnson, Hans Werner Kelber, John Dominic Crossan, eds. The Jesus Controversy: Perspectives in Conflict. (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1999). This latter shows that the debate is still running its course.

[56] C.f., Gerd Theissen, Annette Merz. The Historical Jesus: a Comprehensive Guide, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1998), chapter 3, *The Non-Christiam Sources about Jesus*, 66-90, especially the section one in which he discusses the Jewish historian Josephus who, in Jewish Antiquities, 18 and 20, gives a brief biography of Jesus and mentions him as the brother of James, and section 2 in which he discusses the rabbinic sources, in which Jesus is put forward as an apostate. As with the canonical and extra-canonical texts, however, none of these sources are reliable or contemporaneous.

Without doubt, redaction-historical and the sociological scholars' work on the inflection of the authors' non-contemporaneous voices in the texts teases out, with subtlety and finesse, the differences and commonalities of the different resurrection communities. Each authorial voice imposes a particular perspective on events to present a discourse after the event through a re-performance of the event. Together, the texts explain how a new faith, made up of different, often conflicting, socio-theological strands developed. But the authentic voice of Jesus, as such, is a lost cause, and the view of the disciples and followers as fraudsters is just one view from within increasingly secularised, or at least sceptical, readings of the texts. Thus, the foundational principle of the historical Jesus movement remains highly questionable. The primary words of Jesus cannot be unequivocally exposed by stripping back the layers of the palimpsest. The rationale of the historical Jesus movement, therefore, does not hold in relation to modern historical methods. Worse, in relation to theology, these methods unintentionally undermine the aims and purpose of the scriptural texts by playing into a secularising process, one outcome being that incarnation and christology are problematised. For, when Jesus is only considered through his humanity, his divinity is weakened.

Furthermore, the taxonomising process does not sit comfortably with literary criticism. A background in literary criticism and a delight in story have naturally led me to read the New Testament as a narrative whole before looking at how the parts relate to one another and the whole. When read like this, the words of Paul echo through those of Mark, those of John through Matthew and Luke and so on in a continual intertextual play. The principles of canon, tradition and the rule of faith also support complex but nonetheless intertextual readings of scripture. Additionally, the texts present the multiple voices of early believers for whom visionary inspiration is a dominant and shared driver. Thus, despite the complex inter-relationships between the texts, faith recognises the sacred power of scripture to inculcate an overall coherence through relations-in-difference, whilst at the same time cautioning against dogmatism.[57]

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[57] 1 Cor. 13, in which Paul speaks of partial understanding and knowledge.

Given the importance of the symbols and themes in one of the most influential texts, the Revelation of John the Divine, it is paradoxical, therefore, that it has come to be viewed not only with suspicion but also as if it were separate and exotically different from the gospels and epistles. Its segregation derives from ideology, due in part to the negative view, notably of some Protestants for whom scriptural interpretation was so central;[58] partly to extremist, non-liberal, interpretation and application in politics and society;[59] and partly to the reluctance to canonise it in the first place.[60]

In historical-biblical scholarship, the decision to read the scriptural canon as a body of (apocalyptic) testament is thus still relatively uncommon; even more so, the decision not to taxonomise the texts into specialist areas. Ultimately, the interlacing, complicating, voices captured in the canon, but influencing a discourse beyond the texts, have led me to hermeneutics, ideological and reader-response criticisms; for, these methods prioritise the narratives as the product and

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[58] Ebeling cites Luther's *Schmalkald Articles* and his preface to the Book of Revelation in which Luther states that the book is 'neither apostolic nor prophetic …[and in it] Christ is neither taught nor recognised'. (Ebeling, 1969, 51). Luther bases his distinction between honest prophecy and heretical apocalyptic visions on the grounds of clarity and simplicity of language, rejecting the use of symbolic imagery in favour of plain speech. This shows one reason why Revelation has long been studied separately from the rest of the canon, and why it was viewed with suspicion.

[59] C.f., Christopher Hill. The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution. (London: Penguin, 1994), III, 13-15: "Bishop Bale said of the Apocalypse that 'he that knoweth not this book, knoweth not what the church is whereof he is a member'. 'Not one necessary point of belief is in all the other Scriptures that is not here also in one place or another'. It was an outrage that some had attempted exclude this millenarian work from the canon. Bale, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* … and the Geneva Bible with its notes, all helped to revive popular apocalyptic visions in England", 298-299. C.f. Norman Cohn. The Pursuit of the Millennium.

[60] Its inclusion in the New Testament was controversial. For example, Eusebius records that in the late second century: 'A man named Gaius appeared, who said that the Gospel was not John's, nor the Apocalypse, but that they were the work of the heretic Cerinthus' (Lawlor and Oulton, Eusebius, II, 208). And in the middle of the third century, Dionysius of Alexandria declared that 'some…before our time rejected and altogether impugned the book…declaring it to be unintelligible and illogical, and its title false' (Dionysius On the Promises, II, in Eusebius, VII.25). C.f. J. Stevenson. A New Eusebius: Documents illustrating the history of the Church to AD 337. (London: SPCK, 1995)153, 255. Had it not been for the popular belief that Revelation and the Gospel of John had a common author it may well have been excluded, although it is clear that Iranaeus recognised the Book of Revelation, and his list of texts roughly accords with what we ended up with in the West. C.f. Stuart G. Hall. Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church. (London: 1991), 62. The first authorised version to include the twenty-seven books is Athanasius' Easter letter in 367CE, but it took another 150 years for this version to be accepted everywhere in the West. C.f., J.N.D.Kelly. Early Christian Doctrines. Fifth Edition. (A & C Black, 1993) 60.

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interpretation of inspiration as well as permitting multiple meanings and interpretations.

These reasons bring me back to that prohibition on apocalyptic as a manifestation of the Word in words, and the movement from the divine to the human. For whilst it is true that the Revelation to John provides the clearest example of literary apocalypse, its concern for the crisis of endtimes clearly echoes in all other literary types of New Testament texts allowing the suggestion that apocalyptic-eschatology cannot be separated out as something entirely different. As Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland write

> Passages such as Matt 24-5 par.; 1Thess 4:13-5:11; 2Thess 2:3-13; Rom 8:18-30; and 1Cor 15:20-5 remind us of the importance of eschatological expectation among early Christians. Such hopes were not merely future but were in some sense anticipated in the common life and in what Christians saw happening in the world around them. This 'realized' dimension is signalled in the New Testament itself, where 1 John 2:18 is the earliest explicit example of the tradition of the Antichrist, the polar opposite of Christ expected in the last days – here applied to a catastrophic split in the life of the eschatological community, a situation the author could not comprehend except as a sign of the last days. (Kovacs and Rowland 2004, 4).[61]

The point that eschatology is both immanent and imminent is important to Christian doctrines. That Christian communities read all events through the eschatological narrative of the end of history is critical, for, due to the apocalyptic event of Jesus' life and death, the world is understood as being transformed in some essentially God-driven way: 'the Scriptures, the fountain-head and embodiment of tradition and the basis of a community's identity, are now read in light of the new experience of the Spirit (Gal 3:2-4)'. (Kovacs and Rowland, 2004, 6).

The faith-filled scriptural interpretative process represents the essentially trinitarian dimensions of apocalyptic: an appeal to God driven by crisis is mediated

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[61] Judith Kovacs, Christopher Rowland. <u>Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus</u>. In collaboration with Rebekah Callow. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

through Christ as the Word *and* guided by the Spirit. In John's first letter, his particular moment of crisis elicits such an appeal through Christ for actual revelation (the Word) *via* the apocalyptic scenario of a cataclysmic end (the scriptural words). The answer to that appeal in turn motivates the text's production which, *in itself,* reflects the apocalyptic experience of revelation gained through the apocalyptic-eschatological narrative. From this perspective, apocalyptic's hermeneutical movement towards presence is significant both for understanding the process of interpreting and producing inspirational scripture – God revealed (the Word) and proclaimed in its message (the interpretation). And this search for personal and new meaning as an apocalyptic process is arguably 'applicable to every age, offering a way of seeing in our own history Eden and the Fall, Jerusalem and Babylon'. (Kovacs and Rowland, 2004, 2). This is underscored by the influence of apocalyptic in western cultures, evidenced in a wealth of literature, art and socio-political ideas – some of which are considered in this study. It is this view that allows the advocacy of apocalyptic text production as prime.

Furthermore, in relation to talk about God, as discussed in the previous section, Karl Barth recognises that the church as community speaks in three ways: first, in the actions of individual believers (faith) and community (shared life and worship); second, in its recognition of fallible humanity (responsible and accountable for its confession) (Barth 1960, 1-2); third, as a 'special' science - the Church's attempt to systematically structure and measure the world in which we live in relation to God as its creator, and the way we find to speak about him. Theology, for Barth, is thus the means to 'self-test', to measure 'her action [and] her language about God, against her existence as a Church'. (Barth 1960, 2).

> As Biblical theology, theology is the question as to the *foundation*, as practical theology it is the question as to the *aim*, as dogmatic theology it is the question as to the *content*, of the language peculiar to the Church. (Barth 1960, 3).[62]

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[62] My italics

All human talk about God is flawed and knowledge can only ever understood as an 'event' – some happening that 'requires criticism and revision' - in which 'the Word of God Himself is the only criterion'. Scripture is the *only* authority for 'normativity' and must be viewed through, and as, the context of the Word. The Word, which manifests the nature of the trinity and Jesus as Christ, is, paradoxically, 'extremely material' and also the form of language about God (representation). The conjoining of these two notions is foundationally significant to the material content of dogmatics. (Barth 1960, 46, 47). Again, this brings to the fore the significance of the operation of the Word in words (sacred representation). Directionally, the Word mediates God's self-disclosure to man. And when, in our talk of God, that direction is reversed, the Word will only ever be illuminated through grace, 'from time to time … given or else refused'. (Barth 1960, 19). As such, human knowledge of the Word equivocates between certainty and uncertainty. It is this, surely, that provokes crisis in faith (as loss of confidence) at the same time as it demands faith (as a confident turning towards God) - the crisis being located at the interface between Word and words, God and man. Thus it is that liminality is central to theology as, arguably, it narrates the punctuations, interruptions and silences of the revelatory process in our representations.

I have thus far begun to articulate the necessary complex interplay between the event of Jesus Christ and the apocalyptic event of scriptural production and reading – paying heed to some of the issues we have in relation to our talk about God and human representation. Throughout I have intimated that unless we fully engage with the problematic concept of the limits of language, human cognition and crisis, we will fail to appreciate the impact of the apocalyptic nature (form and content) of Christian scripture that is the basis for talk about God. I have also suggested that the Revelation to John provides a template through which to understand the New Testament apocalyptically; it resonates with the liminal nature of apocalyptic-eschatology, thus opening out the gospels and epistles to its (related) form and content. In the next section, I explore the concept of liminality more fully as it forms the means to understanding apocalyptic-eschatology that will be applied to the rest of the thesis.

6. A theory of liminality

I have already suggested that the liminal space marks the location of crisis as the axial moment of decision between despair and hope, death and life, lack and presence and that it is here too that theological aspects of relationship, status, sacrifice and transformation have their focus. The anthropologist Victor Turner's paradigm of liminality describes a rite of passage as a transitional ritual. His model provides the starting-point for drawing together notions of apocalyptic, eschatology and liminality, to theorise and apply to the problem of mediation in knowledge between God and man, the self and other.[63]

Significantly, Turner's rites-of-passage model is both theological and anthropological as it articulates how the liminal space enhances the experience of its participants socially and in terms of faith. Turner describes how initiates voluntarily perform a rite of passage consisting of sacrificial marginalisation, which places them in an *in-between* state in which identity and status are lost, to mark a teleologically-driven ritual process of transition from lower to higher status. The act of passing through the threshold/boundary to inhabit the fluxional space of the *limen* is performed on the grounds that the sacrificial process will be socially ameliorating, making worthwhile the symbolic, or even actual, risk of losing everything that makes us human – including reason. The rite consists of three stages:[64]

- separation (from the community – thus, from relationship)
- experience of the fluxional (thus, dangerous) space
- reaggregation (thus, justification) into the (transformed) community

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[63] Victor Turner, <u>The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure</u>. (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1969), and <u>Dramas, Fields and Metaphors</u>. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).
[64] C.f., Alan J Roxburgh, <u>The Missionary Congregation, Leadership and Liminality</u>. (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1997). Chapter 2.

Turner describes liminality in linear terms as the initiates move forwards through the three stages. I would argue, however, that his model does not represent a single, linear movement from one place to another but is an operational *complex* that moves between, and holds together, past, present and future expectations. Once engaged in the liminal space, dangerous encounters with the other defy reason and expectation – even for the faithful. However, the outcome in social amelioration makes the risk worthwhile: this is reflected in all the New Testament texts where the experience of faith (apocalyptic-eschatological encounter with the divine) is dangerous but essential; it is also continual and imminent, reflecting in this sense the *status quo* of Christian faith.

This sense of moving in and through the liminal space operationally complicates the interface, deepening the movements to, against and through the *limen* in an enfolding of the inside to the outside, and *vice versa*. For, in the conjoining, *co-incidenc*e, or occupation of opposites - of beginnings and ends, of stasis and movement, of opening and closure, of knowing and un-knowing - initiates are forced to a point of decision which, through the liminal economy, transforms them. Similarly, liminality expresses the boundary between conscious and subconscious, known and unknown, in the occupation of a position at, or on, both sides of the *limen* as boundary and threshold.

To a great degree, this is what we do when we perform the Christian texts. As such, the liminal paradigm describes a theology of reading (as performance) and response (as interpretation). And it is clear that this ritual movement is reflected in numerous narratives in the Christian texts (as apocalyptic) where sacrifice is the locus for encounter with the divine. The liminal movement from low to high status is on one level clearly marked: throughout the *via crucis,* Jesus voluntarily sacrifices both his human and divine identity in a paradoxical interplay before his true identity as both human and divine is fully revealed to believers in the crucifixion/resurrection. For example, the good news of the gospels is

witnessed in the baptism and wilderness experiences.[65] The ultimate sacrifice is most deeply expressed in the shame and degradation of his trial and execution. As a space of utter lack and loss it leads, however, to his complete transformation and reaggregation to the faith-community through resurrection and exaltation, and in a final liminal experience of ascension, his reaggregation to the Godhead sees him in some new way divinely transformed.

Similarly for believers, in baptism, the initiate is differentiated from the world - dying to her old identity, reborn to a new one in Christ where, in order to share in a life transformed, initiates perform Christ's dangerous space of sacrifice in the eucharistic feast and where they proclaim 'the Lord's death until he comes'.[66] As members of the body of Christ, they are both differentiated and united in a remembering *and* re-membering of Christ's infinitely extending, sacrificial body.[67] Again, in the Revelation to John, the prophet-leader John is separated from his community, forced into a liminal space of exile where he receives a revelation from Christ concerning the seven churches. It has been suggested that Revelation was a prophetic lead-in to the eucharist in which case the full import of partaking in this sacrifice is effectively playing through the promised eschatological process in all its awful splendour.[68] The sense of danger of the liminal experience is *inter alia* evoked in the movement to eucharist in the former Book of Common Prayer.[69] As ritual locus, it is both a place of danger and comfort, out of which the message of promised transformation comes through Christ as *limen*: beginning and end,[70] threshold and boundary, sacrificial lamb and victorious warrior.[71]

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[65] Especially so in Mark's gospel.
[66] Roxburgh, 31, 1 Cor 11.23-26, respectively.
[67] C.f., chapter 5, section 10 on the eucharist, participation and relations-in difference.
[68] C.f., also 1 Cor. 9.13-14.
[69] C.f., the Exhortation in the former Book of Common Prayer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 245ff: '...and so dangerous to them that will presume to receive it unworthily; my duty is to exhort you in the mean season to consider the dignity of that holy mystery, and the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof; and so to search and examine your own consciences ... but so that ye may come holy and clean to such a heavenly Feast, in the marriage garment required by God in holy Scripture, and be received as worthy partakers of that holy Table'.
[70] Rev. 1.8, 22.12-13; 5; 19.11ff, respectively.
[71] Rev. 1.9; 21ff, respectively.

Liminal paradigms proliferate in the texts, repeatedly demonstrating how identity and status must be sacrificed prior to reunion with that identity proved, transformed and revealed. Sacrifice becomes the template for living, given by Jesus to his followers who are asked to give up family, belongings, status, in a process that is demanding and dangerous at the same time as it offers comfort and strength; it is both temporary and permanent as believers await and live the endtimes.[72] In the Christian grammar of apocalyptic-eschatology, the social outcome is thus unexpected; it is one of scandal, shame and exclusion paradoxically conjoined with joy, comfort and communion. This is because the space into which the believer is liberated remains *essentially* liminal. Any sense of social amelioration from baptism or eucharist is held in tension with the demand to *live* sacrifice. In this sense, Christian mimesis deviates from Turner's archetypal rite of passage paradigm. Jesus Christ, as the living mediator between humanity and God, holds in tension the reality of loss, promise and fulfilment which sacrifice epitomises. In sacrifice, Christ's self-emptying conjoins with Jesus' human obedience to God - a form of slavery.[73] As *Logos*, he is the mediating vessel for revelation in the *limen*, holding in tension what has been, is and will be.[74]

In this way, the logic of the complex liminal paradigm is that *apokalypsis* is an eschatological experience of the divine within the *limen* itself as Jesus Christ: the *limen,* a divine and human space, which stands on both sides as it is incorporated in vertical *and* horizontal, linear *and* cyclical, spatial *and* temporal movements, is thus the critical point in which to *know* eschatology - as the end *and* beginning of the Word. It is *this* sense of a complex liminal economy that allows us to define a theory of revelation through the focus of the *limen* itself. It is one that complicates but deepens our understanding of the reading process (as a rite of passage in which the Word reveals as it conceals), at the same time as the content of the story is narrated. Thus, reading the text as a sacred location

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[72] 1 Cor. 12.27-29.
[73] Phil. 2. 6-11.
[74] Prologue to John's gospel.

of relationship between God, humanity and the world is a dangerous but worthwhile performance.

To conclude: Turner's linear paradigm has already impacted on literary criticism. For example, the transitional process has been recognised in certain novel types.[75] It has also been used to explain biblical narratives whose content deals with liminal rites of passage.[76] But these mostly remain anthropological rather than theological, and linear rather than complex applications of the model. By analogy, however, the more complex idea of reading as an apocalyptic performance of scripture usefully describes how the Word resonates in the liminal, as it reveals itself anew. Furthermore, whilst indubitably, the gap between event and transmission problematises real presence in acts of writing and reading (even that of scripture), the liminal, apocalyptic-eschatological process is able to represent the complication of the temporal gap between experience and proclamation that pertains to all revelatory experiences. In that sense, the text speaks of itself as a liminal space of risk and danger as it plays through the inadequacy of human language to open out the problematical *limen*, where the Word both bridges the chasm between itself and words at the same time as it returns us to silence.

Chapter 2 will concentrate on a closer scrutiny of liminality and reading (as a response to revelation) and interpretation, predominantly through the work of Christopher Rowland, Ernst Käsemann and Elisabeth Fiorenza. It finishes with a reading of the creation narratives that centres on representation and the significance of the liminal paradigm, with the aim of foregrounding how apocalyptic negotiates through crisis in the world-as-text to arrive at a sense of knowing God.

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[75] E.g. Wanagari wa Nyateta-Waigwa, <u>The Liminal Novel: Studies in the Francophone-African Novel as Bildungsroman</u>. (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).
[76] C.f., Nanette Stahl, <u>Law and Liminality in the Bible</u>. Supplement Series 202. <u>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</u>. (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1995).

Liminality and reading apocalyptically

The riches of assured understanding and …the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge

1. Chapter summary

Chapter 2 concentrates on liminality and reading as a response to and performance of revelation. I work predominantly through the work of Christopher Rowland, Ernst Käsemann and Elisabeth Fiorenza. I finish with two readings of the Creation narratives through the focus of representation and the liminal paradigm. The overall aim is to open out the Christian grammar in scripture to the complex nature of the *limen* to apocalyptic-eschatology through the crisis of the world-as-text. Not only does this chapter give a closer sense of what apocalyptic is and how it works, but provides templates of positive and negative liminality through which to consider the crisis of representation in the next chapter.

2. Introduction

In the last chapter, I asserted that New Testament scripture is inherently apocalyptic in that it represents God's unexpected rupture (as self-disclosure) into the world. I explained how apocalyptic might be better understood as apocalyptic-eschatology, and that these concepts should be drawn together through the concept of the *limen* as a metaphor and semiotic symbol of the (sacrificial) axis to revelation. The form of the apocalyptic text reflects the content in Christian narratives, performed through the body of Christ, where the sense of crisis is represented through the threshold to revelation (an incarnation) but also through its apparent barrier or withdrawal (kenosis).

However, whilst the liminal logic of apocalyptic is clearly inscribed in Old Testament texts, despite the interrelation with the New Testament, these texts must show something distinctive in what they express and in the way that they were written. Before exploring the secularised model of liminality, therefore, it is important to understand the Christian apocalyptic text and what constitutes a Christian apocalyptic performance. And, as I begin to draw together the concept of apocalyptic and eschatology through the liminal paradigm, this will not only open us to a clearer of sense of how Christian grammar is constituted but also that it, in turn, reflects the apocalyptic reading and response of early Christians as a theological and hermeneutical principle. To some degree, therefore, this chapter looks at what it means to perform through Christ's body, and how this has been recognised and expressed by some biblical scholars who specialise in apocalypticism. I mainly consider the work of three theologians whose works describe the hermeneutical interpretation of apocalyptic that, when supported by the theory of liminality outlined in the previous chapter, mark aspects of how its content is reflected in its form. Within that exploration, I will bring in some of the criticisms that scholars of apocalyptic have made of redaction-critical methods to undermine and misunderstand this operation, and include my own views on their negative impact on Christian theology. The theory of liminality thus aims to present a novel way of looking at the experience of the apocalyptic text through the performance and participation in Christ's body.

In the work of Christopher Rowland, I look at the Jewish technique of *merkabah* interpretation to draw together concepts of apocalypticism and liminality. Then, in the works of Ernst Käsemann and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza I consider the way in which their views of Christianity as apocalyptic illustrate and support the liminal paradigm of apocalyptic-eschatology that, when brought together, portray the performance of the revelatory liminal space, not as a single, linear movement from one place to another but as a *complex* as described in the previous chapter. To that degree, it is in this chapter that the main thread of the argument is outlined: first, as the experience of apocalyptic

and the operation of the *limen*; second, the association of these two ideas and their relatedness to the crisis of representation and participation.

3. The 'visionary mode': participation, performance and proclamation

As mentioned in the previous chapter, apocalyptic has predominantly been viewed by biblical scholarship as a sectarian, marginal religious worldview that existed in the heterodox, intertestamental period: it is recognisable through certain literary characteristics and by its cosmological interpretation of the world-as-text, that informs the sharing and development of a common approach by its participants in a common grammar. The work of Christopher Rowland has in recent years done much to explain the Jewish apocalyptic-hermeneutical technique of performing through scripture known as *ma'aseh merkabah* and that he suggests plays through Christian texts produced around this time. This is important work because it prioritises the way in which a mystical form of scriptural interpretation (mainly after the destruction of the Temple in 70C.E.) developed to make sense of a world in flux.[77] Rowland makes the connection between *merkabah* as a 'visionary mode' and the production and interpretation of Christian apocalyptic texts. The mode explains the way in which a believer-exegete expresses scriptural interpretation apocalyptically. It is helpful here, in the sense that *merkabah* describes the process by which, through a participative performance of scripture (as encounter with the divine Word), the revelatory operates *in* representation, in a process which is primarily driven by faith, through affect, to reason. And whilst I am not suggesting that our interpretations of Christian texts must follow *merkabah* principles, it serves as a useful perspective through which to view the (scriptural) text as a space of participation with the divine.

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[77] Liminality, as I am presenting it, centralises the notion of crossing, or failing to cross, boundaries. The chariot of God (as God) in Ezekiel 1:4-26 is a central metaphor for revelatory and prophetic journeying through the cosmos. In other words, it is constituted by border crossings as a means to access God's Word.

This hermeneutic process involves taking a question to the (apocalyptic) text, suspending judgment, and waiting in abeyance and obedience for the Word to carry the reader into heavenly realms for an answer to prayer (as plea and response). As such, it articulates the secret and mysterious process operating in and through the *limen* as a sacred space of divine encounter that is both in and beyond the world. I am suggesting that this helps to further define the characteristic of apocalyptic as an opening to the problematic of representation as it directly works and re-works though scripture (as the world inscribed cosmologically by God). As such, this understanding of apocalyptic scriptural performance marks how a rational, anthropocentric approach often encumbers and confuses any interpretation of God's nature that may help to reduce the reading of scripture predominantly through redaction-historical methodologies, and that I have already suggested tend to secularise the theologising process. In this section, therefore, I introduce some of my own views on literary apocalyptic characteristics to demonstrate how, in the hands of some scholars, mistakes about the nature and purpose of apocalyptic are compounded, and reflect on how Rowland's work brings to the fore some of the more obvious weaknesses of modern biblical scholarship. The overall aim is, as such, to illuminate the critical relationship between a scriptural performance of divine encounter and its re-presentation as textual witness. In this sense, it presents a theology of reading as a performance through the apocalyptic-eschatological space of representation, and a way of reading as a performative response to God's Word.

As a first step to looking more closely at *merkabah*, let us first consider one of the criticisms of apocalyptic texts by modern western scholarship, which has helped build the argument that apocalyptic texts are an *inferior* form of prophecy. This particular criticism suggests that apocalyptic texts are often muddled and incoherent in form and content in the way they draw together bits of existing texts with no clear sense of direct, prophetic voice or message. The main point is that apocalyptic texts obfuscate God's Word. There is, however, another way to look at this so-called textual muddle. I propose, instead, that the lack of sequential logic

should be recognised as similar to the technique of collage from fine art, but where in the apocalyptic text the collage is textual. For me, this demonstrates an aesthetic decision where, through juxtaposed motifs of opposition, often ironically inverted, the exegete re-presents the complex liminal performance to inflect the emotional experience of revelation (i.e., the content) in the form.[78] Thus, the emotional state of the exegete (his hermeneutic crisis) that is external is brought into the liminal performance to deliberately exacerbate the fluxional nature of the experience. In that sense, the form does not demonstrate poor writing skills but an attempt to close the gap between experience and representation by demanding and demonstrating an emotional response to the simultaneous presentation of the complex interaction between human experience, time and space. The gaps and discontinuities are represented through displacements that foreground the mysterious ruptures between presence and absence.[79] In other words, they are theologically (and analogically) loaded. Similarly, the distinctive characteristic of symbolic polarity demonstrates an awareness of the dialectical (and dialogical) principle which, in scriptural representation involves (divine) mediation.

These two characteristics have long perplexed scholars working out of logic-driven, historical-taxonomic methodologies as they go against the grain of traditional redaction-historical interpretations. As an example, John J. Collins explains why the great biblical scholar of apocalyptic, R. H. Charles, fails to understand the processing of apocalyptic form and content

> Charles' lack of empathy with the material is apparent in two characteristics of his work. First, he tended to treat the texts as compendia of information and paid great attention to identifying historical allusions and extracting theological doctrines. In contrast, he gave little attention to such matters as literary structure or mythological symbolism. (Collins 1998, 14).

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[78] In the introductory chapter to Part 2, I discuss the literary generic and modal aspects of the literary form and content that I see as particularly useful to identifying the apocalyptic text.
[79] Displacement is a theme that Graham Ward utilises in his theological account of the body of Christ which I discuss extensively in chapter 5.

Similarly, according to T. W. Manson

> There was a sense in which the language of Apocalyptic remained a foreign language to him. [Charles] could never be completely at home in the world of the Apocalyptists. And this made it impossible for him to achieve that perfect understanding which demands sympathy as well as knowledge. (Collins 1998, 14).[80]

Charles' inability to recognise the 'mosaic' quality of the writing as a generic constituent can be attributed to his need to dissect the text for theological clarity and evidence of verifiable historical fact.[81] Charles' presumption of a weakly-formed literary technique, in effect, prevents him from having a sound grasp of how the apocalyptic text works and leads to a lack of appreciation of how, in the juxtaposition of images taken from other texts, the apocalyptic author reinterprets the texts in his own apocalyptic performance, on order to *re-present* that re-envisioning by simultaneously expressing process *and* outcome.

What the process effectively does is to weave together different aspects of the exegete's own context (as cultural situatedness) *and* as those parts of a (cosmological) discourse which precede, follow and interrupt the text in an attempt to fix its multiple meaning *in the moment*. In effect, this interweaving is a representation of the liminal, *intertextual* hermeneutic performance that informs and *forms* the text. Understood in this way, it can be said to reflect the way any reading of the Bible that seeks answers from the divine performs its reading as an *inter- and intratextual* play through the *whole* of existing scripture. For example, the image of the man clothed in linen from the Book of Daniel plays, intertextually, through Revelation 10.5, 6, 7; 12.14, and Luke 21.24, and intratextually, in Daniel 4.34; 12.6, 7. And although historical references are integral to this multi-voicing, they must be seen in simultaneous association with the text's symbolic and incarnational aspects that evoke presenced meaning in and for all time. In this way,

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[80] John J Collins (1998), *op. cit.,* 14. Collins has taken this extract from J. Barr's citation of T. W. Manson. T. W. Manson, "Jewish Apocalyptic in Recent Scholarly Study". <u>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</u> 58 (1975).

[81] C.f. Collins, <u>Apocalyptic</u> 3, 5, where he considers the incomprehension arising out of the composite characteristic of apocalyptic texts. C.f. chapter 4 below on genre.

the apocalyptic text inflects a newly interpreted vision into its form and content, such that the manner in which the author has received it resonates with his particular mystical-exegesis of existing scriptures but also, beyond into our own.

That a biblical apocalypse was most probably 'processed' in what amounts to a 'visionary mode' is a point never identified by one such as Charles. More surprisingly, Collins does not speak of the way in which the texts were produced. This mode, however, is arguably a truly significant pointer to the relationship between performance and production of scripture that opens a dynamic and interactive, interpretative and literary procedure, where the exegete participates in, or embodies, the prophetic texts through which he seeks a hermeneutical and revealed response to the problems of his own time. In effect, it is a representation of the entry into the sacred, liminal space of the text, and the experience of the complex admixture of God's irruptive power into the present through the past and future. This imaginative process brings texts, or extracts or composites of texts, to renewed life and tells us much about the thinking process as it works through the written rather than the spoken word.[82]

Notions of participation and performance are thus fundamental to any understanding of the apocalyptic textual process. The collage of images renders the conjoining of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of performance easier for subsequent readers to re-experience. Christopher Rowland explains this as follows

> The first chapter of Ezekiel, as well as being the key text for the mystical tradition in Judaism (*ma'aseh merkabah*) is a central component of Christianity's primary visionary text, the Apocalypse. Ezekiel and the Apocalypse have prompted contrasting interpretations: eschatological calculations; or, the means of engendering

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[82] For this reason, comparisons can be made between apocalyptic techniques and Derrida's deconstructive process of *différance* in which supplementarity inheres. C.f., Jacques Derrida. *Différance*. Margins of Philosophy. Trans. Alan Bass (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1982); *Plato's Pharmakon.* Dissemination. Trans. Barbara Johnson. (London: Athlone Press, 1981). Incidentally, I would suggest that secular, postmodern examples of this type of performance of reading/writing exist in recent literary production. E.g . Jean Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea (London: Penguin, 1968). D. M. Thomas, Charlotte: The Final Journey of Jane Eyre. (London: Duckworth, 2000). Both authors re-enter the original text, *Jane Eyre*, as characters or witnesses, and re-perform it according to their respective hermeneutical concerns and cultural contexts. Whilst the texts can stand alone, knowledge of the other associated texts enhances their impact on the reader whose reading re-members each text through each of the others.

a *visionary mode*. In the interpretation of both texts this *mode of interpretation* has probably been as important as the transmission of the content of various interpretations. These particular texts in tradition include the accumulated experience and practice of using these texts with the expectation that these texts may open up (sometimes new) interpretative and theological insights. (Rowland 2002, 365).[83]

Exegetes perform the texts and experience the 'prophetic genius, which had inspired the prophets of old, to inspire them too as they read'. (Rowland 2002, 316). In this way, they become prophets for their own times. The modal performance enacts the old, carrying it forward into the transformed apocalyptic text in a movement that reflects the intertext both intrinsically and extrinsically. To that extent, the extrinsic performance of a visionary interpretation of a text enters into the production of the consequent apocalyptic text. Its form is, as such, chiastic. As a performance, it will be re-performed in the interpretative participation of future readers, where the extrinsic aspects will be different, but affected by those intrinsic to the (inter) text.[84] Thus, whilst all interpretation is performative and participatory, it is consciously ritualised and re-presented formally in the visionary mode. In Christian apocalyptic the performance operates through Christ's body, the liminal site for the modal process.

It is relevant to compare this against the work of cultural theorist and semiotician Roland Barthes has sought to deny any access to the authorial voice beyond the text. In his essay, *The Death of the Author*, he proposes that the written text is by nature 'intransitive' (itself, a liminal grammar): its meaning can never pass beyond the symbol to the 'author' and the fact itself, but instead

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[83] Christopher Rowland, "The Prophetic Performance of Scripture." Oxford University: unpublished, 2002. Lecture Notes sent to the author by electronic email on 27.03.03.I am grateful to Professor Rowland for coining the term, 'visionary mode' and for its explanation.

[84] I am not suggesting that this mystical practice stimulated the production of all apocalyptic texts, but there is a sense in which this constituent inheres in the form of all apocalyptic texts. I will try to demonstrate this in the comparison of Christian with modern and postmodern texts in Part 2. However, the concept of a modal performance of an intertext helps understand the hermeneutic process; it may also help in distinguishing the difference between an apocalyptic genre and mode.

remains the interpretative, existential experience of its reader.[85] However, Barthes also speaks of the 'master shaman', or story-teller, who performs a narrative *to an audience* through the spoken word. The shamanic performance can be usefully compared to the visionary mode described by Rowland in that the performing prophet *inside* the apocalyptic text is like the shaman who masters the 'narrative code' in the *telling* of the tale. Barthes writes that the shaman's 'performance … may be admired' but not his 'genius'. (Barthes 1977, 142). By this, Barthes means that the audience knows that the shaman is not the author of the story but its mediator or transmitter. In a sense, in inhabiting the story, he effectively dons the mantle of both creator and narrative in its mediation. This is also true in the apocalyptic text, in which the prophet-performer often takes on the name and voice of the prophet of the original prophetic text: he *embodies* a pseudonym and inhabits the story just as the shaman embodies the tale, and by extension, in re-memorising and re-presenting it, also re-authors it. The apocalyptist and the shaman, in mediating the text/narrative, lose their identities for a deeper reason than just story-telling. They are performing the liminal process; and in their participation of the text are, by extension, drawing their respective readers/recipients and the prophet (or divine messenger) into that shared participation; the readers, in turn, pass on the experience through their witness. Barthes seems not to recognise this interactive process. The apocalyptic interpreter does not make this mistake.

Similarly, internal to the apocalyptic text, the performer's voice is multiplied in the supernatural voices that speak and guide the received vision. The aim and hope of the visionary mode is that, as he performs these voices, so he will embody their wisdom. Simultaneously, the prophet-performer is incarnated and inscribed within the narrative framework of interpretation; he becomes part of the text in its performance and re-inscription. The text, as liminal space of revelation and transformation, is to that extent the threshold to that which it represents. To the

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[85] Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." Trans. Stephen Heath. <u>Image-Music-Text</u>. "La mort de l'auteur" (1968). London: Fontana, 1977. Oeuvres Complètes. Vol. 11, 1966-1973 (Paris: Du Seuil, 1994) 491-95. C.f., chapter 3, Section 8, on Barthes and the concept of the 'death of the author'.

degree that the revelatory experience is mediated through the text it also forms part of the reality of the prophet/interpreter. In the apocalyptic text, therefore, the mastery of symbols of which Barthes speaks is more than an interpretation of emblems, because the symbol (an example would be the Eucharist) also *signifies* the thing that it symbolises, in that sense resonating and embodying presence at the same as the gaps and aporia defer and problematise it.

I describe this form of hermeneutics as a theological performance of the *limen* on the grounds that, in Christian apocalyptic, the interpretative agenda revolves through Christ's body (his life, death, resurrection and ascension). The performance accords with Turner's paradigm of ritualised identity loss in the liminal space out of which, and by analogy with, the believer-exegete emerges transformed (as Jesus was) in, and by, the Easter events. As such, the prophetic text is the mediatory, performative and empowering space through which the performer lives and is inspired. Simultaneously, interpretation forms the 'contexture' as a liminal process working from both sides of the *limen* and as part of a dialogical principle of intertextuality.[86]

The primary aim of apocalyptic practice was to consciously develop techniques that open up the reader to 'the powerful images …and the dynamics of divine irruption'. (Rowland 2002, 319).[87] In Christian apocalyptic, this irruption has been understood through concepts of incarnation and *kenosis*.[88] They conjoin in an understanding of the way the incarnate Word reveals itself within the limits and limitations of the human community and the human text.[89] In <u>Barth, Derrida and</u>

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[86] C.f., Tzvetan Todorov, <u>Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle.</u> Trans. Wlad Godzich. <u>Theory and History of Literature</u>. Vol. 13. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984): especially Chapter 5. "Intertextuality": 60 - 74. Bakhtin writes that, "in literary prose…dialogism energizes from within the very mode in which the discourse conceives of its object and its means of expressing it, transforming the semantics and the syntactical structure of the discourse. Here the dialogical reciprocal orientation becomes, so to speak, an event of discourse itself, animating it and dramatizing it from within all of its aspects". (Todorov 65).

[87] C.f., chapter 1, section on keywords: *Revelation*.

[88] *Kenosis*: the self-limitation of the *Logos* in incarnation.

[89] C.f. Graham Ward, <u>Barth</u>, Chapter 7: 147.

the Language of Theology, Graham Ward explores the ethics of the trinodal operation of *kenosis* through the 'Word/Saying' of Karl Barth and Emanuel Levinas. In Barth, this irruption is called '*krisis*' or '*ereignis*', and in Levinas, 'rupture' or 'diachrony'. (Ward <u>Barth</u>, 148). Barth calls the interactional process as 'a dialectic of time and eternity' which 'is bridged by the paradox of the incarnation, which is a God-event, and the economy of which is trinodal'. (Ward <u>Barth</u>, 167). Thus he articulates how, in faith, we learn to recognise our limits as we see the meaning of God's mystery, led

> through content back to form, and in both cases to Himself, who one way or the other does not give Himself into our hands, but keeps us in His hand. (Barth 1960, 201).

The trinodal view helps open out the relationship between the apocalyptist and the apocalyptic text in its liminal operation. Furthermore, the working of the Word, defined through its mysterious unveiling as veiling, is again reminiscent of the presence-as-absence of the apocalyptic text.

> It might appear as striking that…the movement of the Word of God itself, which of course faith can only follow, is thus expressly and thoroughly described as a twofold one. This is … because the fact here to be expressed allows of no other way. Indeed… the fact is that in faith it is a case of as it were breaking through, or of recognising as broken through, the veiling in which, in proclamation, in the Bible and in Christ Himself, God speaks to us, i.e. of seeing and hearing that the very veiling of God is His true and real unveiling. (Barth 1960, 201).

Similarly, Rowland's view of the mystical-hermeneutical technique mode points to its understanding of the scriptural text as 'a dynamic repository of ever-changing meanings that inscribed and re-inscribed that circle of reciprocity that occurs between the hermeneut and the text' (where the text embodies the Word in words through its sacred space). (Rowland 2002, 369). But, as the prophet sees

the vision, the vision reciprocally sees *him*.[90] And though mediated in representation, this is nonetheless process as encounter and proclamation of revelation, and the mystery of revelation as the covering over of God's mysterious presence. It is both knowing/unknowing that informs and informs us in the crisis of the liminal. Thus, more than commentary, the apocalyptic text represents inhabitation, incarnation and kenosis, communion but also dispersal and dissemination (a concept to which I return in chapter 5). As a form of intercourse, the *limen* dominates the grammar as the dynamic threshold or passage between two courses and is the active third constituent of the trinodal operation of dialogism and analogy. It is the channel of communion between man and what is otherwise unseen. It *is* the mediating space (as Christ) and the creative, performative space for the speech act of God's Trinitarian self-presentation.

What is important, theologically, is the affective and cognitive process of textual performance where the visionary mode is the articulation of a theology of response and a theology of reading. In the last two sections of this chapter, I will extend this understanding by exploring the relationship between God's Word and human words (as an analogical relation-in-difference), to explain God's performative speech in relation to human language before and after the fall. My reading of the creation narratives of Genesis thus aims to open out the analogy between God's Word, human words and the crisis of representation. It is arguably in these narratives that we begin to see the breakdown in the relationship between God's Word and Adam's response. For, it is in creation that we witness protology as the action and incarnation of the Word in the world-as-text conjoined to eschatology as the end of the Word in words. These sections present a reading of liminal apocalyptic-eschatology through which to contextualise the crisis of representation discussed in chapter 3.

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[90] N.B. Prophetic texts often describe a revelatory process of 'hearing' as well as 'seeing'; they also present images of a divine text or scroll: e.g. Ezekiel 1-3, 4-28, 8- 3.3;
Jer.1.4, 9;Isa. 1.1, 6.1 –6Zech. 1.1, 7 –17, 2.1; Dan 7.1, 8.16. There is a mixing of voices and visions, the human and the supernatural, the worldly and the eternal.

Before this, however, I would like to discuss the conjoining of apocalyptic and eschatology through the theologies of Ernst Käsemann and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza who, respectively, describe the apocalyptic, visionary mode and the liminal process of text performance *avant la lettre*. Their work clarifies how an apocalyptic reading-response of Christian Testament texts operates from within the liminal paradigm.

4. Thresholds of revelation in the New Testament through the work of Ernst Käsemann

I first became aware of the connection between apocalyptic and eschatology in the theology of Ernst Käsemann, and through his descriptions of proclamation I began to conceive of the concept of a liminal economy where, in Christian grammar, the concept of Christology is central to understanding the revealing Word in words. Thus, as *Logos* (the Saying-in-the-said), Christ mediates between God's and our words. And Christian scripture is *apocalyptic* in that it opens the believer to the mysterious nature and process and performance of the Word in words. As *Logos*, Christ is at one and the same time, revealer, the means of revelation and the revealed presence in the text. He is interpretative channel, interpreter and interpreted. In revealing the imminence of God's kingdom, humankind stands at the threshold (that is Jesus Christ) to the (eschatological) world and God's full presence. The operation is one in which the form and content of God's Word speaks itself as it opens out to an enfolding of that which stands on each side of the threshold. This section outlines how Käsemann reflects something of this operation.

First, Käsemann reconnects apocalyptic and eschatology as one concept, his doctrine of revelation opening out the complex, relational interplay between beginning and end. Certainly, for him, apocalyptic and eschatology reflect the simultaneous opening and closure to the divine through which God's will is understood and, as I hope to show, this is, in effect, a description of the dynamic *liminal* activity, in which God's self-disclosure plays through protology and

eschatology as He participates in the world (in Trinitarian performances between God as Father, Son and Spirit).

When, in 1960, he presented his paper, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology*, at Sidlingen and Erlangen in Germany, yet another revival of interest in apocalyptic had already begun.[91] Käsemann first asked *if* '[a]pocalyptic ... [is] the mother of Christian theology', why 'dogmatics no longer starts with the eschatological problem but traditionally ends with apocalyptic'. (Käsemann 40).[92] He equates the revelatory with the eschatological. As such he draws the *limen* as boundary (and end) together with the *limen* as threshold. His question does not relate semantically to any linear sequence but to the issue of which doctrine takes priority. Crucially, he sees apocalyptic as the interpretative lens through which all Christian doctrine must be viewed. For this reason, Käsemann argues that systematic theologians need to review the proclamations of the post-Easter community as the origins of Christian theology because, 'however obscurely ... they contain the laws of the future'. (Käsemann 21). The *kerygma* of the Synoptic tradition proclaims the sole lordship of Jesus as Christ through 'manifestations and the truth of the Spirit'. (Käsemann 21).[93] Käsemann thus understands that in the events after Easter a transformation has taken place in which its inspired religious fervour, combined with an intense expectation of the end, can *only* be performed and expressed apocalyptically. The way in which the followers of Jesus view reality has undergone a radical change because God's self-disclosure has been revealed in the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ's body in a relational economy of God the Father to Christ the Son (as *Logos*) through the Spirit.

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[91] German scholarship developed a keen interest in apocalyptic literature in relation to dogmatics. A parallel interest arose in English-speaking biblical scholarship. C.f., Klaus Koch, The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic: a Polemic Work on a Neglected Area of Biblical Studies and its Damaging Effects on Theology and Philosophy. Trans. M. Kohl. Ratlos ver der Apocalyptik (Gutersloh:Gerd Mohn, 1970). (SCM Press: London, 1972). In chapter 5, 49ff he outlines post-war apocalyptic studies, foregrounding Wilkens' preliminary thesis that insists that all Christian Testament texts are apocalyptic (Koch 73). He also considers Pannenberg's thesis on apocalyptic history (Koch 98ff).

[92] Ernst Käsemann, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology* in Apocalypticism. Special Supplement. The Journal for Theology and The Church (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969). Originally printed in Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche (1960).

[93] *Kerygma*: a term coined by Rudolph Bultmann to express that "Jesus Christ lies behind the gospel proclamation" (McGrath 373). C.f., Alistair E. McGrath, Theology: An Introduction. Second edition. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

However, as mentioned earlier, there are many scholars who have attempted to separate the *historical* Jesus from Jesus as *Christ.* Contextually, Käsemann sits within this debate. To summarise: redaction-historical research insists on differentiating between the actual historical words of Jesus and the post-Easter apocalyptic interpretations of events, even though the latter are seen as foundational to Christianity. The question is whether, in creating a divide between the historical and the exalted Jesus, the reader is forced into separating, and thus distinguishing between, the apocalyptic-eschatological teachings of Jesus *before and after* his death.[94] Käsemann recognises, however, that in the gospels these concerns are centralised formally and thematically in the proclaimed theology of the early church, where the events before Easter are read through the execution and resurrection to *form* Christian theology. This reflects an understanding of a grammar inherent in Christian scripture that plays through the liminality of apocalyptic-eschatology in its form and content because it acknowledges that it necessarily performs through the axial point of crisis in Christ's body on the cross. Of course, Käsemann is not alone in this. But he is nonetheless marking how, in segregating the so-called historical from the theological meta-narrative, the outcome of Jesus' life and mission in the Easter and post-Easter events are effectively undermined. For, it problematises the apocalyptic 'contexture' as it ignores the liminal performance between pre- and post-crucifixion events. Thus, for Käsemann, it thus follows that even if in his own life Jesus was more 'bound up with beginnings of Christian theology…yet it would still be necessary to see in post-Easter apocalyptic a theological new beginning'. (Käsemann 40).

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[94] Käsemann is distancing himself from Albert Schweitzer. He writes that Schweitzer's followers 'have themselves become an obstruction to the carrying out of the task they have recognized, for they begin making the whole question a problem of the life-of-Jesus research and then sought to explain the earliest history of dogma in the light of the delay of the parousia. Both paths have led to a dead end'. (Käsemann 1969, 39). However, in attempting to clarify the astonishing charismatic events of Pentecost, Käsemann loses sight of the issue of what Jesus as both human and divine passed on to his disciples before the Easter events of crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation. The challenge which those in search of the historical Jesus have set themselves involves the incarnation, itself a quintessential revelation. The 'questers' look at how and when this concept was first understood, and whether Jesus understood this revelation in his own lifetime, what they carried forward from that time, and in what way. This question impacts on how and when the Christian proclamation of Jesus *as Christ* developed. For an appreciation of Schweitzer's view of apocalyptic eschatology, c.f. Schweitzer A, The Quest of the Historical Jesus (London: SCM, 2000), and The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity (London: A & C Black, 1968).

Let me give some examples of what this means. If we imagine how Jesus would have written his own story in his own lifetime, we might conjecture that it would be driven by the baptismal and wilderness visionary experiences. Redaction-historical scholars accept these as real events. As events, they undoubtedly reflect Turner's rite of passage paradigm and, as such, involve the apocalyptic-eschatological paradigm, reinforced by the narrative symbolism of the liminal space of transformation in which God's Word is received.[95] We know furthermore, that for Jesus (and the Baptist), the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God forms the core of his theology. The 'Son of man' sayings bring to the fore the apocalyptic Danielic texts:[96] what Jesus taught before his death can thus be said to *prefigure* Christian apocalyptic theology but not *be* Christian theology. As already asserted, this is because the interpretative focus of early Christians was charged by the Easter events of Jesus' death and resurrection. Significantly, in their post-Easter experience, believers are opened out in the Spirit to the mediating power of Christ and his reality as Lord. It is thus through the crucifixion/resurrection that the Trinitarian movement of God is exposed. And although, as man, Jesus' own activities are apocalyptic performances, these are only fully revealed as God's presence to his followers in the resurrected *Christ Jesus*.[97]

The meaning of apocalyptic has been transformed across the liminal threshold of Easter into something radically new, and what Käsemann does, as such, is to begin to re-inscribe Christian theology with, and through, an apocalyptic-eschatological liminal economy. For example, an insightful reading of Matthew reflects the apocalyptic-hermeneutical process found in all four gospels

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[95] Both water and wilderness are liminal locations and symbols.

[96] These sayings speak of the coming of one "like a human being…[to whom] was given dominion and glory and kingship …[in a] dominion that shall not pass away" (Dan 7.13-14) are formed in an apocalypse.

[97] There are exceptions to this, such as in the Transfiguration scenes. Even in these, however, there is a qualitative difference between pre- and post-Easter knowledge of Jesus as Christ, and there holds a sense of the Transfiguration as an apocalyptic-eschatological and liminal rupture within the life events of Jesus as fully human, representing yet another (divine) displacement and, therefore, another marker of the apocalyptic nature of the texts.

> The reference back to the history of the Old Testament … [is] done on the basis of the apocalyptic principle which is most clearly formulated in [Matthew] 24.37ff, 'As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man'. The time of the end and the time of the origin correspond to each other, and the history of the Old Testament, seen from the starting point of the end, is the reflection of the origin. Thus, following the tradition of late Judaism, the Old Testament is apocalyptically interpreted. (Käsemann 1969, 33).

The correspondence between origin and instauration *constitutes* the revelation of God's (cosmological) intent. Käsemann draws together the relation between doctrines of creation (protology), eschatology and revelation to a doctrine of salvation, to open out Christ's salvific role. And, his Christological view of apocalyptic articulates the analogical relation between the boundary as historical reality *and* theological sign. This demonstrates, in a way that the historical Jesus logic cannot, the interconnectedness between beginnings and ends and God's originating Word (Christ as *Logos*) in an overarching doctrine of the Word (in words).

This economy acts in and across the liminal space to effectuate a response that leads to salvation rather than perdition, in a correlation that Käsemann expresses as

> the idea that the course of the history of salvation and of the history of damnation runs parallel, if also in different directions, and finds its criteria and goal in the parousia of the Son of man. (Käsemann 1969, 33).

Käsemann is, as such, marking the chiastic movement of the theological paradigms that drive Christian apocalyptic texts and that, crucially, play through the eschatological-liminal axis of Christ. The adequate response to threshold and boundary (as end that relates in difference to beginning) in the liminal economy is that of the apocalyptically proclaimed *kerygma*: Christ's Word in the threshold of the end of history *is* God's performative Word of creation. It reflects the emergence of Christian proclamation that performs a two-fold movement analogically. Another way of describing this is that Christological and subsequent Trinitarian foci arising out of the crucifixion/resurrection event are *apocalyptically* driven to form a new understanding of how the multi-messaged voices of God and humankind are

mediated *in relationship*, performed and proclaimed through the text itself. In this sense, the theological and the literary are inseparable.

Another scholar of apocalyptic, John J. Collins, accepts the centrality of apocalyptic-eschatology in the Christian text. Like Käsemann, he has done much to clarify the way in which the theological weaves through the literary. Again, against the historical Jesus movement, that undermines notions of apocalyptic prophecy, he asserts that although 'apocalyptic' is 'an ambivalent term... it is not significantly more ambivalent than other terms such as 'prophecy' or 'wisdom'. (Collins 1991, 24). Prophecy and wisdom are both influences on apocalyptic literature but are terms that have *not* notably undergone the kind of negative criticism to which apocalyptic has often been subjected by biblical scholars, and to which Käsemann was responding.[98] Collins argues that 'apocalyptic' should *not*, therefore, be seen as some vague theological concept but as texts produced through close analogy with other scriptural texts. As Käsemann suggests, this is relevant because apocalyptic texts narrativise the hermeneutical mode of interpretation in which God's will in history is viewed holistically as apocalyptic-eschatology. The consciously intertextual interpretation of scripture by apocalyptic authors of the Christian Testament establishes connections between historical events in the Hebrew Testament and events at the centre of their own narratives, in which Christ is the axial point of crisis and decision. Intertextuality is, of course, integral to all scriptural production but the liminal event of Christ's body in crucifixion/resurrection does not stand between Hebrew and Christian Testaments as a divide but as the threshold to truth, in which God's work in history works through that which was, is, and is to come. Thus, in the work of Käsemann and others like Collins, the apocalyptic mode is described even though it is not expressly articulated.

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[98] John J. Collins. *Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism*. <u>Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium</u>. J. J. Collins and J. H. Charlesworth, Eds., Supplement Series 9, <u>Journal for the Study of the</u> <u>Pseudepigrapha</u>. (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 1991) 11-32.

It goes without saying that Jesus and the early Christians are products of their own social, political and religious milieu. The experience of Jesus' followers is transformed by the liminal events of Easter, just as Jesus is transformed by his elevation as Christ; their paths are interconnected through shared performance and participation. Accordingly, it is important to reiterate two factors that have already been noted about the apocalyptic-interpretative process of early believers. First, an apocalyptic interpretation of existing scripture helps believers make sense of the Easter events, and out of which they envision Jesus as exalted 'Son of man' who is, 'definable only through the lens of the end'. (Käsemann 33). Second, the movement of history in these endtimes is seen to relate-in-difference to the movement and activity of God seen in the beginnings of history. Literary form and content are woven together *Christologiclly* in a proliferation of apocalyptically interpreted paradigms, metaphors and images, modally performed: in the rites of baptism, shared meals, Eucharist, hymns and liturgies; in the movement between symbolic, locational markers; and in the liminal performance and displaced movement from baptism and wilderness temptation to crucifixion and resurrection. The apocalyptic-eschatological paradigm even percolates through the parables of Jesus. Thus, the relationship between the Trinitarian God, man and the liminal complex expands through and unfolds in the narrativised proclamation of this radically new theological understanding. Any attempt to undermine or to distinguish between before and after misses the (hermeneutical) point.

Käsemann reflects this in his warning of an 'inseparable and yet ever imperilled bond between the Spirit and the gospel'. (Käsemann 1969, 42). It is a criticism of the redaction-historical interpretations, in which it is not the prophetic, revealed Word of the exalted Christ that, in taking them out of context, is brought to the fore, but the *ipsissima verba*, or so-called historical teachings of Jesus. Käsemann warns against the danger of reductionism in redaction-critical and historical-scientific study that he sees as bringing about a theological crisis in our own times. He seeks to draw theology back from the brink of enclosure and indifference by emphasising how, as mediator of salvation, Christ gives power and authority to those charismatically-driven messenger-prophets who proclaim the

power of Christ to break 'miraculously into the sphere of bodily life'. (Käsemann 1969, 43).[99] He recognises that the apocalyptic view of history and the historical moment inaugurated by Christ in his life and death drives those early believers

> not merely to proclaim the *kerygma* of Christ, but to narrate it … in a highly unique sense, namely within an eschatological horizon and interpreted in eschatological terms.(Käsemann 1969, 34).

The apocalyptic-eschatological process works dynamically as the events of Christ through the performance of the rehearsed, recaptured and re-memorised story from the perspective of the believer living in the post-Easter reality, expressing how the three views of eschatology – future, inaugurated and realised – *co*-exist. This is expressed as a revealed knowledge of the coming *parousia,* and understood through 'the criteria employed by the world Judge, and [deriving] its knowledge from its inspiration'. (Käsemann 1969, 29). Gospel narrative is, as such, a template for living in which the nearness of God, captured through the mediation of Christ and extended through the Spirit, speaks simultaneously in the urgency of the beginnings of the end and of the nearness of judgment of both living and dead; and thus enfolds the apocalyptic events of Revelation. Dualistic images and typologies that arise out of but also forward these convictions show that they are *dialectically* mediated in a critical anticipation of that end. In Matthew's gospel, for example, they are expressed as a series of promises and curses. In prophesies of the end many of the oppositions are paradoxically reversed after the final judgment (Matt. 19.9). The horrors of damnation are only too vividly imagined (Matt. 10.13ff; 11.22, 24; 12.41ff). (Käsemann 1969, 32).

To conclude: Ernst Käsemann's explanation of the centrally important association of apocalyptic and eschatology begins to describe the nature of Christian apocalyptic interpretation through the how and why of its narrative formations. In this he demonstrates an appreciation of the hermeneutical impulse of an essentially apocalyptic text production in which revelations are formed through the textual re-performance of existing scripture and the events of the life,

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[99] On the importance of embodiment to analogy, c.f. chapter 5, below.

death and resurrection of Christ as a liminal performance. Moreover, his awareness of a dialectical presentation arising out of the use of imagistic polar extremes provides a convenient entry point to techniques of apocalyptic literature that so effectively express the critical moment of crisis and flux out of which the demand to decide, in faith, emerges.

5. Imaginative participation and the unique crisis of early Christianity

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza also associates apocalyptic with eschatology. Like Käsemann, she interrogates the common cultural milieu and identity of Christianity and Judaism in the first century to unpack the notion of revelation, eschatology and liminality as it grows into a distinctively Christian form.[100] She emphasises that, although this evolves out of other forms of Jewish apocalypticism (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 296), the uniquely self-generative interpretation of early (Jewish) Christians asserts something qualitatively new - a distinctive theology developed by Jesus' followers in the wake of the crisis of the crucifixion/resurrection event. For, although apocalyptic references by Jesus and Paul reflect the Jewish traditions of apocalyptic form and content, with internal literary cohesion coming out of the cultural context of that period, she identifies clear distinctions. (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 296). Importantly for this particular group of believers, it is the specific social, political and religious crisis created by Jesus' death/resurrection that proves that history is coming to an (imminent) end. The fact that the event is incorporated into their faith allows them to develop a now distinctive faith, because the cultural expectation of a Messiah, or Son of man, is being performed and experienced as a lived reality *in* Jesus; he both marks and is marked out by the end. It is his embodiment of and as the end that in effect marks *their* critical moment and movement of faith. It is this experience that allows them to

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[100] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. *The Phenomenon of Early Christian Apocalyptic: Some Reflections on Method.* Ed. David Hellholm. Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East. Proceedings from the international colloquium on apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 1979. Tübingen: Paul Siebeck, 1983: 295-315. C.f. Schüssler Fiorenza, Revelation: Vision of a Just World. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991) for a sensitive reading in which this approach is fully developed.

understand how his role in the divine judgment in that end promises salvation for the faithful (i.e. those who interpret these factors correctly) and punishment for the wicked (those who do not). (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 300ff). In this way, Christianity distinguishes itself from other forms of Jewish apocalypticism.

Like Collins and Käsemann, Schüssler Fiorenza also reflects on how the process of interpretation spins out of apocalyptic scripture in order to weave into imaginatively new text productions in which Jewish literary-apocalyptic motifs are employed in a radically distinctive way. The simultaneous experience of extreme pessimism and optimism is reinforced by the apocalyptic motif of two ages that apprehends the search for salvation in the *actual* crisis in these believers' lives. This motif, she posits, moves horizontally as it describes God's intervention in the material, historical world, the linear movement avoiding the Gnostic tendencies inherent in ascent motifs, and marking how the resurrection of Christ epitomises the reality of the beginning of the *historical* end in which believers see themselves as the eschatological community of salvation. (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 305). Any attempt to differentiate between an immanent and imminent eschatology is therefore flawed and ultimately misleading. In this sense, she is recognising the tensely experienced synergy, not competition, between the two.

Again like Käsemann, she grasps that unless the texts are read as well as produced apocalyptically, confusions necessarily arise. If taken into the liminal paradigm this means that an apocalyptic reading plays through the *limen* situated between immanence and imminence, in a paradoxical holding-together of differentiated concepts of time and space. And I would add that the predominant ascent/descent motif present in many of the texts represents an apocalyptic *mode* of opening to divine revelation and not a Gnostic tendency. A *non*-apocalyptic interpretation of apocalyptic representation is, as such, one that seeks out the purely descriptive rather than the imaginative, and resists the deepest implications of the apocalyptic text because, as Schüssler Fiorenza writes, 'mytho-poetic language cannot be reduced to factual information.' (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 305). In other words, the hope that arises out of the performative process of

apocalyptic reading plays through its analogical nature and is not dependent on abstract or fact-based information.

Schüssler Fiorenza's main argument is that a 'closed one-dimensional interpretation' reduces the *multi-dimensionality* of meaning that inheres in apocalyptic writing and interpretation, and she arguably recognises the significance, therefore, of the simultaneity presented through the collage technique that holds together several concepts and images. Similarly, Hans Werner Kelber describes how the multi-voiced church supplements and expands the hermeneutical process in a nuanced, complex interplay between re-memorisation, enactment and growing tradition.[101] His description of the liminal play of interpretation calls to mind the participation in and dispersal of the Spirit in the believing community, a theme I discuss in chapter 5. Kelber differentiates three dominant characteristics in the production/reading process

> Synchronically, the canonical gospel narratives culminate in death/resurrection/ascension ... At the same time, the gospels' narrative plots enact a host of other religious and ethical themes, configure aspects of time and space, develop characterization, and construe multiple plots and subplots.

However, he makes another highly relevant point

> Diachronically, the gospels are deeply implicated in tradition, and respond to, transform, and reabsorb traditional elements of various kinds ... [but] it is inadmissible to claim that they were written singly from the perspective of Jesus' resurrection. ... In performance or in reading (aloud or even in silence) a participatory element enters into the hermeneutical process. But the ... experience is by no means in all instances synonymous with that of the risen Lord. A miracle story for example, invites hearers/readers to respond to, or participate in ... the narrated events, and to reorient their lives accordingly.... In view of these performative dynamics, it is inadmissible to claim that the memory of the Church always activates the presence of the *risen* Lord. (Kelber, n. 43, 92 – 93).[102]

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[101] Hans Werner Kelber, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus". Ed. John Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson and Hans Werner Kelber, <u>The Jesus Controversy: Perspectives in Conflict</u>. (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1999). 75 –116.
[102] My emphasis.

Kelber marks how the *hermeneutical* process works from both sides of the Easter events in a complex process that is, at times, dependent on the revelation of the risen Lord whilst, at others, it performs the present world through the teachings of the pre-Easter Jesus which can be taken at face value. Nonetheless, he is describing the apocalyptic-liminal process at work.

Kelber works through hermeneutics whereas Schüssler Fiorenza works through literary criticism and phenomenology. These methods arguably better denominate the complexity of Christian apocalyptic texts and their production than more reductionist methods. (C.f., Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 305). Like Kelber and Käsemann, she is concerned with the interpretation of Christian narrative post-resurrection and ascension, where multiple meanings must be allowed to stand in their holding together. Only this approach guarantees the emergence of the complex interplays between the apocalyptic symbols and motifs, as 'religious proclamation that *provokes* as religious narrative, audience participation and catharsis'. (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 309).[103]

In summary

> Early Christian apocalyptic should … not be delineated by abstracting the theological essence or the existential eschatological stance towards life from its apocalyptic language and thought-world. Apocalyptic language … evokes imaginative participation. The metaphoric and symbolic character of apocalyptic language resists any attempt at logical reduction and closed one-dimensional interpretation. Its aim is not explanation and information but the expression of visionary wholeness. It elicits understandings, emotions and reactions that cannot be conceptualized and expressed in propositional language. (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 305).

These terms reverberate with the process of creation and the analogical relation. Apocalyptic narrative thus functions *through affect* to re-enact the past *and* carry the reader forward to a transformed future, the 'structural order' of the narrative establishing order and overcoming chaos. (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983,309). As such, I would argue, it is not so much the cognitive dissonance of faith but of the conjoining of cognition and affect *in* faith.

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[103] My emphasis.

Like Käsemann, Schüssler Fiorenza ultimately describes the entire Christian Testament texts as apocalyptic:

> [the tension] between past, present and future of salvation, has determined the New Testament forms of gospel, history and apocalypse, so that in a certain sense all three forms can be classified as Christian apocalyptic forms. However, they emphasize differently the two poles of religious narrative: the re-enactment of the past and the anticipation of the future. (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 311).

Her assertion of a distinctively apocalyptic accent, in which the modal stress is on the future through a re-memorised past, essentially derives from an understanding that the Christian texts are apocalyptically driven, performed interpretations, produced intertextually. And her description begins to explain how crisis is overcome when the liminal hurdle is performed as a complex. Thus, from the human perspective, it is insufficient to simply regard liminality as a transitional space in which identity is lost, prior to transformation from a lower to a higher status. For, whilst Turner's anthropological model is certainly reflected in the narrative form of many Hebrew stories (seminally so in the exodus), it is necessary to further recognise how Christian scripture also expresses liminality in its form articulated through and as the revelatory mode of textual performance.[104]

The content of the narratives often clearly follow the linearity of Turner's three stages but it is harder to identify the *limen*, as opening to God's Word, in the form. In the last two sections of the chapter I would like, therefore, to mark the concern of this chapter: how liminality, apocalyptic and eschatology are conjoined in a theology of the Word in words. The next section turns to the theological and scriptural beginning to consider God's creative performance of the Word and liminality. This is followed by a hermeneutics of the narrative of the first human words, to question how they can be said to correspond to God's own Word. As such, these final sections constitute apocalyptic performances that, hermeneutically, focus on analogy and language. They take us back to the questions posed in

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[104] C.f., also the flood, the exile and in motifs of border crossings, status loss and restitution and so on. In fact, the liminal paradigm is rehearsed in almost every story of conflict and hardship, with reversals and ironic inversion dominating the narrative flows.

chapter 1, i.e., to what happens when God's existence is refused or resisted, and to how a crisis of representation is elicited by detheologised explorations of the relationship between knowledge, cognition and language that consequently deny correspondence between reality and representation. These sections bridge between this and the next chapter on the crisis of representation and the problematic of the inadequacy of language.

6. Performing the creative Word in the *limen*

In the section on liminality in chapter 1, I defined the *limen* as barrier, threshold *and* transformational space. In relation to human language, the *limen,* as barrier, is a location of crisis and despair. As threshold, it is the space out of which, in faith, hope emerges. Theologically, it is the simultaneous experiences of all three aspects that both defies and releases the doctrine to the Word as the *limen* opens itself out to that which stands on both sides. The liminal operation, as such, defines the theology of apocalyptic-eschatology. For, as transformational space, the *limen* is the location for the divine operation of God's redemption in relationship with humankind.

Earlier, I wrote about Käsemann's affirmation of the centrality of creation to apocalyptic-eschatology. In this section I will describe how the Creation narratives of Genesis 1-3 provide the means through which to interpret the way in which human language corresponds to without equating with the Word, then to expose the problematical nature of representation. Genesis 1 describes how, in the uniquely *performative* speech act of creation, God as Word forms a *liminal* space through which to disclose Himself in and through creation. Genesis 2 and 3 exemplify two movements of communication between God and man: first, the relation-in-difference between God's Word and man's words; second, the tragic fault-line of relation-in-opposites that arises out of the fall. As we begin to see how the *limen is* constituted as a complex space in which the Trinitarian movement of the divine interacts with the human (thus allowing the Word to 'come' to us in our

representations), we also begin to understand why the nature of its performance is, at the same time, problematic. For, despair makes the *limen* a barrier to faith and to the possibility of divine encounter. Thus, these stories show the importance of liminality to the language of theology through which to understand a doctrine of the Word, and also as the overarching form of the Bible. They also begin to open out the concept of the crisis that is, arguably, inherent in all our representations as atomism or immanentism. Thus overall, the exegesis of the creation narratives is an important step in further unpacking the concept of analogy that is central to arguing for a liminal economy in representation, and it acts as an appropriate prologue to the next chapter on the crisis of representation.

An apocalyptic concept of revelation viewed through the tripartite liminal economy represents the operation of the relation between God's Word and human representation through which meaning is experienced and known. According to the re-definition of apocalyptic literature thus far assembled, revelation is an activity that begins in hermeneutics (as God-driven response) and that, *via* representation, becomes a theology of reading. As such, a presupposed relationship pertains between author and reader in the critical moment that opens out in the liminal space of textual performance. This means that an apocalyptic reading is theologically and analogically loaded. Negative paradigms, to which I turn in the next chapter, and that focus only on the *limen* as barrier or limit, refuse and resist this presupposition. I am proposing that Genesis 1 and 2-3 witness to the logic behind these different but related pre-suppositions (herein forwarded as propositions in the debate on language). For, it is here that the liminal operation of opening and closure to God's Word in human words are drawn together in the narrative of the act of creation and the primary events of history.

The first point I would like to make is that Genesis 1 describes the primary speech of creation, and to suggest that God's performative speech act operates within the *limen*, as the sacred space created *between* chaos and nothingness. As such, the liminal space is the one *in* which God actively creates the universe and

the barrier that exists between order and chaos is at the same time a threshold to created order. The performative speech act is God's primary act of self-disclosure, and its polar images of differentiation illustrate Käsemann's thesis of the necessary correspondence between protology and eschatology (and the parallel histories of salvation and damnation).

At the same time as the first creation narrative acts as a template through which to read revelation in the inner working of the Trinity, in the logic of creation the Word represents God acting relationally in Himself *prior* to creation; and thus, of necessity, before the relation-in-difference with human language. Here, I am not suggesting that the Christian understanding of a Trinitarian economy of Father, Son, and Spirit represents the liminal complex of barrier, threshold and transformatory space. For, whilst the Trinity illustrates its inner working in the *limen* as the creative, performative speech act of God, the western doctrine of Christ's two natures additionally holds God *and* man in the tension of the liminal economy, where the divine limits itself in the human through *kenosis*. In other words, the aspects of *limen* as barrier (and self-limitation of the *Logos)* and threshold (in incarnation) are reflective of God's relationship *with creation* not of the Godhead. In this sense, God's Word reveals and conceals itself within the limits and limitations of the human community and the human text.[105] Incarnation represents a bridge between the divine and the human, because Jesus enters the *limen* as a human who interacts with the divine, as he simultaneously conjoins in the Trinitarian economy. Thus, the liminal process of revelation in the creation narratives, express something of the internal relationship of God, as well as the analogical nature of God's relation to humankind and between eternity and time. As we begin to understand the nature of relations-in-difference, we are opened to the complexity of the *limen*, as a sacred performance between the Word and words that to some degree imitates the Trinitarian relationship. Justice and judgement inhere

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[105] In Revelation, the identification and symbolisation of Christ's role as the key to opening and shutting are irrefutable: for example, the doors to death and Hell (1.18) or the bottomless pit (9.1f.; 20.1,3), the open door to Heaven (4.1), the sealed book (5.2ff), the seals (6), earth (12.16) and so on. Thus creation and eschatology are brought together through his mediating activity.

in this dialectical relationship within human history. So too does reconciliation. As such a complex, analogical-liminal grammar begins to emerge.

My second point is that the second creation narrative stands as an exploration of the relationship between God and the first human, and thus between divine and human speech acts. The logic is as follows: God speaks creation into being and man re-presents his creative act through his narration of it. Paradoxically, of course, this representation exposes the problematic of the dialectical relationship between time and eternity in the liminal processing of any revelation of the Word in words: the lapse in time between the original performative speech act of God and its representation in narrative can *only* be explained through a liminal doctrine of revelation - as a divine rupture in human language. Furthermore, for the creative act to be experienced *as reality* rather than a type of fiction (that merely comforts), the revelation can only be believed analogically.[106] The theological significance is first that, in the representational process itself, some sort of *correspondence* between God's Word and human words inheres, and second, the dynamic revelatory process in some way folds backs into representation; meaning that, from the beginning of the world, the idea of correspondence signifies, as genuine possibility, the representation of God's Word in man's own words. One can infer from this that humankind intuitively knows what language is, or should be capable of; and consequently, the nature of the relationship between God and man stands upon God speaking first and man responding in analogous, God-directed terms. Human language is, as such, engaged in a God-dependent interpretative response. However, an exact correspondence between God's Word and human words cannot be viewed as more than possibility, because the revelatory process *beyond* actual presence negotiates between opening and closure at the *limen* of God's Word as creator.

To sum up: Genesis 2 and 3 reflect the complex play between God's Word and human words: from the outset, a difference opens between God's performative speech act of creation and man's naming of the world that is then radically affected

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[106] For comments on apocalyptic literature and comfort, c.f., Part 2, chapter 6.

by Adam's disobedience. For, whilst in the first narrative Adam's *naming* of the animals is a way of illustrating what exact correspondence between the word and thing might look like in human language, the end of the second creation narrative demonstrates a significant change: that of difference and deferral (Derrida's différance) between God's Word and human language.[107] This is because of the qualitative shift between Adam's first words and his language post-apostasy. For this reason, an examination of the narratives from the perspective of univocity and equivocity has genuine relevance for any attunement to representation as the final section aims to show.

7. Creation and correspondence

The Word is narrated in Genesis 1 (paradoxically, as the first representation). Creation is a 'said' act consisting of two parts:

> God *said*, "Let there be light", and there was light. God *called* the light Day, and the darkness he called Night (Gen. 1.1).[108]

The two steps constitute the divinely spoken act of differentiation. *Saying* creates light out of the darkness; differentiating light and darkness is the primary act of creation in which both time *and* space are made in relation to each other. George Steiner calls this, 'a rhetoric, a literal speech act'. (Steiner Grammars, 27). It is followed by a divine *naming* of that which emerges from that first differentiation. The Word univocally creates *and* expresses the thing.

God's activity has taken place *in,* not beyond, the liminal space created between the formless void and the face of the deep (waters), between nothingness and chaos. In this divine activity, the boundary between the void and the deep

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[107] As mentioned previously, the term différance is Derrida's: the term represents the conjunction between deferral and difference in relation to supplementarity in dialectics.

[108] Unless otherwise stated, I have used the following translation of the Bible: New Revised Standard Version. (London: Harper-Collins, 1989). C.f. Gen. 1.3 and 5.

becomes a creative threshold filled by God. It is the golden thread of God's self-disclosure acting *on and between* both sides to make the world in a serial act of differentiation. It is here that we see the operation in which the form and content of God's Word speaks and opens itself out to an enfolding of that which stands on each side of the threshold. On these grounds, Genesis 1 epitomises the divine economy of the *limen*. From the very beginning God's speech activity is distinguishable from man's because his speech is performative, that is, the name corresponds to the created thing. The threshold marks out differentiation. Qualitatively, it is blessing.[109]

Making humankind in God's own image is a gift of love,[110] where God differentiates himself from but stands in loving relationship to humankind and the world, because creation can *only* be made *in relation* to God's Trinitarian self. The creative movement is necessarily from God to man. Any correspondence between the Words and words must reflect the primacy of this directional movement. Man cannot act in speech as God does. He can only stand before God as and in response to His performative speech action. God's speech *is the act of creation*. Man's, on the other hand, is only *about creation*. As such, there is a qualitative difference between God saying, 'there it is' and man saying, 'there it is', because man's word is a response and recognition of God's creative activity; both an engagement with *and* an acknowledgement of God's creative Word that reflects the active presence of God in the world He has spoken into being.

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[109] C.f. J.G. Dunn. Baptism in the Holy Spirit. (London: SCM, 1970). In his work on the Spirit, Dunn makes a connection between the primary act of Creation and the divine speech in the baptism of Jesus. God's Word is in both cases, therefore, performative. Referring to Rabbinic exegesis, he notes that, "Rabbis sometimes took the dove as a picture of the Spirit 'brooding' over chaos (Lohneyer, *Markus* 21, 25; Barrett, *Tradition*, 39; Taylor, 161)".

(Dunn n. 12 & 13, 27). The Rabbinic tradition understands this metaphor to mean that God has both bred and nurtured Creation; this process is, therefore, seen as gift. Dunn asserts furthermore, that the dove which is witnessed in the Mark baptism version of Creation may also allude to the Flood narrative in which God un-makes and then re-makes the world; here, of course, the dove is a sign of the reality of that re-creation.

[110] Gen. 1.26.

Within the eternity of Paradise, God and man are together *and* separate. However, there is an analogous movement in man's speech about the world, because the way in which man speaks to and about God is through active responsiveness. Man's nature (and his language) stands or falls under the principle of analogy. In God's creative act, an analogy of being exists as a relationship and expression of continuity between God and his creature. Correspondence inheres in this analogous movement. It allows us to speak of man as being *like* but not identical to God.

In the second creation narrative, in the differentiation of man and woman, there is a further expression of the economy of correspondence and blessing. Adam and Eve are serially made from the same dust. In the act of love, itself a creative or procreative act, God indicates that, as man and woman, they are at the same time separate but one. Relationship stands as differentiation *and* oneness in this creative spoken act. Oneness should not be confused, however, with the (indifferent) un-making of the differentiated creation. The relationship between the differentiation and oneness of humanity as an act of love is always a directional one, in which the self turns towards the differentiated other as a blessing from God.

Man desires to be face-to-face with the creator but is identified and identifiable in the relationship he has with his human companion. In Genesis 3.16c, this is reflected in human analogy, this time, however, in terms that incorporate domination or a discourse of power. The desire to be at one with God expresses the blessing of differentiation where oneness is reconciliation. Man is not absorbed into God's own self just as Eve is not re-absorbed into Adam from whose body she originates. This marks the qualitative nature of an *analogia entis*. It helps understand exactly what may be inferred about a direct relationship with God.[111] Designation and correspondence are not one and the same.

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[111] In the Bible, this is often expressed through metaphors and images of the bride and groom and, whilst within a patriarchal society this does not signify equality, it does signify an act of responsiveness and love.

What analogy prioritises is connectedness over self-identification. In human relationship an analogy exists between God's creative act and man's activity, between God's nature and man's. But in God's first Words, it is a command that actively creates the world. Man cannot actively create the world but, in the act of facing God, and through correspondence and relations-in-difference, he can, *in faith*, respond by an implicit (and thus, in his interpretation, in the explicit) theo-ethical demand to care for it. By inference, it is part of his nature to do so. God's nature is to act lovingly. So too is man's. Love stands within the creative command of creation.[112] A loving nature is God's gift to humankind as a call to loving relationship that can critically, however, only be enacted in faith.[113]

In the Genesis narratives, however, there is a sense in which God is qualitatively always alone despite his relationship with creation. This perhaps reflects God's awareness of the difference between His solitude and Adam's potential *loneliness*. A constituent of the blessing bestowed on man is God's making of animals so that *Adam* should not be alone. In the creation of man and the world God seeks, therefore, to offer the gift of a type of relationship for the creatures of creation which, by his nature, he is unable to share *in like kind*. Part of this blessing is the gift of language to Adam to process this relationship. Adam's *naming* of animals crucially includes the ability to differentiate himself from the other creatures of God's creation in his *own* language. God additionally blesses Adam with Eve as Adam seeks relationship with a creature which is like himself in a way that neither God nor the animals can be.

God's concern is to prevent Adam's loneliness. When God brings every creature of creation before man, he gives no cues, but waits to see how Adam will name them. Thus in Genesis 2, he allows Adam to make *qualitative* judgements between his creatures. Naming the animals is Adam's means of identifying, and, thus, deciding whether he will find an acceptable helper and companion amongst

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[112] Gen. 2.15, 18
[113] C.f., chapter 4, section on the complex nature of faith and hope.

them. Perhaps God also waits to see whether Adam identifies, *in speech,* an analogy of being (relations-in-difference) between himself and the other animals.

A sequence suggests itself here: the first is functional and has to do with the gift of choice. The second is that choice comes *out of* the naming process. First, it is clear that, in Adam, God has found a helper and companion. Amongst the animals, Adam does not find an analogous companion; he seeks one who is like himself. God acts again by creating woman out of Adam's flesh and bone. Only then is Adam content. The adequacy of an analogy of being between Adam and Eve offers the means of fully overcoming Adam's potential loneliness, an adequacy he cannot share with his creator.

A second issue specifically involves the way human language works. Adam names the animals in such a way that thing corresponds to word. However, he is unable to create a companion by naming one thus, because only God can name *performatively.* Adam lacks the performative speech of the creator. Whilst correspondence exists in man's first words, so too, does a categorisation in which judgment, or the ability to adjudge between differentiated beings, plays some part. The act of naming is part of Adam's nature. George Steiner notes that in 'pre-lapsarian discourse, name and object, the signifying and the signified, match exactly. There is no gap for involuntary misprision'. (Steiner Tautology, 351).[114] Even though there is an exact correspondence between word and thing, Adam has begun the process of defining his world through identification and categorisation. The two are related, but categorisation is not univocal to the divine act of differentiation, in which God first speaks creation and then names it. Man's word is *not* God's Word. Whilst God adjudges the 'goodness' of a differentiated universe as its creator, man can *only* judge by analogy. The question then arises as to how 'misprision' enters human language. This surely concerns God's command to Adam to 'subdue' creation which he qualifies by a restriction that forbids him to eat from

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[114] George Steiner, "The Great Tautology". No Passion Spent: Essays 1978 – 1996. (London: Faber & Faber, 1997) 328 – 347.

the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.[115] Given the outcome of Adam's disobedience, a qualitative difference must exist between his words before and after eating the forbidden fruit that, in turn, leads God to expel him from Eden. This is described in Genesis 3.

In Genesis 3, God moves from performative Word as blessing to performative Word *as curse*, for after the fall the curse inheres in the relationship between God and man (and his representations). It also *anticipates* that which distinguishes God's from man's understanding for God's curse differentiates between positive and negative *creative* acts. That which is performative in God's Word,[116] in human language post-fall describes a dialectical process between opposites. In one sense, this can be seen as analogy 'gone wrong' and would seem to reflect the working of human conceptualisation and its expression in language. It is in the distinction between God's ability to differentiate and relate through relations-in-difference and man's attempt to distinguish between opposites that expresses how misprision is introduced into language. Human interpretation of God's Word is wrongly reflected as a power representing the dualistic polarity of good against evil *only after* Adam eats from the tree, when any sense of equivalence between blessing and curse is broken down by a dialectics of thinking.

It is this critical shift that seems to undermine God's performative creative speech act of differentiation as an act of divine love. However, this is human interpretation *after* Adam's act of transgression (in which he desired to understand creation as God does). Wanting to *know* good and evil in the way that God knows them is impossible. Properly understood, creation stands as a potential blessing prior to the performative creative act. There remains within its trace, moreover, that anterior state, without necessarily signifying, however, that the state of nothingness and chaos was *curse*, in and of itself. As such, Genesis 1 describes a

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[115] Gen. 2.19-20, 17. N.B. subdue: a sense of to 'quieten' inheres in the word, as well as the sense of domination.

[116] For example, the separation of light from darkness.

prior state of non-creation or negation, and God's act of love is his potential to foresee creation as a blessing in which relationship inheres.

Against that, God's curse of Adam and Eve reflects a performative response to the apostasy of disobedience with regard to divine knowledge. If the command to leave alone the tree of knowledge of good and evil is part of God's blessing to Adam, it is given because God knows that man can never *know* as He knows. Idolatry (a distorted view of the analogy of being) is rooted in the desire to see as God sees, and Adam's disobedience interferes with the way in which he previously 'saw' the world in perfect correspondence. However, it does not change the fact that he *never* saw it as God sees. Tragically, Adam's understanding of the world now contains the misprision of a dialectics of power, where, consequently, he can only identify himself through the distorted lens of personal power and status. Adam sees through inadequate eyes and he expresses himself in language which no longer fully corresponds with creation as blessing: unconditional love has, after all, nothing to do with power.

We further witness this misprision in Adam's behaviour immediately after his transgression. God calls out to Adam, 'Where are you?' This call is not at first sight an act of judgment but Adam reacts as if he has already been judged. The anticipation of judgment arises from his new knowledge, demonstrating that he has already begun to choose between what *he* understands to be good or evil. In this sense, Adam passes judgment on himself. He does not directly answer God's question, but instead replies that he is naked and afraid, disclosing increased dependence as Adam mis-reads God according to his new knowledge.[117] Adam's reaction has, of course, been interpreted in many different ways.[118] However, in this first actual conversation between God and man, God clearly understands the implication of Adam's strange response. He is able to read it as an act of disobedience attributable only to Adam's newly acquired knowledge of good and

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[117] Gen. 3.9ff.
[118] Especially as nascent sexuality.

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evil.[119] In Adam, it demonstrates a qualitatively new awareness of his own self in relation to the world, reflecting fear, vulnerability and the sense of separation arising from disobedience. He does not ask for God's forgiveness, for in a sense it is not disobedience that frightens him but the awareness of his own naked (and lonely) selfhood.

Qualitatively, the way in which Adam has identified himself in relation to the world and to God is new. He feels exposed and unprotected. This is a kind of aloneness in which Adam now perceives himself to be separated from God and His creation. Through disobedience, the world seems to have become a place of curse not blessing. Worse, through his own freewill, he has placed a barrier between himself and God. The *limen* has become boundary over threshold, making man view the world from within his *own* limits and through which he will now judge between good and evil. This change literally *constitutes* human (but not divine) judgment.

Thus the critical subject of the second Genesis narrative centralises the nature of differentiation and divine/human relationship, in particular the nature of man's response to God's act of creation as blessing and love. Adam's turning away from God illustrates the gift of freedom as the freedom to choose the direction in which he will take his understanding (as acceptance or refusal). When directly facing God, Adam *must* see the world as blessing. However, in turning away, he condemns himself to see the world, anthropocentrically, as curse. In one sense, it is a curse because Adam has constructed a barrier between himself and God. In another, the world is not a curse, for God has done little more than spell out the inevitable distorted outcome of Adam's apostasy.

God's curse necessarily results from Adam's own misreading of knowledge which, in turn, is grounded in a fundamental misunderstanding of that which constitutes freedom. Wishing to be equal to God, Adam introduces the concept of the violence of dialectics into the nature of how we conceive the world. In fact, his apostatic act refuses freedom as Adam finds himself imprisoned by his own action

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[119] Interestingly, in the event, a third party performs an act of mediation and introduces the concept of deceit and lies into human language before God and man speak directly to one another.

that dis-ables language from saying what it means.[120] Thus the narrative represents a second paradigm of liminality that stands between God's originating act and reconcilement. On this point God is silent.

In his exile from Eden, Adam's response rehearses that silence and, as the second paradigm takes Adam to the margin of God's Word, in his expulsion from the garden, the margin becomes material. The physical barrier between man and God's presence results from disobedience. *Adam never speaks again*. Man and his descendants will from henceforth struggle with a human identity that he put in jeopardy.[121] From his marginal position, Adam can only *re-member* God's presence in words in repetition, representation and textuality. This re-membering echoes down the ages to Derrida's metaphysical understanding of the nature of language and the *trace*.

However, as with any limit, the barrier simultaneously reflects the concept of the boundary as *threshold* where the desire for real presence remains as a potential for responsiveness to God's Word in words. For, in crossing from eternal presence into finite time, the possibility of a *return* (as turning back) to God's presence inheres in language; the boundary becomes the liminal space of flux where man must learn to await God's creative Word to which he must respond in the obedience of love. The expulsion is thus a metaphor for man's turning away from God in which the demand to re-turn inheres. As the second liminal paradigm, it lies within the structure of human language and not within the performative speech of the Trinitarian God.

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[120] C.f. Paul Fiddes, <u>Freedom and Limit: A Dialogue between Literature and Christian Doctrine</u> (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1999) 48 – 49. Fiddes questions Michael Edwards who similarly proposes that narrative arises from Adam's fallen language. Fiddes describes his proposal as follows: 'in a perfect existence, communication [Edwards argues] would be identical with reality, and so there would be no need for stories in which an event was created and a form imagined [because] 'the need for story comes with the exile from Eden''. (Fiddes, 49). Edwards uses Derrida's questioning of logocentrism to demonstrate "man's fallen state where words are no longer united with reality" (Fiddes 237, n. 51). Fiddes denies the centrality of the fall to Christian doctrine, asserting that this is a later imposition of the U-shaped plot of romance which is evidenced in the works of Milton and Spenser, which is undermined by the later view that the Bible is a collection of diverse texts which refuses an overall shape. However, Edwards' thesis recognises the importance of the attenuation of language and the loss of correspondence that is central to the crisis of representation. C.f. Michael Edwards, <u>Towards a Christian Poetic</u> (London: MacMillan, 1984).

[121] Jeopardy: From the French, meaning a divided game.

8. The limits of language

In the introduction to chapter 1, I asked whether the apocalyptic-eschatological paradigm of liminality (as the dominant paradigm for New Testament textual form and content) can usefully inform the recent crisis of representation in which it is said that representation fails to communicate meaning and where correspondence falters at the limits of language. I also asked whether a liminal reading might expose and clarify the tendency towards immanentism and atomism in modern paradigms. My reading of the fall acts as a template to that paradigm, and in chapter 3 I turn to the way in which the liminal paradigm has been truncated by modern secular theory; and how, when the limit is seen as a barrier to meaning, this inculcates narratives of despair and of the end that seriously affect all of our notions about communication, participation and relationship.

The three models of speech outlined above show how the *limen* problematises (but inheres in) our representations; and how, by breaking it into its tripartite complex, we begin to understand Christian apocalyptic as a doctrine that draws eschatology, creation and revelation into a doctrine of salvation, revealing and expressing the mediating process of the Word in words through Christ, as *Logos*, and unique articulation of the apocalyptic-eschatological event.[122] The next chapter, however, focuses closely on the *limen* as barrier and locus of despair. It aims to show that reconciliation and redemption cannot arise solely from the logic of an analogy of being because a doctrine of salvation requires the analogy of faith and trust in God. Chapter 4 considers how misunderstanding liminality can attenuate theological accounts of apocalyptic and eschatology; and in chapter 5, I look again at how the barrier is theologically (simultaneously and *in faith*) a threshold to hope and promise, this latter aspect opening out the possibility of encounter in love (not ridding but rather enfolding its shadow side). As such, it is a theological account of the *limen* that inheres in the fabric of our Christian representations, where God's Word is both captured and lost in the 'nearly, not-yet' of human language that only partially corresponds to God's own Word.

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[122] From Käsemann, 1969.

The Flawed Medium of the Text

Ours is the long day's journey of the Saturday

1. Introduction:

In chapter 1, I drew together some complex ideas about the possibility of relationship between God and humans at the heart of which lies the problematic of communication between self and other. The concept of analogy and correspondence between God's Word and human words was introduced along with the way God's self-disclosure situates itself at the limits of our representations. I made an association between the notion of apocalyptic as a rupture or opening to encounter where God's Word comes unexpectedly from God to man, and compared this to man's use of reasoning from the world to knowledge of God. I suggested how this directional difference has been used to play analogies of being and faith against each other.

I then outlined how apocalyptic revelation involves the concept of crisis and introduced the term apocalyptic-eschatology to express the conjoining of threshold and limit (or barrier) as the moment of crisis. This was developed through a theory of liminality (and the *limen*) as the locus for encounter between self and other at the limits of representation. I showed how, the interface is operationally complicated in the conjoining, or occupation of opposites: of beginnings and ends, stasis and movement, opening and closure, knowing and un-knowing, and self and other. And, that as a paradigm, the dialectical has to work through the analogical if it is to be theologically freighted.

Having established the relations between crisis, apocalyptic, representation and liminality, in chapter 2, I looked at concepts of apocalyptic scriptural performance. I set my own work in the context of the dominant biblical methodologies which, by recourse to so-called scientific approaches, may subvert our understanding of apocalyptic reading and text production, to negatively affect their theological impact as a hermeneutic response to God's Word in words. David

Hellholm underscores how apocalyptic literature is 'intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority'. (Hellholm 27).[123] My further assertion that Christian apocalyptic texts centralise Christ as the eschatological crisis and thus perform hermeneutically through the *limen* of Christ's body was, therefore, taken to the work of New Testament scholars, Schüssler Fiorenza and Käsemann, to show that their work reflects how this unique crisis forms early Christian grammar to provide the theological means to survive and sustain the nascent communities of faith. I argued that they achieved this by modally performing the liminal space of scripture to which they brought their own painful experiences in an analogy of faith to bear on the notion of imitation and the *via crucis*. I attempted to outline how the liminal paradigm, as the conjunction between the extremes inherent in crisis, helps to open out the apocalyptic text to view.

The chapter ended with a reading of the Genesis narratives of creation through which I attempted, through the liminal paradigm, to unpack the relation-in-difference between God's Word and man's pre- and post-lapsarian words. I concluded that once Adam's original sense of adequacy of correspondence had gone, his misprision could only ever reflect God's curse and, that unable to judge as God does, man is reduced to struggling towards an understanding between God's Word and his own (reduced) words. Adam's situation thus acts as a metaphor for the crisis of representation that is firmly located in the *limen* as barrier or limit to language, and in that sense, depicts the unraveling of meaning that we are witness to in the secularising process of modernity. In this sense, there are two interrelated liminal paradigms, one of which denies God.

In this chapter, I begin to explore how the association of apocalyptic and liminality can be used to explore the epistemological (and emotional) crisis of subjectivity and representation in late modernity. I begin, through Augustine, by looking at our assertions that we know God. I go on to consider some attitudes of

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[123] David Hellholm, "The Problem of the Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John", ed. A. Yarbro Collins. <u>Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting</u>, <u>Semeia 36</u> (Decatur, G.A.: Scholars Press, 1986) 13 – 63.

the post-theological world and, through Adorno, Massumi, Derrida and Barthes, I look at subjectivity in relation to the crisis of representation and liminality to show how these perspectives reflect and play through the post-lapsarian liminal paradigm described in chapter 2.

Even though I present examples of ways in which the crisis of representation can be interpreted through notions of the *limen* as a barrier to revelation I will conclude that, theologically, language is never quite able to rid itself of the notion of the *limen* as an opening (*apokalypsis*) to encounter with the other and, as such, as a transformational process. At the heart of this view stand relationship, responsiveness, and responsibility, central to which is the analogy of faith: man seeks an understanding of his own nature in relation to God and his world through an imitation of God as loving relationship where, however, true interpretation is impossible without God's self-disclosure. This notion of analogy establishes some parameters for chapters 4 and 5. In the former, I will consider how, when played through modern theories of subjectivity and dialectics, the profound theological message of hope and the cross of Jürgen Moltmann is attenuated. In the latter, I look at liminality in relation to the analogical worldview of Graham Ward in order to present a doctrine of liminality through the grammar of apocalyptic.

2. How do we know we know (God)?

Knowing what God is, in theological rather than philosophical terms, involves knowing what a right relationship with God might look, feel like, or actually be. Awareness of the process and reality of how we come to know God is thus the key to gospel witness. In chapter 1, I outlined how encounter with the divine is by nature a process taking place at the limit of human understanding. Augustine articulates the complex interaction between the centrality of limits, cognition and language to theological reflection. In Confessions, Augustine shows his awareness of the difficulty of knowing in relation to faith and some of the afore-mentioned issues about limit, correspondence and proportion in the problematic of

language.[124] Through his own struggle to explain how we know God, he articulates the problematic of the flawed medium through which we seek to know Him. Augustine's questioning is a frank, prayerful expression of this problematic that acts as a useful reminder of the issues at the heart of this study.

> 'Grant me Lord to know and understand' (Ps 118: 34, 73, 144) which comes first – to call upon you or to praise you, and whether knowing you precedes calling upon you. But who calls upon you when he does not know you? … But surely you may be called upon in prayer that you may be known. (Augustine, 1.1).

As with Aquinas in the previous chapter, this reflection plays between prayer and reasoning and already assumes a (divine) listener. It is a response and a plea to God to hear. His questions, which revolve through the problematical limits and boundaries between God, creation and humankind, demonstrate his perplexity about the relation between self and other.

> Surely when I call on him, I am calling on him to come into me. But what place is there in me where my God can enter into me? … Where may he come to me? … is there any room in me which can contain you? Can heaven and earth … contain you? Without you, whatever exists would not exist. Then can what exists contain you? I also have being. So why do I request you to come to me when, unless you were within me, I would have no being at all? … where can you come from so as to be in me? Can I move outside heaven and earth so that my God may come to me from there? … Where do you put the overflow of yourself after heaven and earth are filled? Or have you … no need to be contained? … Who then are you? (Augustine, 1.4-5).

This outpouring, to which subject and limit are central, is followed by a hymn of praise that immediately recognises that human language is never adequate to the task of defining God and our relationship to him. Thus, Augustine asks, 'What has anyone achieved in words when he speaks about you?': at the same time that he knows it is impossible to 'say', it is equally impossible to remain silent, even if the inadequacy of our outpourings drives us towards it. (Augustine, 1.5). Any talk about God is thus marked by paradox.

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[124] St Augustine. Confessions. Trans. Henry Chadwick. (Oxford World's Classics: 1998).

Augustine's questions are, of course, supported by faith through analogy as a relation in difference. This chapter, however, is situated within the time and space of the post-theological in which the problem of *not* knowing attenuates or rejects faith through its overriding sense of loss and despair, thinking arguably emerging as an inevitable outcome of the certainties of Enlightenment thinking. Steiner's metaphor of 'Saturday' as the "longest of days" sums this up.

> There is one particular day in Western history about which neither historical record nor myth nor Scripture make report. It is a *Saturday*. And it has become the longest of days. We know of that Good Friday which Christianity holds to have been that of the Cross. But the non-Christian knows of it as well. That is to say that he knows of the injustice, of the interminable suffering, of the waste, of the brute enigma of endings ...We also know about Sunday. To the Christian, that day signifies an intimation, both assured and precarious, both evident and beyond comprehension, of resurrection, of a justice and a love that have conquered death. ...The lineaments of that Sunday carry the name of hope (there is no word less deconstructible). But ours is the long day's journey of the Saturday. Between suffering, aloneness, unutterable waste on the one hand and the dream of liberation, of rebirth on the other. (Steiner <u>Real</u>, 232).[125]

His Saturday runs the line between the despair of lack and the hope of fulfilment but as it does so, it stresses the way in which the negative aspect of the liminal paradigm in secular modernity has reduced (and often attempted to eliminate) its positive opposite. However, the postmodern crisis of representation weakens the concept of faith at the same time as it exposes a desire for it. Furthermore, when stripped of its identification with Sabbath, Saturday dons the permanent mantle of lost identity between suffering and rebirth to mark the negative liminal paradigm. Longing is a constant presence that is disabled from movement towards fulfilment.[126]

Theologically, this metaphor of Saturday represents the hiatus, in which a critical moment of choice between death and life nevertheless inheres; thus, between *despair* (as that dark moment in which hope is banished in indifference, and where courage is destitute) and *hope* (as the instauration of love, the cardinal

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[125] C.f., chapter 4 on Moltmann's theology, Bloch's thesis and my own interpretation of hope.
[126] C.f., chapter 5 on Graham Ward's reading of desire in modern and postmodern theory which he sets against a Christian interpretation of desire.

function through which we communicate *in* our being with that which is ultimately other). The critical turn remains one of faith in God as that which is other. To resist or refuse this is arguably counter-intuitive to all relationship, responsiveness and love. But if this is the natural human condition, why then do so many postmodern discourses on representation, critique or reject notions of faith involving either communication between self and other, or the possibility of right relationship? Feelings of despair, nihilism, and indifference have come to dominate in what Theodor Adorno has called the 'prison house of language': life is all chaos and flux in the 'age of the sign'; meaning is projected as "local, community is tribal, society is pluralistic" (Ward 1997, 585).[127] The despair (of always being in the middle), an indifference (of endless deferral), a libidinous nihilism (of perpetual flux) as such, must surely derive from the absence of God, or at least an absence of faith. As such, one outcome of the detheologisation of language is the cauterisation of hope in and as an act of rebellious self-destruction.

For, as Steiner, reflecting Augustine, writes in <u>Grammars of Creation</u>

> hope is a transcendental inference. ... 'Hoping' is a speech act, inward or outwardly communicative, which 'presumes' a listener ... 'in the hope', precisely, of support, or at the least, understanding. (Steiner <u>Grammars</u>, 6).

Without faith, hope is impossible: as such, hope, like faith, is a gift from the divine. Without it, on the defensive, we are left bereft of authentic relationship.

This chapter, therefore, concerns: the way in which the crisis of representation illustrates how, when faith is lost, any relationship between speaker/listener, writer/reader is undermined; how this destructive process denies the possibility of transformation (necessarily an apocalyptic process to do with meaning); how this is a reduction of the (Christian) view of the liminal process through which the faithful are transformed through encounter with the divine (ie, it is a process that, intertextually, references Christian theological arguments). The

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[127] Ward, *Postmodern Theology, op. cit.,* 598. From within perceptions of a global 'marketplace', however, new theologies are emerging. They often involve kenotic economies of love and a new sense of God's mystery.

crisis in representation paradoxically rehearses the helplessness of Adam, exiled and alone. It says that the future holds within it the end of language as ashes and end stop. For this reason the significance of modern and postmodern paradigms of crisis, lost identity, despair and endings cannot be over-emphasised, for they form the context in which western thinking has been situated since the rise of modernity from which atomism and immanence have become the norm. The next section describes the crisis in more detail and aims to establish the perspective through which to read four examples from theory.

3. The crisis of representation

The crisis of representation is significant because it acts like an undertow in modern and postmodern western culture in which a movement away from the certainty and confidence (this word is theologically loaded) of western common identity (built over several centuries) to an emotional and intellectual struggle between various social, technological, political and cultural positions.[128] The speed of change (active and reactive) on so many levels in modernity has incubated uncertainty to the degree that fear and despair are bound to infect the very architecture of our grammars. Graham Ward has drawn on ideas from twentieth-century Germany about the crumbling cultural metanarrative to contextualise Karl Barth's exposé of the language of theology, and provides a good starting point from which to explore why despair and lack have come to dominate our representations.

> Fritz K. Ringer, in his classic study of the German educated middle classes between 1830 and 1933, writes: "By the early 1920s, they were deeply convinced that they were living through a profound crisis, a "crisis of culture", of "learning", of "values", or of the "spirit". The crisis of representation … was part of a wider crisis of legitimation and confidence in Western European civilization. (There appears to be a correspondence between semiotic, political and theological forms of representation.) It was a crisis intimately linked with the decline of idealism, the rise of positivism, the imperialism of

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[128] An interesting early indication of this view is to be found in Carl L. Beckers, <u>The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers</u>. . First published in 1932. Second edition. (Yale: Yale University Press; 2003). Beckers writes that Montesquieu insisted that the "constant and universal principle of human nature" were after all "relative," so that, for example, what was suited to the nature of man in certain climates might very well be unsuited to the nature of man in other climates''. (Beckers 2003, 100 – 101),

technology and the mushrooming of what Adorno and Horkheimer called the 'culture industry'. (Ward <u>Barth</u>, 7).[129]

Ward's outline describes the intersection between a growing sense of failed systems of representation and the social, political, and religious crises of this time. Emotionally, they are linked by visions of death and desire, decline and end.[130] The word, *Krisis*, he suggests, dominates the literatures of German culture from the late nineteenth century and permeates the 'German *Zeitgeist* well into the 1930s', reaching a particular intensity in the Weimar Republic (Ward <u>Barth</u>, 7). At the same time, he points out that the word *modern* begins to play an equally important role in the cultural mood. Attempting to re-form the German aesthetic programme, Modernism's aim is to create the world anew. (Ward <u>Barth</u>, 7).[131] Furthermore, if the art and literature of pre-war Germany already expresses a sense of crisis, the experience of the First-World War infects the inter-war period exponentially. Life in Weimar is consciously lived through extremes - the conjunction between loss and renewal perfectly describing a critical point which resonates dangerously between suspense and expectation, indecision and decision, death and life. Accordingly we see that these experiences are genuinely playing through the complex liminal model in which apocalyptic-eschatology inheres but in a way that centralises the subjective self. Sections 4, 5, 6 and 8 provide examples of how the negative liminal paradigm has been used in the debate of self and other in representation which, as we will see in later chapters, forms part of the means to express and critique a language of theology.

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[129] Fritz K. Ringer, <u>The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890 – 1933</u> (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1969) 3. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, <u>Dialectic of Enlightenment</u>, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1973) 120 – 167. (C.f., Ward <u>Barth</u>, 7).

[130] Ward's project is to demonstrate that Karl Barth's doctrine of the Word, which developed out of this particular cultural juncture, is situated within a metaphysics of language that shows how 'language is always and ineradicably theological'. (Ward <u>Barth</u>, 9).

[131] Ward lists the work of Musil, Rilke, Mann, and the aesthetic movements of Dadaism and Futurism. For a study on the development of Barth's systematic theology in the context of Weimar and under Nazism, c.f. Timothy J. Gorringe, <u>Karl Barth: Against Hegemony</u> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): in particular, chapter 3.

4. The prison house of language:

The sense of the end of meaning is reflected in the work of many twentieth-century thinkers. A useful entry point for our purposes can be found in Theodor Adorno's Negative Dialectics which, because it provides a useful metaphor for Adam's post-fall condition, is worthy of brief consideration.[132] Arguably, it establishes the tone for drawing together notions of subjectivity, representation and the liminal together.

> The name of dialectics says no more, to begin with, than that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder, that they contradict the traditional norm of adequacy. Contradiction … indicates that the untruth of identity [is] the fact that the concept does not exhaust the thing conceived. (Adorno 5).

Man moves between the hope of adequacy and the despair of unstable identity. Theologically, this illustrates the loss of adequacy in language at the point at which despair cripples critical choice, fatally infecting it with the negativity of rebellion, rejection, atomism and indifference at the interface between self and other.

For Adorno, dialectics is 'the consistent sense of non-identity' in which man's 'thought is driven to it by its own inevitable insufficiency' and by the 'guilt of thinking what [he is] thinking'. (Adorno 5). In this, negative dialectics reflects the apostasy of Adam outlined in the previous chapter where, if Adam's guilt derives from the negative way in which his thinking and speaking is driven post-fall, his *refusal* to take responsibility comes from his unexpurgated anger, sense of abandonment and (failed) desire for equivalence with God. Adam is forced repeatedly, in flawed language, to reflect on this. Adorno reflects this when he writes

> What we differentiate will appear divergent, dissonant, negative for just as long as the structure of our consciousness obliges it to seek for unity: as long as its demand for totality will be its measure for whatever is not identical with it. This is what dialectics holds up to our consciousness as a contradiction. … Total contradiction is

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[132] Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics. Negative Dialektik. (Frankfurt: Verlag Suhrkamp, 1966).Trans. E.B. Ashton. (London: Routledge, 2000). In chapter 4, I will look at how Jürgen Moltmann uses the dialectical principle but, arguably, without fully engaging with the crisis of representation.

> nothing but the manifested untruth of total identification. Contradiction is non-identity under the rule of a law that affects the nonidentical as well. (Adorno 5-6).

To reiterate: Adam is trapped inside a language which cannot speak as God speaks. If, in seeking equality with God man seeks unity with Him, that unity, paradoxically, will drive towards the un-making of creation. *This* is the apostasy that lies at the heart of Adam's disobedience. Within this act lies the agony of the human condition that fails to work through analogy as relation-in-difference.

Adorno's understanding of dialectical discourse is reflective of a shift in understanding about human language. He understands the 'curse' within the form and content of human language but argues against the theological nature that it subtends. This is further complicated when the supplementary nature of language is deconstructed theologically. In his consideration of Karl Barth worked through Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, Graham Ward outlines Derrida's take on apophatic discourse

> Apophatic discourse strives to conquer itself and arrive at "a non-God, a Non-Intellect, a Non-Person, a non-Image" (... Derrida is quoting Eckhart). ...The immediacy is caught within the webs of language, and so ... negative theology is ineluctably drawn into supplementation and commentary *after* the event. (Ward <u>Barth</u>, 254).[133]

Both views usefully demonstrate how the true nature of differentiation can only ever be understood in and through notions of God's presence and affirmation. This means that in fluxional language man is constantly destined to refer through, and search for, the *trace* of God and in a struggle with God's (necessary) absence. As human discourse negotiates its way through the nature of differentiation, even when wishing to affirm knowledge of God, any possibility of God's revealed Word in words is continually dogged by the inadequacy, negation and supplementarity of our linguistic tools. However, in the process of questioning adequacy, there remains a moment of decision and judgement that reveals its potentiality, presenting a

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[133] Ward, <u>Barth</u>. He is citing Jacques Derrida, <u>Psyché: Inventions de l'autre</u> (Paris: Editions Gallilée, 1987) 358. My emphasis. N.b., apophatic: knowledge of God through the negative.

(seemingly impossible) turning-point between (God-affirming) life and (God-denying) death. I suggest that the apocalyptic text resonates with this movement between despair and hope but where the double aspect of the *limen* exposes the choice to return *in faith and hope*. If hope inheres in this critical moment of liminality, however, it will only be revealed through faith in the ability of God's willingness to hear us and of his Word to rupture our words.

The knowledge of good and evil introduces a metaphysics of violence into man's dialectical means to understand his world that makes it impossible for him to live in a differentiated state of blessing, because the primal desire for unity arises out of the desire for equality. Return to differentiated blessing can only be overcome through a divine act of reconciliation, but Adorno's metaphor suggests that this is logically impossible within the framework of human cognition. As such, it highlights the double-bind within which man finds himself.

> Reconcilement would release the nonidentical, would rid it of coercion … it would open the road to the multiplicity of different things and strip dialectics of its power over them. Reconcilement would be the thought of the many as no longer inimical, a thought that is anathema to subjective reason. (Adorno 6).

Appropriation (more accurately misappropriation) is part of that double-bind. Adam's apostasy and *subjective* reason go together to produce that change in man's nature in relation to the world and to God, in which the 'transconceptual' is impossible for us to think, express or ever to fully experience. Reconciliation of any kind is impossible without God, yet we continue to desire it despite the rejection of the theological. This is reflected in Adorno's assertion that: 'As the heterogeneous collides with its limit it exceeds itself … [and] contradiction is nonidentity under the aspect of identity'. (Adorno 5). This state of heart and mind illustrates Adam's state of 'bondage' when deprived of God's presence. As God's curse brings the second paradigm of liminality into play, the banishment of humankind from relationship with God introduces the agony of separation, attempts at self-identification, as such, replacing the beneficence of differentiation. Communication between God and man is no longer face-to-face but is dependent on God's willingness to reveal Himself. Paradoxically, the first act of creation already showed this to be so.

The barrier between Adam and God's self-disclosure is a *demand to* man to call out for reconcilement that seems to go against free will. But this is because the act of turning towards the other first requires a preparedness to accept responsibility for one's own nature in relation to the fall. For whilst freedom allows independence, it also means being accountable for that God-given freedom; this is Adam's bond. Of course, being in bondage reflects that sense of being bound *within* a promise and man's responsibility is arguably to understand the true nature of the differentiated relationship between God and himself. This can only occur by acknowledging the bond and by being receptive (and obedient) to the creative Word. To that degree, the threshold between God and man is the linguistic space against which man's fear is challenged, despair is thwarted, and in which his words fail. As such, if the problematic of language lies at the heart of our theologies, the boundary between God's Word and our words represents the necessary limit at which, in faith, to await God's self-disclosure.

The refusal of the (theological) relationship in difference between self and other deprives language of its ability to discern meaning. This can be seen in the biblical narrative of Babel that expresses the difference between the Word of God and man's, highlights the refusal to turn and seems to drive the crisis of representation.[134] Man seeks to compete with, to be god-like and/or do without God. It is, as such, a narrative that centralises the violence of discourse and exposes a theology of glory. In Babel, language becomes a profound symbol for the difference between flawed human understanding and the divine, performative power of God's language. Refusal and rebellion thus contextualise the crisis of representation from the very beginning. As in Babel, in the refusal of God in secularised modernity, experience of mortality is interpreted as inaccessibility to that which is other without any sense that this may involve recalcitrance on our part. Rejection of the theological thus takes us further away from the potentiality of the complex nature of the *limen* to enliven language where instead it becomes a barrier to *all* relationship. When this reduced paradigm becomes the norm, we sit at the negative extreme of the dialectics between hope and despair. Far from the

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[134] Genesis 11.

energy and joy of creation, this is a world of indifference and relativism, of solipsism and lost identity. It is this imprisonment which opens us to the full implication of the crisis of representation.

However, in the next section, the nature of human representation is further complicated by Jacques Derrida's proposition that all language is apocalyptic in tone. Derrida, perhaps above all modern theorists, prioritises the written over the spoken word. Furthermore, he is profoundly aware of, and takes great delight in an ironic play between our representations and scripture as inscription. His essay on the apocalyptic tone of language works through the impossible possibility of communication at its limit. As such, it offers a different perspective to that of the dialectical nature of language and the notion of the *limen* as the barrier, or end to meaning.

5. Derrida's apocalyptic tone of all language and the problem of mediation

Jacques Derrida is as far as I am aware alone among philosophers in acknowledging that an apocalyptic tone exists that is 'a transcendental condition of all language'. (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 87).[135] The question is whether this does anything to illuminate the detheologised text as against the notion that all language is theological. A good starting point for philosophy, the assertion of a metalinguistic condition would certainly seem to contravene modern and postmodern understandings of the relativistic nature of texts and of the impossibility of any universal norm. However, Derrida is being deeply ironic, for the apocalyptic tone is deceptive by nature: 'fundamentally one, its diversity is only of ways of proceeding (*procédés*), masks, appearances, or simulacra'. (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 83). Throughout the essay, Derrida picks up on and strategically employs this duplicitous nature: the apocalyptic tone as a medium is one of obfuscation and mutability. Its unreliability is what makes representation a thorny issue. Meaning is, in his terms, never clear, never fully exposed, never complete.

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[135] Jacques Derrida. "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy." <u>Semeia</u> 23."Derrida And Biblical Studies" (1982): 61 - 97. This essay works through the Book of Revelation.

Derrida's next step is to distinguish tone from mode, further clarifying his thinking when he states that the tone of a text should be distinguishable from its content: the tone is *not* what the discourse says. Either can 'derail' the other. (Derrida, <u>Tone</u> 84). The tone is, first and foremost, the medium of revelation, acting as the 'revelator' of an unveiling in process. Constituting the apocalyptic (revealing) structure of truth (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 84), it promises to 'you' (the recipient) the identity of both the discloser and of the yet to-be-disclosed truth, by which Derrida suggests that the tone involves the identity of the revealer (and the mediating nature of the revealer) but not the message itself. (From the beginning, then, Derrida is making a point that the apocalyptic tone affects all discourse, but this does not necessarily help to explain why the tone seems to be manifested in the content of the negative liminal paradigm where it should not be necessary.)

As truth, the tone speaks of the imminent end, or more accurately of the truth *as* end. In the revelation of the revealer, the revealer is never revealed as real presence. Truth is, to that degree, both the destination *and* the end (a final judgement), which must be related to the identity and presence (*as non-presence*) of the revealer: this would seem to be the message, thus derailing any content. An apocalyptic tone is, as such, one in which the end is seen to be *beginning*. It is a desiring tone which seeks to attract its recipient, by saying, 'we are all going to die'; those who do not hear, or do not already know its message, are as if already dead, whereas the discloser and the recipient become a 'we' who are aware of their vividness, and hence, of their wakefulness. (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 84). As such it seems to speak of longing for death whilst at the same time experiencing life more intensely. To some degree, this helps to explain the enlivening process of apocalyptic that I described above, whilst at the same time, it presents desire as a longing for death, a theme that is central to modernist views of subjectivity. In this sense, Derrida's position appears, at first sight, to be close to that of René Girard in <u>Deceit, Desire and the Novel</u>, for whom apocalyptic desire ultimately divides into a double-ended choice between death or the supernatural: for, 'the apocalypse would not be

complete without a positive side'. (Girard 1988, 261 - 262).[136] Girard points to an example of this in the work of Dostoevsky, stating that all 'his conclusions are fresh beginnings; a new life commences, among other men, or in eternity'. (Girard 1988, 261 - 262). Derrida also knows of the double-ending of apocalyptic but uses it to reflect on the double-bind of language. But whilst Girard reflects the theological notions of faith and hope in his reading of desire and apocalyptic, this is less clear in Derrida. This is because he is acutely aware of the slippery nature of representation.

Derrida recognises the sense of warning inherent in the apocalyptic tone: the 'I shall come'. Instead of exploring this as promise, he asserts that situated in the future, its voice is nonetheless transcribed repeatedly and confusedly in a proliferation of 'tongues or tones'. In his ironic exploration of the Book of Revelation, Derrida describes this phenomenon through the Babel motif which is also present in the content of John's text, as *Babylon*, the 'Great Whore'. (Derrida Tone, 85). In Revelation, the revealer's voice is always positioned *behind* John. There is no *face-to-face* encounter with the revealer (who, of course, is also the message). Furthermore, the text is a preamble without narrative content; it serves as a 'title or name-tag' from 'who knows where', tying the 'apocalyptic disclosure to the sending or dispatch'. (Derrida Tone, 86). The 'envoi as apocalyptic, the apocalyptic sends itself'. This takes us back to the self-evidencing of the apocalyptic process, and to the impossible task of 'unmasking' the sender. (Derrida Tone, 86, 87). Thus the apocalyptic text is an authoring without author; it is language saying itself. It is this quality of tone which Derrida wants us to understand. He writes that 'as soon as we no longer know very well who speaks or who writes, the text becomes apocalyptic.' It is this quality that marks the tone as apocalyptic, and, as such, as 'the transcendental condition of all language'. (Derrida Tone, 87). We never know who speaks: the other is inaccessible. Identity (as identification) is lost.

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[136] René Girard, Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Discourse. Trans. Y. Freccaso (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1988).

For Derrida the Book of Revelation is an 'exemplary revelation of this transcendental structure'. (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 87). And in this sense, it is a *genre.* (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 87). He seems, however, to refuse any idea of a modal interpretation because there is no revelation as such. Speaking with great irony, Derrida suggests that the apocalyptic tone stimulates 'modern' 'Aufklärer' (visionaries) to wish to expose the false sender of false apocalypses; but these readers can uncover *no limits* to the process of demystification of the apocalyptic text. However, it is this that, paradoxically, motivates its production.[137] The desire for the other drives forward a revelatory genre from which there is no escape, and no outcome (no eschatology, no revelation). It is the prison-house as loop and deferral.

Whilst the apocalyptic text thus mis-leads (the disempowered) towards reactionary and conservative positions, it simultaneously presents a radical means to free expression in that it avoids censorship. This, in turn, challenges any 'enforcement [or] maintenance of order'. (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 89). Thus the apocalyptic tone is subversive because it (and its genre) mixes 'voices, genres and codes', and so is able to dismantle the dominant contract or 'concordat', by producing a 'tonal disorder' (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 89).[138] This 'mystagogic' obfuscation multiplies distinctions between closure and end, producing a series of discourses 'on the end' which fail ever to announce the end. (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 89 - 90). This leads him to conclude that 'every language on the apocalyptic is also apocalyptic and cannot be excluded from its object'. (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 108).

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[137] As in most of his work, throughout his essay, Derrida allows his own ideas to interact ironically with those of another. Here, with an essay by Kant, in which Kant complains about the Neo-Platonist philosophers of his own time. A deal of caution is, therefore, needed, for as Derrida playfully mocks Kant's critique, he demonstrates how Kant is involved in the same game of mystification, in which the messenger becomes the message. Immanuel Kant, "Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie" (1796).

[138] It is this understanding which opens up the form and content of Pynchon's <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u> in Part 2.

John's Apocalypse holds the key to this because it, over any other text, shows how representation is

> violently severed, fragmented, re-distributed, with blanks, displacements in accents, lines skipped or shifted around, as if they reached us over a broken-down teletype. (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 90).

Paradoxically, this observation facilitates an understanding of how the apocalyptic text articulates its hermeneutical process (as rupturing and displacement) in the difficult translation of revelation (in representation). But according to Derrida, this has the unlikely effect of *compensating* us, as recipients of the revelation that is *no* revelation. Its messages of 'holocaustic burning', its non-disclosure and obscurantism, its lack of emanation or destination, all point to an 'exchange of appeals and responses that precisely is no longer an exchange'. (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 91 - 92).

When Derrida 'bends' the apocalyptic tone of John to philosophical discourse, he is asserting that in the constant call to 'come', there is an imperative, a performative 'type' of 'jussive modality', a command which acts as a 'gesture' but that can never be recovered, identified, or aligned to the other. This gesture is event beyond the event and also its dispossession. (Derrida Tone, 94). *It is untranslatable*. All multi-voicing is overcome in this command to 'come'. It is as such a 'conductive violence' of authoritarianism, and the 'double bind' of the singular 'I' which addresses *itself* through the multiplication of voices. It thus stands beyond onto-eschatological-theological, beyond good and evil, *and* beyond determinism. (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 94). John's 'book' (and more broadly, the written text) is simultaneously open and closed, sealed and unsealed, signed and unsigned. It is the 'double bind' of language which cancels itself out. (Derrida <u>Tone</u>, 95).

In Derrida's notions of deconstruction and *différance* the focus is on supplementarity as an expression of pure longing.[139] But again, the ironic frustration expressed by Derrida has affinities with Girard's mediator of desire, where the disciple imitates the master or mediator. (C.f., Girard 1988, 1ff). Girard argues that within the text mediation can be either internal or external, the point being that 'the impulse towards the object [of desire] is ultimately an impulse towards the mediator'. (Girard 1988, 9). The mediator is *reviled*, as possessing that which the disciple desires. Within modernity and postmodernity, the disciple tries to dissociate the difference between disciple and mediator, and posits a 'quasi-divine ego' that roots desire in the subject. (Girard 1988, 10 -16).   This interpretation resonates with the sin of Adam, of course. It also speaks into the gospel message. In Derrida, however, the mediator is the *text* that stands *between* self and other – and rather than facilitating immediacy, prevents it. However, as it does so, it leaves *the other's trace* and it is this that Derrida is thankful for. In Christian grammar this plays through Christ as *Logos*, kenosis, and God's necessary self-limiting nature. But, in Derrida, it is unclear if a claim can even be made for the apophatic.

Ironically, Derrida is seeking his own authoritative voice through which to undermine *philosophical* discourse on the logical possibility of revelation (by the other in the mediating medium of the text). As he does so, he falls (no doubt, playfully) into the same trap of which he accuses Kant. However, it must also be said that Derrida's sleight of hand is intentionally ironic (he never means to say that language is devoid of meaning). And, in this essay, he reveals much about the apocalyptic tone in language, which both says *and* does not say. Theologically, this is significant. But he perhaps does more even than this. To the degree that Derrida is able to signal the tone of threat and warning, of promise and comfort, of the single voice of the other as authority (the paradoxically multi-messaged obfuscation seeming to cover the very thing which it seeks to expose), he is able to signal the

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[139] C.f., Jacques Derrida. Writing and Difference. L'écriture et la différance. (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967). Trans. Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

impossibility *and* the possibility of language to communicate a trace of presence in language.

Here again, Girard similarly reflects the paradox flagged by Derrida as part of the modern condition of crisis. He writes that the 'mediator's divinity is central to novelistic genius … [e]verything is false, theatrical and artificial in desire except the immense hunger for the sacred'. (Girard 1988, 77 - 79). Derrida recognises this, even if he rejects the need for *faith* to import potential meaning (the Word) and, in the relationship between revelation and the *limen,* he is in any case critiquing philosophy, *not* theology *or* literature. And in recognising the mixing of voices and genres in all text production he is able to clarify what constitutes an apocalyptic tone. (Arguably this, in turn, may be moved theologically to a dynamic mode, which is, finally, exemplified in an apocalypse, such as that of John, where the form and content correspond.)[140] From this perspective, the form and content of apocalyptic literature is a type of language which expresses a concern for mediation within what could be described as a disturbed and disturbing, multi-voiced environment. My own view: that apocalyptic writing involves a 'contexture' that weaves a close relationship between concepts of revelation, eschatology, and the *limen* demands that the contexture must be viewed through the multi-layered liminal complex in which, paradoxically, threshold (or entry point), boundary, hiatus (or end-stop), transitional, transformational, and performative space are held together as saying/not saying, presence/absence and trace.

If, therefore, we relate the common view of apocalypse as an inspired prophecy or vision of violent ends and judgment to Derrida's interpretation of the apocalyptic tone of all language that plays through the end, we can see how he also articulates the connection between concepts of liminality and revelation and its paradoxical complexity. Thus Derrida's exchange which is not an exchange can, at

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[140] C.f. Hans Robert Jauss. Jauss, Toward an Aesthetic of Reception. Trans. Timothy Bahti. (London: The Harvester Press, 1982) "Introduction", by Paul de Mann: 82ff, on the mixing of genres and correspondence.

the very least, be read as a comfort to man, bound as he is within flawed language because, as Girard argues, 'metaphysical desire brings into being a certain relationship to others and oneself'. (Girard 1988, 295). Perhaps, in the rejection of the metaphysical, Derrida is making us aware of the inadequate relationship between the self and language. However, he does not discuss (it is not his aim so to do) the way in which this multi-messaging marks out an impulse for hope and actual change which comes about through the participation of individual voices within the (single) multi-voiced text (which is reminiscent of the many-in-the-one in the Trinity and community of believers). This will be a false hope if God's Word does not speak, and perhaps without faith, it cannot (be heard).[141]

The question I posed in the last section was whether the negative liminal paradigm can ever truly displace the liminal complex - even from within its own self-limiting use of reason. Theologically, Derrida's trace of presence from within the desire for death points to a comfort and enlivening (from which hope can emerge) to inflect Steiner's sense of hope's undeconstructible nature (with its inherent qualities of the promise of future divine presence) into the closed language loop; and as such, at least in part, defies the negative paradigm. As to the question about why the eschatological scenario is so dominant in the detheologised text Derrida convinces us that the apocalyptic tone of all language cannot avoid playing through the eschatological.

In chapter 1, I explained the use of the term apocalyptic revelation as an expression of the dual process of rupture and disclosure of the other into our representations that has strong associations with emotion and affect, in that it is an uncalled-for eruption into consciousness. Emotions, paradoxically, are often refused within the postmodern philosophical discourse in spite of its overall mood of resistance and refusal, despair and fatalism – all deeply emotional, non-rational

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[141] In the final chapter of Part 1, I look again at the relationship between desire, participation and faith through the work of Graham Ward. Here, following an analogical view, which is also referenced through Derrida's concept of différance, we get another reading of the theological nature of displacement and the liminal paradigm.

human characteristics. I would like to briefly bring to the fore the relationship between crisis, representation and emotion and then play it through an example of the type of discourse that has arisen from this denial. The following section considers, therefore, an alternative approach: that of the body and affect.

6. Affect, crisis and representation

In his introduction to <u>Parables for the Virtual,</u> Brian Massumi sets out to explore the

> simple conceptual displacement: body - (movement/sensation) - change. Cultural theory … has tended to bracket the middle terms and their unmediated connection. It can be argued that in doing so it has significantly missed the two outside terms, even though they have been of consistent concern – perhaps the central concerns in the humanities. (Massumi 1).[142]

He considers the interconnection between movement and feeling, specifically in relation to our concepts about the body and suggests ways in which the smallest movement, or displacement, is able to draw together qualitative differences, or variations, which bring emotions into play.

> [F]eelings have a way of folding into each other, resonating together, interfering with each other, mutually intensifying, all in unquantifiable ways apt to unfold again in action, often unpredictably. Qualitative difference: immediately the issue is change. Felt and unforeseen. (Massumi 1).

This description arguably echoes through into the notions of revelation discussed in chapter 1 which discussed how, in viewing apocalyptic, logic is broken and yet we can still somehow *affectively* know. It also reflects an affinity with the performance and production of the apocalyptic text in chapter 2.

Massumi's project works through the interconnections of a tripartite economy that consists of movement, feeling, and change to reflect on how it may impact on recent postmodern cultural theories. He identifies in recent cultural discourse a non-acceptance of the mediating function of feeling to movement and change. In so

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[142] Brian Massumi. <u>Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation</u>. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 1

doing he questions whether the discourse fails to deal with that which stands on either side, that is, the physical body and change. The discourse (he asserts) moves between the polar opposites of naïve realism and naïve subjectivism. The jettisoning of affect and sensing may, therefore, be as dangerous as a whole-hearted acceptance of naïve objectivism. In this sense, cultural discourse moves to the opposite end of the spectrum to a position of naïve subjectivism where, refusing phenomenological views, the subject has become a construct of 'external mechanisms'. (Massumi 2). He proposes that between concepts of matter and ordered change a gap is opened which is filled by concepts of cultural mediation. In cultural theory these mediating functions are seen to act as ideological mechanisms of control which suppress the subject in a socially-constructed system of power. (Massumi 1). Massumi writes that

> [t]hese were ideological apparatuses that structured the dumb material interactions of things and rendered them legible according to a dominant signifying scheme into which human subjects in the making were "interpolated." Mediation, although inseparable from power, restored a kind of movement to the everyday. If the everyday was no longer a place of rupture or revolt ...it might still be a site of modest acts of "resistance" ... keeping alive the possibility of systemic change ...The body was seen to be centrally involved in these everyday practices of resistance. But this thoroughly mediated body could only be a "discursive" body. (Massumi 1-2).[143]

Whilst these mechanisms project a making and an un-making of sense relative to the ideological system of mediation, sense *itself* is refused. Thus, according to this reductionist view, the positioning of the body (its point-of-view) is described as being placed on a geographic 'grid' consisting of 'an oppositional frame-work of culturally constructed significations.' (Massumi 2). The body is static, effectively pinioned in one square of the cultural power grid. Whilst displacement is maintained within the predefined spaces of the ideological grid, any movement (as a means for transformation) has been excluded from its framework.

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[143] C.f. for example, Richard Terdimans, Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985). He writes that: 'To the extent that any dominant discourse can be understood as an imposition upon individuals from outside, the effort by them to gain control of its power, to turn it to their own use, serves the function that I have described as counter-discursive'. (Terdimans 86 - 87).

Massumi writes that

> Since the positional model's definitional framework is punctual, it simply can't attribute a reality to the interval, whose crossing is a continuity (or nothing). The space of the crossing, the gaps between positions on the grid, falls into a theoretical no-body's land. Also lacking is the notion that if there is qualitative movement of the body, it as directly concerns sensings as significations. (Massumi 4).

At this point Massumi's argument intersects with the present discourse on apocalyptic literature, for the *gap*, or interval, is viewed as an emotional issue which immobilises the now disembodied body. This is analogous to the *limen* as a barrier to relationship and encounter as well as to movement and transformation, and leads to immanentism and atomism. However, whilst his description goes some way to explain how the crisis of representation is able to get a foothold, it does not suffice. Massumi exhorts, therefore, a reintegration of the notion of *intensity* (which he associates with *affect*) describing its emotional significance for language. Remarkably, his description echoes previously discussed notions of apocalyptic-eschatological liminality.

> Intensity would seem to be associated with non-linear processes; resonation and feedback that momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future. Intensity is qualifiable as an emotional state, and that state is static – [i.e.] temporal and narrative noise. It is a state of suspense, potentially of disruption. It is like a temporal sink, a hole in time … (Massumi 26).

He argues that in language there is a 'redundancy of resonation' which feeds the notion of supplementarity of discursive meaning. However, it operates in a dual and simultaneous economy of amplification *and* redundancy. (This reflects descriptions of the performance of the apocalyptic text and Karl Barth's view of language.) Massumi adds that this economy

> belongs to entirely different orders depending on which redundancy it enacts. Or, it always enacts both more or less completely; two languages, two dimensions of every expression, one superlinear, the other linear. Every event takes place on both levels – and between both levels, as they resonate together to form a larger system composed of two interacting subsystems following entirely different rules of formation. For clarity, it might be best to give different names to the two halves of

the event. In this case, *suspense* could be distinguished from and interlinked with *expectation* as superlinear *and* linear dimensions of the same image-event, which is at the same time an expression-event. (Massumi 26).

'Resonation' in the space between the two spheres plays into the liminal complex I described in chapter 1 and, of course, we know how the New Testament Passion narratives are 'measured' by inter-relational aspects of suspense and expectation. In fact, they can be said to underpin the theology of the cross. At this point, however, what I draw from Massumi's exploration of the inter-relationship of movement, emotion and change is first, that negative paradigms of the *limen* foreclose its potential as an economy of movement between suspense and expectation (between despair and hope, between fall and instauration), and second, that these movements intrinsically involve *bodily sense*. In this sense, Massumi's description begins to connect the physical body through sense and emotion to the liminal economy. Theologically, this begins to explain the Trinitarian movement of love in which notions of the body, kenosis and incarnation inhere.

Massumi goes on to look at the concept of the critical point in relation to affect and intensity (Massumi 32 - 33) that deepens the understanding of the location of crisis already outlined. He describes the event, or moment of intensity, as a 'critical point' in which bifurcation takes place. This is the 'turning point at which a physical system paradoxically embodies multiple and normally mutually exclusive potentials, only one of which is selected'. (Massumi 32 -33). In the liminal paradigm, this is, of course, what I have described as the axial moment of decision. In Massumi, however, it describes a *virtual* operation in which multiple levels, with differing spatial and temporal organisational structures and logics, resonate with one another to 'recapitulate the same event in divergent ways'. (Massumi 33). According to him, it will not lead to decision. However, again when read theologically, this explanation is analogous to the apocalyptic modal operation that, as such, opens out to questioning the reductionism of the negative paradigm of *limen* as barrier. For, it arguably allows the question of talk about God to be reintroduced to the discourse of language as notions of transcendent infinity and space can be discussed through the critical point as the moment of stasis through which decision must pass. Thus, in this sense, Massumi's proposition about the

nature of intensity and expression events foregrounds the way in which affect plays through crisis, meaning and decision in language experience.

In conclusion, Massumi's intensity-event, when taken into the apocalyptic narrative of Revelation, presents us with a metaphor of human words as a war of words, in which notions of end resonate with notions of opening, but that can only turn to the positive through faith. I have already outlined the way in which notions of crisis dominate our literatures and discourses to underpin modern and postmodern western culture and their apparently crippling and attenuating effect on language, when limits are viewed as impassable or dissolvable (Massumi's definitional model as a punctual no man's land). Narratives of fatalism and despair show this to be the case, as do discourses of resistance and rebellion. Godless language seems to be driven by a logic that brings about stasis and undermines the motivating properties of affect. It is a logic of despair and self-failure in which a refusal to view correspondence through its relation-in-difference inheres. Against that, as the narrative in Revelation *allegorises* despair (where, for the godless, hope is lost), it is able to turn the crisis that is built into representation to the positive. This is because the Christian apocalyptic grammar modally performs through and exposes the liminal possibility of transition and change in the intensity event as it works through Christ's (real *and* textual mediating) body. It is arguably this drawing together in the intensity event that marks the distinction between the possibility of revelation in *theology* (*theos* and *logos* representing both talk about God and God's talk) and its cauterisation or attenuation in godless language. Paradoxically, therefore, the simultaneous experience described by Massumi's intensity-event is reflective of the apocalyptic juxtaposition of liminal images (of barrier, opening, and transformational space) which, in resonating, take us, in faith, towards revelation and a point of (God-given, God-directed) decision. The Christian apocalypse could as such be said to perform this antimony from the physical, through the medium (of Christ) to the transformative change. Furthermore, Massumi's stress on the body and change opens the discussion of the liminal process outlined previously to the importance of *embodiment* - at times in terms of performance, at others in terms of incarnation and kenosis. His acknowledgement

122

of the significance of movement can also be taken into theological notions of the creative, eschatological and soteriological movement of God operating on creation between chaos and void as well as God's Trinitarian intra-relationship within the performance of the Word in words.

We have seen how Adorno deconstructs and exemplifies the crisis of representation through negative dialectics, how Derrida proposes an apocalyptic tone in all language in which representation is an exchange without exchange. Massumi's outline of the virtual foregrounds the immanentism and atomism at play between suspense and expectation. All three centralise the subjective self to highlight the problematic of an analogy (the univocal and equivocal).[144] Each paradigm is presented through the *limen* which, when read analogically and theologically, brings new perspectives to the notion of apocalyptic-eschatology. Both Adorno and Massumi are concerned with the multiplicity of the cultural texts as they play through the discursive body. Thus, before moving to the final example of the negative liminal paradigm, I would like to briefly consider the crisis of representation in art. I have chosen that of Modernism because the language of affect and the psyche has had a marked influence on it. The aim is to look at whether a theological remnant of the apocalyptic-eschatological inheres or whether atomism and immanentism prevail.

7. Art as a liminal expression-event:

As an example of the association of renewal and crisis, Modernism in art is worth a brief mention here as, arguably, it performs the revelatory through the liminal paradigm with a heightened sense both of emotion and the dangerous nature of its space.   A fine example that connects unstable identity with psychological disturbance and transformation is found in the Prinzhorn Collection of Art. This collection, produced by psychotic patients in Heidelberg and Wiesloch

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[144] There are two main models that dominate arguments about subjectivity: the first posits the isolating state of being shut off from communication; the second, proposes that all is dissolved into one state. This reflects the analogical problematic of univocity versus equivocalness.   For a consideration of two examples of this, c.f. Graham Ward, <u>Cities of God</u>. London and New York: Routledge, 2000) chapter 5, *Communities of Desire*, 117ff, in which he discusses the views of Hobbes and Spinoza.

clinics, was put together by clinicians, and is known to have significantly influenced the artistic movements of Dadaism and Surrealism.[145] Images from the collection were taken into the work of several artists to illustrate what happens when ideas about breakdown (and distance from reality) and new starts are juxtaposed and consciously associated with notions of intense emotional disturbance (psychosis), the latter being linked to a concept of authenticity.

The movement was concerned to move *behind* reason in order to access the original, nature of humankind, uninfected by cultural discourse. Psychosis signifies both that which animates (gives life to) and the condition of the mind (only more recently, in terms of mental disease) and Modernists made a connection between primary (often, primal) expression and mental/emotional illness. Psychotics were seen to represent 'miracles of the artistic spirit dawning from the depths beyond all conceptual reflection'. (Brand-Claussen 15).[146] In an essay about the collection, Caroline Douglas foregrounds the ancient connection between mania and prophecy where a correspondence was said to exist between 'naming the thing' and the madness of prophecy. Patterns of manic depression, unlocked in art therapy, were thus being linked to the visionary.[147] The patients exemplified a destabilisation of the self and Douglas writes that

> it is an easy step to understand why the condition [psychosis] has been explained in terms of possession, of supernatural or divine inspiration [to produce] a new view of reality, born out of extremes of emotion and experience. (Douglas 46).

The association between affect, psychosis and revelation helps explain why the conjunction between madness and the desire for the new appealed to Modernism, and why this view underpins much of the work produced subsequently by Modernist (and postmodern) artists, for whom dynamics of aggression, displacement, rupture

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[145] C.f. Bettina Brand-Claussen, "The Collection of Works of Art in the Psychiatric Clinic, Heidelberg – from the Beginnings until 1945." Beyond Reason: Art and Psychosis: Works from the Prinzhorn Collection. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1997) 7 – 23.
[146] Citing the artist Alfred Kubin's letter to Das Kunstblatt, 1922.
[147] Caroline Douglas, "Precious and Splendid Fossils." Beyond Reason: Art and Psychosis: Works from the Prinzhorn Collection. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1997) 34 –47.

and otherness have been so important. For, this interplay exposes how, at the margins of representation, symbols are locked into a war between suspense and expectation, between stasis and movement, between hope and despair, and between barrier and threshold. And in this reading of the psychotic, a sense of warning and promise inheres that expresses much about apocalyptic's necessary performance of the liminal. Refusal of apocalyptic, as opening, is thus arguably less evident in art production than in notions of textual representation where the detheologisation of the text and a refusal of the other (eschatology) have been formalised into reading theory.

The predominance of notions about limits in the form and content of our recent literatures has arguably had a crippling effect on ideas about language itself where limits are viewed as impassable or dissolving. The many narratives of fatalism and despair show this to be the case. The context from which these narratives emerge (the reality of difference in social extremes, the barbarism of war, the potential for the end of humankind in nuclear and chemical warfare) forms the backdrop to our recent philosophical, theological, and literary text production. And as said previously, meaning, as such, seems to fail when the interweaving between the literary, philosophical, and theological is lost. However, much in art defies this theory. It is not that art production shirks the reality of despair or that it espouses religion. Rather that it openly acknowledges its dependency on sense, emotion, and affect where sentiments, moods, affective disorders, and traits are seen as the participation of the senses in and through each other to transform disposition, even when that disposition is at its darkest. The interpretation of signs in art is arguably, therefore, more open to the supernatural, boundary crossings and the concept of affect in relation to revelation within the problematic of self and other; and many of the symbols from the apocalyptic texts can be found in these art movements. Art, as such, may offer a new perspective on the emotional nature of apocalyptic that Schüssler Fiorenza speaks about.

However, if Modernist artists and to a degree, writers, embraced notions of crisis and apocalyptic-eschatology, this has been less the case in other areas of thinking from the 1920s onwards. Theorists of language, cognition, and culture, in

their exposure of what has become known as the crisis of representation, have expended much energy in exploring the problematic of God as both 'the empirical object of knowledge and the elevated subject who is ...the condition of possibility for that knowledge'. (Burke 64).[148] They have interrogated the issues through discourses on human subjectivity, knowledge and language. Working through logic alone, the implied tautology of being both revealer and revealed has done more than attenuate ideas about God, for it has opened out to questioning the issue of whether human thought and language systems are ever able to represent reality or meaningful presence beyond, from *within* the enclosed limits of self. If they can't, the *limen* becomes either an impassable barrier beyond which we cannot reach out to relationship with the other or it occurs as a regulated locus of passage which, because of multiple points-of-view, relativises experience and understanding to limit movements of transformation. At issue are notions of perception in relation to incorporation, incarnation and relationship and the eschatological line. When this is seen as the only way (within enclosed limits of discourse) through which to define the self, lack alone comes to the fore.[149] Arguing thus out of reason alone, only the disabling effects of language (as a flawed system) are foregrounded, where the self is driven, at best, by desire for (and appropriation of) the unattainable other; at worst, by despair of the self at the limit of language. Within the confines of philosophy this is articulated as the problematic of the *limen* which, therefore, presents a serious problem for any philosophy of language in terms of medium and mediation. This is again why, when positing a limit, any expression (*within* language) of the other *beyond* the limit (of language) can only be thought of *theologically* (and then only in terms of mediation and analogical relations-in-difference.

What complicates the concepts driving forward the postmodern agenda, therefore, is the fact that they can only be expressed in terms that negatively play through the images and symbols of apocalyptic, reflecting an apocalyptic tone.

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[148] Sean Burke, The Death and Return of the Author, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).
[149] A host of narratives within the modern/postmodern canon rehearse this absurd, inescapable, and destructive eschatological horizon.

Their narratives speak of the end of God, of man, of posterity, of world, of archive. Contrarily, they lack hope, and thus stripped of revelation expose the frustration (of hope as foreboding) which arises out of the collision of self against the boundary of language. Arguably as metaphor, this tone serves only to further illustrate the limits of human autarky in its refusal of God. And the collision between the self and the limits of representation forces and reinforces the irresolvable conflict of oppositions described in Adam's fall. The inescapable, recycling movement thus serves to return man to the tragically flawed moment of primary decision, where metaphorically, human language hit the margins of its own inadequacies. In literary terms, the content of language seems logically to present the limits of its own form in antinomy, that is, in the faulty assertion that language can only ever be discursive and, therefore, *mis*representation.

To conclude: it seems to me that the recourse to reason alone forces the development of self-limiting and reductionist theories of its own self-regulation, that a more nuanced view of the nature of liminality frees up – particularly if the emotional is allowed its full place within notions of knowing. I return to this in section 8 below.

It is clear that modern and postmodern theories posit meaning as multiple and relative due to the instability of the sign in representation, and that presence evades the text. We will now see, in the work of Roland Barthes, the French literary critic and social theorist, how that argument works. One positive outcome of the absence of the other is that the reader is freed from the external referent to a 'pleasurable play' of the text to which a personal but unstable meaning can be ascribed.[150] I would argue, however, that pleasurable play is only one interpretation of this detachment that depends, moreover, on the association of notions of appetite and desire with pleasure and appropriation. Appetite and desire can be otherwise described as want, or lack, where, instead of consolation and promise (also associated with longing), the residual effect is violence and death as well as

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[150] C.f., Roland Barthes, <u>The Pleasure of the Text</u>, trans. R. Miller (London: Jonathon Cape, 1976) 78 – 80.

indeterminacy, indifference, and despair; and where the only promise is the half-light of virtuality and oncoming entropy (that is, non-movement and non-embodiment and a kind of energy as nothingness or chaos) that cauterises movement or transformation.

I take this perspective to Barthes' work on the absence or death of the outside referent/author to illustrate the associated concepts of postmodern relativism with its detheologised limit (Massumi's 'continuity or nothing') that refuses the author as the authoritative other beyond the text. His work presents us with a perfect metaphor for the western anti-theological stance and helps to further account for the resistance and rebellion that we have seen in the stories of Adam and Babel. Thus, having considered the negative paradigm as a prison-house of language, and having furthermore begun to question whether it is really possible to completely exclude the theological from representation, the next section asks whether the end of the Word and words can ever be viewed as more than an act of rebellion.

8. Roland Barthes' Death of the Author

In his essay, "The Death of the Author", Roland Barthes' position to the author/other is openly polemical and provocative, his work perfectly illustrating Massumi's point that with the systemic bracketing of mediation in 'body - (movement/sensation) – change' paradigm, postmodern theory constructs the ideological means to refuse any system of mediation (Massumi 1-2). [151] For Barthes, culture is the text as the world.[152] With the subjective self at its core, he makes an attack against the author, or referent beyond, as the false and illegitimate subject of the text, stating that

> Writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost. (Barthes <u>Death</u>, 142).

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[151] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author." Originally published as "La mort de l'auteur" (1968). <u>Image, Music, Text</u>. Trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977) 142-148. <u>Oeuvres Complètes, vol II, 1966-1973 </u>(Paris: Du Seuil, 1994) 491-495.
[152] E.g. literature, art, music, film, architecture, landscape *et al.*

This effectively means that as soon as a 'fact' is told it no longer acts 'in reality' but only as a symbol within the mirrored freedom of writing. (Barthes <u>Death</u>, 142). Even when we are dimly aware of his existence, the author is situated as an anterior, separate entity beyond the text, thus detached from his origins by his absorption into a negative but open space with no origin. The author can no longer act transitively. The text remains only to perform the reader's pleasure.

> The modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now. (Barthes <u>Death</u>, 145).

The sequential process of the performative speech act of God which is followed by the respondent's act of listening, and to which Steiner refers, has been refused. In what amounts to a supersessionary move (an act of appropriation), the created text substitutes or stands in the place of its author. The author, as symbolic opening to the text, is undermined as the symbol becomes more important than its referent. Barthes points out that

> Mallarmé was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner … to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'. Mallarmé's entire poetics consists in suppressing the author in the interests of writing (which is…to restore the place of the reader). (Barthes <u>Death</u>, 143).[153]

To some extent, this heralds little more than an aesthetic move which, in Mallarmé, aims to transform one's view of the world into that of universal spirit. In Barthes, however, the aim is to liberate the reader from the perceived external constraints

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[153] C.f. Douglas Parmée, <u>Twelve French Poets: 1820 – 1900: An Anthology of 19th Century French Poetry</u> (London: Longmans, 1961). Stéphane Mallarmé lived from 1842 - 1898. To place Mallarmé's work in his own context (according to Barthes, a forbidden act), the poet believed that the truth of the 'principle underlying the universe' lay, not in reason, but in identification with the principle of 'le Néant' – 'the nothingness of pure spirit when deprived of any of its fortuitous physical externals'. (Parmée xxxviii). The poet sought to *distil feeling* as the free-floating spirit of the text, thus transforming external reality into the aesthetic of universal spirit. He argued that poetry should, therefore, always be suggestive rather than descriptive: 'nommer un objet supprime les trois quarts de la jouissance poétique, le suggérer, voilà le rêve'. (c.f. Parmée xxxix). Trans., 'To *name* a thing removes most of the poetic delight, to *suggest* a thing – that is the dream'. It is in the association between dream, delight as sensual pleasure, and the spirit principle that Mallarmé's work performs.

of the author in which the author is the reader's construct of a principle of limitation. The reader performs through the text independently of its author: in separating the author from his text, the reader freely experiences the textual space. The author can no longer claim ownership. The reader is no longer responsible to the outside referent.

However, if, instead of following Mallarmé's notion of *le néant,* we consider Barthes' perspective on the author/reader relationship through the creation narratives we discover that there is an alternative and thoroughly positive view of God's intention in the first creative act. For the text can be read as the creation of a self-suppressing author who freely chooses to set the world (as text) free, thereby empowering the recipient to perform the text in a *gifted* freedom. In such a reading, the reader's freedom ('set free' by the author) would, by analogy, be like that of Adam who was freed by God to name the animals (a freedom suggested by God's silent viewing of Adam's act of naming). As such, God is again voluntarily withdrawing in the interest of a liberated creation. The counterpart in this interpretation is the equally voluntary subscription to that gifted freedom by Adam who, in a simultaneous, unspoken re-interpretation of God's creative Word, receives the creation-as-text. Adam has now to perform the text (as *his* world) independently of, but in reference to, God who is the fugitive author of the text. But then, no blame can be attributed to God in the interpretation of Adam's world.

This alternative interpretation brings to mind Steiner's enquiry into the nature of the linguistic tautology of Exodus 3.14, 'I AM WHO I AM', in which he asks:

> whether we ought not to hear in God's statement the muffled echo of an infinite solitude, whether the grammar of mirroring in the tautology is not the figuration of an aloneness from which creation, and most sombrely that of man, is excluded. (Steiner <u>Tautology</u>, 360).

Accordingly, the cost of the reader's freedom is God's eternal isolation: the Word ceases to be performative within creation. To the extent that creation and man are, to some degree, set free of accountability to God, neither the text nor the reader is

answerable for, or to, God's separateness. Yet a sense of mutual alienation inheres in this interpretation. Within Steiner's exegesis one senses both the heady freedom of detachment, and a 'banishment of men and women from the inviolate self-sufficiency of the creator'. (Steiner, Tautology 360).[154] Once again, freedom and exile conjoin (as in the exegesis of the expulsion of Adam). Equally, accompanying this paradoxical and tragic state, a relation-in-difference remains between Adam, as the reader of the text (creation) who is made in God's image (as the author), and God. God retreats into loneliness. Man is excluded from God's aloneness as he is simultaneously destined to share it in his own attenuated version of separateness. Analogy inheres as both author and reader are trapped in their respective prisons of self. Relationship is experienced as shadow, absence, longing and loneliness.

To be fair, Barthes' stated aim in *killing* the author is to positively affect the *temporal* experience of reading by limiting the implications of its superlinear dimensions. He proposes that every text is eternally written '*here and now'*. This immanent eternity is achieved by removing 'the Author … as the past of his own book' and the barrier of 'before and after' (Barthes <u>Death</u>, 145). The reader has no past experience of the text (or author) and he does not yet know of any future one. Thus the immanence of the text is projected as a series of eternal (atomised) moments and not as a sequence of interpretative episodes cut off from one another. This parodies simultaneous experience. However, even here, correspondence is inerasable from the (scriptural) narrative. For in making the text a metaphor for the created world, Barthes concomitantly demands that the author stand for God abandoned in what I would describe as a recycling of the first created Words and Adam's apostatic act. Barthes reduces God to Mallarmé's principle of spirit to which no relationship inheres but only dissolution. In his scenario (whether Barthes recognises it or not) a negativised version of the first creative act speaks of an anti-author-intra-text and, therefore, of an anti-author-ante-text. The reader thus replaces God (who fails to act in relationship) and the *nothingness* of the text calls out to no one. Response is refused except as desire or misappropriation. As

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[154] Steiner is considering the poetry of Paul Celan. C.f. Paul Celan, <u>Poems of Paul Celan</u>. Revised and expanded edition. Trans., Michael Hamburger. (New York: Persea, 2002).

such, it is desire as lack in which violence inheres. Barthes' logic thereby denies a relational voice to all readers by denying a voice to the other/God as author. This speaks of a *responsibility* to the text in which paradoxically *response* has been extracted. The *néant* of the text thereby re-presents freedom as want and not as responsibility or loving response.

This is clearly not Barthes' intention. In fact, at the mundane level, it is not the authorial he wishes to suppress but a particular type of critic's voice – one that employs a particular methodology with regard to the external author. Barthes reviles the critical approach which introduces and emphasises the external, biographical, and psychological events of the author's life into textual interpretation for the sole purpose of imposing the *critic's* own authoritative view of the author onto the text. For Barthes, however, details of the author's life are both inadequate and falsifying tools of interpretation. The suppression of the voice of this type of critic, therefore, allows Barthes a new freedom in which *his* voice can interact independently from the external interference of the alternative critic. He is, ironically, advocating little more than a technique of close reading. This is quite clear when, in Critique et Verité, he attacks traditionalist critics for their attacks on 'New Criticism'.

> You would have thought that you were witnessing some exclusion ritual carried out in an ancient community against a dangerous subject. From which a strange lexicon of *execution*. They dreamed of *wounding, puncturing, beating, assassinating* the new critic, of dragging him to *court*, to the *pillory*, to the *scaffold*. (Barthes Critique, 10 - 11).[155]

The language used against the new critics (including Barthes) is violent and emotive. The invective of negative reviews clarifies his decision to opt into the rhetoric of violence. In killing the author Barthes places a full-stop between old criticism and his own interpretative stance. It is a revolutionary move grounded in

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[155] My translation. C.f., Roland Barthes, Critique et Verité (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966). "On aurait cru assister à quelque rite d'exclusion mené dans une communauté archaïque contre un sujet dangereux. D'où un étrange lexique de l'*exécution*. On a rêver de *blesser*, de *crever*, de *battre*, d'*assassiner* le nouveau critique, de le traîner en *correctionelle*, au *pilori*, sur l'*échafaud*".

ideological resistance. Ultimately, however, in killing the author, Barthes disenfranchises both the author and the reader from meaningful communication.

Barthes rightly sees a close, and necessarily personal, reading of the text as more contextually significant than that of an interpolation of biographical detail as the authorisation of a critic's point of view. However, in this, he seems to refuse either diachronic (i.e., historical connections) or synchronic (i.e., thematic and structural) relations between texts. There is strangely no intertextuality. In confusing the voice of the author with the voice of the critic he disguises a new form of critical totalitarianism, and consciously uses the ironic tone of violence picked up from the older traditionalist literary critics of his own time to counter-attack. To that extent, his voice comes to substitute *both* the voice of the critic *and* that of the author. It is a power-play.

To reiterate: the move against authorial presence is a form of refusal of the cultural intertext in which Barthes exposes a desire to deny the critic's use of biography to assert a 'canonical' reading of the text. But the confusion between the author and the critic subverts the authoritative voice in the text. If Barthes' god still exists he is dis-abled from communicating his relational intentions to his creature (who is, inter-textually and intra-textually, a symbol of responsiveness to both the created world and its author). This god (whether author or reader) becomes irrelevant because first, Barthes dis-ables the author in or at the boundary line (as ring-fence around the creation-as-text which is now the creation-as-void) and second, the reader (in the disembodied space of the text-as-void) who has no way of communicating with his sister.

If the worthy aim to liberate the reader to a direct experience of the text, without any intervention from the author (whose intention cannot in any case be entirely known), disables the reader, any relationship which remains is still notionally between the reader, as subject, and the text, as object. However, language has effectively been stripped of its mediating power to project a hope of transformation. Notions of conversation and intercourse are lost - at least in terms

of an informal, intimate meeting, or familial keeping-company with the author.[156] The reader's movement of *turning with* the author is thus dispelled. The concept of a text's ability to run-between the author and the reader, which opens up and marks out an intervention or exchange, is removed. The reader, as self-imposed re-author of the text, is caught up in the loneliness of his own tautology. His reinterpretation marks out his own 'I am what I am'. This loneliness is experienced discretely by the next reader who, in turn, reviews the tautology of the one before but without the ability to connect with it. There is a remorseless circularity in the logic of this argument. It creates the nothingness of desire, a desire in which inheres a longing for the absent and rejected referent. In the antimony between the void (Mallarmé's *le néant*) and the randomness of chaos (the reinterpreted text), Barthes conflates the author and the interpreter (the maker and the recipient) in a negative paradigm of freedom (as that which stands on either side of the creative *limen*) in the process of un-making. The question then emerges as to why the reader should bother to *read* the text at all or, if read as relativised experience, why he should bother to *write* about his discrete performance of the text - unless the pleasure of the text is sufficient as an experience of disembodied longing.

In the structural move made by Barthes, and in order to cover the supersessionary move of the interpreter, an interminable suspension of beginnings and endings is proposed, in which interpretative values are both multiplied and denied. An alternative paradigm of eternity, in which the suppression of the author is declared as a prerequisite to freedom, points to the fluidity and flux of the text as the only possible experience of the reader, who is thus detached from the physical world. In this way, the relative view of the reader who can impose any view on the text results inevitably in a logical drive to indifference. Barthes calls this the eternity of 'duplicity'. (Barthes Death, 148). I suggest that this duplicity effectuates a 'double-dealing' of the liminal paradigm that puts it in jeopardy. It is a folding-out

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[156] Origins: (Mid. Eng./Old Fr.) Conversation: informal, intimate meeting together, or familial keeping company (with), or turning with. Intercourse: running-between, marking a commerce, intervention or exchange.

of the *limen* to void and chaos which refuses reality to the creative space. Language *as* eternity becomes thus both duplicity and duplication. For Barthes, it is to be celebrated as a dual act of resistance and liberation. But, it reflects the kind of resistance of which Massumi speaks – a 'sink hole' that, in effect, allows no breakthrough from stasis. Accordingly, Barthes' eternal text could be described as the liminal void (or space as non-space) which expands analogously with the universe, that is, within its limits which are *no* limits. The de-centred text exists of itself, and any interpretative outcome can only be in terms of valuing this duplicity as multiplicity (or as multiplication) of meaning. Thus meaning does not inhere in the origin (or referent) of the text but in its multi-mailed destination – that of the reader. (Barthes <u>Death</u>, 148). The reader, however, is unwittingly disembodied and hopeless.

This is playing with power, as it is effectively the reader (in this case, Barthes as *alternative* critic) whom Barthes wishes to bring to the fore. Paradoxically, he becomes the focus of the next reader's attention, from which can be inferred a process not of *de-authoring* but of perpetual *re-authoring*. Logically, the possibility of crossing over thresholds, or at least of entry points for each reader into the text, still inheres in this multi-mailed messaging, the envelope of which must be opened in order to gain access. This is another way of describing intertextuality but without dialogism. Openness and the eternal text cannot, therefore, withdraw from the issue of an enforced (fore-) closure of the external referent, nor does it deal with the negative effect of the resultant dissipation and attenuation of the single, serial, lonely voice within the messaging process.

Massumi understands this. And Barthes' model subscribes to the positional model he proposed in that the framework is punctual. Given the fact that, in Barthes' paradigm, a reality cannot be attributed to the interval or liminal passage, the interval (Massumi's gaps between positions on the grid) falls necessarily into a 'theoretical no-body's land' (Massumi 4), and Massumi rightly posits that a 'crossing is a continuity (*or nothing*)'. (Massumi 4). Reading as he wishes us to read means that Barthes' relative readings paradoxically pass into this nothingness. The punctuated moments of the eternal text which pleasures its reader has enfolded

that which stands on either side of the *limen* into the *limen*. That which stands on either side, therefore, becomes its substitute. Barthes thus fails to understand the nature of liminality. Theologically, however, if the *interval* is performed, the dynamic of sensing between continuity and nothingness presents a (mediating) third way (the Word). As apocalyptic rupture, it plays through the language of affect (as the participation of the senses in and through each other with the ability to transform disposition), where language (as a physical medium for communication) opens up the perception of that which is external to it (in this case, the world through the Word in words). Thus, although Barthes' paradigm reflects what Massumi calls a 'qualitative movement of the body', it lacks 'sensings as significations'.[157] Arguably, this means that in Barthes' theory of the author and reader both the author and reader are disenfranchised from the how and what of representation.

In Barthes' paradigm of the boundary between self and other, the separation of an author from his text employs the textual boundary as a weapon of suppression. And yet logically, the antimony between bounded space and the *néant* disallows the integrity of the re-authoring process for which he makes claims. The presence of the other bleeds into the nothingness of the space which, posited as eternal, is yet internal to its structure. The aim to free the reader from authority, in the expanding and enclosed textual space, presents an illusion of limited control over the fear of nothingness. Simultaneously, and ironically, it declares an espousal of nothingness *as something;* that something is the negative aspect of desire. However, the boundary is still to be inferred and, so too, a sense of origins and outcomes.

Ironically, Barthes argues that the nascence (or re-birth) of the reader exists at the expense and in the involuntary sacrifice of the author. Thus in a double-movement of un-creation and re-creation Barthes acts *as* god of both the text and of the reader in a self-espoused duplicity. From this perspective, the tenor of his narrative on the death of the author is reminiscent of Adam's first transgression in

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[157] C.f. Massumi 4.

which he seeks to know as God knows: to stand in equality with, or even therefore, in the place of God. The respondent of the text has *become* its author. Thus, in Barthes' ironic reference to Nietzsche's death of God narrative, a sinister rehearsal of the form and content of Christian narrative inheres from which Barthes (however ironically intended its reference may have been) cannot escape. The death-of-God/death-of-author narratives call to mind the sacrifice/execution of Jesus (who in the text stands as *Logos*) and whose death was brought about by the refusal of his fellow Jews to accept him as both messianic form and content (i.e., the medium *and* the message). Thus, in the association of creation (nothingness and origin) with the murder of God, the narrator is ultimately confronted by the misdeed of his own mis-reading. In the Christian narrative this is to be reckoned in guilt and accountability. However, Barthes' model acts in defiance of responsibility. His paradigm *dictates* that this be so.

If Barthes' enclosed space of the text attempts to refuse identification of, with, or through the external author, as it does so it simultaneously shuts down any possible communication between the inside and the outside of the text *at the boundary-line*. Like Adam, in choosing so to do, he mis-reads the nature of analogy as a ratio of equivalence rather than one of proportionality and relation-in-difference. To reiterate: in the spoken act of creation the concept of boundary stands as the space for God's performative speech act between chaos and void. As such, at the boundary between human speech and static, God confronts us in a silent demand to re-turn to Him (the sacred *limen*) for revelation. However, when the author's death is viewed as the death of *Logos* (as the mediating voice of the textual medium) his death ideologically silences the possibility of revelation and thus renders human language incapable of meaning. For Steiner this logical outcome means that '[t]oday's deconstruction of this transcendent persona in the critiques of a Foucault and a Derrida are a logical consequence of the "mopping up" of Christianity'. (Steiner <u>Grammars</u>, 62). This ideological consequence is also true for Barthes. The positing of the impossibility of communication between the author and the reader of the text points, perhaps more than anything, to the question of what Steiner calls 'the issue ... of the nature of being' and the 'answerability' of God

towards his creation. (Steiner <u>Grammars</u>, 33, 34). However, Steiner questions whether feelings of guilt and revulsion (and the concomitant issue of an unjust and tyrannical author) '*authorize* destruction' of the text. (Steiner <u>Grammars</u>, 35).[158] His choice of verb is apposite given the anti-authorial, authoritarian position of Barthes.

In the postmodern re-narration of scripture, questions about freedom or responsibility (for the reader relative to the author) are lacking in the absence of authority. Thus Barthes, in suppressing the authorial voice, suppresses the apocalyptic paradigm of revelation at the limits of representation, thereby silencing God's performative voice. The void of the text replaces the creative act of differentiation in which the respective responsibility of maker and made are contextually interlaced. This unavoidable outcome inheres in the logic of this particular paradigm of reversal. To re-state Barthes: writing is 'the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost'. (Barthes <u>Death</u>, 142).

9. Is it possible for the *limen* to only operate as limit?

If, as I have already claimed, the problematic of the *limen* involves the issue of separation, and this is affirmed in both biblical and detheologised interpretations, it is because in the experience of (self-inflicted) separation man has sought the meaning and purpose of the interplay between differentiation and relationship. The modern, detheologised discourse arguably represents the polar extreme of representation and the subjective self that the fall introduced. Theologically, this demonstrates man's failed autarky from within a flawed and limited system in which the dialectical principle is centralised. The despair that ensues leads to a two-fold conclusion: autarky is illusion; language is disabling. Theologically, the issue is expressed differently: autarky is lack of freedom; revelation can only be partial because language is flawed. The central question in both approaches, however, remains how, in the shifting sands of language, relationship can be mediated. This

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[158] My emphasis.

is where the analogy of faith comes to the fore. For, underlying the discussion of the crisis of representation is the problematic of the mediating process in analogy.

Against notions of the apocalyptic liminal performance of the text outlined in the previous chapter, I have concentrated here on postmodern readings of the flawed text as expressed in the crisis of representation and exemplified in the double bind of the *limen* as boundary (as chaos or void, closed or collapsed). I have thus discussed how blindness to God's presence renders the boundary impenetrable, thus reflecting a crisis of difference between the self and the other that is so absolute that revelation is deemed impossible or undesirable. This is a discourse of despair. Inherent in its logic is the sense that reasoned knowledge of God from knowledge of the world risks either a closed system or one of synthesis, in which case the *limen* is removed. Notions of analogy collapse within this framework; meaning is lost unless a clear sense of adequacy and differentiation as relations-in-difference is developed (although even here, we can only think of it as possibility). For, as the what and how of representation (in a state of perpetual flux), language seems to be debilitated and displaced by time in finite history and, apparently, disabled from the possibility of describing the 'operation of a Logos beyond the embrace of any language system'. (Ward Barth, 9). This is further complicated, of course, by the apocalyptic tone inherent in language, which in the crisis of representation has increased the multi-messaging, disruptive nature of violent discourse, at the same time as it speaks of (and desires) death and the end. As Graham Ward points out, the crisis

> [c]ourt[s] the unconventional and nonconformist in a conscious effort to overthrow the traditional perspective and stock expectations. Its dynamism [is] aggressive, disruptive and even apocalyptic.
> (Ward Barth, 7).

Additionally, the dimensions of space and time are relevant to the liminal paradigm of representation, for they are undermined by textuality, repetition, and re-presentation in a way that is not threatened by analogical, apocalyptic readings. The essential stumbling block to common understanding seems, therefore, to lie in

contradictory notions of differentiation, self-identification, and lost identity, and therefore, how meaning is to be ascribed to them in relation to time and space.

Against the negative view of limits presented in the crisis of representation, however, I suggest that, in theological terms, any echoing of the tone, mode, form, or content of *biblical* apocalyptic literature will inflect into the intertextual play of negative and reductionist paradigms of the *limen* to leave a trace of the other. Further, that as the apocalyptic tone resonates between different dimensions it simultaneously forces an experience of both loss *and* transformatory activity. In other words, at the same time as the *limen* is constituted by the notion of barrier, it is also informed by the *limen* as opening to God's performative speech (intra-relationally as love and participation in the Trinity and co-relationally with its respondent creation). Analogically then, the *limen* is the location in which God's Word and human representation interface. As in creation, the liminal space is bounded by negation. However, it is also bound to creative representation. This paradox is central to issue of the necessary but impossible task of doing theology.

Whether in the detheologised or theologised text, therefore, our representations are infected by the fall. And yet, a grammatical relation exists between them. Thus, in either case, it is arguably the misunderstanding of God's absence that drives forward negative feelings of fear and despair through the axial point of the *limen*. For, where suffering and injustice prevail, God's (apparent) absence provides a reason and excuse for rebellion, rejection and loss of faith. And, to that degree, notions of hope and despair depend on each other. For as George Steiner writes

> Hope and fear are supreme fictions empowered by syntax. They are as indivisible from each other as they are from grammar. Hope encloses a fear of unfulfilment. Fear has in it a mustard seed of hope, the intimation of overcoming. It is the status of hope today which is problematic. On any but the trivial, momentary level, hope is a transcendental inference. (Steiner, <u>Grammars</u> 5 - 6).

If hope operates within a transcendent sphere, the detheologisation of the text helps to explain the dominance of despair and fear within recent western cultural texts, the dialectical principle mis-read and misappropriated in a discourse of power. The question as to whether the negative paradigm can ever truly displace the liminal complex even from within its own self-limitation of logic is, therefore, unlikely (Steiner's indivisibility of grammar).

As a final word: the work of Karl Barth has been influential to my work because it is his insistence on the radically transcendent nature of God (his 'Let God be God!') that removes the danger of the analogy of being with its inherent danger of a theology of glory. Barth unceasingly emphasises the qualitative difference between the performative nature of the Word and the inadequate medium of human language. In the type of dialectics that I have espoused throughout, and that reflect the analogy of being through the analogy of faith, I have tried, therefore, to differentiate between the logic of contradiction and Adam's illusion about equality with God, and God's performative Word and man's pre-lapsarian words. I have also stressed that in post-lapsarian representation, our words are not adequate and cannot fully presence God's Word. The strength of the crisis of representation has been to highlight the attenuated and insufficient form of language, and to foreground the depth of despair that arises out of the world-as-text. In both this and previous chapters, I have furthermore suggested that ideological criticism (and a hermeneutics of suspicion) best critiques the claims of rational consciousness to understand the nature of reality, even within the language of theology. These factors are significant to the next chapter, in which I look again at the theological implications of the liminal operation in Christianity through the work of Jürgen Moltmann.

Moltmann's work arises from the midst of the crisis of representation, and he is both influenced by, and resistant to its methodologies. He shows an acute awareness of the depth of despair that arises from atheistic protests and, in his theologies of hope and the crucified God, he focuses through the difference between analogies of being and faith through the dialectical principle. However, he

is highly critical of the analogy of being (as was Barth) whilst, at the same time, he theologises the dialectical principle in a way that arguably forces the kind of dualisms that we have seen throughout the exposition of the crisis of representation. It seems to me that is derives from a scant regard to the how and what of representation. It may, therefore, be useful to reiterate that, for me, without a clear awareness of the nature of analogy through the flawed nature of representation, little hope remains for theology to claim that language can in some way be shared between God and man, or even man and man. For, any other approach leads to atomism and immanentism. So, for me, Moltmann's view of analogy is attenuated by a negative spin that arises out of modern (predominantly Protestant) methodologies, whilst his, arguably, naïve use of the dialectical principle (which plays through the subjective self) attenuates his theology. I have already suggested it is necessary to hold notions of analogical language together with dialectical methods (as relations-in-difference).

Furthermore that, as language is flawed, liminality is a key consideration in positing a relation between God and man. To that degree, the nature of relationship and participation in Christian grammar must play through semiotics and the analogical view. For this reason, I turn to the work of Graham Ward, as a supplement to Moltmann, because it presents an analogical, cosmological worldview that plays both through semiotics and the nature of participation. The former will be used to support my critique of Moltmann's methodology, whereas the latter will be considered in depth in the final chapter of Part 1 when I present the hesitant beginnings of a theology of liminality.

Protest and the dialectics of hope and despair in the work of Jürgen Moltmann

Personhood … is that sense of self that continually comes from being in relation, repeated, but non-identically with every action in and upon the world.

1. Introduction

Whether in the life of an individual, a community or nation, despair arises out of material, physical, spiritual or emotional crisis. Rebellion against, or rejection of the goodness of God derives from a profound sense of abandonment. Despair can infect us all at different times and according to different circumstances. In the Bible, the spectre of despair haunts the Book of Lamentations, in which barely a glimmer of hope remains and where faith struggles for survival amongst the ruins of a dehumanised city. Recently used to represent New York in the aftermath of 9/11, Lamentations marks the devastating outcome of human violence and injustice - surely a symbolic antithesis of God's kingdom. However, despair also echoes through the laissez-aller of Ecclesiastes and in the outrage of Job — that is, within the circle of the wealthy elite. In our own times, examples of material and spiritual crisis are fed to us daily by the media. Whether in mass killings in Darfur, the murder of Victoria Clambié, the exultantly rebellious atheism of Richard Dawkins, or the lassitude created by quasi-totalitarian consumerism, the sense of indifference and death ritualises despair; yet it is a ritual that leaves us feeling further disempowered. That disempowerment involves the commodification and objectification of the body. In twentieth-century post-war Europe, these feelings were often narrated through absolutist ideologies and existential and absurdist philosophies which some theologians and biblical scholars sought a way to resist. More recently, the rise of relativism in the liberal west has done nothing to diminish the need for these resistances. Often, usually without recognising it, the response of western churches has been an attempt to overcome these arguments through recourse to the same thought processes that created the resistances in the first

place – moving between extreme liberalism and fundamentalism. The resulting outcomes are often unsatisfactory, particularly as we have been forced to accept that Christianity is just one narrative among many, and where the relevance of Christian faith to the despair of a heterodox, predominantly secular and consumerist world is neither obvious nor easy to defend in the face of post-colonial, post-pluralist arguments.

The two final chapters of Part 1, which form the theological heart of the study, consider two perspectives in relation to these complex issues. In this chapter, I look at the way in which Jürgen Moltmann's approach to the profound atheistic protest that arose after World War 2 reflects and is infected by modernist thinking; and reflect on how this risks attenuating the power of his theologies of hope and the cross, to draw the latter into the former. Moltmann, following early modern Protestant tradition, argues that a flawed approach to theological interpretation arose from theistic influences and the analogy of being, and that the consequent failure of many church communities to face the rise of secularism derived from a refusal to engage with the problem of suffering which this approach is forced to refuse. His theologies of hope and the cross attempt to light a way forward within the reality of history action through eschatological hope and God's sharing in suffering.[159] However, I propose that his recourse to dialectics, combined with an antagonism to the theistic view of the analogy of being, fail to open out the liminal nature of participation and response by falling into the kind of dualisms that in fact reflect the crisis of representation.

In this, and to a greater extent in the final chapter of Part 1, I consider how the work of a more recent theologian, Graham Ward, whose engagement with postmodern cultural theory offers a more nuanced understanding of the nature of representation in relation to the body as a key cultural metaphor, and in relation to

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[159] Moltmann, Jürgen. <u>The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology</u>. Der gekreuzigte Gott (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1973). Trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden. 2001 ed. London: SCM Press, 1974.
---. <u>Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology.</u> Theologie der Hoffnung. (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1965. Trans. James W. Leitch. 2002 ed. London: SCM Press, 1967.

the nature of relationship and participation. For Ward, the necessity of an analogical worldview, founded in patristic and scholastic traditions, provides the theological key through which to negotiate representation. As such, it can be used as a supplement through which to re-read the profound theology of the crucifixion event given by Moltmann in relation to our own times. Furthermore, his appreciation of the liminal nature of Christian grammar gives pointers to the development of a theology of liminality which lies at the heart of this study.

2. The chapter in the context of this study

The following brief summary of chapters 1-3 puts this chapter into context: Chapter 1 explored the nature of representation in relation to revelation as apocalyptic-eschatology. It looked at how Christian narratives perform through a liminal complex which opens out to God's self-disclosure, as a mediating space for human encounter with the divine, but that recognises the paradoxically partial nature of that revelation in human representation as it performs through the tensions of analogy and dialectics. It considered how an apocalyptic-eschatological grammar structures the hermeneutics of early Christian followers/text producers through the uniquely extreme crisis of crucifixion in a movement from despair to hope and love in resurrection. In chapter 2, I asserted that this revelatory-driven process was grounded in relationship and community, where participation and performance provided the means to uncover the meaning of Jesus as Christ incarnate and kenotic through the emergence of the spirit. I outlined how the apocalyptic-eschatological story in the Revelation to John can be used as a template to highlight the extent to which apocalyptically-driven readings dominate all Christian text-production, that is to say, that apocalyptic revelation works *through* crisis, and further developed this through a theory of liminality. I looked at the Christian message of the end with its eschatological horizon in the kingdom of God, and how, in our representations, God's Word reveals this understanding to open knowledge of God out to the experience of a foretaste of the fullness of relationship between God and man. I argued that revelation is, as such, directed from God to man but that our responsiveness to him is required through an act of faith and trust; this quintessential movement of faith reflects a cosmologically-driven

analogical view that defies the anthropocentric. In chapter 3, aspects of the crisis of representation were discussed through a negative liminal paradigm that resists and forecloses the analogical view, cannot accept God's existence, and exacerbates the sense of eschatological crisis (caught as it is between the polar extremes of the dialectical principle): in other words, that despair leaves us bereft and hopeless because it only performs through barrier as lack and/or chaos. This is now the dominant western paradigm and must therefore remain central to theological resistance.

Throughout, I have been concerned with how Christianity, born out of absolute crisis and despair, and narrated through the liminal act of Jesus' life and crucifixion, was able to overcome this closed view, and arrive at belief in Jesus as Christ, and through which a sense of hope and love in community persists. The New Testament is an unfolding story of overcoming failure, disappointment and despair through faith, hope and love without recourse to human domination through a liminal paradigm of apocalyptic-eschatology. This is extraordinary, for, as an emotion, despair (and loss of faith) elicits anger, rebellion and/or indifference, each in its way reflecting our lack of control and powerlessness over creation; the gap between our knowledge of the world as misprision and our desire for congruity is not overcome by human actions or thought alone but only by God's revelation of himself in Christ. This achievement stands in contradistinction to the inability of anthropocentric paradigms to defeat the sense of abandonment and lack, particularly given recent understandings of the flawed nature of human cognition. Anthropocentric models of free will and self-determination, of utopian societies and eschatological progressions have neither diminished nor overwhelmed lack. Autonomy has not led to happiness. I have thus argued that it is this disappointment that helps explain the proliferation of narratives of despair throughout modernity and postmodernity and which permeate our institutions (government, corporations, universities etc.) in a meta-narrative of chaos and end, with sub-narratives of confinement, exploitation, flux, atomism, rebellion, relativism

and meaninglessness, all of which play through the problematic of univocalness and equivocity that dialectics explain but do not overcome.[160]

I have also argued that in the biblical texts, words and signs are theologically imbued with power and meaning, but that in modernity and postmodernity, the sense in which narratives of rebellion and despair are in the throes of a double eschatology intensifies as the end of both meaning and the material world conjoin, in the illogic of rationalist readings with their prioritisation of mind over body, and dualistic over analogical worldviews. At this point, in order to understand the profundity of this double despair, and to foreground the theological significance of liminal performance to Christian faith, a theological reading of the crucifixion as a uniquely critical moment is necessary. For, if despair is signified within the meaning of crisis - in and at the axial point - as disease (dis-ease) and death, an explanation of the Trinitarian movement at play within the liminal operation must be given. Theologically interpreted, the crucifixion chooses life over death. But more, it chooses life as an embodiment in Christ – in which location the dynamic event of apocalyptic-eschatology finds God-imbued hope in the promise of redemption and salvation. Thus two dominant narratives (Adam's fall and Jesus as Christ) have established the parameters for presenting a theology of liminality in the face of the crisis of modernity. One aim has been to demonstrate that the dominance of simple dialectical approach fails to overcome the negative barrier of liminality. Another has been to show how the theological weight of the liminal operation of reading and response to God's Word helps foreground an opening to apocalyptic-eschatological understanding, without passing over the problematic of flawed representation.

In this chapter, I take a slightly different approach to propose that the work of Jürgen Moltmann typifies the difficulty, in modernity, of working with a dualistic methodology. His book, The Crucified God (1973), looks at how rebellion against God arises out of injustice and suffering, proposing that God shares in, and thus experiences suffering in the critical axis of the crucifixion as both the foundation *and* criticism of Christian theology. His earlier book, Theology of Hope (1967), is a

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[160] For example, in the rhetoric of terrorism.

primary marker of eschatology *as* hope in God's promise of salvation and redemption. Whilst together, these remain influential theological texts for our times that have the potential to bring together the *limen* as end stop in the cross and opening in resurrection, I will argue that they fail to do so for two reasons: first, Moltmann's way of thinking about the world falls into the dualisms of the crisis of representation, and second, the liminal operation is inadequately expressed. Thus, the atheistic protest and Moltmann's rebuttal remain within the same methodological prison house discussed in chapter 2.

In Cities of God (2000), Graham Ward's post-pluralist and positive engagement with postmodern theory and culture presents a new analogical cosmology that supplements Moltmann.[161] It arguably reflects much more closely the liminal operation at the heart of representation and helps overcome the difficulty Moltmann has in drawing a Trinitarian view together in the crucifixion and resurrection event, as well as moving his eschatological view of hope beyond the view of a kingdom of God that risks immanentism. With its emphasis on analogical relations between the Trinitarian nature, the body and participation, Ward's work takes the broken body as a sign of 'cultural disintegration' in modernity and postmodernity, and reflects on the metaphor of brokenness in Christian tradition as 'profound thinking about the nature of bodies through the relationship it weaves between creation, incarnation, ecclesiology and Eucharist'. (Ward Cities, 82). The drawing-together of performative participation in the Eucharist will help to outline a reading of the liminal nature of sacrifice in the crucifixion in the final chapter of Part 1. My own reading of the liminal operation of the crucifixion-resurrection thus plays through selected texts of these two theologians, aiming to add to their work by sketching the beginnings of a theology of liminality that keeps apocalyptic-eschatological grammar and interpretation central, marking it as a theology of response and participation that offers refreshing opportunities for our reading of scripture (and some literature) as apocalyptic-eschatology. As such, it maintains a hermeneutic methodology and re-establishes the parameters for the crucifixion-resurrection event through the tenets of faith.

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[161] Graham Ward. Cities of God. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

3. An overview of Moltmann's theologies of hope and the cross

In the 1960s, a new sense of hope arose as people looked forward to stability and renewal after World War 2. Jürgen Moltmann's work engaged productively with the political and social ideas, and secular resistances to belief of the times, and his book, Theology of Hope (1967), profoundly affected theological thought and practice at a time in which Europe was emerging from the rubble of war. Influenced by Marxism, his ideas on eschatology as the historical forward-movement of God's hope and promise, aimed to set believers on a path of liberation, that as Richard Bauckham comments, in a turn away 'from accommodation to the present state of things ... [and] insofar as the promise contradicts it, [is] set critically against it'. (Moltmann Hope, XV).[162] The book was not without its critics and some years later, Moltmann supplemented it with The Crucified God (1973). As a theology 'after Auschwitz', this work set out to answer influential atheistic protests against the reality of a loving God in the face of suffering; to affirm that hope emerges from the site of the crucifixion; and to critique some churches' acceptance of a theology of glory arising out of theistic understandings of the analogy of being, that in his view denied God's sharing in real suffering, thus exacerbating either indifference to or isolation from the realities of social injustices.

Moltmann follows the historical view that early Christianity reflects two phases of theological development: first, the earliest Pauline faith that proclaims the risen Christ and the gift of the Spirit; second, the slightly later gospel narratives that reach behind the resurrection to re-member Jesus' teaching in the movement forward to crucifixion as a means to interpret its radical outcome in resurrection. He argues that both are essential aspects of the same event, any diminution of the death of Christ (seen as the death of God in God) opening up faith to the sin of glory in a realised eschatology. He refuses the distinction between a doctrine of God and the economy of salvation and states that Christian faith stands or falls through knowledge of God's Word where radical hope must be revealed in the crucified Christ as the uniquely axial moment in God's movement in history (i.e., in

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[162] Moltmann. Hope, Preface by Richard Bauckham, 2001.

the onward process of creation). The two-phase development of early Christianity is significant to his theological interpretation because it justifies the logic in his theology of hope that begins with the resurrection rather than the suffering and despair of the crucifixion. The fact that he begins first with *optimism* is a genuine reflection of the prevailing mood of the early 1960s, in which the guilt and horror that the war left in its wake was giving way to a regained confidence and hope in Europe. Social progress had, however, been accompanied by political critiques of systemic social injustice. Directing the theology of hope further into issues of social and political engagement, therefore, he takes the same line of thinking in his subsequent book on the crucified God. Here he develops a view of the crucifixion as the site for God's death in God in order to present first, a critique of injustice and suffering in world events, and second to answer atheistic protests against a cruel God. The Crucified God thus opens out a critical theory of God that, against metaphysics and ethics, is not dependent on achievement or works and that attempts to overcome the dangers of isolation or immanentism that, he believes, arise out of deism and theism.

Moltmann's dialectical theology argues that the tension between opposites (for example, sin/righteousness, the cross/resurrection, death/life, absence/presence) shows how the positive is exposed in, and has the potential to overcome its negative counterpart. He calls this revelation-in-contradiction and dialectical knowledge.[163] Jesus is a law-breaker, a blasphemer and rebel who sets himself against the law and works. The crucifixion, therefore, radically critiques any previous understanding of God because the outcome in the resurrection shows that, in his abandonment of Jesus on the cross, God is clearly rejecting the law and works. That is, through Christ's sacrifice, the Trinitarian Godhead changes the course of creation. God thus reveals his nature as critical, antithetical, polemical and dialectical in the crucifixion-resurrection where, through the gift of the Spirit that emerges out of the crucifixion, a new faith emerges in the resurrection to set humans (oppressed *and* oppressor) free from sin and the law. (Moltmann Crucified, 62ff, 66).

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[163] C.f., Moltmann Crucified, chapter 1, section 3, 20ff.

Following Luther's theology of the cross, Moltmann presents a strongly Christological Trinitarianism through his exploration of the intra-relational aspects of God, God and the world, and God and man which, in the history of Christ, goes through a change in the physically real, shared and suffering moment of crucifixion.

> God became man that dehumanized men might become true men. We become true men in the community of the incarnate, the suffering and loving, the human God. This salvation, too, is outwardly permanent and immortal in the humanity of God, but in itself is a new life full of inner movement, with suffering and joy, love and pain, taking and giving; it is changeableness in the sense of life to its highest possible degree. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 238).

This is a development of Luther's notion of the two natures of God and man in and as one being: 'Christ and God form a unity not only in revelation, but already in their very being'. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 240). The Father and Son are not separate but held *in relationship* within the suffering and God-forsakenness of the crucifixion. In this way, he explains the 'inner logical connection between the two special features of Christianity, faith in the crucified Jesus and in the triune God', to open out a full 'Christological doctrine of the Trinity' in which the profound relationship of the Trinity plays through the suffering of Son *and* Father to reveal the fullness of suffering, gifted love in the Spirit. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 242-3). But whilst accepting Karl Barth's hermeneutic starting point for understanding Jesus Christ as Lord in the doctrine of the Trinity, he rejects any distinction between the immanent Trinity and its activity in the world. Instead he follows Karl Rahner's position that the activity and being of three-in-one is held together 'in one tractate'. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 248). Here in effect the cross tests the inner relationship of Father, Son and Spirit: God abandons the Son to death in crucifixion, and grieves the loss of Fatherhood. It is a double forsakenness. At the same time, the Son delivers himself up to the Father to liberate us from sin by taking on sin for humankind, thus to become Lord. The giving up of the Son, the fact that he is not spared, demonstrates that God is prepared to give us all that we need (even his Son) despite the cost to the Father. For, Father and Son are *both* suffering subjects within the reality of crucifixion.

> It may therefore be said that the Father delivers up his Son on the cross in order to be the Father of those who are delivered up. The Son is delivered up to this death in order to become the Lord of both dead and living. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 251).

This undoubtedly reflects Turner's liminal paradigm (separation - loss of identity and experience of the fluxional space of crisis – reaggregation) that enhances both the Father's and Son's identity and status. The crucifixion event is thus the point of deepest separation and closest community, the presence and absence manifesting mutuality

> [in the spirit] of surrender … as the spirit which creates love for forsaken men, as the spirit which brings the dead alive … and reaches forsaken men in order to create in them the *possibility and the force of new life'*. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 253).[164]

This 'possibility' is what Moltmann defines as eschatology – not God in or above us, but going before us in history as the 'God of hope'. It presents an eschatological hope that offers not only the potential to reconcile, redeem and liberate the oppressed but, ultimately, the oppressors too. It is this possibility that overcomes despair. Christ's action is, as such, an *anticipation* of the end that thus points to the future of God as all-in-all, and reveals the inevitable coming to freedom of humanity in this world, in this history. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 265).

> It is [God's] will in and through Christ that the whole of reality shall become his image, that his name shall be hallowed, his kingdom shall come and his will shall be done. The cross, the overcoming of sin by vicarious expiation, is the centre of the gospel. But its horizon is the kingdom, the purified heart, the sanctified life, the exorcized state, the society made at peace. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 268).

It is only here that the analogy of being will prevail. Until then, we live the process towards it.

In the meantime, two forms of sinfulness undermine us: *presumption* as the 'self-willed anticipation of the fulfillment of what we hope for from God', and *despair* as the 'arbitrary anticipation of the non-fulfillment of what we hope for from God'. (Moltmann <u>Hope</u>, 8). These drive us respectively to arrogance and nihilism (or

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[164] My italics.

absurdity) and he attributes them to theistic views of the analogy of being. The provisional, historical, hope-filled eschatological history of the crucifixion, in this sense, does not, unlike a theology of glory, reflect man's *ascent* to God but God's *descent* to man - in incarnation and in kenosis, through which Christ, the Son of man, reveals 'the Fatherhood of God and the power of the Spirit'. (Moltmann Crucified, 284). This is uniquely understood through a Trinitarian theology where the 'dialogical relationship with God' is opened up 'only in and through Christ'. (Moltmann Crucified, 285). In this sense, Moltmann is describing Christ as mediator ('representation') *and* active creator in the activity of the Trinity, his Trinitarianism thus showing a predominantly Christological interpretation. (C.f., Moltmann Crucified, 272). In terms of a theology of liminality, of course, it reflects in part the *limen*, in which Christ is both medium and message, and where the Trinitarian activity of God in the liminal space reveals God's nature. But it does not really explain the process to which analogy and dialectics are both central.

Like several other theologians at this time, Moltmann recognises that eschatology is not an appendix to faith but has primacy.[165] It is active and motivational in its forward-looking prospect of the end when Christ finally will complete the reconciliation and salvation of creation: 'A proper theology [has] to be constructed in the light of its future goal. Eschatology should not be its end, but its beginning'. (Moltmann Hope, 2). Hope does not defer happiness in the present: 'How could it do so! For it is itself the happiness of the present'. (Moltmann Hope, 17). But nor does it reduce the suffering of the present. Instead, love 'takes the pain of the temporal upon itself [whereas h]ope makes us ready to bear "the cross of the present".' (Moltmann Hope, 16). To that degree, he emphasises God's participation in time, where believers, in imitating that movement, take on the suffering moment of the crucifixion, where hope gives direction in the ongoing process and direction towards a new creation. Hope is, as such, the *medium* of possibility. In the promise, Christ is the 'representation for the coming rule of God [and] also the incarnation and the realization of this rule.' (Moltmann Crucified, 274). Christ signifies eschatological hope for faith to follow: as the 'kingdom

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[165] C.f., chapter 1, Section 4 on Käsemann.

resides in him', is defined by him in history, he represents the transitional, that opens the way to believers in 'a process', however, held 'within the Trinity'. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 272-3).

As Christ hands over the kingdom to the Father, his *representation/mediation* ends but his Sonship is completed in obedience. Before the end, the crucifixion is the foundation for redemption; in the kingdom it becomes 'a doxological Son-Christology 'for 'the consummation of the Fatherhood of the Father'. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 275, 274-5).   In this way, he explains how the subjective, changing relationships of the Trinity 'are not fixed in static terms … but are a living history'. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 274). Moltmann's reading thus does attempt to show how Christ's mediating activity works and how it will end when the kingdom comes, where, through redemption, adequacy returns to human language. However, we have to ask whether this reading sufficiently deals with the problematic of the mediating text where the Word in the Trinitarian operation must show the provisional nature of human representation whilst still revealing itself. The following section looks, therefore, at some of the issues inherent in this.

4. Mediating the text and the problem of dualism

Despite his recognition of the crucifixion as the site to test God and humanity, Moltmann's reading of the crucifixion/resurrection promise arguably fails to fully open out the liminal operation of what I have called apocalyptic-eschatology, and which Graham Ward, to some degree, exposes through semiotic interpretation and the development of an analogical worldview. The thrust of my argument is that whilst Moltmann clearly has no problem with the central idea of revelation (Christ as God's Word) in relation to human knowledge and understanding he does not recognise what it means for Christ's body to be the key *metaphor* for Christian grammar and how this operates through the slippage and supplementary nature in representation, that Barth and others bring to the fore and that I discussed in chapter 1. Furthermore, whilst Moltmann wishes to narrate what it means to be beings-in-process, he cannot do so whilst tied into the dualism of individualism. This is because his reading of Christ as mediator (*qua*

'representation) fails to account for either complication. Additionally, his presentation of eschatological history involves creation as a process which refuses to connect eschatology to protology thereby reducing the apocalyptic-eschatological paradigm because, in emphasising the forward movement of eschatological hope, he denies those aspects of the liminal process which fold back on themselves at the same time as they move forwards in deferral and difference.[166] This arguably demonstrates a difficulty with the nature of participation, analogical relation and difference exposing how, in effect, his methods derive from the second liminal paradigm of barrier which collapses God into nature, something that he is clearly hoping to avoid. As a result, his dualistic methodology arguably risks immanentism (God as immanent in an evolving world) and atomism (individualism).

As the radicalised hope that Moltmann's work brings to post-war theology has given tremendous impetus to ecumenism and social change, this outcome is unfortunate as it introduces some unexpected reversals in his argument. If, moreover, the weaknesses in his argument derive from his methodology, it strikes me that the basis on which Graham Ward (through numerous postmodern theorists) sets out a Christian theology of meaning and the sign, and through which he develops 'a social semiotics that emphasises process and movement in terms of a correlation between time and desire', provides new interpretative processes through which to read Moltmann. I will return more fully to Ward's view of desire in the next chapter but what is useful here is his understanding of semiotics, for it is arguably within the thorny medium of the crisis of representation that Moltmann's theological arguments falter.

For Ward, values are not brought to meaning in words *per se* but through their *performance* where meaning between objects is made *through* their materiality. Representation is as such a rememorising process that recontextualises values through and for our own times and can be summarised as the way in which

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[166] This is clear from his comments on Dorothee Sölle's eschatology as protology, in which he criticises her reading of Christ's mediating role: 'What comes out at the end is only what was presupposed at the beginning,' and thus the 'interplay between non-identity and representation becomes a shadow play before the light that always was, is and will be'. (Moltmann Crucified, 273).

'material bodies, culture and metaphor constitute each other'. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 14). This means that inscriptions of the (real) body are always performed interpretations. Because of the interest in how symbols are produced and interpreted in modernity and postmodernity there now exists an opening for Christian theologians to create an analogical cosmology through which to *read theologically* (i.e., respond in-relation) 'the cultural metaphors of their times and their social, political and economic implications'. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 13). In this way Ward connects the physical body to Christian grammar through the body of Christ, through which we can learn to read our own cultural context.[167]

As such, the body mediates the cultural codes of the times in which we live. However, knowledge is never more than partial. (We cannot see with God's eye.) At the same time, any event or thing maintains its relation to the symbolic core in which it is lodged. Critically, such an (analogical) understanding will not lead to relativism or idealism 'because this position refutes the notion of a self-grounding Cartesian ego' by its positioning in discursive practice. For, the self is *never* stable but ever in-process because the space and time within which the subject finds itself is always changing. (The present, as such, is specious.) Moreover, as subjects always stand in relation to other subjects, together, they help form identity and sense of self. Universalism is as such rejected. What is maintained, however, is the reality and necessity of shared knowledges, created communally to provide ways to understand things and always constituted through metaphor. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 17). And, as the metaphors change and develop, they help make sense of the world through new connections without ever breaking with the past. This means that

> [as t]he chain of signifiers ... moves diachronically, filtering the past into the present and both into the future ... no simple move can be made from description to explanation'. (Ward, <u>Cities</u> 18).

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[167] I will show how the association of cultural context, the body as metaphor and material bodies can be use to supplement Moltmann's methodology in the section on George Steiner and Elie Wiesel below.

Within the Christian grammar in which Christ's body is the central metaphor, Ward thus opens us to new interpretations for our own times in what is arguably essentially a liminal (hermeneutic) process of representation.

Ward usefully interrogates the modern view of subjectivity by turning away from the Cartesian subject to notions of personhood and beings-in-process to show how development and change are *always* in relation to others, and where knowledge is a shared communal activity of learning. However, as all human knowledge is constituted through metaphor, where the subject is mediated through the cultural context of whichever time in which it is interpreted, this means that Christianity is also a product of its own culture. As such, it cannot stand 'over and against the times in which certain signs signify, but is itself a sign of the times and part of the market of their exchange'. (Ward Cities, 17). For, all descriptions, whether systematic or not, are stories that aim to persuade and are never 'politically innocent'. (Ward Cities, 19). In this 'cultural matrix'

> No act exists *in vacuo*. The circulations of meaning draw in and upon both other contextual meanings and the situation in which it is being refigured or figured as at all significant. But the implication of this is that the object's meaning always transcends or escapes, by the very excess of its signification, the circularities of interpretation. … [And so] the cultural metaphor itself transcends all its interpretations, leaving room for more, requiring more … (Ward Cities, 20).

This effectively presents an eschatological horizon as inherently *desiring*, and where, in any interpretation, a certain view of the world develops because humans are by nature, 'characterised by desire and movement'. (Ward, Cities 20). Theologically, this has profound apocalyptic-eschatological implications, as although meaning cannot be fixed once and for all times, it can speak for its own time whilst maintaining a profound connection to the past in the intertextuality of discourse. This helps to explain the longing of hope, where Christ opens a space through which to interpret the events of his own (fluxional) time in which the eschatological horizon is centralised. At the same time, it informs the necessary giving-up of identity in the liminal performance in the movement to decision and change.

These moves mark a subtle but significantly different approach to that of Moltmann, primarily in the way Ward's analogical view presents a view of relations-in-difference not of relations-through-opposites. As such, what he is proposing is a *negotiation* that avoids the appropriation that results from an acceptance of Cartesian subjectivity. It is a clear affirmation of the theological 'freight' of analogy (that, 'bears the weight of a profound cosmological significance') that does not diminish the inherent dangers of univocity and equivocalness. Instead, his work moves through and beyond them through what he calls an 'index of participation'; where, on a theological level, the sense of relations-in-difference helps overcome the atomism and the collapse into immanence that, I argue, Moltmann's work risks.

Many have flagged the way Moltmann's dualistic methodology forces Tritheism, Modalism or even Panentheism.[168] The first is shown in the atomised subjectivity of each aspect of God, the second because, as Ward comments, Christ becomes 'the Subject *par excellence* … the self-grounding one'. (Ward Cities, 114).[169] Thus, whilst Moltmann's concept of high or low Christology shows a concern to render coherent the concept of Jesus Christ, as both man and God, it inevitably falls into Modalism, because dualistic thinking about the individual subject leads to fragmentation and atomism whereas Ward's move away from the Cartesian ego to a view of personhood fully marks the significance of relations-in-difference.

> Subjectivity, though not necessarily tied to a concept of a transcendental ego, is fundamentally concerned with discrete individuals. Personhood … is that sense of self that continually comes from being in relation, *repeated, but non-identically with every action in and upon the world*. … Persons are not replicas, but embodiments of

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[168] For a review of Moltmann's doctrine of God and other dominant models, c.f., Veli-Matti Karkkainen. Trinity and Religious Pluralism: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions. (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2004). Richard Bauckham. The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann. *Section 4: Debate*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995) 23ff. In Trinity and the Kingdom, critics have noted the deepening of Moltmann's ideas on Tritheism (i.e., that each aspect of the Trinity is a separate God). Some have also proposed that he exposes Panentheism (i.e., that God and the world are connected), in God in Creation and The Way of Jesus Christ. Jürgen Moltmann. The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God. (New York: Fortress, 1993). – God in Creation: a New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God. (New York: Fortress, 1993). – The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions. (New York: Fortress, 1993).
[169] I would argue that his view of creation tends towards the third.

Christ as a Person. Persons, as such, are analogically related to each [other] through Christ. Subjects ... are atomised. (Ward, Cities 114).[170]

Ultimately, because of the distinction between subjectivity and personhood, this means that dualistic thinking highlights weaknesses in Moltmann's views of Christology as 'the mode of God's givenness to the world'. (Ward Cities, 114).

In the context of the time in which he wrote his theologies of hope and the cross, Moltmann's dualistic thinking reflects the concept of individualism reflected in Protestant theology (from the nineteenth-century onwards), and out of which particular problems of identity and correspondence arise. Whilst he wishes to argue for change (against immutability) in God's Trinitarian relationship, internally and externally, any dualistic reading creates a divide between the nature and identity of God and humanity that cannot be bridged. This is because, as Ward writes, subjectivity 'is fundamentally concerned with discrete individuals' and not, therefore, with the analogical nature of being-in-relation. (Ward Cities, 114). In this way, despite his assertion of the centrality of relationship to the nature of the Trinity, Moltmann falls between Modalism (conflating all three aspects in Christ) and Tritheism (isolating the three aspects into discrete subjects). And whilst Moltmann wishes to show the intra-relationship of the Trinity in the suffering of the crucifixion he undermines Jesus' humanity by collapsing it into the Godhead. A lack of understanding of the problematic between analogical and dialectical readings implicates Moltmann's methodology as dualistic thinking, where, grounded as it is in modernity, it cannot escape the views which it resists. This atomism also threatens the relationship of human faith to apocalyptic-eschatological performance that I wish to foreground; and diminishes the analogical worldview, by failing to acknowledge the negotiation between equivocal and univocal meaning and the transgression of boundaries in the essentially unstable and fluxional nature of representation. It thus has difficulty in explaining Christ as medium and message, form and content.   Thus, without a more nuanced analogical interpretation, his dialectical method risks attenuating the sense of meaning-in-relationship.

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[170] My italics. Ward's turn from subjectivity to personhood is examined in the next chapter in a section on participation and liminal performance.

I argue that Ward's semiotic approach helps to supplement Moltmann's theologies: through the assertion that all description remains interpretation; that no final human judgment can ever be made; that explanation is provisional but forward-moving. Not only does this help to understand the necessity for, and the inevitability of changing perspectives within all grammars, it grounds the body (Christ's body) as the mediating site for Christian interpretation that, by analogy, connects into those grammars. It also begins to open out Christian grammar as liminal, where the body of Jesus Christ can be understood as the performative space for the community of believers and for participation in-relationship. The analogical view, read through a semiotic interpretation, thus begins to give Moltmann's view of representation a clearer sense of the provisionality of knowledge of God, together with its forward, eschatological movement in relation to incarnation *and* creation. Furthermore, the clearer sense of the analogical view of relations-in-difference over relations-in-opposites that Ward introduces can arguably be used to overcome the panentheistic implications of Moltmann's process creation that risks collapsing God into history and the world, thereby threatening divinity.

As this section has begun to expose the dangers of dualistic thinking, the next considers how Moltmann's use of the dialectical principle in developing his theologies of hope and the crucified God weakens his argument and produces some unintentional outcomes.

5. Dualism and the primacy of hope

Perhaps it is because of his polemic against the danger of 'syncretism' in the analogy of being that Moltmann pays so little attention to the essential analogical nature of theology (in which relations between God and humankind are negotiated through notions of univocity or equivocalness), or to the extent to which talk about God depends on culturally-loaded images, symbols and metaphors. Whilst Moltmann employs the same kind of chiastic technique that one finds in the New Testament: for example, 'the first shall be last, the last first'. (Matt. 20.16), he does little to mark the complication of an arguably negative bias of inversion in

modernist readings in relation to the unstable nature of representation and the 'double bind' of language which cancels itself out.[171] What I mean by this is that inversion reflects the apocalyptic tone and the eschatological nature of all language (where, in any idea its opposite inheres) and the inevitable deferral of meaning, but where the trace of the other, signals both the impossibility *and* the possibility of language to communicate presence in language. To some extent, ironic inversion reflects saying-in-the-not-said where, in performing through irony, the believer experiences both the critique and affirmation of the message that, in effect forces reflexivity and self-examination.[172] The fact that Moltmann never really engages with the relationship between the content of Christian proclamation and the grammatical form which it reflects attenuates his interpretation of Christ as mediator of the Word in representation. It also undermines the primacy of faith to interpretation. For, I would argue, it is only *through faith in performance and participation* that the believer is opened to the ongoing process of radicalised hope. In other words, as mediator, Christ saturates the believer with the Word only at the point in which the believer performs through the liminal operation that simultaneously opens and closes her to revelation – and that, through faith, creates a desiring movement forward to participation in the other that prevents the fall back into subjectivity and atomism.

Moltmann's dialectical theology argues that the tensions between opposites (for example, sin/righteousness, the cross and resurrection, death/life, God's absence/presence) show how the positive is exposed in and has the potential to overcome its negative counterpart. However, without recourse to a discussion of dialectical and trinodal aspects of representation, he finds it hard to explain how that process works. What he calls revelation-in-contradiction and dialectic knowledge suggests that the believer must imitate Christ, in a play between absence and presence, willingly self-emptying *himself* to negative, alien encounter

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[171] C.f., Zho Jing-Schmidt. *Negativity bias in language: A cognitive-affective model of emotive intensifiers.* Cognitive Linguistics. Vol. 18, Issue 3, 417-443. September 2007. Jing-Schmidt's article discusses the negativity bias and a 'general asymmetry in the automatic processing of affective information [that] should bear linguistic consequences' to present a 'cognitive-affective model of negativity bias'. C.f., Derrida, Tone 95, and chapter 2 above.
[172] C.f., for example, Mark 4.

and experience, thereby to open up the path to freedom and change (i.e., a revolution in the church and its traditions). (Moltmann Crucified, 10).[173] He argues that this principle supplements that of the analogical principle: critically, 'the dialectical principle of knowledge' will prevent a theology of glory, out of which atheistic protests (justifiably) arise, because instead of any correspondence between God and man, in which man can ascend to God through the law and works, 'God is only revealed as "God" through descent into his opposite'. That opposite is 'godlessness and abandonment by God'. (Moltmann Crucified, 22). He argues thus that the

> The dialectical principle of 'revelation in the opposite' does not replace the analogical principle of 'like is only known by like', but alone makes it possible. In so far as God is revealed in his opposite, he can be known by the godless and those abandoned by God, and it is this knowledge which brings them into correspondence with God and … enables them even to have the hope of being like God. (Moltmann Crucified, 22).

In the Theology of Hope, he presents eschatological hope as a universal truth about the future in Christ resurrected. However, in The Crucified God, he is forced to return to the site of the crucifixion to re-examine and justify this position in the face of protests about theodicy, the existence of suffering in the world and the concept of God as good. For Moltmann, the theistic philosophical view of a perfected God refuses the experience of suffering in God. Whilst I agree that it is essential to maintain the sense that God shares in some way the suffering of humankind and that this is witnessed in the crucifixion event, the fact that Moltmann weakens the analogy of being is unhelpful. Furthermore, the lack of a performative process means that he cannot describe the mediating operation in Christ either in terms of saying/not saying; or, hold the crucifixion and resurrection together as one event. To my mind, this is because he equates the chiastic technique with the modern dialectical principle that inevitably falls back in on itself in a way that a more nuanced understanding of the tension between opposites avoids. The result of this is that in Theology of Hope, Moltmann foregrounds eschatology as the foundation of Christian belief by making eschatology and hope

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[173] C.f., Moltmann Crucified, chapter 1, section 3, pp20ff.

equate. Arguably, this conflation does not do justice to the problematic of threshold and barrier and the nature of interpretation. Furthermore, his dualistic argument means that faith is appropriated by hope, without overcoming the etymological collapse of the positive side of hope back into its negative counterpart of despair.

Moltmann begins by pointing out that despair is the prime marker for exclusion from God's kingdom in Revelation 21.8. He defines despair as follows: as *presumptio*, it is the premature anticipation of fulfillment (immanence) and the ground for a theology of glory. As *desperatio*, it arbitrarily anticipates non-fulfilment (fatalism) and exposes the atheistic turn to the logic of absurdity as foreclosure. (Moltmann, Hope 8). Hope, on the other hand, avoids resignation and escapism, keeps us *in* time and gives believers a historic future which makes us impatient enemies of death. In opening the way for time and by setting history in motion, hope prepares us to bear the cross of the present. (Moltmann, Hope 6-8, 16). Hope is thus the radicalised key to Christian belief that arises out of the *ex nihilo* of crucifixion. This allows Moltmann to make a highly significant assertion about the relationship of hope to faith

> Faith has the priority, but hope the primacy. Without faith's knowledge of Christ, hope becomes a utopia and remains hanging in the air. But without hope, faith falls to pieces, becomes a fainthearted and ultimately a dead faith. (Moltmann, Hope 6).

This statement perhaps most clearly marks the distinctiveness of Moltmann's theology. Moltmann puts *spes quarens intellectum* in place of *fides quarens intellectum* as a first step towards his doctrine of hope. Faith puts you on the path, but hope keeps you alive to the promise determined and informed by the eschaton. (Moltmann, Hope 26). In this way, he aims to radicalise the concept of revelation as God's promise for, and opening to the future in history. I take issue with the idea of hope taking primacy over faith, because the dialectic between hope and despair reflects relationship-in-opposites rather than relationship-in-difference and has no room in its logic to include the performative role of faith to the emergence of hope.

Moltmann's ideas on hope grew out of the work of Ernst Bloch, a Marxist, whose work on hope not only influenced him theologically but also methodologically. The next section considers how this may have led Moltmann into dualism.

6. Dualistic argument and the inevitability of reversal

Bloch's book, The Principle of Hope (1959) remains a rare exposition of what constitutes hope through which to develop a (Marxist) ideological presentation of the means to political and social change in capitalist modernity.[174] It influenced Moltmann to write Theology of Hope and to deepen his own view of hope in history. Bloch insightfully examines the way in which fear, anxiety and terror permeates modernity to generate end-time narratives of alienation, aiming to demonstrate how hope reverses despair by showing how the seed of hope emerges from the critical moment of despair and loss. Despair is hope's antecedent attributable to a primal anxiety that directs us towards expectations of the end that exacerbate man's sense of alienation and fear of death. Hope stands at the other end of the spectrum to despair but emerges from it. However, Bloch follows the logical and linear progression from negative to positive without unpacking the complex internal relationship of despair and hope. It is arguably, as such, a modern dialectical paradigm of progress that fails to open out the complex internal tendency of representation to cancel out meaning, and it is this logic that Moltmann takes into his theology.

Bloch asserts that hope opposes itself both to anxiety *and* memory and is, therefore, quite distinct from any other emotion.

> No 'existential analysis' of hope will ever be able to reveal the latter as a 'forerunning determination to die' ... hope has projected itself precisely at the place of death, as one towards light and life ... thus it definitely has the intentional content: there is still rescue – in the horizon. (Bloch 112).

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[174] Ernst Bloch. The Principle of Hope. (Oxford, Basil Blackwell,1986), Trans., Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. First published as *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag) 1959. All references in this section taken from a section of Part Two, *Foundation*: 'Anticipatory Consciousness', Section 14, 77 – 113.

As the dynamic nature of hope emerges precisely at the dangerous (critical) point of despair between death and life, it represents the 'dialectical' tipping point away from death towards the will to live. (Bloch 112). Moltmann, employing the chiastic technique, goes a step further by asserting that *hope presupposes despair.* This allows him to develop his theory on the imitation of Christ, where entry into the dangerous space of despair (away from the safety of faith) opens us to a radicalised hope that allows an authentic turn to life as salvation. (Moltmann Hope, 9, 249 respectively). As such, it is an activity in which the promise of the kingdom inflects, or bends itself into the present to move faith forward dynamically from negative to positive. Thus

> The concept of history that is marked by … the category of the new … depends on the nature of the future that is expected in each particular case, and on the source from which the mission emerges and the object at which it aims. Yet 'history' here remains the epitome of possible danger and possible salvation. (Moltmann Hope, 248-249).

Moltmann is here attempting to show the contextual specificity of each believer in time and to the necessity of being open to risk and failure, where moreover, to risk all 'plunges everything into infinite danger of forsakenness and meaninglessness'. (Moltmann Hope, 249). And yet, the fact that hope presupposes despair suggests the inevitability of a cyclical return to despair as the only entry point to faith. It is this idea that permeates The Crucified God, where personal disappointment over the lack of change provides the context to re-test his theology of hope through the crucifixion (as the site of suffering and danger).

However, a misapprehension inheres in Moltmann's reading of Bloch's view of *despair* which actually more closely reflects the *pagan* view of hope as the tormenting prolongation of life than the paradoxical nature of hope expressed in scripture. The pagan view of despair is a representation of hope as a negative.[175]

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[175] C.f., Friedrich Nietzsche. Human, All Too Human: a Book for Free Spirits. 1st published 1878. Trans. Marion Faber & Stephen Lehman. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). Chapter 2. *On the History of the Moral Sensations*, Section 71, 58. Nietzsche describes the story of hope thus:

> '*Hope.*— Pandora brought the jar with the evils and opened it. It was the gods' gift to man … called the 'lucky jar. Then all the evils, those lively, winged beings, flew out of it. Since that

Bloch's proposal is that radical hope emerges out of hope-as-despair which truly reflects its momentous arrival. However, whilst Moltmann's take (i.e., that 'despair presupposes hope') on Bloch's fundamental argument that despair is hope's antecedent rightly reflects the etymology of despair as the cancellation of hope, in so doing, undermines Bloch's fundamental argument of the primal drive to alienation and death. Furthermore, Bloch's view, that positive hope *dissolves* memory, undermines the grammar of Christian faith, grounded in participative, re-memorising processes (in its scripture, liturgy and rituals). Taken together, this interpretation perhaps explains Moltmann's leap to the resurrection hope and promise without first examining the true nature of suffering and despair in the crucifixion. Once contained in his theology, suffering (as the necessary site for radical hope and only path to happiness and positive action) fails to sufficiently consider the primacy of faith to the emergence of hope. In dualistic thinking, furthermore, either interpretation will flip between hope as despair and hope as the movement to confident future in endless deferral and difference.

A more convincing approach might be to consider the relational movement of faith and hope within the triadic nature of love to reduce the etymological tendency of hope to collapse the positive into the negative and to prevent the circularity of dualistic thinking to either dissolve or maintain the *limen* as barrier. As such, I propose that Moltmann's assertion that despair presupposes hope in effect opens us to the pre-existent nature of God's Trinitarian love in creation that is, moreover, driven analogically in the faithful response to creation. The hope inherent in the Trinitarian movement in creation does not bridge to Bloch's reading of hope as the radical emergence of a new kind of hope out of despair. For Christians, only the

time, they roam around and do harm to men by day and night. One single evil had not yet slipped out of the jar. As Zeus had wished, Pandora slammed the top down and it remained inside. So now man has the lucky jar in his house forever and thinks the world of the treasure. It is at his service; he reaches for it when he fancies it. For he does not know that the jar which Pandora brought was the jar of evils, and he takes the remaining evil for the greatest worldly good—it is hope, for Zeus did not want man to throw his life away, no matter how much the other evils might torment him, but rather to go on letting himself be tormented anew. To that end, he gives man hope. In truth, it is the most evil of evils because it prolongs man's torment'.

crucifixion/resurrection can do that. Nor arguably does Moltmann's prioritisation of (Christian) hope do justice to the complex and necessary interrelationship between faith, hope and love embodied *in Christ* (and in the Christian tenets of faith). This is because the separating out of hope attenuates the role of faith to participation in the body of Christ.

An alternative view is that, in the *Deus dixit*, love drives the performance of the creative act *ex nihilo* as a Trinitarian performance. Within this paradigm, God is Love, Faith and Hope from which everything proceeds as relationship-in-difference. This means that love is active, creative relationship, the nature of which stands on God speaking first and man responding *in analogous terms,* where human language is God-dependent interpretative response. Reciprocity is structured into love *as faithfulness*. Faith involves obligation and obedience. Expectation is also inherent in faith as a looking-forward in confidence from the midst of the creative act which its performance makes known. In the beginning, this faith requires no proofs and does not, therefore, signify the hope of which Bloch or even Moltmann speak but it does mark the reciprocal obligation of loyalty (fidelity) as committed promise. In this sense, faith is reflected in the creative act of correspondence and differentiation as a confident gift where hope is made known in the act of faith.

Moltmann's argument, that despair stands within a not-yet-perfected creation, thus refuses a role to protology. He rightly wishes to find a way to emphasise the radical nature of hope in a forward-moving history in the wake of the crucifixion-resurrection event. However, in order to radicalise hope in the way that Moltmann wishes, Adam's transgression against the blessing of creation must be similarly radicalised through an understanding of the *limen* as barrier, because notions of eschatology (judged as both the end of meaning and life) and hope (as the threshold to new life) are paradigmatically inconceivable before *this* point. The barrier between God and Adam represents the cancellation of reciprocal, appropriate confidence in the fall that is only restored in Christ's faithfulness in the crucifixion. What distinguishes Jesus and Adam's contexts is, in effect therefore, the fact of an eschatological horizon, a horizon inflected with Adam's sin of desperation (the barrier as end-stop) and eschatology as the promise of a new judgment prior

to the coming of the kingdom (a threshold to revelation as life). To use Moltmann's technique of chiasmus, it is in the abandonment of faith that man finds himself abandoned. For, the abandonment of faith opens out despair as negative hope that breaks trust with God.

Adam's rebellion resonates in the Philippians' liturgy (which effectively refutes the theology of glory without recourse to theistic philosophy). Adam is made in God's image: Christ, however, is 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1.15). God created all things through Christ the Son (John 1: 1-3;Col. 1: 15-20;Heb 1:2), who was pre-existent with the Father and the Spirit before the creation of Adam (John 8.58), yet he, in his self-emptying, was incarnated as a human being as God intended (Matt. 1.20-3; Luke 1.26-35). He 'did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited' because, within the Godhead, love is the *principle* of creative, performed personhood (or a co-equal relation-in-difference). Loving relationship can thus only be imparted in the participation in and the performance of Christ's body, where in imitation, faith and hope are again subsumed into the Trinitarian principle of love (c.f, 1 Cor. 13). Walking in faith is thus the enactment of confident expectation (hope) of love as a manifestation of loving response to God's nature. It is here that hope emerges as something radically different, because in the active taking-on and overcoming of sin a responsive turning back to God in repentance is fully expressed in faith. This is hope as forbearance (a holding back and enduring in the Son) and forgiveness (as the fore-given love of the Father and forgiving action of the Spirit). This understanding introduces hope as a *desiring* promise and centre of all apocalyptic-eschatological interpretation. This perhaps better narrates the *radicalised* hope of which Moltmann speaks. Jesus' faithful response to his call to self-sacrifice ('not my will but thy will be done') thus has primacy as it moves through despair and doubt to overcome the weakness of fear, and open out to view the forward prospect of desiring hope and promise to an instauration of hope as confidence (the path of faith). This begins to determine Christian grammar as liminal performance and participation in the crucifixion-resurrection. Before Jesus Christ, none has achieved this evocation of the fullness of love in one act of liminal performance – even though despair as desperation

(foreclosure) or as presumption (equality) forms threads that weave in and out of the scriptural narratives before the gospel accounts.

In performing through the liminal process of the body of Christ, the gift of hope, as a prospective return to the true giftedness of creation, is radically new because, by implication, it draws eternity and time together eschatologically in a way that defies the schism that Adam forced between hope, as confident faith, and hope-as-despair (a fore-closing of creative blessing), carrying within in it the seeds of a kingdom of God that is qualitatively different, because it is informed by eschatology as God's judgment and redemptive fulfilment. This is why *fides quarens intellectum* pertains as a radicalised faith presented in Jesus Christ, where, in this reality, eschatological hope reveals its distinction from and its relation to protology. It is furthermore, in this sense, that the liminal performance of apocalyptic-eschatology negotiates through comfort and warning and the essentially trinodal operation in opposites to open out textual deferral and difference in which the trace of the other, and the call to come inhere as excessive to the collapse of negative into positive (or *vice versa*).

The dualistic approach cannot, therefore, bridge between the crucifixion (as abandonment and lack) and resurrection (as promise and presence) because it always reflects the pattern of reversal inherent in it. Additionally, with regard to Ward's supplement, Moltmann's inability to genuinely negotiate relations-in-difference arguably forces the appropriation of faith by hope. This move reflects the shift in human understanding post-fall, and refuses Karl Barth's reflection that God ultimately stands beyond the 'yes' or the 'no' of human representation, thus beyond the negation of one by the other. The paradox of holding yes/no together with both/and is part of the unstable nature of representation and its partial access to revelation, and thus points to a different understanding of eschatological promise and the kingdom in which participation, the body and desire are central.

In the next section, I look at dualism in relation to the issue of appropriation that subjectivity tends towards. It explores the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed and asks what happens when the 'victor' becomes the

vanquished in the forward movement of history in contradistinction to the reflexive views of those who were formerly oppressed. It reads the concept of appropriation through Ward's idea of the way 'material bodies, culture and metaphor constitute each other' and critiques Moltmann's use of Elie Wiesel's experiences in Auschwitz to develop his argument about the actual death of God in crucifixion. I turn to Steiner's reading of the Last Supper to highlight the dangers of conflating the extraordinary and the ordinary in secular readings of the cross, to further expose the problematic of dualism.

7. Dualism and appropriation

Moltmann's early life was safe, comfortable and secular. It appears that he did not question the German government under which he grew to manhood and toward the end of the war was drafted into military service. In 1945 he surrendered to the British, after which he lived in various camps for several years. On being exposed to the horrors of the death-camps, Moltmann was tormented by the reality of Nazism, claiming that he wanted to die rather than face up to the way Germany had dehumanised and persecuted the Jews and others opposed to Nazism. What saved him from this despair was his engagement with Christianity.[176] He writes that

> A theology which did not speak of God in the sight of the one who was abandoned and crucified would have had nothing to say to them. One cannot say ... whether as the result of our experiences we understood the crucified Christ better than anyone else. Experiences cannot be repeated. ... It is not the experiences that matter but the one who has been experienced in them. (Moltmann Crucified, xvii-xviii).

Faith, together with his experience as a prisoner of war (for example, rebuilding bomb-damaged areas in Scotland where locals demonstrated enormous friendship), inculcated his sense of the relationship between suffering and hope that plays through all of his theology. To that degree, as the cultural narrative with which he grew up is deconstructed and critiqued in the aftermath of the war, the oppressor learned how to repent and, through God's forgiveness, move through despair to the daylight of hope. His experience of Christ – in his particular moment of despair –

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[176] C.f., Moltmann Crucified, xvii-xviii, in which he connects the move *through* despair to hope.

saved Moltmann, brought him to faith, gave him hope and taught him to revisit the suffering site of crucifixion when that hope was again threatened.

Moltmann's thesis is that despair is overcome by the intra-relational suffering of God in crucifixion that, in the resurrection, opens the godless *and* godforsaken to new hope and (Christian) faith that puts an end to rebellion and fatalism. Yet suffering still exists in the world, and a fall back into despair persists as an inevitable part of the human condition exacerbated in modernity. This understanding came to Moltmann after his disappointment at the failure of the hopeful 1960s to transform social and political conditions. The context in which The Crucified God was written was, therefore, already different to that of a decade before when he wrote Theology of Hope. Both negative and positive critiques of Theology of Hope elicited a deep anxiety of faith in Moltmann, for he admits that, after a period of optimism and hope which he helped to promote in the churches, his personal disappointment in the wake of events like the Russian entry into Czechoslovakia, the assassination of Martin Luther King, the less than happy outplaying of Vatican 2 and the Uppsala Conference in the late 1960s, motivated him to test Christ in the cross, as the 'centre of my hope and resistance', knowing full well that Christian faith stands or falls in this event. (Moltmann Crucified, xviii). The Crucified God is, in this sense, a hermeneutic re-reading of the signs of the times.

In his introduction to Cities of God, Graham Ward reflects on the importance of cultural specificity and how to read the signs of the times.

> Reading signs is a fundamental Gospel teaching. Learning what it means to be a disciple, participating in the way of salvation, [and] recognising the advent question in the quotidian … [However,] Christ practices a social discourse – performs a set of signifying acts comprehensible to (and readable by) a specific social context which shared what Charles Taylor terms 'common and inter-subjective meanings'.[177] (Ward Cities, 5).

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[177] Charles Taylor. Philosophy and Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 1. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1985) 38.

To that degree, Moltmann exemplifies what it means to be a disciple of Christ. However, he does, I believe, fail to acknowledge how a Christian rhetoric risks domination and appropriation if it is not negotiated through relations-in-difference but only through relations-in-opposites. Against this, Ward's post-pluralist approach recognises that Christianity is one among many discourses of truth: truth, in human terms, is not absolute; there is no 'yes' or 'no' in human representation. The confessional space of Christianity can legitimately span its boundaries only if it acknowledges this: otherwise, the danger of passing over, and forgetting the cultural specificity of other groups (women, children, homosexual, godless, godforsaken, religious or ethnically different etc.) remains.

The essential move that Ward makes away from Moltmann is to ask not what God's *nature* is in relation to the world, but what God '*is* in relation to the world' which stands as a complex, unstable set of social and cultural networks.

> Christian theology is itself a cultural product, standing not over and against the times in which certain signs signify, but is itself a sign of the times and part of the market of their exchange [for there] is no pure theological discourse; and there is no room for naïveté. The space culturally opened up today calls for continuous self-reflexivity and analysis'. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 2, 13-14).[178]

What I wish to highlight here is how, therefore, despite the desire to repent for his unwitting participation in oppression, Moltmann risks appropriating the oppressed, to inadvertently silence their voice; and that, although the paradigm of the God who suffers in the cross brings hope and liberation to Moltmann personally (something he then develops ecumenically), the culture of the cross has itself brought persecution to others. Moltmann must engage with this dark side of Christianity through relations-in-difference. However, this is arguably something that his dualistic thinking unintentionally works against.

George Steiner's reading of the Last Supper looks at the dangers of dualism to warn of a double betrayal inherent in the uniqueness of Jesus against the

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[178] For example, this has been witnessed at the Lambeth Conference, 2008, with its debate both on the ordination of women and openly homosexual bishops.

ordinariness of mere mortal followers.[179] His essay opens out to question the problem of exclusivity in faith which, he asserts, has ramifications for those who fall (or are pushed) outside its boundary. As such, he presents an alternative perspective to the cross as the site for critiquing God (as God of Israel), thus keeping the question of protest open to its emotional and political complexity, at the same time as he demonstrates the danger inherent in working through relations-in-opposites.

8. The double-bind of Judas and Jesus

The crucifixion of Jesus is a complicated event because it is not simply an individual, private act of self-sacrifice by Jesus Christ (the man-god) to his Father: it is a human execution (legal), a multi-faceted act of social othering; a (self) offering substitute for sin by the Son to the Father; a performance in-relationship; and, according to Moltmann, a trial between God and God. To some degree, this complexity is prefigured in the Last Supper and performed in the Eucharist.[180] In "Two Suppers", Steiner reflects on the nature of social othering and sacrifice in the wake of the holocaust to ask whether love should be viewed as the source or subversion of life. He argues that beyond the development of a doctrine of incarnation in the Eucharistic sacrament, in allegorisation and subsequent secularisation, 'perceptions of the Cross' alter detrimentally. (Steiner Suppers, 394). Its meaning is made increasingly ambiguous by different interpretations that demand a dialectic between the temporal and the eternal aspects of the crucifixion-event.

Steiner compares the deaths of Judas and Jesus, writing that 'the crux is nothing less than Creation and the Fall, these two moments being inseparable from the matter of love in both Hebraic-Christian and Greek-Latin legacies'.[181] Central to

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[179] George Steiner, "Two Suppers" (1995). No Passion Spent: Essays 1978 – 1996 (London: Faber & Faber, 1997) 390 – 419.

[180] C.f., chapter 4 below, and the section on participation and the Eucharist, read through Ward.

[181] Although Steiner is able to draw together the deaths of Socrates and Jesus, I will only consider Steiner's reading of the deaths of Judas and Jesus because of their relevance to the impact of social and religious 'othering'. For an alternative reading of the deaths of Jesus and Socrates, c.f. Moltmann

this reflection is the pain and frustration experienced in the 'rupture' between self and other and the desire for 'a return to lost oneness'. (Steiner <u>Suppers</u>, 405). Opening in the shared conviviality of the Last Supper, both deaths involve rupture and sacrifice (and thus, are liminal experiences). Jesus and Judas go voluntarily to their deaths: Jesus (and perhaps Judas) *self*-sacrifice (although Judas commits suicide to invert the sacredness of *this* taking of life). The cross thus stands as a singular event and, in our times of extreme violence, Jesus' cry of abandonment still calls out to us, as Moltmann's personal experience affirms.

Steiner's main point is to mark a distinction between the ordinary and the exceptional in order to open a debate between expectation and failure that may help to explain the barbarity of the last century.[182] In effect, he associates Jesus' cry of abandonment and God's subsequent 'muteness' as a 'summons to interpretation immediately after the long midnight of massacre and deportation, of hunger and the death-camps'. (Steiner <u>Suppers</u>, 395). Like Moltmann, Steiner recognises that the *Shoah* demands a dialectic between 'Golgotha and Auschwitz', particularly because existentialism and demythologisation of religion have infected modern culture to suppress any real sense of the resurrection. Again, this describes the tendency of the negative to appropriate the positive and, against Moltmann, Steiner writes that

> [t]he concept of resurrection pales precisely as that of the agony on Golgotha grows more graphic. We live the Friday more intensely than the Sunday. (Steiner <u>Suppers</u>, 395).

It is this very point that Moltmann is attempting to overcome with his eschatology of hope. However, it is precisely because of Steiner's Jewishness that *his* protest holds our attention more, say, than that of Camus (whose atheism Moltmann describes as deriving from theism), another writer through whom Moltmann interrogates the cross.[183] Distinct contexts, as such, disallow a singular reading of

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Hope,147 –149, in which he describes the death of Socrates as 'a festival of liberty' and the death of Jesus not as a 'fine death' but 'a profound abandonment by God'. (Moltmann <u>Hope</u>, 149).
[182] This is similar to Derrida's insistence on the difference between the universal and the unique.
[183] C.f., Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 228ff.

the signs of the times, and if the interrogation of the cross in modern times questions aspects of love (e.g., faith, hope, and forgiveness), they do so for good reason. The cross deserves interrogation for its outcome in suffering that Moltmann's awareness of despair, as god-forsakenness and godlessness, genuinely wishes to draw together.

Steiner too, wishes to foreground this point. He does this by going behind the crucifixion where he discovers that, in the moment in which Christians find community in the prefiguring of the Eucharist, Jew-hatred begins.[184] The significance of shared meals derives from being in a 'clandestine or closely guarded gathering of a chosen group', in which critical notions of 'the totemic, of human and animal sacrifice, of purification and initiation' inhere. (Steiner Suppers, 390). The Last Supper presupposes the crucifixion and Jesus ruptures the 'conviviality' of the shared meal to go voluntarily to his own death. However, thus deserted, his companions are left to make sense of this disruption for their own lives as disciples. (Steiner Suppers, 392).[185] Self-doubt and the demand to be self-critical are consequently placed on the reader (as disciple) in a demand to be accountable. Strategies of selective discipleship mark out his followers as messengers and custodians of the memory, the mentor *and* the message. (Steiner Suppers, 397).[186] A 'blackmail of perfection' leaves those in its wake exposed and feeling abandoned. Judas's betrayal is sited within this selectivity, and thus in turn, elicits hatred of the message and the men who deliver it.[187]

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[184] Steiner works through John's Gospel; it is argued that John provokes the clearest hatred of the Jews, as Jews. It gives a detailed outline of the role of Judas. For another nuanced reading of apocalypticism and the need to scapegoat in the New Testament, c.f., Frank Kermode. Genesis of Secrecy. (London: Harvard University Press, 1979).

[185] Conviviality: 'to live with and among others' (Steiner Suppers, 392); *communitas* and communion are thus conjoined.

[186] C.f. John 13.15 – 18: For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are mesNew Testamentrs greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed … I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen.

[187] C.f. John 13.18 – 19: I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But it is to fulfil the scripture, 'The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me'. C.f. Psalm 41. 5 – 10: My enemies wonder in malice when I will die, and my name perish. And when they come to see me they utter empty words, while their hearts gather mischief; when they go out, they tell it abroad …they think that a deadly thing has fastened on me, that I will not rise again from where I lie. Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me. But you, O lord, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them.

This may be the most suggestive and tragically consequential passage in western 'literature'. Almost everything remains uncertain, but with that uncertainty of self-disclosure, with that pressure on our continued imagining and demands on intuition which are peculiar to the greatest art. (Steiner, Suppers 412).

In John's account, the Last Supper is a site of jealous love, in particular, between Peter, the Beloved Disciple, and Judas. Feelings of inadequacy conjoined with jealousy couple with the outcomes of betrayal. Within this hatred is the ordinary man's double-bind of aspiring whilst being antagonistic and resistant to the 'ideals of sacrifice, of fraternity and of abstention beyond [his] reach'. (Steiner Suppers, 399). Thus, in the emotional maelstrom of Jesus' inner circle, an unjustified, paradoxical and deep hatred of the Jews is generated that passes down the centuries to our own times.

The narrative tension hangs between opposing movements of 'concord and withdrawal' (echoing Moltmann's own description of the trial and death of God in God). (Steiner Suppers, 401 - 402). In an intensification of the apocalyptic literary technique, John's account plays between inside and outside, light and darkness, presence and absence, singular and universal. Only the Beloved Disciple is let into the secret of Judas' devilish (but necessary) betrayal of Jesus.[188] Of course, even though Judas has been revered in certain Christian communities for his 'self-sacrifice', this view is considered heretical in the West.[189] (C.f., Steiner Suppers, 415). Steiner reflects that

In a motion whose inhumanity Christian exegesis has sought to elide ... Jesus dips the morsel and gives it to the son of Judas Iscariot. ... Centrally, we witness here a

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[188] C.f., John 13.21 – 30. In The Genesis of Secrecy, Frank Kermode brings the association of Judas and Jesus together and marks Steiner's point. He writes: The necessity, in a circumstantial and history-like story, of having a character to perform the Betrayal is obvious enough. Depending on how one looks at it, he plays the role of Helper and Opponent; by opposing the Hero he serves the logic of the narrative, as Satan did in Job. (Kermode 1979, 84).

[189] C.f. J. G. Tasker, "Judas." A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels. James Hastings, ed. Vol. 1. (Eidnburgh: T & T Clark,1906) 907 – 913. It states that: the Cainites – an important Gnostic sect – are said to have declared that 'Judas the traitor ... knowing the truth as no others did, alone accomplished the mystery of the betrayal'. (Tasker 912). C.f. "The Gospel of Judas" (Irenaeus, *adv. Haer.,* i.31).

'counter-sacrament', an antinomian Eucharist of damnation. (Steiner <u>Suppers</u>, 415 - 416).

(This is also reflected in his sacrifice as suicide, of course.) Judas, as a type for all Jews, is 'othered'. The remaining followers of Jesus are blessed. The people (formerly favoured by God) who reject Jesus as Messiah are cursed, leading to their permanent exclusion and annihilation in the Nazi death camps. (Steiner <u>Suppers</u>, 417).

Judas leaves to take up his role as scapegoat (representing the sinfulness of all Jews). Jesus leaves to accept his role as sacrificial lamb – an atoning gift to God for sin. The double-blackness of the crucifixion and Jewish persecution resonates in this axis, dividing brother from brother. Paradoxically, it is thus that John's narrative forces 'on us the insoluble possibility of the actually inspired, of the revealed'. (Steiner <u>Suppers</u>, 419). Out of this rhetoric of double-violence, Steiner's protest is at its most poignant. He likens the God (who reveals himself) to the Devil, and issues a caution to humankind: 'when supping with the Devil … a human being – particularly one out of the house of Jacob – should carry a long spoon'. (Steiner <u>Suppers</u>, 419). Steiner has every reason to point out the danger of ignoring this double-edged sword which, in modernity, moves between singularity and universality. He is, in effect, marking the dualism which collapses the positive into the negative to appropriate God and outlaw the ordinary.

Moltmann too has reason to re-open the debate about the crucifixion in relation to rejection, shame, abandonment, stasis and trial (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 153, 155, 147), for in the crucifixion, love and relationship are broken in an apparent subversion of the ground for faith and hope in a loving God and a blessed creation. It is something that Christianity, in its complacency, too often glosses. And Moltmann moves swiftly to the resurrection, describing the Trinitarian activity of God in the crucifixion-resurrection as a universal beyond the particular.

> If the message of the resurrection … happened outside the boundary of Israel, on Golgotha, and outside the "hedge of Israel" … it happened, in fact, on the boundary of human society, where it does not matter whether a person is Jew or Gentile, …

man or woman, because death is unaware of these distinctions either. .. [and it is] in this death God's Son has died for all. (Moltmann Crucified, 199).

This statement is an attempt to expose the relation between Christ's uniqueness and the common ground of death in the space of danger beyond safety. But Steiner has already pointed out that in a detheologised society the liminal space of boundary crossing can also be a site for a rhetoric of persecution.[190] Moltmann's lack of awareness of the etymological double-bind and the danger of appropriation shows this to be so.

9. The boy on the gallows

Moltmann's theology hinges on the paradox of the crucifixion as a site of redemptive power for the godless and godforsaken and his apologetic for Christianity 'after Auschwitz' is a genuine attempt to build this case. One way he does this is by reflecting on the witness account of an execution in Auschwitz given by a Jewish survivor, Elie Wiesel. He aims to engage with the suffering of the Jews as well as Judaic views on the relationship between God and suffering, in order to distinguish and strengthen his thesis about the God who suffers in the crucifixion (and in any other aberration of justice thereafter) as a unique shift in eschatological history. Moltmann asserts that, in effect, God's death on the cross is proclaimed by Wiesel himself.[191]

> The SS hanged two Jewish men and a youth in front of the whole camp. The men died quickly, but the death throes of the youth lasted for half an hour. 'Where is God? Where is he?' someone asked behind me. As the youth still hung in torment … I heard the man call again, 'Where is God now?' And I heard a voice inside myself answer: 'Where is he? He is here. He is hanging there on the gallows.' (cited by Moltmann, Crucified 283).

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[190] Of course, the debate between Jewish and Gentile Christians is evident in the gospels and tradition, between, for example, Paul and Peter, and most notably against the Jews in the eight sermons against 'Judaisers' of John Chrysostom. In and beyond the Churches, the outcome in the west has been that of persecution of Jews by Christians.

[191] Elie Wiesel, Night. Nuit (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1958). Trans. Stella Rodway (London: Penguin, 1981): 77.

He rightly declares that any 'other answer would be blasphemy'. However, without self-reflexivity in relation to the cry of this accuser of God (and by analogy of his fellow man), he proceeds to compare what happens on the cross to the Jewish notion of 'God's humiliation of himself' which, he claims, 'presses towards a distinction in God between God himself and his "indwelling" (Shekinah)'. (Moltmann Crucified, 283). Moltmann rejects the theological case for *Shekinah* because, for him, it means that the human history of suffering would be 'in the midst of God himself' — a claim that, I have already argued, is hard to refute within his own process creation model. It is not that Christianity invents a *new* God but that '[in] the fellowship of the crucified Christ it finds itself in a new "situation of God" and participates in that with all its existence'. (Moltmann Crucified, 284). He then argues that a Trinitarian view of the history of God will overcome the difficulty that the Jewish perspective presents to the perfection of God's nature. But in the process, he inadvertently appropriates the God of the Jews for Christianity. For, we must recall that his reading takes place within the 'market of exchange' (that Ward highlights). This may be a valid interpretation for Christians and it does, moreover, attempt to argue for the common nature and needs of humankind in the face of suffering injustice. But Wiesel is *not* a Christian witness but a Jew who is proclaiming the *God of Israel's* death on the gallows in the face of dehumanising injustice arising out of the western Christian cultural bias against Jews (as Christ's betrayer and executioner). He does not experience the hope that a horizon of resurrection imparts for, despite a cultural intimacy with eschatological hope, it is the Word that dies in Wiesel's participation in and performance of the boy's death. It is eschatology in that other deadly sense: the end of the Word, and thus of hope as confidence (trust within faith).

Steiner's reading of the sacrificial rupture as social othering echoes through Wiesel's protest, where persecution in the death camps arises from western Christian religious and cultural misappropriation. In fact, it symbolises the inevitable culmination of that reversal. Wiesel falls into despair to follow Camus' logic of a cruel God. For him, stepping *into* death represents the step *to* 'freedom'. In the face of this abandonment by God, the persecuted refuses reconciliation.

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> In every fibre I rebelled. … How could I say to Him, "Blessed are Thou … Master of the Universe, Who chose us from among the races to be tortured day and night. … This day I had ceased to plead. I was no longer capable of lamentation. On the contrary, I felt very strong. I was the accuser, God the accused." (Wiesel 79).

Wiesel curses God but unlike Job he asks for no intervention. The enforced participation in the boy's execution negates his life, his curse emerging from the accusation. He feels no love for God because God has shown him none. He turns away from God into atheism. As the boy (and God) dies, so does his faith. He foregoes prayer. His love of God has died in the deadly game of survival, in which suffering becomes hatred of self *and* other. It is a negative reading of the cross as site for redemption. The crucifixion has potential (a theologically charged word) as the site for the liberation *from* sin but for Wiesel, it is his logical entry *into* sin as loss of faith. As such, it signifies the logic of dualistic thinking and the conflation of self and other in the most terrifying way.[192]

What Moltmann's faith witnesses to is, in effect, an argument of hope of forgiveness and redemption for the *oppressor* achieved vicariously through the oppressed, something Wiesel would probably refuse. It reveals the sense that Christian faith and hope open all humankind to 'a life to be loved' - love, as *agape*, which gives of itself

> to the unlike, the unworthy, the worthless, to the lost, the transient and the dead … that can take upon it the annihilating effects of pain and renunciation because it receives its power from a *creatio ex nihilo* …[that] brings all things into the light of the promises of God. (Moltmann Hope, 17).

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[192] Elie Wiesel's humanist work on human rights and on the Holocaust is well known, but is not without its critics, many of whom accuse him of an uncritical acceptance of Israel's behaviour, and of profiting from the Holocaust industry. C.f., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elie_Wiesel. *Criticism*. Wiesel has been touched by further anti-Semiticism. He was attacked in San Francisco by Holocaust denier, Eric Hunt, who was convicted for a hate crime in July 2007. Wiesel's position is humanist and rejects any call to faith and hope as a means to overcome indifference by using opposites as a rhetorical tool to fight injustice. He attempts to bridge the dualistic gap as follows: 'The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of beauty is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, but indifference between life and death.' *US News & World Report* (October 27, 1986): http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Elie_Wiesel. Taken from the web on 020808. He advocates the necessity to takes sides against crimes against human rights by speaking out against injustice. C.f., Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech. (December 10, 1986).

What Wiesel resists is the injustice and muteness of a God who fails to intervene on behalf of the righteous.

However, if we respect Wiesel's experience of God's death and its outcome in lost faith, we see that Moltmann effectively colonises the story to further his argument about the God who shares in suffering. Wiesel's account thus reinforces Steiner's point about what is revealed in the double betrayal. Hope in Christ saves *Christians* (even Christian oppressors) but it cannot save a Jew for whom the logic of Jewish oppression seems to be inherent in the very grammar of the Christian text. What is more, Wiesel's turn from God undermines eschatology as hope and promise, reinforcing the dualistic logic of the etymological collapse of hope into despair (loss of faith). The death of this boy cannot, therefore, simply be taken to 'figure' Christ on the cross for all of humanity. Serious qualification and reservation is needed in a negotiation between the cultural context of a (secularised) exclusivity (grounded in Christian faith in which scapegoating and dehumanisation inheres, and out of which cultural context German nationalism re-inscribed its anti-Semitism) and the implications which that exclusivity brings to bear on any appropriation of a Jewish understanding and experience of (Christianised) persecution.[193] Therefore, Moltmann's use of this culturally specific Jewish death further highlights the dangers of dualistic interpretation (and universalism) that Steiner's essay seeks to expose. On one level, what we see in this scene of the gallows in Auschwitz is alienation as reification. Moltmann does not overcome this: in fact, the way he uses this passage further marks the danger of absolutism that any rhetoric of persuasion risks.

Once again, it is here that Ward can supplement Moltmann. For, if the body is the 'principal site for the operation of power' as Ward (following Baudrillard) proposes, we must learn to view the body differently.[194] He writes

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[193] Of course, it is also true to say that Nazism's persecution of Jews, whilst having its roots in Christian prejudice, takes it beyond to a terrible conclusion of indifference to a common humanity.
[194] C.f., Ward <u>Cities,</u> 75.

Postmodernity does not transcend but deepen … the hidden agendas of modernity. … and so the corpses and carnage of Ypres and the genocides of Belsen, are repeated variously, at Pol Pot and Bosnia. The bodies, modern and postmodern, are concrete and also symptomatic. Where culture can be understood as a language, as an open field of shifting symbols, these pilings up of the dead are metaphors of cultural disintegration. (Ward Cities, 81).

Furthermore, an economy of rhetorical exchange is one in which we think we know the value of an object, symbol or culture and are able to negotiate to a point where that value is accepted by those who stand on either side of that negotiation. However, the violence that inheres in such negotiation implicates a violating of the body. Following Judith Butler, Ward thus proposes that the concept of 'matter' has a double signification of 'to materialize' and 'to mean'. When things matter, we can only know it within representation where

we inhabit the broken fragments of these … bodies; they are mapped on to our bodies through 'signs and significatory efficacy'. The narratives of tearing and violation, as we read them, involve themselves in the narratives of our own embodiment. Through these narratives these bodies, and our bodies also, scream and rage for resurrection. (Ward Cities, 82).

The alternative strategy that I have tried to take therefore is: to accept Steiner's tragic association of the sacrifice of Christ with the social othering of Jews in order to interrogate the cross through the gallows' account of Wiesel; and show that the metaphorising of the boy's body on the gallows does not stand beyond an economy of exchange but within the negotiated market of rhetorical persuasion. Both Wiesel's and Steiner's narratives demand an answer or at least a response to the (often unintentional) appropriation of God's love for Israel by Christian theology (although significantly, the eschatological question remains open in Steiner, as he marks how Jesus' cry on the cross leaves its trace of the incarnational aspects of the Eucharist and crucifixion).

In Moltmann's theology of the cross, in his positive assertions about God's suffering in God as the site for hope, there is also an unspoken 'scream and rage' for resurrection that permeates Wiesel's statement about God dying on the gallows and his response that '[any] other answer would be blasphemy'. For Moltmann to

believe in the Christian God of resurrection, he has to believe that the boy's death is not forsaken; as such, it is inscribed on his own body. However, as Christians we must acknowledge the repetition of atrocities beyond the particular of the cross in the Holocaust, at the same time as we work through their specificity. We must, therefore, recognise that the cry of abandonment in "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachtani*" from Psalm 22 is also the cry of the Jews for the God who seems to have forsaken Israel. In so doing, a step is taken that opens us to self-interrogation at the foot of those gallows through the liminal experience of the cross. As we recognise the profound violence of the appropriation of Jesus' body as a site for social othering (*qua* the violence of discourse), we must ask for forgiveness in repentance for the colonisation (and oppression) of Judaism by Christianity. Instead of situating his own need for forgiveness (as unintentional oppressor) as the hermeneutic starting point for performing through this execution, however, Moltmann can be accused of appropriating it to justify the universalism of Christian faith. This is an unintentional misappropriation of the cross that reveals the hegemony of western religion and dualistic thinking of which he is unaware.[195]

10.   Conclusion

Moltmann's (naïve) discourse plays through a determinism that allows him to view the boy's execution as analogous with that of God's death on the cross without seeing the fragility of the rhetorical technique he employs. Arguably, this is a serious misreading of the signs (culturally and contextually specific) that, unless

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[195] Of course, in recent times, apologies have been made. For example, Alessandra Stanley reported in The New York Times of March 13th, 2000, that Pope John Paul II made this statement: "we humbly ask forgiveness," - "We cannot not recognize the betrayal of the Gospel committed by some of our brothers, especially in the second millennium," and that "Recognizing the deviations of the past serves to reawaken our consciences to the compromises of the present."   - [this is] the most sweeping papal apology ever, repenting for the errors of his church over the last 2,000 years. However, amongst fundamentalist Christians, there is a counter tendency that looks to the conversion or fulfilment of Jews in Christianity (for example, 'Jews for Jesus' movement). According to this view, Jews are still blessed by God, but unless they are 'fulfilled' in Christ will not be included amongst the elect in the final days. For a fairly typical response from a Jewish rabbi, c.f., http://judaism.about.com/library/3_askrabbi_o/bl_simmons_christbelieve.htm, taken from the web on 13.06.08.

answered, justifies the turn away from God in the atheistic protest. Perhaps the only way to take and read Wiesel's sign into a Christian discourse is through acts of reflection on, contrition to, and pleas for forgiveness from the Jews and God. This action would take us back into the way of the cross and away from a theology of glory (a trap that pertains in dualistic thinking and the slippage of language and that arguably goes behind and beyond the theism of which Moltmann is so critical). Arguably, the double betrayal that Steiner describes so eloquently *is* theologically signified in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross (where resurrection is a longed-for promise and right reading of those signs): it plays through Jesus' words 'Forgive them'. But Steiner is also correct: in the ordinariness of Judas (who, like the rest of us, cannot live up to the demands of the two commandments) we have a sign (repeatedly misread) that signifies what it truly means to forgive and require forgiveness (and that is assuredly only possible through God's eschatological action and judgment). It is, therefore, that other cry (Jesus' cry of abandonment) that opens the way to take Judas' mute death into his own, as a space in which to share suffering, guilt and shame. The crucifixion, therefore, that, according to Moltmann is a trial between God and God, must fully reflect the essential nature of relations-in-difference through the Trinitarian movement of lover/lover/loved that Ward exhorts over that of relations-in-opposites. It must be a site in which to demonstrate our love of our enemy as our neighbour (who is different but stands in relation to us); and a self-reflexive performance of ourselves as enemy as well as neighbour. Furthermore, whilst the explanation that God suffers *in himself* in the crucifixion attempts to both answer and comfort those who suffer, unless it negotiates through the body analogically, it cannot demonstrate the way in which that God's suffering alleviates man's; it simply maintains the atomised sense of suffering that Wiesel's account expresses. Nor can it sufficiently answer the means to justice in history of the oppressed by the oppressor. For, whilst Christian faith and hope open all to 'a life to be loved' and to a love which gives of itself 'to the unlike, the unworthy, the worthless, to the lost, the transient and the dead', (Moltmann <u>Hope</u>, 17), it cannot take this across into politics and legal change (as exchange) *except* as one voice amongst many; one that furthermore, acknowledges the joint partiality (as ascription and projection) and provisionality of its knowledge.

In the next chapter, I consider Ward's reading of the unstable nature and identity of the sign (the body of Christ), to which notions of ontological scandal play through a weak ontology, and to which the concept of displacement is central. The chapter aims to further develop liminality and again provide new ways to explore the dilemma of modern discourse.

Inscribing Christ's body: Revealing radicalised faith and hope in the desiring community of God

Love... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. ... as for knowledge, it will come to an end.

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I considered how, despite its profundity, the work of Jürgen Moltmann with its concentration on subjectivity falls into dualism and modalism. Furthermore, this methodology makes it difficult to draw the crucifixion/resurrection event into a single paradigm. I suggested that its eschatological message, through which the end-time message of radical hope must be fully inflected into the axial moment of despair and loss, is thus attenuated. I began to introduce the idea of Graham Ward's work on analogy as a supplement through which to revisit Moltmann's work in order to reinvest it with meaning through an analogical (and essentially apocalyptic-eschatological) account which, I believe, better represents Moltmann's intentions. In this chapter, I look at Ward's work in more detail: first to expand on the significance of an analogical worldview to theological interpretation and second to show how his semiotic reading of Christ's body illuminates the liminal paradigm that, I believe, is central to Christian interpretation. The chapter also looks at the theological significance of liminality to a grammar of Christianity.

I touched on the fact that, for Graham Ward, theologians 'do not work to reinvent the Christian faith, but work within the unfolding revelation of God'. His focus through a Christian analogical account of the world-as-text maintains the dominant metaphor of (Christ's) body as physical rather than virtual: it cannot be appropriated. To begin with, he highlights how pre-modernity and postmodernity

186

share a concern with textuality in a way that modernity does not. Not all postmodern accounts are analogical; however, he recognises that if theological discourse is not to become dogma, it must be open to the criticism and interpretation of other grammars because it forms a Christian grammar that, like them, is not 'unequivocal'. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 13, 21-22). Thus, whilst he and Moltmann agree that theological discourse must be reflexive and open to criticism by modern theory, Ward's work on semiotics stresses the inextricable movement between the equivocal nature of language and analogical correspondence, whereas Moltmann believes in the ability of Christian argument to express the singularity of its truth.[196] I have already posited that Moltmann's dialectic criticism (emerging out of modern theory) problematises analogical relations through its stress on the subjective self. Also, that he downplays analogy and expresses a mistrust of the analogy of being in a polemic against the theistic view. This means that despite Moltmann's recognition of nihilist and atomist trends in atheistic protests and in fundamentalist and liberal views in the Church, his methodology is formed in the hegemonic, dualistic and totalising thinking of modernity. Rather than taking an either/or attitude, or an approach that works through the negative to arrive at a radicalised positive paradigm, Ward, however, moves away from the subjective self towards a view of 'personhood' and participation to present an analogical account (as a necessary negotiation between equi- and univocal) that refocuses the importance of the doctrines of creation (and incarnation) and therefore, of humankind made in the image of the Trinitarian God (as being-in-relation). Thus, whilst also espousing a high Christology, Ward's is not dualistic: Christ is not the subjective 'Monad defining all monads ... the self-grounding one' set above the Father and Spirit. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 114ff). The working together of an analogical account and a semiotic world-view allows him, therefore, to engage with and critique our own times of 'unprecedented social atomism and the deepening of virtual reality' in way that arguably moves beyond cultural apartheid and atomism in which Moltmann is caught. (C.f., Ward <u>Cities</u>, ix).

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[196] For example, Moltmann works through existential philosophy and Freudian psychology to interrogate theology.

Ward's analogical account acts as supplement to Moltmann principally because his nuanced understanding of the mediation of the differentiated self seeks to uphold the co-equal participative nature of the Trinity that is, however remotely, established in humans through an analogy of being and, furthermore, reflected in Christian notions of personhood, love and desire. (C.f., Ward Cities, 165, 17). He posits humans as beings-in-process who develop and change *always* in relation to others, and with whom knowledge is a shared communal activity of co-equals that works between creation and eschatology. He also insists that all knowledge is constituted through metaphors where the subject is always mediated. (Ward Cities, 17). As Christianity is a product of its culture, it does not stand 'over and against the times in which certain signs signify, but is itself a sign of the times and part of the market of their exchange'. (Ward Cities, 17). All descriptions are thus interpretation. They are not 'politically innocent' but stories that aim to persuade. (Ward Cities, 19). No final judgment can be made and explanation is provisional and (appropriately) contextual. Accordingly, Ward's analogical view presents relations-in-difference not in-opposites, where the notion of negotiation (over appropriation) more clearly articulates the provisionality of theology at the same time as it offers the possibility of developing 'strategies of selfhood' (individual or communal) that will initiate new signs of identity through the essential 'openness' of its (Christian) narrativisation (of and through Christ's body). This is, in effect, an expression of the analogy of faith in which the unstable, in-process form (it is a liminal paradigm) of Christianity admits to never truly knowing, but where 'admission of different modes of knowing substantiates its wisdom' as 'time-bound, situated and, therefore, incomplete' knowledge that disallows judgment whilst remaining open to, if limited by, 'questions of tomorrow'. (C.f., Ward Cities, 258). This clarification - that any certainty is rhetorically driven - begins to articulate the way in which Moltmann's methodology can be accused of appropriation (arising out of Christian hegemony) and modalism (arising out of dualistic thinking). It also begins to illuminate the theological implication of apocalyptic-eschatology as the liminal performance of signs (read analogically between equivocalness and

univocity) and via which, as both knowing and not knowing, we arrive at an understanding of the saying in that which cannot be said (the Word in words).[197]

The chapter considers several important aspects of Ward's work on analogy and participation in the body of Christ, beginning with his theology of meaning and the sign (the liminal aspect of time); participation with regard to desire and difference (liminality and mediation); displacement and the body of Christ (a liminal grammar); the performed (analogical) negotiation of relations-in-difference through the body (of Christ): and the Eucharist (a liminal performance). I finish with my own beginnings of a theology of liminality and a reading of that through the tenets of faith.

2. Theology of meaning and the sign

Ward believes that analogy first opens a way to *read theologically*, that is, to respond in-relation to 'the cultural metaphors of [our] times and their social, political and economic implications'. Second that analogy reintroduces the cosmological world-view. (Ward Cities, 13). As a first step, it is important to understand how, through his notion of an 'index of participation', Ward grounds his work (through numerous postmodern theorists) in a Christian theology of meaning and the sign that develops 'a social semiotics that emphasises process and movement in terms of a correlation between time and desire'. Participation is central to his methodology because he understands that values are not brought to meaning in words *per se* but develop through (shared) *performance*. In other words, '[m]aterial bodies, culture and metaphor constitute each other'. (Ward Cities, 14). He proposes that objects create meaning *through* their materiality but that the inscription of the (real) body draws this into performed interpretation as a re-memorising process that recontextualises values for our own times. Meaning, as such, is written on the body as much as the body creates our sense of meaning.

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[197] The grammatical logic of apocalyptic-eschatology will be further discussed in Part 2, as will its extension into other literatures.

However, because all knowledge remains partial, as it is mediated by the codes of culture and language of the times in which we live, it is always contextual. As such, whilst acknowledging that any event or thing is related to the symbolic core in which it is lodged, his position avoids relativism and idealism 'because [it] refutes the notion of a self-grounding Cartesian ego' by the specificity of its placement (embodiment) *within* discursive practice. Thus *the self is not stable*. Rather it is ever in-process because the space and time within which the subject finds itself is always changing. The present, as such, is specious. Subjects stand in relation to other subjects. In fact, being-in-relation forms the identity and sense of self. This understanding refutes universalism. The reality and necessity of shared knowledges is upheld because meaning, constituted through metaphor, is created communally to provide ways to understand things. (Ward Cities, 17). Moving through time, the metaphors change and develop, helping us to form new connections without breaking with the past. Thus 'characterised by desire and movement', humankind will develop a certain view of the world that reflects its very nature. (Ward Cities, 20). And as I have argued before, form and content reflect each other to create a grammar. However, this also means that we cannot speak of true identity in being. *Ontology is 'weak'* and, therefore, hermeneutical.[198] Meaning cannot be fixed once and for all times. But this neither implies that it cannot speak a truth for its own time nor that it has no (intertextual) relation to the past. Because of the movement through space and time, participation creates an index of meaning arising out of the relationship between the body, culture and metaphor to which analogy is a central principle, but where instability drives forward the desire to find meaning. This does much to overcome the arguments presented in chapter 3.

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[198] Ward is working through Gianni Vattimo: 'That which truly is (the ontos on) is not the centre which is opposed to the periphery, nor is it the essence which is opposed to appearance, more is it what endures as opposed to the accidental and the mutable, nor is it the certainty of the obiectum given to the subject as opposed to the vagueness and the imprecision of the horizon of the world. The occurrence of Being is rather … an unnoticed and marginal background event'. Gianni Vattimo. The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture. Trans. Jon R Ryder. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988) 86 and 1997.

Following these principles, Ward proposes that the Christian responses to social atomism require 'a strong doctrine of participation' that prioritises body over mind (as 'the principal site for the operation of power'), in a theology that apprehends the way in which 'embodied desire' constructs and makes objects desirable. This is why he negotiates a new sense of desire which he then centralises to explain how the Christian account of desire and the body contradicts those views of desire that point to commodification and atomism. And how, through participation, analogically connected concepts of living, physical bodies relate to institutional bodies reflected throughout the entire cultural text. In that sense, Ward reinvests the now etymologically reduced concept of *eros,* as seduction or need, with a sense of desire for *sanctified* participation, such that all creation is drawn 'back into participation in God – [co-operating] with God in the redemption of the world'. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 77). This is the theological 'freight' of analogy that 'bears the weight of a profound cosmological significance'. As the *imitatio Christi,* Christian desire cannot commodify God because it interprets all things through doctrines of creation and the (eschatological) kingdom. This view arguably does not diminish the impact of suffering but rather works through the liminal performance of the suffering body with the interpretative tools of apocalyptic-eschatology.

Ward radicalises the concept of participation by drawing attention to the way in which the body is written onto and by all of our cultures, pointing out that in any institution we readily accept the reality of authority through its ontological foundations of meaning via which 'we know' and are able to communicate. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 70-71). As such, belief is central to the participation of individuals as part of (embodied) communities. His analogical world view is then open to explore the way in which the secular is suffused by the theological (in Christian terms through the metaphor of Christ's body).

> The body accepts its own metaphorical nature – insofar as it is received and understood only in and through language. Only God sees and understands creation literally. We who are created deal only with the seeing and understanding appropriate to our creatureliness. ... The body, as metaphor, moves within and along the intratextual nature of creation. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 95).[199]

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[199] In relation to language, this again reflects the points I made in Sections 7 and 8 of chapter 2.

This is a considerable supplement to Moltmann because, in linking the body to our representations, it allows a Christian reading to negotiate through the discourses of other cultural groups, without commodifying the body that is inscribed and encrypted in them. In this way, his nuanced presentation of the church as an erotic community, interpreted moreover through participation in the fracture, presence, extension and dispersal of Christ's body (particularly in his reading of the Eucharist) shows how the body of Christ survives, or lives 'beyond its precincts', thus to '[redeem] it through desire'. In essence, not only does Ward imaginatively play through the punctuations of mediation that Massumi writes of, his sense of sacred desire, as the driving force for meaning, expresses the means to radicalised hope, about which Moltmann writes, through an imaginative portrayal of the way in which the sacred, creative space in which believers participate in God, can actually transgress its boundaries to play an active role in the discourses of difference.

Ward's theology is not, as such, anti-modern. Rather, in order to move beyond the secular, it engages with the (secularist) culture of modernity and postmodernity through an analogical account. And as it plays through creational and incarnational traditions, it listens to and critiques the many (commodifying) voices of nihilism and atomism to proclaim a vision of justice, peace and beauty against the institutional violence and injustice of our representations. Its soteriological interpretation is thus 'a critical perspective [that situates] today with respect to yesterday and tomorrow' to provide a sense of analogical adequacy that liberalism or fundamentalism simply cannot achieve. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 70). As he plays through past, present and future, through barrier, threshold and flux, Ward's is thus a (provisional) theology that arguably takes liminality (and mediation), as a theology of the Word and of response, seriously, and in a way that is impossible for Moltmann.

The next section shows how Ward builds the connection between the body, desire and analogy. As such, it adds substantially to my own work in that it foregrounds the essential centrality of the body of Christ as the semiotic sign and medium for communication of the Word.

192

3. Desire and difference in the analogical account

Whereas Moltmann prioritises the dialectical principle of relationship through opposites, Ward looks at what relations-in-difference means. I have throughout stressed how, in order for relationship to exist, there must be some correspondence through which to refer, communicate and respond in (loving) relationship. In the Bible this is established through God's performative speech act of creation, in which humankind is made in God's image (Gen.1.26), but difference is as essential as correspondence to any straight-forward analogical relation. More importantly, Ward shows how difference elicits desire as *an attraction* to that which is other. Ward asserts that

> Desire issues from difference; difference not satisfied in its own differential. ... [But d]ifference can only be difference because it stands in relation to that which is other: which means that God is not wholly other (*pace* Barth) and Christian otherness cannot be transcendentalised as such (*pace* Levinas and Derrida). (Ward Cities, 172).[200]

This reflects the exegesis of the creation narrative discussed in chapter 1: loving relationship operates between the blessing of similarity and difference, each protecting the other from dualism or atomism. For even in Eden, equivocalness and univocity do not pertain absolutely. In other words, adequacy does not mean being either completely different or completely the same. This is because attraction to that which is different (desire for the other) positively deepens our sense and experience of self and allows us to share this without either appropriating or abandoning the other.

Ward gives a sense of what this analogical play means in the *fallen* world in his reading of Augustine's City of God. He understands Augustine to say that whilst we can distinguish between opposites (for example, between that which is divine or human) they are *at the same time* 'co-mingled'. This inherently double meaning disallows complete translation 'into concrete historical and social realities'. (Ward Cities, 229). For example, love, virtue, justice – are terms that operate on earth (as

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[200] This is a major concern in Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology. (1995).

moral) and in heaven (as theological). Although the same language pertains to each its double sense induces an ambiguity which we both inhabit and search to make sense of. Terms are analogous but not identical. However, they share the same time-bound goodness and distress as they operate 'in God's unfolding providence'. This is why we need to think analogically: the 'analogical world-view is axiomatic.' (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 229).[201]

Due to the flawed state of human knowledge, a concept can only ever find significance *eschatologically* because, as a 'parody' of heavenly form, earthly, disordered understanding is 'predatory' on the ordered (adequate) form from which it has broken away.[202] On the one hand, order inheres in the sense that it has its origination in God. On the other, it is a 'perverse imitation' that reflects the self-love of Adam.[203] In this way, analogical (theological) thinking inevitably moves 'beyond the literal or historical towards the spiritual or mystical meaning of the text'. For the believer, the virtual world is, as such, dependent on referencing and, in some way, locating and migrating through, another (unstable) 'spatiality' that, in its inhabitation, displaces and ruptures the earthly parody to expose its own arbitrariness.[204] The semiotic significance of this is that whilst there is slippage in meaning such that we cannot *rationally* deduce the possibility of order out of disorder without falling into immanentism, we can, in an analogical account, and 'on the basis of theological difference', affirm that any assertion of equivalence will at least be exposed. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 232). This is a significant form of knowledge that monitors and constrains whilst still opening us to new potential and promise.

For Ward, Augustine's analogical account of the two cities, which foregrounds difference at the same time as it draws them together through their (grammatical) boundedness, recognises first and foremost the distortions inherent in representation. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 227-8). For, it is that selfish love of self that 'gives

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[201] Ward is here speaking of Augustine's view of the two cities which, importantly, is written through the body.
[202] This is a similar idea to that which I expressed in the previous chapter, when I claimed that hope, pre-fall, could only be interpreted eschatologically post-Fall; it could not be considered to be the same.
[203] Ward is here working through Oliver O'Donovan's reading of Augustine. C.f., Oliver O'Donovan. <u>Augustine's City of God: a Collection of Critical Essays</u>. (Peter Lang: New York, 1995)143.
[204] Ward is considering Augustine through Certeau. C.f., Ward <u>Cities</u>, 230ff.

rise to distorted representations of the divine, parodic simulacra of theological truths'. This account allows Ward to infer from the analogical account, in which man is made in God's image and is reflected in the sociable nature of God and humankind, that, similarly, and working analogically through faith, it is through relations-in-difference that a vision of justice can be discerned. (Ward Cities, 228). This view depends on a Trinitarian understanding of God as a community of co-equals that, insofar as humans are social and that our activity drives to the social good, affirms that they stand in relation to God's image and glory. (Ward Cities, 234). This does not, however, mean that we can force or achieve reconciliation, for this would be a form of utopianism. Significantly, Christian hope does not, therefore, stand as aspiration (as a teleology of desire leads to colonisation and appropriation) but as eschatologically-informed faith that understands its utter dependency on God's cosmological and providential action, where God's love loves difference. This again marks how Ward supplements Moltmann.

> What is loved in love is difference. Such love of difference, in difference, from difference, to difference operates according to the economies of both kenotic and erotic desire. In fact, agape and eros can be seen as two perspectives with the same dynamic, moments of giving and receiving where giving is also receiving, and vice versa. (Ward Cities, 201).

Overall this means that love is driven by analogical difference (not dialectical opposites) that interrogates and operates through absence and presence. Again, this demonstrates the recognition of the apocalyptic-eschatological significance of liminality.

The next sections consider Ward's reading of Christian grammar of displacement, in which the body of Christ is interpreted by the communities for whom that body is the central metaphor of faith, and where an emphasis on personhood offers a new way to interpret both Moltmann's theologies and the issues addressed within them. I will again argue that his reading of the crucifixion considerably supplements Moltmann's view of God's suffering love in his emphasis on the radical displacements of Christ's body touched on above. Also, that it plays into my own exploration of a theology of liminality.

4. The (Christian) desire for what is good

Let us look at what Ward means by desire. He first posits three distinct modes: theological, ontological and sexual. Each has its own dynamic. The first reflects the Trinitarian difference within God, the second, the interval or space between 'the uncreated God' and creation and the third, the strands which pull us towards each other and that inscribe themselves as a network of (bodily) attractions. As the (postlapsarian) sense of difference misreads analogy, in order to escape its movement towards indifference, we must recognise how, when difference is lauded *qua* difference, it leads to objectification and thereby the atomism and appropriation that are evidenced in individualistic, modern and postmodern paradigms of desire. The kind of desire that wants to possess something is thus distinct from Christian desire because it is 'an economy of lack' and 'craving'.[205]

In its place, Ward proposes that the Christian economy of desire is driven by the desire for an (aesthetic) encounter with what is good and true. But whilst *this* desire 'has an embodied specificity' in Christ it neither diminishes material meaning nor moves beyond the world into some transcendent state beyond emotion. As such, it does not reflect the theism of which Moltmann writes with regard to the analogy of being and theology of glory, nor diminish the prioritisation of an analogy of faith. This is because desire operates through the three distinct but inter-related modes of difference. He writes that

> to desire or love God is to invest the world with significance, a significance which deepens the mysterious presence of things. And so ... the object of desire can never be the terminus of desire. The object can never be made an end in itself without betraying the true nature of the thing ... [f]or the participation desire circulates within is far greater than any one lack installed by I-want which the object creates. ... the object desired is to be enjoyed as gifted; rather than simply used, exploited,

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[205] In some sense, it is this economy that both Wiesel and Moltmann inadvertently expose: Moltmann's desire is driven by a profound need for the forgiveness of the (Christian) oppressor by the (Jewish) oppressed, but results in effectively reinforcing the Jewish estrangement from (the Christianised) God, thereby appropriating the Jewish cry of abandonment as its own; and Wiesel's desire, that is similarly driven by the need to overcome his own self-loathing, effectively appropriates the God of Israel's death into that of the (abandoned Jewish) boy on the gallows to punish himself along with God.

consumed. … [I]t finds its satisfaction in attaining [which, in turn] both satisfies and deepens the longing. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 172).

This desire goes beyond the lack (and dissatisfaction) of the 'I-want' because that which is other stands closer to the differentiated self than that self stands to itself. Critically, this makes the subject conscious that what it lacks is to some degree its own self. However, the believer who lives *in* Christ (i.e., inhabits a space in his body) desires to know and be like Christ but also to understand the difference (including his absence). Any sense of redemption thus arises out of understanding that we are not like Christ while simultaneously being formed in that space in Christ that we occupy. Christian desire is, in this way, directed towards that which is so full of presence that it 'demands that we take account of the yearnings it calls forth in us'. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 174). It is this double-sense of presence/absence, similarity/difference that opens the operation of Christian loving to the simultaneity of faith and hope and to selfless but self-loving love that, by participation in the Trinitarian love, forgets self in order to love itself fully. Furthermore, 'the coming to oneself is also a movement towards the others one has separated oneself from' to reflect fully 'the logic of the fracture: both celebrating the intimacy of oneness and taking that celebration out into the world.' (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 174).[206]

This reading deepens the understanding of love as *agape* by underscoring the nature of longing desire through notions of self/other in relation to change and movement through space and time, where (following Irigaray) the place we inhabit is 'a space opened up by the distending body of Christ' – a place where love is essentially kenotic and erotic. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 201). In this way, Ward's reading of desire adds to my attempt to sketch a theology of liminality through its radicalised notion of love read through the erotics of attraction and difference, and where the interval or space 'subtends' as by a 'double envelop'.[207] For, this notion echoes in the description of the operation outlined in chapter 1 and that I described as a

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[206] C.f., Section 10, in which I provide a reading of Ward's reintroduction of the concept of fracture to the Eucharist.
[207] C.f., Ward, Cities 201, on Luce Irigaray. <u>Sexes and Genealogies</u>. Tr. Gillian C. Gill. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) 8. –- <u>Ethics of Sexual Difference</u>. Tr. Caroline Burke and Gillian C. Gill. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003) 48.

complex liminal model that is simultaneously linear *and* cyclical, operating through the mediation of the *limen*, running back and forth as it folds what stands beyond it back into itself as acts of revealing and interpreting conjoin.

5. Desire and the liminal grammar of Christ's body

As Ward's reinterpretation of the erotics of Christian desire (inscribed on the body of Christ) connect to unstable time and space and to notions of shared personhood and participation, it seems to me that he is effectively drawing attention to the liminal nature of Christian grammar. What I mean by this is that, paradigmatically, desire works through the liminal form (and content) of the body of Christ as it moves through various changes in its nature and activity (for example: incarnation, transfiguration, transcorporeality, crucifixion and death, transition, resurrection, ascension and so on), and that, in the axial point of the crucifixion, all these displacements (distensions, subtensions and extensions) inflect, or bend back into its stress point to release a desire and longing that does not commodify God because of the way in which it interprets all things through doctrines of creation and the (eschatological) kingdom. In relation to his theological 'freight' of analogy that 'bears the weight of a profound cosmological significance', the significance of Christ as creative Word is deepened. For example, as *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Word travels through, and *is* also by nature the liminal vortex of the apocalyptic-eschatological medium and message. In Trinitarian terms, the Word thus signifies what Ward describes as 'the eternal displacements of the Trinitarian processions; the Trinitarian differences', as it 'expands and embraces all that is other [as] the mark of God within creation'. (C.f., Ward <u>Cities</u>, 105).

Thus, the crucifixion, which as Moltmann rightly asserts is the epicentre for Christian faith, creates a grammatical logic that allows a fuller interpretation of Christ's unique sacrifice (as a coming close to God), which is carried into the Eucharistic feast and in which theologies of incarnation and eschatology modulate to prevent a theology of glory; and that draws together the paradox of love as a desiring, longing for the body of Christ, and as a shared suffering in its brokenness. In this way, the temporal/spatial relation of the site of sacrifice to that body is the

central focus of any notion of participation in Christian terms. And it is in the development of a grammar that is inscribed through Christ's body that Christianity creates something radically new. This is, in essence, a central focus of <u>Cities of God</u>: for, from this (grammatical) perspective, he opens up the nature and purpose of Christ's body as it is mapped on to the (Christian) body (as a sacrificial body of suffering love for the forgiveness of sin) and that develops in the participatory economy of faith, hope, and love, to reflect a cosmological world view through analogy and relations-in-difference. This goes beyond the Cartesian subject and the dualisms of Moltmann's approach to dialectics. In real terms, through baptismal and Eucharistic liturgies (in which Revelation is incidentally firmly sited), the gospel narratives of the way to the cross, and the epistles in their theological expositions of Christ and the cross, Christian notions of the mediating process of God's Word play continually through the displacement of Christ's body in which the mystery of presence presents its trace.

The body broken

As Moltmann understood, the protest against the loving goodness of God focuses on notions of justice and the suffering body.[208] In the intensified violence of our histories, the despair which Moltmann explored is as acute as ever. As Ward points out, that violence led Jean-Luc Nancy to remark that 'the body has been turned into nothing but a wound.'[209] Nancy's concept of wound suggests a 'soulless materialism' away from any sense of the sacred.

> The piles of corpses at Ypres, Belsen and Cambodia will not go away. This is a fatal wound that bleeds eternally. There is no life here. There may be room for a liberal notion of tolerance … [b]ut there is no *telos* for this tolerance, no good life to which it tends, no commonality which subtends its possibility. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 94).

This is the logic of endless surface repetition that we see, for example, in the voyeuristic obsession with violence in Warhol's ready-mades.[210]

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[208] The body is, of course, also the metaphor through which society is organised.
[209] C.f., Jean-Luc Nancy, "Corpus". Trans. Claudette Sartiliot. <u>Thinking Bodies</u>. Ed. Juliet Flower MacCannell, Luara Zakarin. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994): 30.
[210] C.f., for example, Andy Warhol. <u>White Car Crash 19 Times</u>, 1963. Private collection, Zurich.

Any refutation of this logic must show how the broken body of Christ provides the means to move beyond the barrier of despair and indifference to a hope which is grounded in a sacred materiality. It is this that Ward sets out to achieve, and the metaphor of the wound is his starting point for taking seriously the body of Christ as an eschatological metaphor of hope and participation, in which the body, although simultaneously present and absent, is not dissolved but instead expanded *in* Christ.

> Christ broken, given, resurrected and ascended. The body does not disappear. In fact, it realises it own uniqueness, its own vocation, its own irreplaceability, as offering a space for the meeting and mapping of other specified bodies, a sacred site. (Ward, <u>Cities</u> 95).

(This is exactly the point that Moltmann attempts to make in his association of the death of the boy and the crucifixion of Christ.) Unfortunately, most recent western Christological notions have tended to divide the death of the human Jesus from that of the risen Christ (as God) as described through the two natures of Jesus Christ. According to this view, with its emphasis on the human nature of Christ, the cross stands as a locus of rupture and violence between the differentiated natures of the human and divine; but in so doing, it arguably breaks the *analogia entis* that is conjoined in the sacred space of Christ. The ontological logic, however weak, which presents the view of creation as God's act of love to his creature in which an ontic correspondence inheres is what Moltmann fears will lead to a theology of glory and that he seeks to overcome in his presentation of God's trial against God. However, whilst emphatically centralising the crucifixion as the liminal site for faith and hope, Ward presents a radical reading of Christ's body as unstable (as body and text) that is continually changing, displaced and extended, through incarnation, transfiguration, transposition, breaking and degendering, dissemination, resurrection and ascension, thereby making new connections between creation and eschatology that emphasise the fluxional nature of space and time (and movement) at the same time as these changes subtend the physical body. Ward's position on the analogical relation-in-difference, that opens out the signification of threshold/barrier and presence/absence, thus allows a complication and deepening of Moltmann's reading of the crucifixion to renegotiate the way in which the

community of faith participate in the Trinitarian faith, hope and love through, and as, Christ's body. For, the broken body of Christ is understood as the core metaphor that is inscribed onto the believing body of the churches as it extends beyond its own precincts to engage with the world. Ward's understanding can, in particular, be seen in his reading of the ontological scandal of transcorporeality enacted in the Last Supper as it connects into Christ's sacrifice on the cross and thence to the Eucharist, by which means, believers are drawn back into the liminal space of sacrifice (to reinforce and perform its sacredness) and out again to the world.

6. Towards the sacred space of Christ's body

We have already seen that according to postmodern theory the physical body is fugitive.[211] For example, the body is dissolved in the virtuality of cyberspace. Seemingly without feeling, this is the body *disembodied* and atomised. Paraphrasing Deleuze, Massumi explains this tendency as follows

> The problem with the dominant models in cultural and literary theory is not that they are too abstract to grasp the concreteness of the real. The problem is that they are not *abstract enough* to grasp the real incorporeality of the concrete. (Massumi 5).

Ward's logic, however, insists that 'analogical accounts' anchor the body securely in the material world, in effect protecting against 'nihilistic monism … where all objects are seen as present to themselves'. (C.f., Ward <u>Cities</u>, 94).

> The theological or analogical account of the body … stops them disappearing. It does this by safeguarding the significance of materiality, viewing the material as suspended within a divine economy of love. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 117).

That suspension within the sacred space both recognises and complicates Massumi because it posits a relationship between the physical body, time and space that protects it from the atomism of which Massumi writes - the divine economy of love reflecting the Trinitarian nature of sacred creation (i.e., the space in which desire circulates in participation and that goes beyond the 'lack installed by I-want which

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[211] For example, in the works of Roland Barthes and Massumi discussed in chapter 3 above.

the object creates'. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 117). To that degree, Christ's body becomes the sacred space in which to inscribe the material with God's mystery. To reiterate: this is what Ward describes as 'a significance which deepens the mysterious presence of things'. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 172).

The relationship of sacrifice to sacred space is, therefore, an important one. In <u>Sacred and the Profane</u>, Mircea Eliade defines the sacred in terms of power and reality.[212] Experience of the sacred is not reducible to any other type of human experience but is, in fact, a necessary breach of reality reflecting creation as *inflected* by God incarnate. Here again, we witness the liminal activity of divine rupture of chaos and void described in chapter 2.

> It is the break effected in space that allows the world to be constituted … The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world. … Revelation of a sacred space makes it possible to obtain a fixed point and hence to acquire orientation … and to live in a real sense. (Eliade 21, 23).

Eliade's concept of making sacred in some way reflects Ward's grammatical logic in that, as a symbol/metaphor, sacredness analogically connects the other through the reality of the body. However, it does not recognise the eschatological horizon of Christian orientation.

In the Christian text, of course, the site for any interrogation of the body (especially in relation to atomism and appropriation) is the cross as a sacred space of sacrifice. But this is a unique form of sacrifice precisely because it is apocalyptic-eschatological – i.e., it plays through the liminal enfolding and doubling of creation and end. Away from the subjectivity in which the negative liminal paradigms are centred, and that force immanentism, Christ's sacrifice is the entry to a sacred space in order to come close to God. Here, in sacred time and space the body is separated from the mundane via the experience of his body being made sacred (as in Turner's liminal paradigm) in the interval, or gap, between absence and presence. Here, as Ward proposes, the ontological connections are weak as the

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[212] C.f., Mircea Eliade. <u>Sacred and the Profane: Nature of Religion</u>. 1st published, Hamburg, 1957. Trans. Willard R. Trask. (New York: Harwood Brace, 1959).

body plays through flux and instability. It is a place of danger and awe as Moltmann affirms. What this actually mean in terms of the performance of Christ's body is clarified through Ward's understanding of, for example, the ontological scandal of transcorporeality (the bread literally *is* the body of Christ, performed through his creative Word), where transformation arises from the fracture of the body of Christ and where, because of the analogical nature of participation, the danger of transcendentalism and immanentism is overcome. Thus, if we return to the logic of the apocalyptic-eschatological reading of the *limen*, the radical displacements of Christ's body highlight both incorporeality and corporeality, essentially played through a liminal paradigm of presence/absence to which the erotics of desire are central. At the same time, his reading of displacement draws together the liminal performance of Christ and Trinitarian participation through notions of the body and personhood.

7. A radical reading of displacement

In this section, I will try to explain, through Ward, how displacement reflects the liminal performance of apocalyptic-eschatology. It is significant that Ward's exploration of displacement deals theologically with several issues inherent in the historical Jesus movement (as discussed in section 5 of chapter 1), and, as such, is an attempt to move away from 'the nineteenth-century rational search … [that fails] to discern the nature of transcorporeality in Christ'. (Ward Cities, 97). His account fully recognises the mysterious and miraculous nature of revelation, furthermore, where knowledge of the body is 'mediated through the giving and receiving of signs' and that plays through the *limen* as both threshold and barrier. As such, it foregrounds the nature of Christ's body in representation in relation to the revelation of his nature. This is described by Ward as a

> series of displacements or assumptions of Jesus' body [that] continually refigures … and traces the deferred identity of the body of the Messiah … [made] visible in … displacements'. (Ward Cities, 97-8).[213]

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[213] Whilst much of Ward's concern in this chapter is the gendering and de-gendering of Jesus' body which 'refigures a masculine symbolic until the particularities of one sex gives way to the particularities of sexual difference'. (Ward Cities, 97-8). This is a profound addition to women's and men's studies, as well as to ecclesiology. However, in this study, I am concerned to look at the way in

The revelation of Christ's nature and identity is liminal because, following Ward's understanding of the displaced body of Christ with its heightened sense of the mystery of deferred identity, it reflects the dual dissemination and deferral inherent in textuality (referred to in section 5 on the apocalyptic tone in chapter 3), that can *only* be performed liminally through what he calls the 'aporetics intrinsic to textuality itself'. In that sense, the 'deferral of identity and the non-identical repetition ... [that] institutes and perpetuates alterity' not only reinforces the nature of analogy (as being known through relation-in-difference) but, I would claim, also highlights the *limen* as threshold and barrier as the constituent of apocalyptic-eschatology.[214] Again, following this logic, the present/absent body of Christ inevitably gives way to confessions and doxologies which cannot attain presence in the present but are part of a grammar that disperses (in a continual series of further displacements and deferrals) the good news that Jesus is Christ (again reflecting, and to a great degree, theologically overcoming Derrida's (agnostic) view of the apocalyptic tone). In this way, we begin to open up the form and content of apocalyptic literature that, in turn, helps to explain how witness is embodied in the grammar of Christ's displaced body, to 'confer' communion and 'create' community so as to cross the many divides of, in and as difference. [215] For, as Ward affirms

> To examine how this body is represented and produced is not to deny the existence of the body as such. It is not docetic until the body is forgotten... [and] the pain, tiredness, orgasms, aches ... constantly draw Christian theologians back to the matter that matters in the gendered Jew of Nazareth ... [and the] accounts of the life of God incarnate. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 115-6).

In this way, the logic of displacement exposes relations-in-difference through a liminal performance of the crucifixion that marks the Christian church as communities of desire informed by Christ's creative and eschatological nature.

If this reading of Ward is correct, the New Testament narratives perform through the displaced body of Christ to form a grammar to which the theological

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which this reading of displacement plays through the liminal performance in which Christ's body forms the structural logic of apocalyptic-eschatology that permeates scriptural narrative and Christian liturgy.

[214] C.f., Ward <u>Cities</u>, 110.

[215] C.f., Ward <u>Cities</u>, 111.

weight of liminality is central. For, if formally and thematically, the crucifixion of Jesus is the axial point of the Passion narrative, before it come other displacements. For example: incarnation, circumcision, baptism, ministry (teaching and miracles), transfiguration, the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, the betrayal and abandonment, his arrest, trials and torture. After it, come his burial, the discovery of the empty tomb, his resurrection appearances and his ascension, *and* I would argue his revelations. All are examples of liminal performances of threshold/barrier as each displacement expresses a moment of crisis that represents transition as the passing through, and transgression as the breaking beyond, boundaries.

In chapter 1, I highlighted what I meant by the liminal complex and its significance to the nature of Christ as Word.

> The logic of the complex liminal paradigm is that *apokalypsis* is an eschatological experience of the divine within the *limen* itself as Jesus Christ: the *limen,* a divine and human space, which stands on both sides as it is incorporated in vertical *and* horizontal, linear *and* cyclical, spatial *and* temporal movements, is thus the critical point in which to *know* eschatology - as the end *and* beginning of the Word. It is *this* sense of a complex liminal economy that allows us to define a theory of revelation through the focus of the *limen* itself, one that complicates but deepens our understanding of the reading process (as a rite of passage in which the Word reveals as it conceals), at the same time as the content of the story is narrated.[216]

This operational logic can be seen in the lead-up to Jesus' execution, where the atmosphere presents through a heady cocktail of radical teaching for the poor and disenfranchised, where expectations of the promised kingdom and speculations about his identity mix with violent disagreements and misunderstandings (as mis-readings of the liminal operation). The betrayals and desertions implicate the inner circle of disciples as much as the outer circle of priesthood, Roman authorities, and populace. The accountability of the reader to refuse the liminal performance is, as such, played out in that of the characters who, in order to receive the Word, are forced to liminally perform the aporetic nature of textuality – moving through a series of ruptures and displacements through which the paradox of revelation is

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[216] C.f., chapter 1: *A theory of liminality*, 51.

momentarily captured and then lost within the fluxional nature of a fallen world. For, in a sinful world, all are sinners and can only see in part.

To fully understand what I mean by this, I would like to return to the notion of textuality and flux. In his essay Cracks in the Wall, André LaCocque reminds us how the fall disrupts the movement of God's love. He writes that 'it suffices that *adam* disobey the commandment [to love] to reintroduce into the world the chaos from which it emerged in the first place'. (LaCocque 6).[217] God's triple curse of the Serpent, Adam and Eve is a foretaste of un-making reintroduced by humankind in the lust for equality; death is the return to nothingness.[218] Following the beginning of history (as God's gift of life, in which death was 'on an ever-receding horizon'), a new message proclaims that, from this point on, 'death and dust are before and ahead'. (LaCocque 6 - 7). This is the moment of separation and of abandonment in resistance and despair (of which Moltmann speaks) and that, moreover, reflects the inherent direction of 'economies of desire' as a 'structural function of lack'. (C.f., Ward Cities, 106).

In the world of the gospels, death and failure figure strongly, and yet a radical interpretation of desire nonetheless emerges to illuminate God's Trinitarian love through which to present a new grammar. This is because Christ's body is the key metaphor for mediating the creative power of the Word via the series of radical displacements that play repeatedly through liminality, the movement between presence and withdrawal resonating mystery and symbolic depth. This pattern repeats itself throughout the Christian texts.[219] Particularly in Mark and John, Jesus' body is alternately acutely present and physically ambiguous (for example, in baptism and transfiguration; in his walking on water, or disappearance to the

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[217] André LaCocque, "Cracks in the Wall." Trans. David Pellauer Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies. Ed. André LaCocque and Paul Ricoeur. (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[218] The Fall, too, is a mediated process. C.f. Genesis, 3.14, 19. NB. To show that this is not a cyclical process, LaCocque stresses that the serpent is not herein seen as a magical animal "that can slough off its skin and thus be born again indefinitely. … This idol that is worshiped by some is here a humiliated (*humus-ligare*) animal that crawls on its belly and eats dirt". (LaCocque 14).

[219] For excellent readings of displacement, c.f. J. Lee Magness, Sense and Absence: Structure and Suspension in the Ending of Mark's Gospel (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986). Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

wilderness) and his speech is broken by silences and gaps that are pregnant with foreboding (for example, in the tracing of his finger in the sand). However, it is by passing through the ambiguous changes in his body that the acutely material nature of his body on the cross is able to be fully signified, thrusting the reader fully into Jesus' cry of abandonment and death, then beyond to the absolute silence and emptiness of the tomb, and, finally, to the proclamation of his resurrection. Whether by angels or women, Romans or disciples (and this is a significant aspect of the nature of language as it further extends its displacement and dissemination), the revelation proclamation inherent to the liminal performance of Christ's body (and its deferred identity) always comes back to the materiality of that moment of crisis, because at no point is his body more intensely figured than in his death on the cross, and nowhere more keenly sensed than in his cry of agony.[220] It is this materiality that marks it out as a uniquely liminal axis of apocalyptic-eschatology. Without it, no sense could be made of any of the other displacements in relation to God's activity in and on humankind.

It is thus also, that in performing through the body of Christ, we see the nature of textuality arising out of Adam's original apostasy. For, in the narrativising of his progress to ascension through the serial acts of displacement, his body, as the liminal vortex of transition and change, bears the weight of this apostasy to bring the nature of textuality to the fore; by reinvesting the body with materiality to which an analogical view is essential, and by emphasising the ontologically scandalous displacement of Christ's body as it bears the weight of cosmological transformation.

8. Liminality and the (suffering) grammar of faith

However, whilst displacement may open up the liminal nature of Christian grammar, the connection between suffering and desiring, radical hope needs to be more fully made. This section returns to Moltmann's concern for suffering and hope attempting to draw them into the logic of apocalyptic-eschatology and the

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[220] I would like to reiterate the meaning of crisis as an axial moment of dis-ease. It is a turning point in the midst of flux in which change takes place between life and death.

analogical relation of desire to the body of Christ, in order to further understand the apocalyptic performance and production of the scriptural text.

The Trinity and liminality in creation:

An analogical world view intimately involves the idea of relationship and participation. The first creation story represents the inner working of God as Trinity and symbolises creation as revelation, that is, as God's self-disclosure through relations-in-difference. The interactive flow of each aspect of the triad plays through, and out of the other in a relationship in which the fore-givenness and faithfulness of love are inherent and are exposed in act and outcome. In performing creation between chaos and void – often expressed as *ex nihilo* –the Trinitarian activity of God is shown in his will and intention, in his performative Word as it mediates, enacts and manifests that intention, and as the Spirit opens and extends loving relationship out to human participation.

However, creation is not a liminal activity in the way that Turner describes it: contrary to loss of identity, it is an expression of the already formed identity and nature of the Godhead differentiated but also reflected in the form and identity of creation itself. It is analogous in the sense that the primary speech act takes place *between* chaos and nothingness to make its sacred, cosmological space in which life, as an extension of (and participation in) God as blessing originates in the analogy of being. In the participative nature of the Trinity, Christ is the performative Word that encapsulates creation; as such, he *signifies* the sacred space performed *liminally* between chaos and void. Paul writes in Colossians: Christ 'is the image of the invisible God … in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things'. (Col. 15-21). *Logos* thus presupposes representation as the means to relationship between God, the cosmos and humanity; as the Word performs creation, man responds with praise. But this is to get ahead of ourselves, because Christian grammar can only be read into Old Testament narratives retrospectively.

Abandonment and despair:

It is clear that the Old Testament narrates the fall and that the mediation between man and God is enacted liminally in its characters and locations. There is not, however, the clear sense of the Trinitarian nature of God. The patterns of the narratives, therefore, in a dialectical relationship, tend to fall between the hope and promise of Israel as the chosen people, and the despair of abandonment arising out of apostasy. I have already suggested that in the Genesis narrative, the sense of the world as lack and suffering arises post-fall (Steiner's Saturday and Friday), where from the perspective beyond Eden, the world becomes an inversion of creative blessing. As Adam is expelled to a world beyond God's presence, and where threshold becomes barrier, he must, ironically, construct a life out of the earth (in dust and ashes) just as God created man. He knows that he is not God; he feels abandoned; and yet in many narratives, the sinful arrogance of wanting to be like God persists. In order to heal, or experience salvation, humanity requires the redemptive activity of the Trinitarian God, yet can only hope for restitution through the act of turning back in faithfulness and contrition, to await God's action on him. Any resistance or refusal results in a despairing autonomy that rehearses the fall into apostasy and despair; the analogical principle is broken and the need for mediation is needed more than ever.

Liminal spaces and performances in the Old Testament traditions:

Let us briefly consider God's unexpected responses to faithfulness in the Old Testament. Given the analogical nature of relationship, it is unsurprising that the concept of God's creative presence in a sacred space separated out from all that is worldly (and unclean) is common to religions (in holy sites and temples); the attempt to separate God's presence from sinfulness assumes that encounter will be less prone to interference as well as marking its unique and dangerous power. However, the concept of revelation as apocalyptic rupture distinguishes itself from this particular ritualised space because of its unexpected and unsolicited nature in the world of flux. God is in control, and as such, apocalyptic disrupts and disorders the *status quo,* adding thereby an actively dangerous dynamic that is not always

remembered in temple locations (such as churches) that risk complacency and anthropocentricity. Thus, throughout the Bible, apocalyptic revelations take place beyond the domesticated realm of human power in the liminal environment of threshold and in-between, where status and identity are ambiguous and uncertain: for example, in the desert wastelands or the alien cultures of slavery and exile: God moves beyond the space that humans have allocated as sacred to confound expectations. In a parallel move, God singles out the weak, marginalised, dispossessed, or outcast for liminal performance of his Word, with a further demand to mark out the truth from the multitude of post-Babel voices. Thus a narrative pattern of marginality develops between potential fulfilment and actual disappointment, to which the axis or fulcrum is the liminal experience of decision about right relationship between God and man beyond the safety of religious conformity, and that thus complicates views of righteousness.

In some narratives, as man breaks the Covenantal promise of faithfulness and trust, self-glorification and apostasy infect the understanding of harmony between God and man: for example, in Judges and Kings. In others however, God gives humanity the chance to change through liminal performance, in which identity is voluntarily given up in order to receive the hidden secret of his creative blessing: for example, in the Flood, Exodus, and Exile. Often, apocalyptic revelation is embodied in characters that resist their vocation: for example, in Moses, Joseph and Jacob. A sense grows however, that the (marginal) righteous suffer despite their faithfulness, the negative repeatedly threatening to overwhelm the positivity of creative blessing and love; for, there are always more examples of unrighteousness than types like Abraham or Enoch. With each fall from faith, the righteous suffer repeatedly at the hands of the unrighteous –making faith hard to sustain or understand. The cry goes up to God to directly intervene in a world in which man and nature seem to conspire against the faithful. Faithfulness is thus threatened by despair, as the unmaking of hope (as trust) and its replacement by foreboding. This double-bind is the context from which the narratives of the New Testament arise; they are narrate the struggle to uphold faith in the face of suffering, and express much about the fall from faith into despair arising out of

disappointed expectation from within an enforced cohabitation with the disordered, unjust world of the apostate.

Inscribing the liminal body:

Let us now consider how Ward's focus of the relationship between suffering and the body unfolds in the logic of biblical tradition: in Second Isaiah four songs present Israel as the servant of God on whose body suffering is inscribed.[221] In the New Testament, Jesus' body is similarly inscribed but the metaphor of suffering is taken much further. In that sense, his body becomes the text on which the entire cosmology of apocalyptic-eschatology is written, and where (critically) the crucifixion bears the full tension of the unmaking of sin (chaos and void) and the remaking of the creative blessing of full humanness within and through his (human) body. In this way Christ's body embodies and performs the liminal expression of the cosmological order, sacred space and sacrifice. *Logos* is thus the mediating point that holds in tension the stress point between negative and positive. It is the uniqueness of this association that prevents notions of cyclical ritual for, as his unique sacrifice takes on all human sin and death, a radical insight of re-creation arises to offer the eschatological promise of salvation for all. Nor is it dialectical in the way previously describe. For, it is only through Christ that reconciliation is (liminally) performed. This is reflected in Philippians 2.6-11; and again in Colossians where Paul writes that, in Christ, 'God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things … by making peace through the blood of his cross'. (Col. 1.20). The cross is the liminal space that is therefore, *de facto*, the mediating space of Christ's body in which our identity as believers is both lost and grounded *as part of that body*; drawing us into participation as for example, in baptism, we are reborn to suffer at the same time as we overcome that suffering in faith. (c.f., Phil. 2.5, 12; Col. 3.12). This is theologically significant, as without Christ, the process between God and man is rendered either univocal or equivocal: in other words, it is only in the tension of Christ's nature as man and God that the truly Trinitarian nature of the Godhead plays through into history as this radicalises understanding of the apocalyptic-eschatological rupture of God enacted in the ultimate space of

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[221] Isaiah 42.1-4; 49.1-6; 0.4-9; 52.13-52.12.

human crisis between life and death. As fully human, the notions of faith, hope and love feed directly back to, and symbolically overcome, Adam's apostasy (where the turn away from God tips Adam away from creative blessing into a world of suffering (Gen 3.14-20) in yet another ironic inversion of the history of creation. This is, of course, reflected in Paul's declaration that Christ resurrected is the second, perfected, Adam (Rom. 5.19).

The body of Jesus *as* Christ thus represents a (uniquely Christological) paradigm of radical sacrifice and faithfulness that brings God and humanity together in one being, acting as mediator to, and fulcrum of the fullness of relationship *and*, at the same time, resistance to inadequate, negative (and human) alternatives. Before his crucifixion, by placing his trust in the Father to the point of utter submission, Jesus shows that man can be transformed by God in the fullness of faith whilst inhabiting the world of sin and that, in incarnation, he is able to anticipate the outcome of the end times to reveal the true meaning of God's loving forgiveness, as fore-givenness. It is in his acceptance of self-sacrifice for the sake of others, that Jesus offers himself as a liminal site for God's cosmological intentions, stretching our understanding of reciprocal faithfulness between God and man beyond even that of God's demand of Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. In another ironic inversion, in the crucifixion, God foregoes intervention and allows his son to be the site of sacrifice for the taking on of sin; and Jesus knowingly accepts his sacrificial role for the sake of humanity and the Father. The Father thus grieves but does not betray (for this would take away free will). The human action turns to God in faith but the divine action mediates between faith and sin. As in creation, in the crucifixion-event, God therefore performs a Trinitarian movement in and beyond Jesus' body: in incarnation, God inhabits a human body as the Son; in the crucifixion, God the Father withdraws, allowing the sacrifice to take place; and through the resurrection, the Spirit intervenes and extends his (fore-given) divine activity for the hope of humankind; the Trinitarian whole manifesting his will and intention (in-process) for the end times whilst maintaining man's own free will. God's dynamic acts of inhabitation, contraction, withdrawal and extension, as

played through the body of Christ, thus present a grammar for belief where form and content cohere.

In Christ, self-limitation modulates its incarnational and kenotic aspects, reflecting again the *limen* as barrier and opening to revelation, as the Word reveals and conceals itself within the limits and limitations of the human community and the human text. In incarnation, Christ bridges the human and divine, entering the liminal space as a human to interact with the divine, as he simultaneously conjoins in the Trinitarian economy. It can thus be said that, in the liminal process of revelation, the relationship between eternity and time, and the dialectical nature of God's relationship to humankind, are analogically opened out to view through the complex within which revelation of the Word in words operates. A theology of liminality represents, as such, the operation of the sacred space of Christ's body. Justice and judgment inhere in this relation-in-difference between God and man in human history, in an analogical movement that negotiates reconciliation through the body of Christ. This is represented in the narratives and rituals of the New Testament: for example, in the Eucharist, in which we participate in Christ's body (as the liminal site for God's disclosure). The participation, in and as part of Christ's body, is reflected similarly in New Testament scripture and is, as I have argued throughout, a liminal performance. The next section summarises the process.

Summing up liminal reading:

I have asserted throughout that theology has to deal with our experience of God in a world in flux where human reason fails; and, through Ward, that knowledge is partial because ontology is weak. In the liminal paradigm, that reality is expressed as an apocalyptic-eschatological struggle between order and chaos that exposes our orientation (as desire) through Christ's body in the fallen world. In the liminal performance of scripture, the Christian reader voluntarily gives himself up to the text in the faithful hope that the Word will act upon him in a process mediated by Christ (and by extension the Spirit and angelic messengers). In our experience and expression of the Word, these representations expose the problematic relationship between time and eternity as in Ward's understanding of

213

their relationship to responsive desire. The temporal gap between reception and interpretation between the original speech act of God and its representation can only be explained through a liminal doctrine of revelation where, as divine opening, the Word silences words as it paradoxically demands proclamation of the good news; God's revealed Word in words continually marking the inadequacy, negation and supplementarity of the medium of language in the radical displacements of Christ's body. However, as the embodying process of reading performs through the liminal moment of decision it presents a seemingly impossible turning-point between life and death in its very supplementarity, as a movement forward that extends as it subtends. Thus the movement between despair (suspense) and hope (expectation) resonates in the apocalyptic text, where the double aspect of the *limen* exposes the choice to return in radicalised, eschatological hope (a trusting confidence).

I have, with Moltmann, asserted that despair represents temptation as the foreclosure of hope, through which, however, we must learn to recognise God's interrogation of us in our feelings of self-doubt and self-loathing. As such, it is a manifestation (a sign) of our ontological insecurity that is continually *refused* by God's faithfulness as fore-givenness. There is, therefore, a very real sense that our inadequate faith must be completely destroyed before it can be reconstituted (reborn) as hope and promise.[222] For, as I proposed in the previous chapter, faith is prime and has the priority, and it is only from within the nature of the relation-in-difference between God and man that it can be radicalised in and through the grammar of Christ's liminal body – that is both opened and closed to God's disclosure of love and relationship as it performs and re-performs the liminal space of creation. That is why the way of the cross (as performance of Jesus' liminal passage) must be imitated in its entirety – through faith into death (as despair) and beyond into the light of proclaimed, radical hope. This is reflected in New

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[222] C.f., Graham Ward. Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 248-251. In this book, Ward considers Karl Barth's theology and the problematic of language, and proposes Jacques Derrida's theory of différance as a supplement to Barth, and this section provides a clear reading of Barth's understanding of faith, to which this understanding is central.

Testament scripture, where the liminal performance is engaged in a God-dependent performance that is as dangerous and unstable as it is salvific.

It is thus that Paul is able to say that

> And you who were once estranged … he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless … provided that you continue securely established and secure in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard … proclaimed to every creature under heaven'. (Col. 1.21-23).

However, an exact correspondence cannot be viewed as more than possibility because the revelatory process beyond actual presence always negotiates between opening and closure at the interface between God and man and it is this that prevents a theology of glory. Its potential, however, signifies hope as a God-laden promise of reconciliation mediated through the body of Christ as *Logos* – thus presenting a template for apocalyptic-eschatology which, through imitation, we learn to perform and understand Christ as the content in the (liminal) form. This is how a theology of liminality begins to emerge as a grammar through which to read and respond to the scriptural texts (and their initial production), where the body of Christ is seen to express, and hold in tension, both the sacred space of performative, divine speech and the liminal experience of unstable , displaced identity.

In relation to textuality, the principle for reading scripture (liminally through Christ's body) is, therefore, that interpretation will be opened to his Word. In the New Testament, prophecy (proclamation of *Logos*) is understood in a radically new way, primarily because it is a gift to the many, mapped onto, and participating in the body of Christ, through which the Spirit is active as an anticipation of and longing for the kingdom.[223] All prophecy, as such, comes from, is revealed and fulfilled in Christ (Luke 24.27, 44-49). Readers become prophets who are

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[223] E.g., spiritual gifts: 1 Cor 12 and 13.

themselves *signs* of God's will and activity. Furthermore, if believers (under one sacred canopy) are faithful, they will listen to (i.e., perform) prophecy (apocalyptically), viewing prophets and their words with suspicion as the liminal performance tests, and is tested by members of Christ's (textual) body. In this movement between right and wrong prophecy (a self-reflexive and critical hermeneutics), the apocalyptic-eschatological paradigm plays through the textual space of the *limen* with its metaphors of fullness and lack, and will stand or fall on the revelation of the nature and identity of Jesus Christ as the medium and message of faith, hope and love (the tenets of faith), where the guiding principle is love (1.Cor 13.13). However, its extension and proliferations through the voices of many messengers (c.f., Rev 1:1-2) is driven through desire of that whose presence is constantly fractured, displaced and extended.

To sum up: previously traditional notions of prophecy have been complicated, focused through one person at the same time as the 'gift' is extended to all (who are formed as the body of Christ). Revelations of the guiding principles for faith are, therefore, singularly and corporately received and shared, all through the mediated Word gifted in the Spirit. It is in this sense that Christian revelations manifest a Trinitarian, processional movement. Furthermore, in identifying Christ as mediator for the performative process of hermeneutical interpretation, the body of Christ on the cross is the key event/sign for Christian belief which reveals him in the fullness of his signifying and mediating nature of radical displacement. If this event cannot expose God's love and the longing for it, it means nothing. For, the relation between God and man must be shown to be reciprocal, recognisable and accessible, at the same time as it is fugitive and mysterious. It is this paradox that faith recognises and holds onto as it passes through the instability of the textual medium: it is able to acknowledge and submit to an analogical worldview in which signs are taken and imbued with the theological. And it is for this reason that the next section considers the tenets of faith as tests of prophetic reading.

9. A liminal reading of Christian tenets as tests of faith

I have asserted that the sense of moving in and through the liminal space of Christ's body operationally complicates the interface between God and humankind, deepening the movements to, against and through the *limen* in an enfolding of the inside to the outside, and *vice versa*. And that as such, liminality expresses the boundary between conscious and subconscious, known and unknown, in the occupation of a position at, or on, both sides of the *limen* as boundary and threshold, and to which Christological and Trinitarian notions are central. In this chapter (through Ward), I have additionally suggested that the concept of relations-in-difference articulates the play between the conjoining, *co-incidenc*e or occupation of opposites where, in the liminal performance of Christ's body, between beginnings and ends, stasis and movement, opening and closure, knowing and un-knowing, initiates are forced to a point of decision and, through its (Christic and Trinitarian) economies, are transformed into an erotic community of faith and hope. This section considers how the tenets of faith, hope and love (and forgiveness) reflect the liminal paradigm and how they might they be said to articulate a theology of liminality; for, it is in the tenets of faith that we must find its grammatical logic as a theology of reading and response. The aim is to test how the apocalyptic-eschatological grammar depends on a liminal performance, to demonstrate how the crucifixion-resurrection marks the tenets of faith with its distinctive dynamic; thus to show how a truncated liminal reading (of the *limen* as barrier) prevents this movement, thereby risking immanentism and forcing atomism.

The reason for considering again at the arguments about Christian grammar through a liminal reading of the Christian tenets of faith, hope and love, is that they are the essential signifiers of Christian belief and arguments for church participation and community. In tandem with the narratives, they parse the movement through the cultural space of the early churches in a heterodox age. Here, where all is narratology where the slippage and logic of supplementarity keep interpretations open and in play, the grammatical logic and performative actions build participation in the shared sacred space in Christ to bring us closer to God. The tenets should not

only encapsulate the way Christian discursive practice sets out its beliefs and practices in the context of *'crux probat omnia'* but also how to respond to protests against them.[224] For, on the one hand, the narratives and liturgies of the New Testament establish the core beliefs for faith as, in and through revelation, presenting thus a reflexive rhetoric in the specifics of their complex and competing world. On the other, they mark out the similarity between the time of Christ and our own times, where Christianity is marginal to the prevailing hegemony. Their apocalyptic-eschatological performance thus demonstrates an openness to revelation that continues to show its relevance to the times and problems in which any interpreter is responding to its logic (for example, gender, homosexuality, global warming and alternative faiths as signs of the times), to inspire him with future promise.

The first point to make is that Christianity asserts the paradoxical association of crucifixion with God *as* love. This is opened up through revelation in and of New Testament scripture. In the narratives, it is easy to see how, in the liminal operation mediated through Christ, temporal/spatial gaps are problematised and represented in the radical displacements of his body to expose the Trinitarian movement of love at the heart of the liminal performance. But this is also expressed in the scriptural liturgies and doxologies: for example, in 2 Philippians, where Christians are commanded to perform Christ's body (through imitation) until the kingdom comes.

> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who although he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend … and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2.5-11).

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[224] Moltmann's starting point in Martin Luther.

In the body of Christ, the spatial and temporal gap between incarnation and death expresses both the presence and withdrawal of God as the liminal movement of creation which is exposed through Christ's body in the fluxional space of displacement, particularly in sacrifice. Paul's understanding of this process unpacks this early doxology, to mark the reality of God's love as suffering love played through the human.

The second is to show how, through this creative making/unmaking, Christ's body signifies God's fore-given love, thus enabling Paul to deepen our understanding of love, as the primary force into which faith and hope are subtended (as outlined in the previous chapter), and as the guiding principle for belief. It is a love that 'bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.' It 'never ends'. In relation to all identity and cultural difference, this principle establishes a template for imitation.

The third is that through participation in Christ's body, all believers are transformed into prophets in a distinctively focused way as the spiritual gifts that reflect Christ's displaced nature derive from this Trinitarian love. Here, critically however (and reflecting Barth), our knowledge and action can never be more than provisional. For, if within the liminal space of God's creative love, we both glimpse, desire and trust in the potential of God's love in the end-times, we know that in the kingdom love, not knowledge, will be prime: 'as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end'. (1 Cor 13.1-13). As such, our theological discourses are responses to God's love in Christ, where believers show their love for God and their fellow humans in, through and as relations-in-difference and as a response to God examined through shared apocalyptic-eschatological performances of Christ, all through the tensions of the crucifixion-resurrection event – as the sign of the beginning of the endtimes and the coming kingdom. (1 Cor 13.8-12). Faith in Christ thus means being crucified with Christ, born in Christ, clothed in Christ. And that, in one sense, means that our

shared participation of his sacred space overcomes relations-in-opposites, or at least, that it gives a vision of what that might mean:

> There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ... and because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. (Gal. 3.27 – 4.7).

In this radicalised liminal space, shared suffering (compassion) becomes a constituent through which to relinquish identity through a love that is performed liminally through Christ's body, and where their prophecies rehearse the promise of what Christ, simultaneously, prophesied and enacted as relation-in-difference and not as relation-in-opposites. For, what such performances expose is the illusion of identity and status of our cultural hierarchies. And as the identity of Jesus is displaced in transition and transformation, it becomes the signifier of creative love and blessing that draws Christian faith apart at the same time at the same time as it re-establishes, through analogy, its origination in a now eschatologically informed understanding of creation in which the differentiated personhood of the Trinity is inflected. This grammar remains one amongst many: segregation from the provisionality of the world-as-text is thus not an option, for it is here that faith and hope are tested. Nor is our essential interaction with it through the *imitatio Christi,* for this only serves to further expose the liminal nature of the crucifixion-resurrection as the sharply physical and axial moment of reality in the provisional, disrupted and unstable nature of representation.

This complication marks the movements to, against and through the *limen* and the enfolding of the inside to the outside, and *vice versa* that Christ's body undergoes to ground Christian faith in the event of his crucifixion and resurrection from the dead (Rom 1.1). The re-performance of Christ's body reflects the disgorging proclamation that Jesus is the Christ, Son of God witnessed in Mark 1.1 whilst, at the same time, narrating how his status and identity are pronounced from the very beginning of his way to the cross (Mark 1.11) through displacement,

instability and ambiguity. Signs which were present but obscure before the crucifixion are revealed through the newly revealed outcome of his triumph over death. However, they can only be understood through a liminal performance, in a folding back through the crucifixion/resurrection that has formed itself into a newly created sacred space for participation in his body, and where relations-in-difference are both upheld and overcome. It is through this understanding of the tensile and subtending nature of liminality that a new grammar for radicalised love in faith and hope is created. On one level, of course, the arguments remain circular (most clearly represented in the opening lines of Mark's gospel). On the other, as seen above, Ward is able to highlight how the reflexivity (manifested in any critical method), when theologically loaded, is able to reaffirm and extend faith: that is, how theology works 'within the unfolding revelation of God'.[225]

Thus, in the forward-moving narrative of the gospels, Christ's body is the core cultural metaphor through which all interpretation works; Christ incarnate, who reveals the nature of love in all its fullness through the radical displacements of his body; Christ the *Logos*, as the grammar of faith that does the same. If, like all cultural signifiers, he is ambiguous, fugitive and mysterious, at the same time he *is*, when liminally performed, the means to revelation, the physicality of crucifixion opening out that ambiguity through the clarity of participation and imitation in a proliferating movement of longing and hope. Throughout the gospels, his nature is thus revealed as a sacred site of mystery in which his life is seen a prophetic sign for the times. As such, the narratives fold back into themselves, as performative acts of faith, hermeneutically driven, as the liminal (displacing) form bends back into and exposes its apocalyptic-eschatological content.

It is through the liminal process of reading-as-participation that we learn that Jesus *is Christ*; that the endtimes *have* started; and are, in some way, fulfilled *in him*. This theological circularity, however, requires critical and interdisciplinary practices which recognise that their narration is formed through a Christian

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[225] C.f., Ward <u>Cities</u>, 21ff.

grammar that is not 'unequivocal' but is open to criticism and interpretation by other grammars. In the gospels, the protests put forward by Jesus' critics throughout his ministry, act as provocations and arguments to test the veracity of his Word which they pronounce with confidence (the word is theologically charged).

However, in any act of theologising, that process continues within its own cultural setting, whilst folding itself back into the gospel performances. This activity is an intertextual process of reinscription on Christ's body that, in effect, inscribes *us* with its incarnational potency.

For, as Ward writes

> To examine how this body is represented and produced is not to deny the existence of the body as such. It is not docetic, until the body is forgotten. Bodies are written upon; these writings have to be read and reread, and this will change the nature of what is written, rewriting the body again. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 115).

Thus, when Moltmann re-inscribes the body of the hung boy with that of God who shares in his suffering death, he *is* performing the liminal space of the crucifixion. He falls short in his interpretation, however, in failing to acknowledge the danger of applying such a reading to a different cultural context in which Christian hegemony risks violently inscribing itself on the Jewish holocaust without highlighting our own need for forgiveness.

As the core values of Christian faith recognise and represent Jesus as Christ, as Word and love, and whose incarnated being opens the beginning of the end as opening to beyond the end, all other tenets given during Jesus' mission on the way to the cross show themselves to be signs of the coming kingdom. For example, in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6.10 ff//Luke 11.2-4), the demand is to love God above all things and to love your neighbour as you love yourself (Matthew 22.36ff) in imitation of, and relation to, God's activity in and on creation. Everything that is good, and therefore touched by the divine, flows from this understanding of the analogical relation between these two tenets. For again, it reflects the love of other, (God, neighbour and enemy) as otherness-in-relation or relations-in-difference, in

terms of non-gendered personhood *and* gender through two economies of desire: *agape* and *eros*.[226] Thus in the Lord's prayer, it is the *analogia fidei*, which Ward associates with the *analogia Christi,* as incarnational, and where 'God creates the correspondence Himself through the Spirit of Christ communicating with human beings by taking up and informing systems of signification'.[227] As we repent and turn back to God, so God forgives our transgressions. In turn, we must reciprocally forgive not only our neighbour but also our enemy, as we remember that we are often the enemy of other disenfranchised and reified groups and individuals.

This fore-given forgiveness might risk complacency in the analogy of being that Moltmann proposes for theistic argument were it not for the plea from believers to be rescued from 'the time of trial'. For this prayer, whilst recognising the initiation of the beginning of the end times, is a plea to avoid the weight of suffering and judgment that is inherent in this radicalised view of love. But, again, we are forced to witness love in the end times as *suffering* love because this is also the plea of Jesus in Gethsemane ('Abba … remove this cup from me; yet not what I want, but what you want' (Mark, 14.36), where the undertow of human inadequacy (Ward's weak ontology) attenuates any sense of comfort or glory. Thus, this faith holds together the tension between suffering love and the promise of a blessed outcome, to expose love and suffering as aspects of each other, the seemingly simple tenets of faith, in effect, stretching human resilience and willpower in a way that points us into the extreme emptiness of the space of the liminal economy, where loss of identity, sacrifice and the hope of redemption conjoin. As the ideas contained in the Lord's Prayer reflect in and back on each other the Old Testament scriptural messages of redemption are thus radicalised. This message is repeated in the beatitudes in Matthew and Luke (Matthew 5.3ff//Luke 6.22ff) and in the parables, all illuminating the characteristics to which suffering is intrinsic, unsolicited and paired with the demand to forgive by God's will, for it is in

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[226] C.f., Ward <u>Cities</u>, 172 on the kenosis of incarnation.
[227] C.f, Ward <u>Cities, </u>191, a section that works through the Trinitarianism of Karl Barth in relation to gendered humanity.

forgiveness (only possible through God's active love) that the hope of congruity obtains.

The pairing of the liminal activity of representation (as responsive reading) and Turner's liminal sacrifice with notions of forgiveness of one's enemies becomes the preparation and proving ground which opens believers out to the kingdom of God in a distinctly new way – only understood when passed through the key metaphor of crucifixion-resurrection, for it is here that the responsibility (and test) of forgiveness as a divine activity gains signification. However, as we follow Christ's way prospectively, Mark shows equally that, in the liminal economy, it passes through and inhabits confused identities and worldly suffering through which, by identification, we participate in faith. Thus, as confused, shifting signs mark out the times, our inability to *read* them is itself a sign of the times.

> Beware … Many will come in my name and say, "I am he!" and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place but the end is still to come. … This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

There can be no place of safety where the proclamation of faith is concerned. But it is part of the liminal performance which forms the movement to the end of flux and atomism.

> Beware; for they will hand you over to councils … because of me, as a testimony to them. And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations.

It is not enough for Christ to have initiated the beginning of the end. The faithful, too, must rehearse his performance. In this way, Christ's incarnation can be seen as only partial – explaining further the ambiguous, incomplete nature of his divine identification in the world-as-text. This is reinforced by the presence of the Spirit, who, through all the betrayals, extends and subtends the processional movement of Trinitarian love to support us.

> [D]o not worry beforehand about what you are to say; … for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated

224

by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Mark 13).

Thus, Christian proclamation is weighted with an irony that, through inversion, intensifies an outcome that is contrary to what was, or might have been, expected. It is here that eschatological expectations of glory (in his followers) are all simultaneously undermined (by his opponents) and contradicted by the actions and words of Jesus. For, it is precisely in these contradictions that the truth is revealed, once again demonstrating the liminal operation at work.

Whilst this, to some degree, represents Moltmann's view of dialectics, suffering love, faith and hope, repentance and God's forgiveness, and self-sacrifice only become congruous when they are experienced through Ward's 'logic of analogy' that plays through the core revelation of the crucifixion event and Christ's wounded body.[228] Confusion, ambiguity and unstable identity ironically affirm the certainty of the articles of faith, revealed in contradiction to the (fictional) reality. In this way, the liminal process exposes the reality of our present world-as-text, where the crisis of representation (the unstable sign and the inevitability of surplus) is itself a sign of the beginning of the end, and thus of that other flawed beginning (Adam's expulsion and the fall of language). The signs are events-as-signs about the end opening to old and new beginnings and through which we endlessly turn. They seem to offer little worldly comfort, and yet the promise of the kingdom on this earth as time-bound reality resonates a trace of presence in loss, in failure and in mis-readings; nonetheless to open out a foretaste of full presence to come in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21 - 22.7). Hence, the kingdom both is and is not in their historical moment and in ours.

It is clear that astonishing as the good news is, Jesus' statements about himself only gain credence and focus in and through the oneness of the liminal economy of the crucifixion/resurrection event. And, although there are several stories (as signs) about resurrection in the gospels, the resurrection of Jesus is unique. Unlike the prefigurements, whose joyful resurrections symbolise Jesus'

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[228] C.f., Ward Cities, 21 ff on how we produce knowledge and meaning.

status as the 'resurrection and the life' (John 11.25), his own death, ironically, has represented all that is publically unjust, shameful, violent and humiliating.[229] But again, that shame and sin cannot be divorced from Jesus' raising from the dead (as Steiner remarked) that paradoxically opens to possibility the prefigured miracle of resurrection. In human terms, the crucifixion remains a shocking indictment of the systematic dehumanisation of one man (and thus of all humans) by the representatives of a totalising cultural canopy; also of a particular 'internal' persecution by the most powerful representatives of the hegemonic religious representatives (whether in Judaism or Moltmann's Churches) within a diverse heterodoxy under a regional cultural canopy living a crisis of colonisation (or even post-colonialisation). The shock of resurrection thus marks out the possibility of divine justice and redemption. It lights the Word in the words in the *via crucis*, where it gains credence for our own times as a critique of inhuman justice and of suffering as the hateful, forsaken, and totalitarian oppression of the body, whichever body. It is thus, in the liminal re-performance of the crucifixion-resurrection event that believers are able to participate in suffering love that opens out to the promise of something greater than secularised hope, and that is reflected in participation in the liturgical practice of the Eucharist.

To conclude: in a time when multi-voiced perspectives threaten to undermine the analogical view through social atomism or fundamentalism, Christ's liminal body remains the site for violent discourse, just as it did in its own historical context. But it is a site that opens us out to the fullness of relations-in-difference. The crucifixion-resurrection must be viewed as a liminal performance - an apocalyptic-eschatological event and grammar - because it is only here that Christology, the Trinity and confessional participation are fully held together through creation and eschatology. In the context of early believers (who suffered persecution as they represented this grammar in the cultural maelstrom of the Roman hegemony in and beyond Jerusalem) the crucifixion-resurrection is a sacred site of sacrifice, substitution and participation out of which radical hope and a vision of the kingdom

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[229] of Lazarus (John 11), the son of the widow from Nain (Luke 7.11ff) or Jairus' daughter (Mark 5.22ff and parallels),

emerges. Through our own participation in this body, it remains the proving ground of crisis and decision as well as a place of comfort for individuals in the community of Christian faith. Arguably, any separation away from the simultaneous experience of apocalyptic-eschatology defeats the liminal performance and will diminish the materiality of the body to risk atomism and immanentism. In this final section, therefore, I would like to return to Graham Ward's view of participation, personhood and the Christian community of desire through his reading of the Eucharist because, through its re-introduction of the 'fracture', he centralises the displacement of Christ's body and through participation to fully reflect the processional nature of Trinitarian personhood held in Christ.

10.   Sacred space and participation: the cross and the scandal of Eucharist

Throughout this study I have been at pains to emphasise the liminal grammar of apocalyptic-eschatological performance that is central to New Testament narratives, liturgies and doxologies. Amongst other things, in this chapter, I have focused on the way in which Ward, in effect, highlights the liminal nature of Christ's body in its radical displacements and its relation to desire. Whilst, there is no room here to discuss more fully what amounts to a poetics of displacement that Ward articulates in Cities of God, I would like to consider his reading of the Last Supper and the fracture of Eucharist. In the Last Supper we have a prefigurement of the meaning of the crucifixion and how it will be carried into the Eucharist. As such, it is the retrospective key through which to interpret the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, whilst in the Eucharist, we see the expressive performance of its signification for believers. And, although I have touched on the nature of sacred space and its relation to Christ's sacrifice, it is through the association of the Last Supper with the crucifixion of Christ that the participatory nature of Christianity is most fully expressed in terms of embodiment and communion.

Ward writes that in the breaking of bread 'the displacement of the body at the Eucharist [effects] a sharing, a participation'. This is prefigured in the Last

227

Supper (Steiner's conviviality). In is also here that we begin to experience the full depth of rupture of that communion: in the dispersal and betrayals of the disciples; in the arrest, trial and torture of Jesus; and finally, in the actual breaking of his body in crucifixion where the body of Christ is given to the disciples for forgiveness of sin. In sharing and participating in that body, of course, they become part of it. Yet from the centre of this sharing, the one at the centre of communion is separated from the many, the rupture of the crucifixion events thus opening a space through which to transform the movement of desire into loss and grief, and thence to the fully Trinitarian nature of participation.

Ward's logic is as follows: First, without the depth of that previous sharing in the body of Christ that conjoins with the various betrayals and desertions (by Judas, Peter *et al*), 'there cannot arise the sense of a coming separation and loss' through which to reinforce 'the nature and depth of the former identification'. (Ward, Cities 104). Second, separation forces us to face into our own fallen nature and, as Ward writes, this is reflected and acknowledged in the community of the faithful

> What is being mourned … is not simply the suffering body of Christ, but our own nature as those capable of handing that body over, and therefore handing our own bodies over to some other social corpus (the Jews, the Romans, whoever). (Ward Cities, 104).

Of course, this confirms Steiner's view and deepens our own understanding of the necessity of betrayal and desertion to belief that is inscribed in the liminal grammar of Christianity. It also provides a more profound understanding through which to read Moltmann's use of the boy on the gallows, as it acknowledges the way in which we submit our bodies to the shame of belonging to social bodies to which atomism and appropriation are central. In this way, Christ (as the one) and the faithful (as the many) enter the dangerous, transitional and suffering space of liminality. (C.f., Ward Cities, 105). The displacements of Jesus' body perform through the Trinity: in fact, his death can be 'interpreted as the Trinity at its most extended'. (Ward Cities, 105). In the hiatus of the Friday, and in the silence of the

Saturday, the Father is separated and most different from the Son, and the Father-Son are separated from the Spirit.

Within secularised humanity, of course, we live within the constant pain of the Friday and the despair of the Saturday of which Steiner speaks so eloquently. In refusing the goodness of God, we refuse the nature of suffering love within the Trinitarian economy with its focus in the cross as an entry-point to human problems *in the world*. It is the axis in which answers to questions are provided about creation, sin, separation and death, history, faith and hope (as a future horizon). But, with their focus on Christ's body, it is the betrayals and rapid movements which accelerate and exacerbate the sense of human tragedy.

> [These] bear witness to the force-field within which his body is placed and to its own power to become a focus, to affect and draw in. (Ward Cities, 103).

Thus, Ward marks the body of Christ as the axis and liminal centre of radical displacement and desire. Here, any 'iconic status' possessed before his crucifixion is lost in the moment of sacrifice, his body on the cross becoming a 'spent form', a displaced object, left over from the frenzy of self-gratification in his scapegoating by the populace (Ward Cities, 103 – 104).

> The transitional nature of Jesus' body at this point is dramatised further by the silence of Holy Saturday which deepens the hiatus … made profoundly theological because it is interpreted as the Trinity at its most extended … [and where] [d]isplacement of identity itself, the expansion of the identified Word to embrace all that is other, becomes the mark of God within creation. (Ward Cities, 105).

It is here that 'physicality subtends iconicity', emphasising the central association between the body and its inscription into both our memory and our representations. In the hiatus of his dying moments, a new desire emerges. Desire is no longer libidinous, but reflects a longing full of pathos which, through our identification with the suffering of Christ, reinstates (and reinscribes) his iconic status. (Ward, Cities 105). In this way, Ward marks out how the estrangement between God and man plays out in Christ's broken body on the cross as the location in which to truly understand our longing for reconciliation. It is only here that the radical nature of this displacement is internalised to the degree that it can 'trigger' a movement to

salvation. This supplements Moltmann because it is only by associating our participation in the body of Christ at the Last Supper with that of our submission to human power in handing over his body that we can actually perform (share in) and know the redemptive power of the liminal operation in the Eucharist.

In the site of the crucifixion, Christ is made fully sacred as he offers himself to God for sin, in which (metaphorically as Lamb of God in Revelation) he is the unique sacred offering (of differentiated self) in a rite that combines the necessary thanksgiving and repentance through which God's forgiveness is revealed.[230] Thus, in the Eucharist, Ward confirms that the uniqueness of 'Take. Eat. This is my body' signifies transcorporeality, not as disintegration but as expansion *en Christo* - 'an effect of following in the wake of the eternal creative Word'. Accordingly, Christ's 'body accepts its metaphorical nature' analogically in an endless fracturing and feeding to others. The breaking of bread (that *is* Christ's body) presents the miraculous nature of that sacred site - 'broken, given, resurrected and ascended' (Ward Cities, 95). It is this understanding that transfigures discipleship from the kind of worldly virtue and judgment to which Ward referred in his reading of Augustine's earthly city to that of the vision of the City of God found in the Revelation to John.

When Ward describes the 'ontological scandal' of body *as* bread, he is effectively speaking of the performative Word.[231] This is still reflected in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy where the Eucharist *is* the living sacrifice of Christ in the crucifixion/resurrection event in which each believer's suffering conjoins with that of Christ, as a shared devotional offering and oblation. As an act of faithful worship, the Eucharist thus ruptures time and space to renew and make the sacred present, without Christ actually dying or being crucified again.[232] As his body is transformed into bread ('This is my body, which is given up for you,' and

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[230] I have taken this combined concept of the meaning of sacrifice from the Jewish rite of thanksgiving: *Korban Todah.*
[231] C.f., Ward, Cities 82ff.
[232] C.f., Rev. 13:8, in which those written in the Book and participating in worship avoid the risk of idolatry (of the beast).

'This is my blood of the new covenant'), it is transformed for the forgiveness of sins. It is a re-presentation of the event by the (displaced) risen (and ascended) Christ who continues to give himself over as an offering that is ontologically one with that (displaced) Christ on the cross. Of course, the identification of the Eucharist with the sacrifice of the cross, and prefigured in Christ's words at the Last Supper, exposes a liminal performance that plays between present, past and future in a processional movement in which the Trinity inheres.

In the Eucharist, as on the cross, Christ is priest (offering the sacrifice) and victim (the sacrifice is his own body): he is medium and message. But as participants in the Eucharist, we all share by offering our own bodies as part of his body (as church). This *imitatio Christi* is reflected in Paul: 'Now I am rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church'. (Col 1:24). It is in this sense that the Orthodox Church, through the operation of the Spirit, views the celebration of the Eucharist as a continuation rather than a reenactment of the Last Supper. Again, reflecting Turner, the liminal operation of Eucharist as a site of sacrifice is a dangerous and fluxional place of transfiguration where, as Ward comments

> Christ is both broken and given so that we become partakers in him and yet Christ also gathers us together, calls us to each others as fellow members of his … body. Our transcorporeality is thus towards resurrection, not endless 'ab-solution' (or dissolution). (Ward Cities, 94-5).

As such, the act of passing through the threshold/boundary to inhabit the fluxional space of the *limen* is performed on the grounds that, as a sacrificial process, it will be positively transformative, making the symbolic, or even actual, risk of losing everything that makes us human worthwhile – including reason/knowledge. As an operational *complex* that moves between past, realised and future expectations, the liminal *as* sacred space, is thus a space of fracture and transcorporeality - not as a

dissolved body (although it risks this) but as a body transfigured through its opening up to encounter and as 'an effect of following in the wake of the eternal creative Word,' negotiated with the broken but given body in defiance of reason.[233] Again, the sense of moving in and through the liminal space is operationally complicated at the interface, deepening the temporal and spatial movements to, against and through the *limen* in an enfolding of the inside to the outside, and *vice versa*.

It is this performance that exposes the movement through and away from despair to radicalised love, faith and hope through relation-in-difference. Ward describes the analogical relation between God and humans, who in faith are 'constituted as those who desire the freedom, goodness and beauty of being loved and loving'. (Ward Cities, 172). This is similarly reflected in LaCocque who reminds us of how the creation narratives express the cosmological significance of love.

> Love consists in creating someone from the inner self, and in return in being created by this someone. God is anthropomorphous, and humanity is theomorphous. It is an exchange of goodness. … Psalm 94.7-9 shows incisively that the essence of being human is to be in communication with others,[234] to be turned *ad extra*. This is the human responsibility. (LaCocque 10).[235]

In this sense, goodness is both intrinsic and extrinsic to God's and our own makeup. For, within the divine economy of love, there is a movement from inside to beyond which is reciprocated in a continual flow between self and other. Ward makes the additional point that, in humankind, a Trinitarian economy is mediated (through Christ) in an analogous movement.[236] In this way, in the Eucharistic sharing of the body of Christ, both the many and one conjoin.[237]

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[233] C.f., Ward Cities, 95.
[234] Psalm 94.7-9: "and they say, 'The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive.' Understand, O dullest of the people; fools, when will you be wise? He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?"
[235] C.f., LaCocque 3 - 29.
[236] For example, as a prayer to the Father, through the Son, answered by the Spirit.

[237] C.f., Ward, Cities 152 -153.

[The] 'we' … turns contradiction into a paradox that remains hidden in the 'mystery' of sharing … [and] bears us over the oxymoronic, the ancient problematic of the one and the many. … Difference here is made possible by affirming similarity; relations emerge from the logic of analogy. (Ward Cities, 153).

Thus the way is opened to Ward's view of the way in which divine love (lover, beloved and loving) is ruptured, centred and dispersed within the Christian *communitas.* The community rehearses the paradigmatic participation in, and representation of the moment of the cross and its Trinitarian personhood of co-equals. This explains why the longing for a turn back to God requires a theology of participation as against the alternative view of separation as lack, where the subjective self, as subject of desire, seeks to possess the object of desire.[238] This is neither the creative reaching beyond self nor a movement of genuine love (as *eros* and *agape*); it is craving for appropriation.

As Ward signifies

At the Eucharist we receive and are acted upon; now, having been brought into relation and facing the acknowledgement of the breaking of that relation, [we] recognize displacement of the body as part of Christian living. (Ward Cities, 106).

It is thus only in participation with this broken body that his body can be displaced into that of the many and the one. (Ward Cities, 103). This is represented by the 'fracture' of the liturgy, where in its dissemination each body is set 'free to follow … within the plenitude of the Word which has passed by and passes on'. (Ward Cities, 106). For, through participation, the congregant is drawn into the 'ongoing activity of Christ', not as lack but as a taste of eternal life. (Ward Cities, 106). The movement from integration to separation and brokenness, from participation to separation, points to a repetition of the fissuring of self in this shared relationship. This is not love as lack (as falling into the abyss of despair, or as the *via negativa*) in which the self breaks itself apart: it is a fissuring whose completion 'lies outside, beyond, before and after it'. (Ward Cities, 107). It is here,

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[238] C.f., Ward, Cities 172 – 173 for a reiteration of the subjective self.

therefore, that the cosmological worldview is most evident, for participation in Christian desire demonstrates not only the human desire for God but also God's desire for the human. (Ward Cities, 207). Thus, Ward concludes:

> The mourning … from the radical displacement of the body of Christ feeds a positive generation …and enables a co-creativity. (Ward Cities, 108).

This participation in the inner working of God(in the one and the many) expresses 'a certain grammar of being; the *in itself* which goes out of itself towards the other *for itself*, while yet remaining *with itself*'. (Ward Cities, 139).[239] This perfectly reflects a theology of liminality as theologies of response and reading.

11.   Conclusion

In presenting an apocalyptic-eschatology of the Word in words, I have been attempting to show how its liminal theology both reflects, and plays through the crisis in representation, whilst at the same time it demonstrates the effect of God's Word on the flawed and unstable medium of our own words. Logically God's Word is untranslatable, and yet in some way reveals itself to us in the midst of that instability to carry us beyond in its hope and promise. The liminal operation thus works through that fluxional site as a site of sacrifice. This means that the instability of mediation does not fit absolutist readings of Christ. But how do we explain our dependency on his body in the face of the problematic nature of representation?   Paradoxically, as a sign for redemption and justification, Christ both undermines and upholds our identity through the uncertainty and instability of his body, which is at times, spatially fugitive, absent, ambiguous or hyper-real. The radical displacement of Christ's body is rehearsed in numerous narratives that play into the Christian texts as apocalyptic, where again and again, encounters with Jesus can be read as sacrificial (a 'making sacred'), and where his body is the liminal site for sacrifice (a coming closer to God): in the sea crossings, in the transfiguration on the mountain, the disciples live close to the divine. And yet, they

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[239] Ward is here working through Hegel's notion of the 'will' and the 'community of the spirit'. C.f. Ward Cities,137ff.

continue to misread and confuse the signs. For it is only in the giving-up identity through an embodiment of suffering and abandonment (of the self for the other) that we can come closer to God. It is in this sense, that I use the word sacrifice. As such, Christ is a proving ground that involves that loss of stable identity as radical displacement that truly brings the body forward to its physical reality and that paradoxically transforms itself into shared identity. The crucifixion is thus a sacrifice that continues into the Eucharistic feast (in which theologies of incarnation and eschatology modulate to prevent a theology of glory) that draws together the paradox of love as a desiring, longing for the body of Christ, as a shared suffering in its brokenness, and as an extension through participation and dispersal. The temporal/spatial relation of the site of sacrifice to that body is thus central to any notion of participation in the crucifixion event. It is this that Ward is able to express in his theology of semiotics.

Overall, Part 1 has aimed to establish the nature and significance of the apocalyptic text in relation to its liminal performance to set against the truncated, dualistic paradigms and readings of modernity. Part 2 narrows its focus to concentrate on comparative readings of specific literary texts, from however, the broader literary canon beyond scripture. It consists of close readings of apocalyptic works by Mikhail Bulgakov and Thomas Pynchon. They respectively represent examples of modern and postmodern apocalyptic literature. The aim here is to present reader-response analysis of non-scriptural apocalyptic forms through scriptural interpretations that demonstrate the performance and experience of the *limen*. As such, it illustrates how the two liminal paradigms interact with, influence and direct our views of the broader cultural text, to help interpret the signs of the times. It is my hope that by showing how some works of fiction take up the ideas, form and content of apocalyptic, that once identified, will open the contemporary reader to a new awareness of, and pleasure in, already well-known texts that have not previously been identified as apocalyptic by dominant literary-critical strands.

Chapter 6

Words at War: apocalyptic genre and mode

Evangelists clothe their history with [reborn] images, but they are restricted by the historical actuality upon which they fit them. …But the Apocalypse writes of heaven and things to come, that is, of a realm which has no shape at all but that which the images give it. … The teachings of Christ contained both the unfettered images of history and doctrine. In the thirteenth chapter of St Mark … the tremendous figure of the Son of Man expands to fill the skies of future Advent. Elsewhere in the Gospel we have the figure confined by particular circumstance … the Son of Man must suffer; or made an example of moral instruction – the Son of Man came to minister. We read the Gospel as one, and the applied image colours the free image also…St John simply yields himself to images, that is to say, to the Holy Ghost …We can study in this book not only the images, but the process of inspiration by which they are born in the mind. Indeed the two studies are one.[240]

1. Introduction

In Part 1, I outlined a theory of liminality that drew together apocalyptic and eschatology through a performance of the *limen*, and suggested that this shows Christian grammar to be essentially liminal, the apocalyptic text encoding the emotional effect of flux and displacement where, as a war of words, notions of end play into notions of opening to express how, at the very limit of human understanding (where words fail), those with faith in God's love of creation are opened out to revelation in the textual performance of this liminal complex. In all of this, the relationship between God and man (as an economy of love in which God acts and man responds) is a theological presupposition and *cannot* be argued from reason alone. I explained how all language is apocalyptic in tone, but that the analogy of faith reveals the double nature of the *limen* that in the performance of scripture, and through an understanding of the Trinitarian analogical participation, allows us to experience the loving nature of the Godhead – expressed in the displacement of Christ's incarnated and kenotic body. Key issues included the

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[240] Austin Farrer, <u>A Rebirth of Images</u> (Westminster, London: Dacre,1948) 17.

nature and purpose of the body: in sacrifice and forgiveness as a suffering body in the economy of faith, hope and love. I then introduced the apostasy of Adam that, with its negative liminal paradigm, stands as a metaphor for the crisis of representation and shows how the problematic of analogy presents itself through negative dialectics into which an inevitable despair plays. Finally, as Christ on the cross is the axial point of crisis through which the Christian text is mediated, the mediation of God's Word in paradigms of suffering love must then be interrogated through recent perceptions of knowledge in which despair has come to dominate and suppress notions of loving encounter in the liminal space.

I also suggested that, in biblical scholarship, disagreements over the terms apocalyptic and eschatology are themselves exacerbated by the chaotic and disturbed environment of the apocalyptic tone of all language that is, in turn, consciously rendered in the apocalyptic text. Thus, that the problematic of language, mediation and the immediacy of God's Word in words (voiced, for example by Barth and Ward) can be illuminated by a clearer understanding of the underlying affect of apocalyptic-eschatological form and content on Christian grammar; and that the connection between apocalyptic literature and a theology of the Word is important precisely because New Testament scripture presents itself through literary forms that focus on the mediation between supernatural and natural, within what I would describe as a disturbed and disturbing dialectical environment. I discussed the way a visionary mode makes this apparent in the Christian ritualisation of the cross that plays into and through the apocalyptic-eschatological, liminal paradigm. Thus, both the performance and production of Christian texts express the crisis of representation and also the means to reveal God's Word as a theology of liminality.

The main aim of Part 2 is to present reader-response analysis of non-scriptural apocalyptic forms through scriptural interpretations which demonstrate the performance and experience of the *limen*. As such, it presents a way of reading that looks at how the two liminal paradigms influence and direct our readings of the broader cultural text, here, specifically through works of literature. In this chapter,

therefore, in order to set up the two close readings (and moving beyond Derrida's apocalyptic tone), I examine the distinction between an apocalyptic mode (reflecting mood, manner and arrangement) and genre (form, content and function). For once known, the characteristics of apocalyptic will help open the texts to fuller recognition and interpretation of the liminal paradigms. To that extent, this chapter adds literary to the theological parameters of Part 1 to set up two close readings of literary texts, one modern and the other postmodern.

Chapters 7 and 8 consist respectively of readings of works from Russia and America which, for most of the twentieth century, have been represented as social and political opposites within an apocalyptic scenario of nuclear Armageddon. The apocalyptic mindset arguably informs the literature of both where, however, the distinctions between them lead to different, if associated outcomes, because both engage in a conservative yet resistant stand against modern socio-political ideologies. This is arguably achieved in large measure through the influence of the form and content of Christian apocalyptic literature with its emphasis on liminality and revelation. Thus the literature of Part 2 begins to illustrate theoretical aspects of Part 1 through the difference between secular literary and scriptural texts that I play one through the other.

In chapter 7, through a reading that highlights the literary motifs and generic characteristics of The Book of Revelation, I discuss how Mikhail Bulgakov creates an apocalypse by taking a (Christian orthodox) apocalyptic perspective of 1920s literary Moscow to overcome his own cowardice and fear of persecution.[241] In chapter 8, I consider how the work of Thomas Pynchon is a modal performance of apocalyptic that marks the negative liminal paradigm of (nearly) non-meaning and (problematic) communication; and explore how, in reading through the negative paradigm that Pynchon presents, the gospel message of suffering love is distorted

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[241] Mikhail Bulgakov, <u>The Master and Margarita.</u> Trans. Michael Glenny. London: The Harvill Press, 1996. --- <u>The Master and Margarita</u>. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Vlokhonsky. London: Penguin Books, 1997. Citations are from Glenny's translation as, although Pevear and Vlokhonsky arguably reflect more clearly the vernacular slang of the time, Glenny's translation is the best-known English translation.

and corrupted.[242] As such, these final chapters play between the power of Christian apocalyptic grammar and performance (to elicit divine hope and participation in personhood) and the negative, truncated grammar of modernity (with its inevitable outcome in despair, confusion and indifference). In the epilogue, I will suggest some ways in which the work that I have begun here on liminality and the apocalyptic text can be extended and forwarded in our theological interpretations of the cultural text.

2. The apocalyptic genre

Within the interest in apocalyptic and eschatology that grew amongst post-war theologians, attempts have been made in biblical scholarship to clarify aspects of the apocalyptic texts: between an 'apocalypse' (as a generic piece of writing); 'apocalyptic' (as a thought-world, or *modus operandi*); apocalyptic-eschatology (as an idea that transposes into other theological contexts and literatures); and 'apocalypticism' (as sociological and theological function). In terms of this study, in addition to the apocalyptic tone that I discussed in chapter 3, the nature of genre and mode open up literary aspects of apocalyptic prior to the close readings that expose its influence on the broader cultural text. In this section, therefore, I outline the most important generic aspects of apocalyptic from biblical scholarship and further examine the collage theory that I put forward in earlier chapters, as this is, in my view, a characteristic that has remained unexplored.

Klaus Koch began the recent drives to distinguish literary and intellectual characteristics of apocalyptic and the nature of religious movements exemplifying those ideas and literary forms.[243] Overall, the debate has been constituted by

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[242] Thomas Pynchon, <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u> (London: Picador, 1975). ---<u> The Crying of Lot 49</u>. (London: Vintage, 1996). ---. "Entropy." <u>Slow Learner: Early Stories</u>. (London: Picador (Pan), 1985). 77 - 94. ---. <u>V.</u> (Philadelphia: Lippincott ; London: Cape, 1963. Picador ed. London: Pan Books, 1975). ---. <u>Mason and Dixon</u>. (London: Vintage, 1998).
[243] Klaus Koch (1972) <u>The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic</u>, *op.cit.* Koch reviews the revival of interest in 'apocalyptic' in German and English-speaking studies in the post-war period, to which Pannenberg,

antithetical ideological positions between those who distinguish between a Jewish apocalyptic tradition with Christianity as an offshoot,[244] and Christianity as an offshoot of Jewish prophetic tradition.[245] The complexities of these ideological issues are too great to consider here. It suffices to say that for many the nature and value of the apocalyptic tradition is often seen as inferior to that of the prophetic tradition.[246] For my purposes, what matters is that apocalyptic literature be identifiable, and that when particular texts are in dispute, they are argued over within generally recognisable terms of reference.

Of course, even within the historical-critical approach, there are many ways of examining apocalypticism: for example, the visionary mode (Rowland) as a hermeneutical approach to text production discussed in chapter 1. Another is the examination of the distinctions between literary genre, mode and tone. A number of conferences, colloquia and publications have looked at defining and distinguishing these particular aspects, with contributions from several notable scholars working in genre studies.[247] One outcome has been a proliferation of distinctions between a broad range of texts from across the first-century Mediterranean and Near East. Another has been the importance of agreeing common literary characteristics.

Wilkens and Käsemann are of central importance. NB. I have completed a draft review of apocalyptic studies in a draft. It will not be included in the final version of this study.

[244] *Inter alia*, as a written, visionary, and sometimes, a Wisdom related movement.

[245] *Inter alia*, as relating to actual, historical prophets, such as Jeremiah.

[246] E.g. From Friedrich Lücke onwards, this tendency is confirmed. It formed the basis for Käsemann's article (1969) discussed in chapter 1, above.

[247] E.g. "Conference Proceedings", The Taskforce on Genre in New Testament Literature (Society for Biblical Literature, 1972); Colloquium on Apocalypticism (Uppsala, 1979);
"The Morphology of a Genre", in Semeia, no 14 (1979); "Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting", in Semeia, no 36 (1986); Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium (JSP Suppl. Series, no 9, 1991); John J Collins, The Apocalyptic Imagination: an Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity (New York: Crossroad, 1984). Second edition, 1998; Christopher Rowland, The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity (London: SPCK, 1982). Notable scholars within this interest area are J.J. Collins, A. Yarbro Collins, E. Schüssler Fiorenza, David Hellholm, Jean Carmignac, Lars Hartman, E. P. Sanders, David Aune, F. M. Cross, P. D. Hanson, H. H. Rowley, M. E. Stone and R. E. Sturm.

Within biblical studies, it is now generally agreed that form, content *and* function constitute a genre,[248] but that a distinction must be made between synchronic and diachronic interpretations.[249] A synchronic reading abstracts common characteristics from the overall development of a genre to provide a perspective unencumbered by chronological differences. A diachronic reading stresses changes over time, whilst still allowing the comparison of two or more synchronically related genre systems. In biblical studies the abstraction of common formal and thematic characteristics forms the basis for comparing the differences made clear by diachronic readings. For, as in all texts, biblical texts, and their classical contemporaries (canonical and apocryphal), are said to vary because of the different cultural, social, theological and political contexts.[250] However, even though produced at different times and in different locations, the historical time-gap is small relative to the broader context of western history, and the positive association between apocalyptic texts from different, but associated, cultures helps to build a picture of the development of a common literary type (with shared features) within western culture.

In addition to these historically close comparisons (of primary generic examples) another approach is the study of the later reception history of literary apocalyptic.[251] This considers texts which are said to bear the *hallmark* of the primary texts. Reception history will tend to use a combination of historical-, or literary-critical methodologies.[252] My own work falls within this area of interest.

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[248] C.f. David Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre", in <u>Semeia</u>, no 36, *op cit.*, 65 - 96. John J. Collins, <u>Mysteries and Revelation</u>, *op cit.*, 11 - 31. Interestingly, Alastair Fowler disputes the absolute necessity of functionality and *Sitz-im-Leben* to the recognition of a genre, arguing that intentionalism and historical possibility are "not … adequate guiding principle[s]". He points, instead, to a recognizable 'generic horizon'. C.f., Alastair Fowler. <u>Kinds of Literature: An Introduction the Theory of Genres and Modes</u>. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) 256-260.

[249] E.g., David Hellholm, <u>Mysteries and Revelation</u>, *op cit.*, 135-163, especially, 158. Both Jauss and Fowler acknowledge the importance of both. C.f. Fowler (1982) and Jauss (1982), chapter 3.

[250] E.g., throughout the intertestamental period.

[251] My own work falls in this category.

[252] More recent interdisciplinary studies (along with Reception Reading) tend to draw on texts that have previously been considered to fall outside the tradition. E.g. Alison M. Jack, <u>Texts Reading Texts: Sacred and Secular</u>, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, no 179 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). The recent formation of "The Centre for the Study of the Reception History of the Bible" at Oxford University, in which literary critics and theologians/biblical scholars are working on the texts of William Blake as apocalypses, is another indication of movement to draw later

What is common to all approaches is that each is seeking a recognisable aggregate in which certain values are embodied, and out of which changes in style and context can be discussed and assessed. (Fowler 3ff.). As such, an apocalypse, like any genre, presents itself in an 'order of works' (Fowler 3ff) where, as the sequence moves forward through time, the hermeneutic which drives the production of texts results from the movement back to, and through earlier texts, whether or not in a conscious reworking of these antecedents.

A genre is a type of literature with a set of structural as well as thematic traits. In recent years, however, the very notion of a literary genre has been subverted by postmodern views which counter this understanding. The view, arising out of structuralist understandings of language and literature, is that every text is a *discourse* in which affinities and relationships exist between *non*-literary and literary texts. (Fowler 7ff).[253] It has been noted that the difficulty of pinning down that which constitutes a genre derives from its changeable nature. Another difficulty lies in its interaction with non-literary types (e.g., commentary). However, Alastair Fowler points out that

> Any two neighbouring or contrasting literary types … have a far closer mutual relation in terms of genre than either has with a non-literary type – even one from which it draws its formal material. (Fowler 13).

This understanding is important and biblical scholarship is right to seek out the characteristics, although the often self-limiting and restrictive view and attempts to fix definitions within a given period fails to take account of the nuanced mutability of the genre as part of the diachronic nature of the intertext.

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literatures into an exploration of apocalyptic literature. This was initiated by Christopher Rowland and Jon Mee.

[253] Fowler on Bakhtin/Todorov. NB, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, *et al*, follow this movement through to a so-called post-structuralist position, although Derrida does recognise form and its relationship to content.

All-important is that the outward form (use of language, structural patterns etc.) and inward content (ideas and themes) hold together to demonstrate similar values (whether affirmative or resistant). (Fowler 13). And that in any comparison between de-theologised modern and biblical texts, the closeness of values (represented by outward form and inward themes) refers back to the theological nature of the primary texts out of which subsequent texts develop. Hans Jauss suggests, however, that a secular criticism places 'spiritual' genres in a problematic relationship to 'worldly' ones.

> [A] literary understanding that arises only with the emancipation of the fine arts from their ties to cultic and social functions, is transferred to a period that did not yet feel any separation between religious life and literary culture, the contents of faith and the forms of art . (Jauss 102).[254]

That is to say, it has been a mistake to project secular attitudes onto texts which clearly espouse theological interpretation as part of their production as it cauterises their meaning. I would add that this means that when the generic traits of a religious forebear are recognisable in a 'profane' text and form part of its antecedent's reception history, the theological will add depth to (and potentially re-theologise) its a-theological position, because the primary texts necessarily affect subsequent text-production. (Fowler 13).[255] In the critical hiatus between sacred and profane texts, Steiner confirms that all literature works across three semantic fields

> – the theological or 'trans-rational', the philosophical and the poetic – are conjoined in Plato. But it is this conjunction which affords his profoundly disquieted analyses of the creative their resonance and drama of feeling. (Steiner <u>Grammars</u>, 42).

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[254] Hans Robert Jauss. Jauss, <u>Toward an Aesthetic of Reception</u>. Trans. Timothy Bahti. London: The Harvester Press, 1982.
[255] This is what he calls the 'false recategorization' and the 'spiritual challenge' of the Bible (Fowler 13). Again, this is formed by the double nature of cancellation and affirmation in language.

The text is arguably devalued when this tripartite complex is ignored and, in any case, is only possible through subversion, refusal and suppression. Fowler reflects this.

> The inclusion of works in literature need not mean that their practical illocutionary force has been nullified. The Bible's general authority may have weakened. But a good reader will sense its claims and recognize (for example) when promises are being made, even if he chooses, as he might have chosen in 1611 – not to respond. (Fowler 14).[256]

In other words, resistance to the influence of the biblical-theological on the secular literatures of modernity should not detract from the inherent reality of its influence. Thus, although a normative concept of that which constitutes a genre varies as values change, changes serve to further explain their variability and mutability (Fowler 16), whilst the generic similarities aid recognition of that which remains constant. I follow this approach in the close readings in chapters 7 and 8.

The immediate concern with common identification comes from the need for a basic paradigm through which to view change and difference.

> Every genre...has multiple distinguishing traits, which, however, are not shared by each exemplar ... the character of genres is that they change. Only variations or modifications have literary significance. (Fowler 18).

Within a broad definition, diachronic variances allow the identification of change, the commonalities permitting an initial generic identification upon which any comparison depends. Some biblical scholars of the apocalyptic genre have made this point. Their work, however, is mainly confined to the classical period.[257]

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[256] The date of the completion of the King James' Bible as the authorised version for Anglicans.
[257] This understanding of the significance of literary criticism is demonstrated by Schüssler Fiorenza and even by Barth.

The generic constitution of a system of 'unformulated' grammatical rules which, in part, are formalised into 'specialized literary conventions', reflects its beginnings as 'the record of a specialized speech act', and to that degree, it is formed into a 'cosmos of forms'. (Fowler 21 - 21).[258] (For example, in the apocalyptic text, specialised speech acts are voiced by the revealer and the recipient prophet, and its literary conventions would be that of the dialectical use of opposing imagery.) As in discourse, the communication of a genre is forward-moving and 'non-reversible'. Against Derrida's tone, a genre will, as a 'literary coding…confirm the work as well as its message'. Its formal patterns are recognisable, despite the incorporation and organisation of many other forms into it. (Fowler 22). In a New Testament apocalypse, other forms may include the letter, the biography, the hymn, and the commentary.[259] Thus constituted by family resemblance (Fowler 41ff.), a genre changes over time in a series of extensions which conform, vary, innovate, or antagonise the original. (Fowler 23). But this need not imply that employment of a genre is conscious. (Fowler 20).[260] This is also evident where the influence of Jewish apocalyptic has clearly affected text production. For, whereas constant modification and mutation of a genre may seem to undermine its very essence, its mutability allows a text to 'convey' its own distinctive literary meaning. (Fowler 24). New groupings must, therefore, be explored by reference to texts that demonstrate an affinity of subject matter or themes, by reference to different axes, or by their comparable mode or dynamic movement (Fowler 33), because, even where the time-gap is wide, commonalities remain. This is what the biblical scholars of apocalyptic have done.

Apparently against this, Fowler provides an example which is peculiarly appropriate to this study. Of Kurt Vonnegut and Thomas Pynchon he writes that:

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[258] The only question within scholarship is how much of this 'cosmos' one chooses to explore, not whether the gaps between works are too large to consider relevant.

[259] C.f. David E. Aune, Revelation 1-5. . Word Biblical Commentary. Vol. 52 (Dallas: Word Books, 1997). His section (lxx-xc) on genre considers all these aspects.

[260] So, for example, Derrida's view of apocalyptic demonstrates a clear sense of the genre and he writes about it formally as well as thematically, although he does not refer to genre theory.

> We might agree that a new genre of dystopic fiction was emerging, exemplified by Pynchon's *Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, and Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*: works adapting science fiction's assumption of familiarity to a new purpose, namely economical suggestion of intricate social structures in a satirical or alienated way …But we would have very few concepts with which to analyze this "mosaic fiction", or to describe its formal characteristics.[261] (Fowler 34).

Whilst he associates this new utopic/dystopic genre with works of science fiction, I would argue that the supernatural (as a subgenre which feeds into the work of Pynchon and Vonnegut) derives from the apocalyptic genre. So too does the 'mosaic' quality of the work. Fowler's failure to make these associations is probably attributable to the amount of generic change over time, and to the paucity of work on the apocalyptic genre in literary criticism. Perhaps his overly close diachronic reading suggests a general failure to look at the relationship between apocalyptic narratives of earlier periods and modern works of utopic/dystopic fiction. This lack perhaps exacerbates the difficulty of distinguishing between certain types of writing as genres or subgenres, as well as perhaps the reluctance to recognise how thoroughly apocalyptic subtends post-theological texts.

Arguably, this is also an issue for biblical studies of apocalyptic literature for an associated but different reason. First, the composite character of apocalyptic is seen as a deliberate characteristic. Second, where recognised, it is judged to be a sign of poor literary technique.[262] Thus, when a work seems to be constituted by its intrinsically 'mosaic' quality, identification is simply more difficult to process. However, it is precisely this effect which, together with its formal and thematic motifs, signals the generic characteristics of an apocalypse, and this further

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[261] I would argue that utopic/dystopic fictions form part of the apocalyptic intertext.

[262] E.g. Collins, 1998. He comments that: 'the genre apocalypse is not purely a modern construct, but it …raises questions about the status of early works…that do not bear the title. The question is complicated by the fact that some of these works are composite in character and have affinities with more than one genre'. (Collins 4). C.f. John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards a Morphology of a Genre" in *"Apocalypse: the Morphology of a Genre"*. <u>Semeia</u>, 14. (Missoula: Scholars' Press, 1979) 1 - 20, 5ff.

underpins the need for interpretative referencing through similar texts, even where the time gap is great.[263]

The utility of Fowler's approach to genre-criticism is that it allows us to scrutinise descriptive patterns that are recognisable in different texts and periods.[264] (In the case of an apocalypse the mosaic structure plays a *major* part in that recognition.) William Doty agrees that the common characteristics signal shared or associated meaning through structure, motifs and rhetorical propositions as cues for reading. (Doty 420). He suggests that generic definitions should focus on structural over thematic similarities *except*, however, in 'instances in which certain 'content' only comes into language in certain forms'. (Doty 439). I suggest that in apocalyptic literature a correlation and interaction exist between form and content which constitute but also complicate its nature. Moreover, that a refusal to acknowledge these characteristics is often attributable to ideological prejudice.

John J. Collins' principles for distinguishing a genre have been foundational to the biblical discourse on apocalypse and, because they attempt a broad definition, are useful when considering apocalyptic texts separated by centuries. He confirms that an apocalypse has 'distinctive recurring characteristics' formed in a 'coherent type of writing'. (Collins 1979, 1). These are identifiable as formal units which either stand alone or within other genre-types. As such, they are identifiable *independently* of historical conditions, because these characteristics are phenomenological, not historically based in a common stereotype. (Collins 1991, 1 - 2). Collins claims that the eschatology in apocalypses is distinctive but, if found

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[263] C.f. Alastair Fowler, 88ff on 'generic signals', such as titles, key words, allusions and introductory topics which point to a code-type. So, for example, the opening of the Apocalypse signals its reference to an apocalypse like that of Ezekiel, but also to Christian texts like those of Paul which have a formal opening that obliquely reference revelation in the Spirit, e.g., in Romans. C.f. John J Collins 1998, 17.
[264] C.f., William Doty, "The Concept of Genre in Literary Analysis", Conference Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Literature at the International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion, Los Angeles (1972) 413-448, 415.

outside the genre structure, should be related by analogy. (Collins 1991, 4). He defines the following generic traits: [265]

> 'Apocalypse' is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another supernatural world.
> (Collins 1979, 9).

Expectations of cosmic destruction/transformation are found throughout, and personal eschatology is 'an important feature in all types...at all stages of the genre'. (Collins 1979, 17). It is a central focus in Christian apocalypses. (Collins 1991, 18).[266]

Collins' broad definition embraces a much wider literary base than Judaic and Christian texts. He shows that in the intertestamental period, texts that adhere to these principles exist throughout the Mediterranean and the Near East.[267] His paradigm thus crosses periods, (Collins 1979, 5ff), [268] and provides the ingredients which help in the recognition of themes and motifs of much later apocalyptic texts. Of course, Collin's definition has not escaped criticism. Thus E. P. Sanders writes

> A genre conceived as a whole literary work, as Collins has proposed ... can be as broad as a novel; it would be useless to examine a group of novels for ...a common *Sitz-im-Leben*, or even tightly related literary forms of expression. ... Is this enough to make a genre? Precisely what has been explained, except the widespread desire for revelation? This constitutes something, but is it a literary genre? (Sanders [1983] 455).[269]

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[265] C.f. Collins 1998, 5. *Op. cit.* Chapter 9 considers early Christian apocalypses.
[266] Collins' suggestion that apocalypses continue into the Middle Ages is corroborated by Bernard McGinn whose translations of non-canonical apocalyptic texts, and whose historical research on apocalyptic influences is amongst the best in the field. See below. C.f., Introduction above.
[267] C.f. David Hellholm ed. (1983). *Op. cit.*
[268] He is speaking only of Jewish and Christian apocalypses that fall roughly within the intertestamental period.
[269] E. P. Sanders, "The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses." Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the near East: Proceedings from the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism (Uppsala, August, 1979). Ed. David Hellholm. Tübingen: Paul Siebeck, 1983. 447-59.

However, Sanders additionally suggests that the paradigmatic characteristic of 'reversal' should also be included in its identification. I have similarly made this point with reference to the use of ironic inversion; it adds much to the identification of defining characteristics in a broader range of literature (for example, in Vonnegut and Pynchon).[270]

Collins does mention the composite form of apocalyptic literature, but not in terms of the characteristic juxtaposition of polar opposites put together in a collage, or mosaic form. As previously noted, collage may be one of the most neglected aspect of the genre that significantly presents an emotionally charged set of cues for interpretation, and cannot be been passed off as an irrational, incoherent and inept way of writing. The 'montage' theory of Sergei Eisenstein assists in understanding how this technique works.[271] In what I would describe as an apocalyptic filmic mode, Eisenstein's theory reflects a similar method of constructing meaning from the juxtaposition of apparently opposing or confused images. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith explains how

> Eisenstein's original concept of montage was that meaning in the cinema was not inherent in any filmed object but was created by the collision of two signifying elements, on coming after the other and, through the juxtaposition, defining the sense to be given to the whole. The obvious vehicle for such a form of meaning-construction [in cinema] is the shot, which within the conception needs to be a relatively simple element. But what if it is not simple? What if it contains within itself juxtapositions of different elements … created by the coincidence or collision of sound and image in the synchronised film? …In the *Athenian Acropolis* Eisenstein finds an example of the disposition of masses in space which can only be grasped in its ensemble through a montage effect. (Nowell-Smith, xiii – xvi, xv).[272]

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[270] I discuss ironic inversion more fully in later chapters.
[271] S. M. Eisenstein, S. M. Eisenstein: Selected Works, Volume II. Trans., Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor (London: British Film Institute, 1991)
[272] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Introductory essay. "Eisenstein on Montage", in S. M. Eisenstein: Selected Works, Volume II. Trans. Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor (London: British Film Institute, 1991) XIII-XVI, pXV.

The meaning of the film is understood through the montage of many opposing imagistic parts resonating strangely within the audio and visual motifs to make up the 'apocalyptic' text. Like Barth and Derrida, Eisenstein thus recognises the problematic attempt to get at 'the truth of the object represented'. (Eisenstein 26). Nowell-Smith comments

> [w]hat interests him is … that in order to achieve it [a truth-bearing function] in a work of art you have to proceed in an imagistic way, that you have to produce images which are by their nature metaphorical rather than literal. (Nowell-Smith xvi).

One such example of a metaphor (the barricade as a symbol of combat) has particular relevance for apocalyptic literature, in which Eisenstein portrays an abstract drawing of a barricade as a jagged line running horizontally across a page.

> In all its features … [the sketch] expresses the idea and image of a struggle:
>
> 1. At its simplest, by objective *depictive* means: the sketch depicts a barricade.
> 2. By objective *imaginative* means: the elements are compositionally so disposed as to give the impression of overthrow. In this, by overturning various objects the composition repeats the depictive aspect, in which things are also tipped over or overturned on the barricade.
> 3. But the greatest possible generalisation: the clash of planes, of planes and lines, of lines and planes.
> 4. Finally, in the linear character of the basic outline, which reads like the record of the whole process of struggle.
>
> What is more, all these feature interpenetrate one another and in no way upset the naturalistic, depictive integrity of the phenomenon as such. (Eisenstein 26).

The relationship between the depictive (objectively real) and the symbolic within imagistic and metaphorical representation helps in the recognition of the affective nature of the apocalyptic text, especially when those images are contained within the kind of narrative structure which Collins has described. In the collision of opposites (a dialectical process) Eisenstein's montage of composite forms (the

violence of which can be related to Derrida's understanding of the nature of discourse) foregrounds the *limen* (Eisenstein's jagged line) as creative disjunction/conjunction (in the division of the page/screen). Apply these to Käsemann's apocalyptic principle, and it is clear that the tensions in apocalyptic are analogous to those of the avant-garde concept of montage in Modernism.[273] The tensive cohesion of opposites in the montage technique, between materialism and symbolism, performs the function of revealing a multiplied meaning within the juxtaposed images, reflective also of Ward's materiality of the (displaced) metaphorical body, where an apparently fragmented structure is able to mean more than a unified, one-directional and one-dimensional picture or narrative. The prevalence of pessimism in many recent discourses on text-production 'resonates' the dialectics of apocalypticism played through the analogical. Thus, in addition to Collins' list of characteristics, images of reversal and disjunction are thrown together in the apocalyptic text to stimulate affective responses like those described by Massumi.

3. The apocalyptic mode

In contrast, a mode has an 'elusive' relationship to its genre. (Fowler 106). It provides 'tinges of generic colour' that give out 'distinct signals' and relate analogically to the genre. (Fowler 107). Fowler asserts that there are modes which present particular difficulties, because a mode cannot exist of itself. For example, pastoral and satirical texts, (neither apparently corresponding to a mode not a genre) seem to exist as a 'mixture' in which '[d]iversity of form is paradoxically the 'fixed' form' with a 'fixed moral stance' as the point of coherence. (Fowler 110 - 111). Again, this sense can also usefully be applied to the biblical apocalyptic text, and its modern and postmodern descendants. Thus a text which takes a particular moral stance (drawing together a pessimistic and optimistic outlook through the liminal axis of crisis), which combines forms, and juxtaposes opposing images and

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[273] C.f. Käsemann (1969)*:* 33. '[T]he idea that course of the history of salvation and the history of damnation runs parallel, if also in opposite directions, and finds its criteria and goal in the parousia of the son of man.'

symbols (within a cosmic-historical perspective of violent warfare), provides the necessary connections between apocalyptic texts of different periods and locations, to open them out to comparison. Together, the mixture, or hybrid, forms a family resemblance, and has generic connections with what we recognise as an apocalypse.

Thus, the Book of Revelation is a genre (a defining, or re-defining one, at that) that is produced modally. Mark's gospel on the other hand, relates to an apocalypse in some of its themes and motifs but not apparently in its completed external form. It could be described as an 'apocalyptic gospel narrative' as wells as a gospel narrative produced in an apocalyptic mode.[274] The sense that the Christian texts were produced apocalyptic-modally, but without necessarily resulting in an apocalypse, clarifies Käsemann's and Schüssler Fiorenza's statements that all Christian scripture is apocalyptic: all Christian texts are modally suffused with its generic colour. A mode also confers a particular dynamic movement onto a genre, in this case through the liminal performance. As such, the performance (the reading) of the (cultural) text cannot be divorced from the genre because it is performed modally. This substantially helps in clarifying how to respond to apocalyptic texts of whatever period, including those of Bulgakov and Pynchon.

4. Conclusion

To the degree to which Part 1 dealt with semiotics and the problematic of representation, all my work reflects aspects of reader-response criticism. Throughout this thesis I have taken the crisis of representation seriously, and have asserted that the apocalyptic text represents textual crisis in its form, content and function. The above examination of the apocalyptic genre and mode confirms how its characteristics play into many of our literary and also non-literary texts

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[274] C.f. Fowler 106, 107.

(including the ideological resistances arising out of rational-scientific methodologies). Furthermore, I have suggested that, as a strategy for reading, the hermeneutic activity of the reader-performer is to embody and experience meaning through an apocalyptic-eschatological modal performance of the *limen*. Thus, in the readings which follow, I will take the experiences of these explorations and, through an apocalyptic modal performance, work inter- and intra-textually between New Testament scripture and the selected texts, to consider: what each brings to the other and whether the assertion that the theological imprint of the apocalyptic genre permeates into even the most atheistic, de-theologised texts pertains. With this in mind, chapters 7 and 8 explore the work of Bulgakov and Pynchon. These two close readings aim to show how the theological, when performed apocalyptic-modally, can be brought to bear on secularised texts, or on texts that dare not openly declare a theological interest.

Chapter 7

Finding courage: Bulgakov's apocalypse

All great, genuine art resembles and continues the Revelation of St John; it always meditates on death and thus always creates life.[275]

1. Introduction

Post-secular thinking, Ward writes, includes 'thinking about other, alternative worlds' such that in 'the postmodern climate, the theological voice can once more be heard'. (Ward <u>Postmodern</u> xxi). Throughout this study, I have attempted to show how the apocalyptic-theological voice presents alternative worlds through its visions that arise out of the flux and chaos of the world-as-text; and that paradoxically, its tone and mode resonate in many of our recent literatures despite any attempt to quell it. In the previous chapter, I explored the apocalyptic genre in order to foreground its most recognisable literary traits; and the apocalyptic mode in order to show how other forms of literature are tinged with its generic cues. Finally, I suggested how a modal performance will further enhance and emphasise these cues, and that this is the approach I will take to the close readings that follow in this and the next chapter.

In the Christian apocalypse, human history is interpreted by reference to an overarching divine, eschatological history. This has the potential to inform and transform the view of our place in time through God's liminal activity and participation in human history. In this chapter I will discuss how eastern Orthodox apocalyptic plays into the work of the Russian author and playwright, Mikhail Bulgakov who, in the Stalinist persecutions of the 1930s, arguably writes a

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[275] Boris Pasternak, <u>Doctor Zhivago.</u> (New York: Signet Press, 1958).

Christian apocalypse of the most intensely complete kind.[276] Performing through the New Testament narratives, he satirises the literary institutions under whose oppression he suffered, whilst simultaneously revealing the means to personal hope, forgiveness, and redemption. Against the project of modernity, he works through cowardice and despair and, at great personal cost and courage, provides a legacy of hope for a nation deprived of its faith. This is important because, although literary critics have recognised Bulgakov's ability to subvert and resist the communist regime in which he worked, and although his influence played into resistances long after his death (and even today), few have taken seriously the way in which Orthodox apocalyptic-eschatology sustained his effort.

Prior to looking at how he does this, therefore, I begin with two sections which aim to provide background on the profound influence of Orthodoxy on Bulgakov and on the importance of apocalyptic to the modern Russian novel to set Bulgakov's, The Master and Margarita, in the religious and literary contexts of its time. In the long first section, I work through Edward Ericson who takes the Bulgakov's knowledge of Orthodox theology and faith seriously, in order to unpack the themes and cues of his satirical text. I strengthen the background on Russian Orthodoxy with details taken from Vera Shevzov's work on the 'lived' experience of Orthodoxy as well as the Russian catechism commonly used in the period leading up to the vilification of Christianity in communist Russia. In the section following, I turn briefly to the work of David Bethea for further confirmation of the ubiquity of apocalyptic in the Russian novel. Together, these sections affirm the inseparable relationship between Bulgakov's faith and the importance of apocalyptic-eschatology (and thus the liminal performance) to his work.[277] In sections 4 and 5,

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[276] Mikhail Bulgakov. The Master and Margarita (London, Harvill) (1967), 1996. NB All citations will be drawn from this text unless otherwise stated. C.f. chapter 6 and bibliography for reference to an alternative translation. I have been grateful to the Department of Russian at the University of Exeter, for their help in clarifying any doubts about translation differences.

[277] Appendix 2 gives an outline of the first three chapters of Bulgakov's novel, and provides the reader with a fuller reading of the main argument through which to interpret the whole. This constitutes a debate about the 'irrational' nature of reason in modernity which Bulgakov presents as the work of evil modernity against which, paradoxically, the devil sets out to lampoon and subvert. It represents Bulgakov's means to satirise and critique the ideological fault-line of communism. It should be read in conjunction with Appendix 3 which provides a structural outline of the whole novel, as a means to underscore its apocalyptic generic form.

I move to the central problematic of discerning truth, and how, through a dialogics with scripture (in particular, Revelation), and between reason and affect, he is able to question the representation of reality and truth to reveal an actual crisis of representation which plays through the nature and possibility of the *limen*. Two further sections present evidence for an apocalyptic reading of the novel, identifying apocalyptic-eschatological cues as the demand and means to test the Word. Section 8 turns to the central hermeneutic of the novel (and of Christian faith): that of the path to sacrifice and redemption. Section 9 concludes the chapter with evidence as to why the novel should be viewed, exceptionally, as a generic apocalypse. Thus, overall, this chapter shows how some works of fiction take up the function, form and content of apocalyptic that, once seen, open the reader to new ways of interpreting well-known, influential texts that have not previously been identified as such by the dominant literary-critical strands.

2. Bulgakov and Eastern Orthodox tradition

There is a complex interplay between Bulgakov's Orthodoxy, his resistance to western reason and the way in which he associates its influence with the rise of communism. This section briefly presents as background some key tenets of Orthodoxy with the aim of clarifying the novel's main themes and characters. It provides a sense of Bulgakov's cultural context and raises awareness of the background to the theological debate with which he presents the reader.

2.1   Bulgakov's faith

It is beyond doubt that Bulgakov was an Orthodox believer. However, the significance of this may not be immediately apparent to western readers, for, as I pointed out in the introduction, western contemporary critics often misinterpret literary texts because they lack a firm grounding in biblical tradition.[278] This problem may be exacerbated by some distinct differences between eastern religious

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[278] C.f., Introduction above 13, for the comments of Robert Alter and Frank Kermode.

tradition and western theology, and it would be a mistake to assume a common perspective between the two theologies. Additionally, The Master and Margarita is highly satirical in tone; nothing is presented in a straightforward manner and it mocks almost every aspect of (chaotic) life. The devil is the main protagonist; the story of Jesus is presented provocatively and confusedly as a multi-authored text; neither characters are immediately recognisable as aligned to the biblical accounts and certainly not to western theological views. Whilst the main debate centres round the existence of God, references to faith are obfuscated and ambiguous at best, ridiculed or completely absent at worst. Finally, the debate between the devil and the literary critic presents its case for faith indirectly - mocking modern, secular communism but without spelling out the case for belief. Thus ironically, the secular reader may be self-reflexively caught up in the very argument between reason and faith that Bulgakov is critiquing and also incapable of recognising or understanding its underlying eastern theology.

It is clear that most secular critics have interpreted Bulgakov's techniques of obfuscation and confusion, first and foremost, as a means to bypass the censors and not as, simultaneously, an apocalyptic-eschatological performance; where, as in the Apocalypse, apparently antithetical characters interact through a 'book inside the book' (a complex interdependent set of multi-voiced visions written down by the hero of the novel); and where the apocalyptic complex serves as the means to judge and interpret the whole. Arguably, this novel presents a picture of the confusion of being in the midst of eschatological events that any aware believer knows he inhabits. However, unless the socio-political context is read intertextually, taking seriously eastern Orthodoxy's emphasis on the mystery of God which operates within an unfolding apocalyptic-eschatological narrative, the strength of Bulgakov's argument will be attenuated. Thus, even if for Bulgakov's intended readers, it would have been clear that the entire text is shot through with entirely familiar apocalyptic themes and images, it is only in the tension and interplay between the events in Moscow and the 'book's' unstable, fluxional presentation of the Jerusalem events that Bulgakov arguably exposes the paradoxical nature of an apocalyptically-driven faith. As such, although it is a satirical lampoon on his own

times, the key to the novel's depth lies in recognising that the apocalyptic scenario is the sacred lens (or icon) through which to interpret the times, and his means to resist and ridicule both the revolution and modernity (and its western influence) and to let his faith shine through.

Most of us are aware that from the earliest days of the Russian revolution (1918), there was a separation of Church and state. During the time (1930) in which Bulgakov was writing his great novel, The Master and Margarita, thousands of Churches were destroyed or stripped bare; priests and believers were persecuted, tortured, exiled or executed; and the Church was propagandised as an anti-modern promulgator of superstition that held back and resisted revolutionary change. It is in this violent, socio-political context that the novel should be viewed as a voice that, through faith, overcomes cowardice and struggles to discern hope for the restoration of the soul of man in the face of secular communism.

However, it is clear that even in the lead-up to the revolution, Orthodoxy was also in flux. As Vera Shevzov comments

> On the eve of one of the most cataclysmic events in Russia's history, Orthodox Christianity in that country faced a genuine *krisis* in corporate self-understanding. Not only was Orthodoxy being vehemently challenged from without by Marxist revolutionaries, an "enlightened" worldview, and an openly religiously diverse society but, perhaps more significantly, also from within. (Shevzov 258).[279]

So how can we know what Bulgakov's own views on Orthodoxy were? We can learn a little about them from his personal history: he came from a family of priests and theologians; his father was a student of theology and a second cousin, Sergius Bulgakov, was one of the best known theologians of his generation. It is safe to assume that he was he well-informed, that he never renounced his faith and that he deplored the weakness of the 'collective' in capitulating to secularisation and communist ideology, which he never accepted. Most, if not all, of his work makes

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[279] Vera Shevzov. Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

references to Orthodox theological or biblical interpretation, especially eschatology.[280] In other words, whilst we cannot obtain a nuanced, articulated sense of how Bulgakov understood Orthodox theology, it is clear that as communism, with its roots in western rational thinking, attempted to reject and deny the centrality of Orthodoxy to its culture, Bulgakov draws together apocalyptic, eschatology and common Russian views of the devil as a means to expose, subvert and criticise the regime in what is, in effect, a multi-faceted apology for conservative faith reflected through the times in which he lived.

It is Sergius Bulgakov who, according to Edward Ericson, best reflects the novelist's views.[281] Ericson builds a picture of the main influences on Bulgakov and his likely position within Orthodoxy.[282] In his chapter, 'The Orthodox Setting', he presents a view of eastern Orthodox theology in relation to Bulgakov's novel by focusing 'on those elements which seem to offer insight … with special attention given to those which are not shared by the Western Church.' (Ericson 25).

Arguably, the Orthodox Church takes a simpler, and certainly less systematised, approach to faith than in the west: its interpretations are, at the same time, literal and imaginative. It sees itself as a truly eschatological community, with the Church itself as the locus to encounter God as an experience of heaven on earth. Accordingly, as in the Apocalypse, its liturgy and sacraments provide protection from Satan who is waging war against God and his children whilst, at the same time, believers experience a foretaste of its (indubitably) divine outcome. As such, Orthodox faith fully *lives* apocalyptic-eschatology within the sacred, cosmic paradigm from which none can escape and in which everyone is implicated. Because we stand in the middle of the movement to the end, God's

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[280] For Example, Mikhail Bulgakov. <u>The White Guard</u>. Trans. Michael Glenny. (London: Collins Harvill, 1989), and <u>The Fatal Eggs</u>.Trans. by Hugh Aplin. (London: Hesperus Press, 2003). <u>The White Guard</u>, in particular, demonstrates Bulgakov's resistance to Bolshevism.

[281] Edward E. Ericson Jr., <u>The Apocalyptic Vision of Mikhail Bulgakov's *'The Master and Margarita'*</u>. (Lewiston: The Edward Mellen Press, 1991). C.f., Chapter 3, 25ff, in which Ericson claims that Sergius Bulgakov's theological perspective lies close to Mikhail's own.

[282] This section follows Ericson's reading of the Orthodox context in which Bulgakov wrote and includes some selected references from Russian theologians, but especially that of Mikhail's uncle, Sergius Bulgakov. I have additionally referred to parts of catechism and guide to Priests from the period, as these, perhaps more clearly than in scholarly works, indicate what most people would have been familiar with.

activity is above all mysterious and his nature unknowable. However, it is man's destiny to share union with the divine. Mystery, union and the apocalyptic-eschatological are emblematic of Orthodoxy and, as themes, dominate Bulgakov's work and mark his faith to the reader. This selection of some of the tenets of Orthodoxy aim, therefore, to explain these in relation to Orthodoxy's complex view of hell, death and a central, if ambiguous, relationship between body and soul and its eschatology, and to illuminate the apocalyptic cues scattered throughout the text, not only in major themes, but also as a means to evoke the performance of the *limen* as the critical point of contact with God.

2.2 *The unknowable nature of God: mystery over reason:*

Ericson is at pains to make clear that the difference between eastern and western views of God is one of emphasis. The recourse to reason is predominantly western, whereas the east plays more through mysticism. Eastern Orthodoxy there pictures God as the ultimate mystery: God is unknowable, beyond speculation or definition. (Ericson 26). A. C. Headlam, in The Teaching of the Russian Church, similarly argues that the eastern view of knowledge is those 'things [that are] visible and comprehensible' and is based on experience and examination of object; the process of knowing is in part intellectual and in part intuitive.[283] They argue however, that the apophatic process of knowing God counters Aquinas' sense of knowing God through a positive, evidenced-based approach, instead proposing that any knowledge of God will come through a profound sense of what he is *not*. God is a mystery that cannot be articulated or pinned down but can nonetheless be experienced. This negative theology means that Orthodoxy depends far less on systematic dogmatics than in the west, but rather is perceived as operating through participation in God's mystery. Thus mysticism is a strong influence, and mystics are viewed positively. As such, orthodox faith arguably operates more openly through affect than reason, aligning itself more closely with the apocalyptic-eschatological performance described in Part 1.

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[283] A C Headlam. The Teaching of the Russian Church. (London: Rivingtons, 1897). Interestingly, Headlam uses The Longer Catechism of the Russian Church and The Treatise on the Duty of Parish Priests to build his argument. Both were translated by W. D. Blackmore in the 1840s.

Orthodoxy requires few definitions and its dominant governing framework is the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Ericson points out that both Nicolas Zernov and Sergius Bulgakov stressed that western systematics, with their emphasis on the rational, diminish the life of faith. Transformation of the believer comes through faith in Christ alone, but however intimate the relationship to the Trinitarian God, both the relationship and the nature of God remain a mystery. (Ericson 26). This is confirmed by Headlam, who affirms that the Russian Church 'avoids definition' of God's mystery and that the only doctrinal test is the creed. (Headlam 13, 3 respectively). Fewer dogmas and creeds mean that governance is by definition looser. A systematised approach, as in the west, is dependent on reason and constructed logic, but in Orthodoxy, participation in the Church faith is more akin to removing the layers of an onion to get to the heart of God's mystery (Ericson 26) – a mystical journey of faith and trust. No distinction can be made between secular and sacred. The whole of life operates under the sacred canopy. Thus, faith consists of those 'things which are invisible and even incomprehensible' in the visible, material world, and is driven by a 'belief of testimony to truth,' belonging principally to the heart, but imparted in some way through the intellect as, together, these aspects make us human. (Headlam 21-22). E. T. Dowd and S. L. Larson confirm that Orthodoxy lacks systematic dogmatics but add that the believer has a 'key' to direct I/thou relationship with the Trinity that is without mediation; the heart is 'a place where both the consciousness and unconsciousness reside, a place of wisdom [and] direct intuition'; the intellect is reduced to rational thinking only when it '[operates] in isolation from the heart'. The authentic intellect is, in this sense, more akin to a 'mindfulness' held in the heart. (Dowd and Larson 54).[284]

The Orthodox guide to faith is thus simple for, with those simple tenets, all believers understand that a direct relationship exists between genuine faith and good works, because real faith involves love and charity. Clearly, faith without love and good works is dead or meaningless love; it will never lead to eternal life.

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[284] E. Thomas Dowd, Steven Lars Nielsen. The Psychologies in Religion: working with the Religious Client. (New York: Springer, 2006).

Furthermore, if good works are carried out with love but without faith they will be insufficient, because good works only arise out of God's grace and Christ's love and spiritual strength. (Headlam 22). The relationship between love, good works and faith is a central theme in The Master and Margarita, where the Master's self-doubt and cowardice are constantly played out against Margarita's demonstration of love for him (through direct intervention and show of courage) that reveals the nature of their mystical (and, therefore, divinely imbued) union. In fact, ironically, her often outrageous behaviour manifests the way truly good works and intercession put us on the path to restoration – a notion much loved by Orthodoxy.

2.3   *The mystery and mysticism of the sacraments, liturgy and other things sacred*

An essential aspect of Orthodoxy is the view that each and every human has a part to play in the final destiny of humankind; none, whether working for good or evil, can avoid being involved in God's activity. The profundity of this conviction cannot, however, be understood without some sense of the concept of *theosis* which, according to The Encyclopedia of Christianity, stands at the heart of eastern Orthodoxy and signifies 'God's economy with us and the world … to show the world what its final destiny is.' (Fahlbusch and Bromily 453).[285] *Theosis* does not fit with western soteriological terms such as, justification, reconciliation or redemption. Rather, within its apocalyptic-eschatological framework, *theosis* gives itself fully to the notion of humanity's deification through mysterious encounter with the Trinitarian God (from Gregory of Nazianzus), made possible through the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of the pre-existent *Logos* and the work of the Spirit, and experienced and expressed in and through the sacraments and liturgy; *theosis* is to live life 'infused with the Holy Spirit'. (Dowd and Nielsen 55). The biblical grounding for *theosis* is found in the Old Testament Creation narratives where humankind is created in God's image and, in turn, is evident in

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[285] Edwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey Bromily. The Encylcopedia of Christianity. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008).

> ' the many New Testament references to our divine origin ... our sonship in Christ .... The demand to be perfect ... [and] the new nature of the Christian as participation in the divine nature.' (Fahlbusch and Bromily 453).

Through God's grace, *theosis* is God's eschatological gift of 'being as much as possible like and in union with God,' and is experienced by those baptised into the Spirit. *Theosis* represents the restoration of immortality that can only be completed through full development of humanness in Christ's body (Dowd and Nielsen 53), where believers experience the 'perfect life of the Trinity' through the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, and through our performance of the sacraments and liturgy. (Fahlbusch and Bromily 453).

Although Bulgakov does not lead his characters or readers to Church, nor spell out their relationship with and to God's mystery, there are many symbolic and apocalyptic-generic cues to sacramental contact points in the novel that signal the activity of Christ and antichrist in the eschatological battle and, in turn, point to the invisible mystery of God in the visible.[286] The characters, thus embroiled in the apocalyptic-eschatological scenario, also move between earthly and heavenly spheres, a notion that, as Ericson points out, is 'prominent in Orthodoxy,' and to which the concept of union is central.[287] However, union and *theosis* remain unarticulated and largely ambiguous because the characters do not openly assert faith (after all, religion is under attack at this time). Instead, the *symbols* of sacrament and liturgy reveal divine action in and on the characters to highlight that God's plan is not thwarted by scepticism, secular communism or ignorance because he both uses and bypasses any obstacle placed before him to further his will to reunite humankind to his goodness. It is thus the mystic believer who will recognise and understand the import of the signs.

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[286] C.f., Ericson 27.

[287] C.f., Ericson 27. He cites the following from Zernov: 'Christianity is the religion of the Incarnation, of union between heaven and earth, time and eternity, god and man. Its main affirmation is that the divine and human can be made one without losing their identity. This is achieved, not because God and the world are the same, but because God is the creator, the world is His creation, and the Creator is the absolute Master of His own work.' C.f. Nicolas Zernov. Eastern Christendom. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1961) 260.

Bulgakov's repeated allusion to the sacraments as sacred contact points demands some understanding of the Orthodox view. As in Roman Catholicism, there are seven sacraments (baptism; unction with chrism; communion; penitence; orders; matrimony; and unction with oil) but they take on a particular slant in Orthodoxy where they are defined as mysterious and incomprehensible meeting points between God and humanity, made possible through Christ's incarnation. All sacraments are holy, 'which through grace or, in other words, the saving power of God, [works] mysteriously on man.' (Headlam 5).

Orthodoxy's view of Church in which the sacraments belong is that it belongs to Christ's body - the truly physical location for the union between heaven and earth. Here Christ is the (liminal) bridge between human and divine natures. Precisely as interpreted in the Apocalypse narrative, liturgy and sacraments enable us to share that experience. (Ericson 27). Sacraments thus articulate the performance of the apocalyptic-eschatological paradigm, with baptism and participation in the Eucharistic feast as the most sacred. In fact, the (eschatological) *ekklesia* (faith community) is deemed to have begun the moment Christ is baptised to lead his apostles on their apocalyptic-eschatological journey. As it is for Christ, so it is for believers. Baptism is thus highly significant as it marks the instigation of the Church as eschatological community. From this point on, what distinguishes those with right faith is trust in God to reveal the signs of his invisible action in the visible (i.e., in the sacraments). As such, the mysterious and unique state of revelation that begins with Christ's baptism continues unchanged over time and the truth is revealed in all those experiences of mystical union with God, a mystery heightened by an ever-increasing sense of complexity and perplexity.

Baptism, as such, symbolises a person's participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, and chrismation the participation in the Spirit at Pentecost. Through baptism, the believer is 'mysteriously born to a spiritual life' (Headlam 5); any previous mistakes are wiped clean by God's grace marked by the gift of a new name. When believers desert, or fail in their faith, the Church will usually receive them back through the mystery of chrismation, by which a baptised person is again granted the gift of the Spirit through anointing with holy oil. Thus, in times of

personal emergency or loss of faith, any Orthodox Christian can re-baptise or anoint the other with chrism, the latter acting as a substitute for the laying-on of hands, in a conflated interpretation from scripture.[288] Oblique references to baptism, chrism and the significance of new names (and pseudonyms) permeate Bulgakov's novel.

In the Eucharist, it is believed that the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ. Through the operation of the Spirit, communion opens believers to participation in his body and to the love of the Trinity: Christ 'unites persons in loving union with the Holy Trinity through his mystical body.' (Dowd and Nielsen 52). Communion is given only to baptised and chrismated Christians who make preparation through fast, prayer and confession. The priest administers the gifts with a spoon into the recipient's mouth from the chalice. In Bulgakov, we will see an ironic inversion of this sacrament.

In another representation of union, marriage is viewed as sanctifying the union between man and woman. It is a dispensation allowed by God for mutual comfort and support and reflects the bond of love of our ultimate union with God. one of the means to salvation, marriage is a symbol of good works, a 'location of self-sacrificial love and moral perfection' and 'a metaphor and symbol of the soul's union with God.'[289] As in the Eucharist, participation, personhood and relation-in-difference are foregrounded. Generally, widows and some divorcees may remarry. If a person is undergoing a second marriage because of divorce, however, the sacrament contains prayers or repentance for the first failed marriage, and couples are expected to keep whatever promises they may have made privately to each other. In the novel, even though the hero and heroine are not married (Margarita has a husband), they reflect aspects of a remarried couple and secret pledges are

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[288] C.f., Headlam 21. 'It may well be supposed that the words of St John (1 J ii. 20, 27), refer to a visible as well as an inward unction; but it is more certain that the Apostles, for imparting to the baptized the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, used imposition of hands, Acts viii, 15,17. The successors of the Apostles, however, in spite of this, introduced unction with Chrism, deducing, it may be, their precedent from the unction used in the Old Testament.'

[289] C.f., William Schweiker. The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 221.

important to their relationship. Theirs is, in this sense, a true marriage of the soul in a country which discourages religious practice.

Unlike in rational western theology, in Orthodoxy there is no limit to the number of things viewed as sacraments (mysteries): the bible, liturgy, icons and tradition are all viewed through a literal sense of participation in the union with God. Incrementally, good acts performed by the laity (for example, the blessing of holy water, fasting, almsgiving, or even something as simple as lighting a candle, burning incense, prayer and intercession or asking God's blessing on food) are sacramental signs that the soul is maturing towards perfection. In other words, the sacraments symbolise divine meaning in *theosis*. They reveal the mark of that God whose will is to draw the whole of humankind back into union with him, and thus towards perfection and immortality.

2.4   *Mystical union and the nature of the Church*

At this point, we should note that the Church community in Russia sees itself as a collective of equal members; the concerns and status of the individual are, as such, subsumed by those of the collective. Again, the concept of collective may be an important clue to reading the individual struggle of the Master in Bulgakov's novel as, less hierarchical and more strongly lay than most western churches, in Orthodoxy the Spirit belongs to all believers identically, and all participate in the endtimes' battle. What happens to the Master is thus the concern of everyone.

This notion of equality under God not only helps us to understand Orthodox Christianity, but it may also explain the ease with which communism took over the ideas of collectivity. In her exploration of how Orthodoxy actually functioned around the time of the revolution, Shevzov writes

> [t]he sacred centers … were not associated exclusively with any particular class. They served as symbolic markers of sacred community for countless believers, regardless of social and economic background. … [and] "common folk" and "elite" alike [], as believers, often thought about and expressed their collective Orthodox identity in similar ways. (Shevzov 10).

For none is above another. Even priests are not set apart from the collective whole and ordination is viewed as just another, if particularly sacred, act of faith. This common (quasi-heterarchical) belonging (grounded in the Pauline understanding of Christ's body) reflects the sense that '[t]heir religion comes from themselves and they are taught it as part of the traditions which they inherit.' (Headlam 28). Thus Orthodoxy holds to the earliest traditions and what few changes there are, tend to be subtle and, in Headlam's term, 'organic'. In other words, Orthodoxy has not been influenced by the rational, systematic perspective of modern western modernity with its emphasis on the individual.[290]

Devotion is the central tenet of the Church community (even if this often introduces superstitious ideas).[291] (Headlam 28). As each Christian devotes himself to mystical union with God, Christ draws humankind back towards that original and intended state of union, first experienced in Paradise, his unique activity working continually and retroactively from the end to the beginning of time.[292] (Like Käsemann therefore, protology and eschatology work in a double movement against and towards each other in a liminal performance.) Temporary excommunication is a common outcome when a communicant falls away from devotion, and spiritual guidance (divine and human) plays an important role in relation to readmission of the penitent to the Church body. The tendency to admit, exclude and readmit individuals reflects an acute awareness of the struggle involved in moving towards perfection and reunion, as well as the importance that God's grace plays in that struggle.

Shevzov describes the profound influence of Marian symbolism on the Russian Church which was similar to the Marian cult found in England in the Middle Ages. The Virgin was revered as a symbol of the Church as a 'collective Orthodox

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[290] C.f., Headlam 24 – 28.
[291] Note Vera Shevzov's comment that, 'Many clergy … exhibited no concern about "superstitious behavior ".' (Shevzov 121). It is should be noted that the folkloric and vernacular traditions play into religious superstition, and it is unsurprising, therefore, that Bulgakov exploits the common tales of the devil and the Virgin in <u>The Master and Margarita</u>. It is a common means to warn people, in this case, against the regime with its overtones of modernity and western-derivative thinking.
[292] C.f., section 8 below on the retroactive redemption/restoration of the characters, Pilate and the Master.

experience' and the non-hierarchical nature of the Church. (Shevzov 217, 216 respectively). The laity often plays a more active role than in the west, reflecting the more heterarchical characteristics of Orthodoxy, and Mary symbolises the fully perfected human director and guide. She is a symbol of hope for the perfectibility of human nature and can thus set people on the right path to salvation by imitation: 'To imitate Mary was [seen as] the best way to imitate Christ'. (Shevzov, 218 - 219). Any lay believer who has been given a blessing to hear confessions can also be asked to be a spiritual guide to a penitent seeking readmission to the Church body. The guide's choice of penance is seen as the means to open out and heal the penitent's mistakes, and will always focus through his particular personal issues. In The Master and Margarita, the heroine arguably acts as a spiritual guide to the Master. However, her activity is inevitably paralleled and, to some degree, undermined by the state's intervention to cure him for subversion of, and resistance to the regime. Thus again, Bulgakov plays through the tension between good and evil, between the secular and sacred, to illuminate the apocalyptic-eschatological battle that is lived in the lives of ordinary people made extraordinary by the struggle to stay on the right path. All action carries us forward to the endtimes' restoration of humankind, for as in all things in, above and beyond the human, the divine hand works towards union - even when events seem to have been taken over by evil.

2.5   The original nature of the human soul, sin and apocalyptic-eschatology

To fully appreciate the Orthodox view of the nature of humanity, we need to turn to man's origin, sin and the fall, and to how the soul of the believer is transformed by his Christian faith. Orthodoxy takes literally the Creation narrative that man is made in God's image: in Paradise pre-fall, Adam was deemed god-like because he was united to God's presence in the sense of being touched by God. God is the master-creator and artist; man, a derivative, aspiring version. (Here again, Ericson urges us to take seriously the name 'master' given to the hero of the book; it tells us much about Bulgakov's view of his destiny as an author/man of faith. (Ericson 28).) According to Dowd and Nielsen, Adam and Eve are seen as

being childlike with, as all children, 'the potential for growth'; as God's 'grace and gifts of the Spirit were given from the outside … it was possible for them to be lost.' (Dowd and Nielsen 52). This latter comment explains the difference between man at the beginning and the potential for an increase in perfection on completion of the endtimes, where God's grace will fully inhabit man. The child moving towards maturity is reflected in the novel where Bulgakov's heroine in particular has a simple, childlike quality that allows her to both cut through and engage with the powers of evil in a way that the flawed Master cannot.

It is necessary to move beyond the Creation story, however, to consider to man's true nature as body *and* soul: The body is a temple for the Spirit to inhabit, a locus for God to become incarnate in the world. The soul has all the components of the body.[293] (Dowd and Nielsen 56). Like the body, it is sentient and consists of three main powers: reason (*logos*); desire (*epithumia*); and temper (*thumos*). (Dowd and Nielsen 57). When these three aspects of the soul are in balance in body and soul, man is able to follow a life of virtue. However, as Dowd and Nielsen point out, when 'perverted by sin, they lose their organic connection with one another and drive the person into vice.' (Dowd and Nielsen 57). Imbalance is thus akin to physical and spiritual illness, which manifests itself through certain symptoms. As such, it reflects a 'relational-medical' paradigm. (Dowd and Nielsen 57). This view is clearly represented in <u>The Master and Margarita</u>, where symptoms of (soul) sickness are continually being diagnosed and argued over, in particular but not exclusively with regard to the Master. The articulation of the relationship between body and soul thus may be somewhat ambiguous in western terms, but there is no doubt that the future of the soul and body as inseparable stands at the heart of Orthodoxy's apocalyptic-eschatology.

It is Satan (a fallen angel) who introduces evil to Paradise. Evil is like a parasite that cannot exist without a host; it has no right to existence. When tempted by Satan, Adam is effectively wounded by evil which causes a loss of divine substance

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[293] C.f., Dowd and Nielsen who point out that sometimes the relationship is expressed as dichotomous: i.e.,, as body and soul/spirit. At others, the relationship is expressed as trichotomous: i.e., a distinction between body, soul and spirit. (Dowd and Nielsen 56)

that, although not fatal, has the effect of enslaving him to the devil-tyrant of the world. However, sin is a 'temporary malady' that diminishes but does not extinguish the soul's true nature. (Ericson 30). It is this weakened state that gives Satan the power to keep man at a distance from God and explains why humankind is in need of ransom (unlike in western theology, where in allowing himself to be tempted Adam originates sin, and man is thus viewed more as a defendant than an ailing being held hostage by evil.) (Ericson 30). For *any* Christian, the sacrament of baptism is the means to take and transform sinful humanity but in eastern Orthodoxy the transformation into a new, pure being evokes the protological significance of restoration in its eschatology which, in some way, will restore God, humankind and the world to right balance and to a level of perfection that betters the original state of Creation.

However, the life and death of a man stand, in time, between him and reunion with God, and it is thus important to consider the Orthodox view of death and what happens to the soul as it waits for the final judgment. At the end of his novel, Bulgakov presents us with a confused and ambiguous picture of the Master and Margarita who, in death, appear almost suspended in Paradise/limbo. Clearly then, the Orthodox view of man's original nature, that is, what happens to the soul after death, is highly significant to how the reader is to interpret the novel's outcome. In The Buried Soul, Timothy Taylor writes that Orthodoxy commonly views death as 'a soul held in limbo by a never-rotting body, forced to keep working for this world, never allowed peace.' (Taylor 142).[294] According to Sarah Platt, the scholar Nikolai Zabolotsky confirms

> the role of the body in salvation, in combination with the affirmation of matter inherent in the theology of the icon, the Incarnation, and the Transfiguration of Christ. (Platt 187).[295]

Accordingly, the body is held in high regard because 'the ultimate goal of deification involves the whole human' – physical and spiritual. (Platt 187). This explains why

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[294] Timothy Taylor. The Buried Soul: How Humans Invented Death. (Beacon: Beacon Press, 2005).
[295] Sarah Platt. Nikolai Zabolotsky: Enigma and Cultural Paradigm. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000).

Easter is so significant to Orthodox believers. It is the most important event in the liturgical year and is understood as a real historical event that repeats itself in liturgy.[296]   It celebrates the material reality of Christ's resurrection and

> provides a harbinger of the potential resurrection of all bodies ... [which] underlies and underscores virtually all concepts of immortality in the Russian cultural context, even those purported to be antireligious. (Platt 187).

Bulgakov's novel takes place over Easter, and again, often through ironic inversion, liminal points of contact act as cues to dominate his text, where each day leading up to Sunday, as the resurrection day, is symbolically significant.[297]

However, the culture of Orthodoxy has also been informed by ideas of punishment and Purgatory. Andreas Schönle comments that

>]a]lthough the Eastern Orthodox Church has over time articulated a rejection of the doctrine of Purgatory, ... iconographic evidence suggests that Purgatory was an active category in the early Slavic imagination. Briefly, the Orthodox concepts of the bosom of Abraham, limbo, and the "harrowing of hell" of the Nicene Creed are sufficient evidence of some understanding of an intermediate space between condemnation and redemption. ... [and] that the idea of just recompense for earthly actions serving to provide a second chance for redemption even after death, was very much part of the Russian cultural imagination. (Andreas Schönle 64 - 65).[298]

Both limbo and purgatory are represented in Bulgakov's novel in which rejection of faith and the activity of the devil are played through notions of sickness and the unbalanced mind in the lives and deaths of the characters.

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[296] Every holy day of the Orthodox liturgical year relates to the Resurrection directly or indirectly, and as I pointed out in chapter 5, the Eucharistic feast reflects and continues the ontological scandal, in which all believers participate.

[297] Eastern Orthodoxy foregrounds the apocalyptic-eschatological activity of Christ in and through the participation of Church believers in a liminal performance between human sin and union with God. Because Christ is fully human and divine, the incarnation effectuates a union between heaven and earth which, in effect, deifies the whole of humanity through his death and resurrection.

[298] Andreas Schönle. Lotman and Cultural Studies: Encounter and Extensions. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

Let us now look more closely, therefore, at the Orthodox view of the devil and his role in the apocalyptic-eschatological history of humankind in the world. It should first of all be noted that Russian folklore and popular superstition imaginatively builds on the few scriptural stories about the devil. A combination of vernacular and Orthodox traditions is often found in Russian literature that reflects the whole culture, and as Pamela Davidson writes

> Russian authors … draw on multiple associations surrounding the devil or demons in Russian Orthodoxy and folk culture … [including] the Russian devil's association with an evil foreigner, his mastery of disguise, and his predilection for gluttony, drunkenness and debauchery. (Davidson 475).[299]

In common with many of his contemporaries, Bulgakov used these intertwined traditions to great effect, and all these types and characteristics are found in his descriptions of the devil in Moscow, once again providing apocalyptic clues to the novel's interpretation. For Orthodox Christians, the role of the devil, the nature of evil and the promises of restoration are central to its eschatology, but they are seen in a substantially different way to modern western Christianity. So, in addition to the cultural tendency to merge folklore and religion in relation to Satan, the nature of evil, already flagged above as tangibly different to that of modern western views, needs some explanation. Andreas Andreopoulos' comments on the nature of evil from the tradition of the Church fathers help to clarify the Orthodox position. He writes

> [E]vil does not have a real existence of its own, even more so in the eschatological future; it exists as a deprivation or perversion of good, born from the exercise of the free will, and the jealousy of Satan. At any rate, evil was not created by God, and the final state of the cosmos cannot be compromised with the post-Apocalyptic existence of evil. At the same time, Christian and pagan writers alike, such as Origen, Plotinos, Gregory of Nyssa and Proklos, have described the tendency of the fallen creation to return to its original state in almost identical terms, pointing towards a future that will be

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[299] Pamela Davidson. Russian Literature and its Demons. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000).

even better than the original Paradise. Therefore, the fate of humanity and the fallen angels at that time is rather problematic.[300]

The association of free will, evil, and the fallen soul with the existence of the devil, play through quite different (often ambiguous) notions of hell to those of eternal damnation that have dominated much of western theology and its texts. In The Master and Margarita, Bulgakov's presentation of hell (and hell on earth as an ironic inversion of sacramental union) and its relation to human cupidity and stupidity foregrounds hell as an intervention in this world from another (eternal) world. The presence of fire is a symbolic marker for hell. However, fire is seen more as a cure against evil than a punishment, for as Andreopoulos comments

> More than merely "separating," the purifying fire will melt away evil so that what is left is only good. We have to keep in mind that in several of the writings of Gregory of Nyssa on the Fall and the nature of evil, Satan is not presented as the adversary of God but as the adversary of man.

In Orthodoxy therefore, Satan, as in the Book of Job, acts as God's advocate. Again, his activity cannot ultimately harm or change the beneficent outcome of God's eschatological plan for humankind. In fact, he actively, if unwittingly, works on his behalf.

Vernacular accounts play through the belief that when a person dies, the soul is but temporarily separated from the body; it may linger awhile on earth, following a temporary judgment, before being escorted either to Paradise or hell. The experience of Paradise or hell is a foretaste of the final times undergone uniquely by the soul. Hell symbolises the soul's inability to participate in God's infinite love (given freely and abundantly to everyone): it is place through which to learn.[301] This helps to explain the Orthodox view that the body and soul can only be fully balanced and restored in the final judgment. Andreopoulos writes that

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[300] Andreas Andreopoulos, *Eschatology and final restoration (apokatastasis) in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximos the Confessor.* Theandros. Online Journal of Orthodox Christian Theology and Philosophy. Vol. 1, number 3, Spring 2004. http://www.theandros.com/restoration.html.
[301] C.f., Ericson 34.

Clement of Alexandria was the first Christian writer to speak of the fire of Hell as a "wise" fire, the means by which sinners are purified and, ultimately, saved), saw an end to the cycle of successive worlds, predicting if not a final restoration, from which there would be no Fall, at least the possibility of it. Origen's cosmological scheme starts with the creation of the *logikoi* who, falling away from God undergo an ontological change to *psychai* (souls), and ends with the return of (all) the souls to God.

Arguably, this double movement of eschatology and protology and the complexity of experiencing different 'worlds' (encounter with God, absence of God and the final drawing back into God) points to the liminal performance. In Bulgakov, ontological change and liminal performance are recurrent themes by which, reflecting fully the ambiguous problematic of how God's mystery works, the reader is taken, confusedly and obscurely, between worlds, leaving, however, any (divine) final outcome shrouded in mystery and silence. This latter seems to confirm Maximos' view in which, according to Andreopoulos, 'the "perverted" powers of the soul will then cast off the memories and the effect of evil' in an 'apophatic "honor by silence"'. Whilst these moves demonstrate the attempt to explain, or experience, confusions arising from the narrative of the Apocalypse, there is no difficulty about logical inconsistencies, as God and his divine plan are ultimately shrouded in mystery and only discernible through (an apocalyptic) faith.

It should also be noted furthermore that, as second Adam, Christ saves all righteous people (both living and dead) from the bonds of sin and death introduced by the first Adam (and Satan). In a clearly liminal operation, Christ, as Son of God, is crucified, dies and descends into hell to rescue all the souls held there through sin. Because hell cannot constrain God's activity, he rises from the dead and in this way saves all mankind. He comes back to the living as man *and* God so that each individual human can partake in this immortality, something which would have been impossible without his own passage through death to resurrection.

The Virgin, as *Theotokus* (mother of God and, therefore, a place, or space, devoid of sin) also plays strongly through the Orthodox vernacular imagination about hell. As mentioned above, Mary is loved for her compassion and

274

intercessionary powers to ask God for grace or retribution.[302] Her power, however, is often represented as coming directly from her own will and activity; and there are many icon stories in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that describe her miraculous intervention in the lives of the Church community. (Shevzov 214 ff.). A medieval apocryphal story depicts Mary's descent into hell and was well-known in Russia (and in western Europe). She is often symbolised as a cleansing fire, which, as noted above, is associated with purification and wisdom: a 'pillar of fire who guided those existing in darkness,' the 'fire that enlightened the night of life in this world.' (Shevzov 217).[303] Bulgakov combines the complex symbolism of Mary as director and guide with the Mary who can mete out punishment and cleanse, or heal, the soul of men, and embodied by the character of Margarita, she forgives, demands retribution and punishes various characters as she intervenes in apocalyptic events by taking on the devil in order to save the Master's soul.[304] Thus, Bulgakov reflects the Orthodox view, that the soul, which maintains its freewill in death, will be affected by the love and prayers of the righteous up until the endtimes, the intercessions of the faithful reflecting an eschatological hope in the promise of restoration.

The concept of intercession is critical to any understanding of Orthodox practice, for as Andreopoulos comments

> saints ... pray for the redemption of their enemies, and ... [it] expresses our hope for the charity of God. Possibly the honorable silence expresses this hope, which in spite of the danger of determinism, becomes almost a certainty in this light: If even one human being is able to forgive and pray for the salvation of the entire cosmos, wouldn't God's providence find a way to make it happen?

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[302] C.f., Shevzov, Chapter 6: 'The Message of Mary', 214-257.
[303] Shevzov is citing Sergii. C.f., her footnote 19, 217.
[304] C.f., Paul D. Steeves. The Modern Enclyopedia of Religions in Russian and the Soviet Union. (Gulf Breeze: Academic International Press, 1988) 2. Robin Fl Miller. Dostoevsky's Unfinished Journey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) 82. Here, Miller writes about Dostoevsky's use of a twelfth-century story of the 'wanderings of Our Lady through Hell', in which the Virgin seeks God's mercy to stop the suffering of sinners in Hell, and he agrees to release them from suffering from Good Friday to Trinity Sunday. For descriptions of Mary's double-sided intercessionary nature, c.f., Shevzov, *op. cit.,* 'Defining Communal Boundaries,' 239 – 244.

The Church offers special prayers for the dead on the third, ninth and fortieth days, and the one-year anniversary after the death of a believer. A strong belief persists that the power of prayer to intercede on a sinner's behalf can help to lead him from the jaws of hell.[305] As we will see, the problematic of the soul's activity after death, the significance of days, and the intercession of loved ones are all reflected in Bulgakov's narrative, as is the movement between worlds in the activity of the living and dead. Other days are set aside for commemoration of, and intercession for the souls of the departed. Incidentally, these usually fall on a Saturday, since it was on Saturday that Christ lay in the tomb and descended in to hell. The main celebration of Easter takes place at midnight on Easter Saturday; it is the liminal moment in which darkness is held in tension with light, joy with sorrow; and as the light fully dawns, sadness disappears to become just a remnant of memory. (Ericson 34-35). In the apocalyptic-eschatological history, angels of light and darkness are literally real, active agents, and if you have faith and are spiritually experienced, you will be able to distinguish the demons.[306] This complex reading of life and death in which the boundaries between worlds are fluxional acts, of course, as a preamble to the endtimes, where, after the last judgment, all souls will be reunited with their resurrected bodies to fully experience *theosis* (as perfected beings) - that movement towards eternal happiness and the ever deeper love of God in union. However, the actual space and environment of hell are not clearly outlined or represented. Again, Bulgakov reflects the mysterious, obfuscated view held by Orthodoxy.

Finally, it should be noted, that unlike in western Christianity, the text of the Apocalypse is not viewed with suspicion but straightforwardly as another of God's mysteries, that is, as a liminal (sacred) point of contact with the divine. Speculation about the meaning of this text is minimal. It is never read in Church as part of the regular order of services but its text is evident in liturgy. It is clear that the 'thousand years' refers always to the present time, and it is often used as a reminder both of God's promise to those who love him and of the benefits of

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[305] C.f., Ericson 34.
[306] C.f., Ericson 35, and Shevzov 224. Both authors stress the importance of dreams to revelation – an important theme in Bulgakov's novel.

avoiding sin. Iconographic depictions of the final judgment are often portrayed on the back wall of the Church or the walls of the monastery refectory, to remind the faithful to struggle against worldly things. Following this sense, Bulgakov's entire oeuvre stands as a depiction both of the fluxional, unstable relationship between Christ's appearance in the world and of antichrist's rupturing of the world by hell. The Apocalypse is common currency; the notion of border crossings between eternity and time is culturally consistent. As Ericson writes

> Bulgakov establishes a framework of cosmic, eternal values with which he sets the action belonging to the Soviet Union ... [to] conclude on an apocalyptic note which is established through reference to the Revelation of St. John. (Ericson 38).

2.6 The reality of God through the symbolic

I would like to conclude this section on Orthodoxy with Ericson's view of Bulgakov as a (faith-driven) writer. Ericson emphasises Orthodoxy's view of the unnamable mystery of God's activity on and in us that signifies, 'the life of the Church [as] symbolic; ... a mysterious life, hidden under visible signs'. (Ericson 27). In this, he associates the revelatory power of symbolism with the mystery of God, and it is striking how closely this effectively describes the apocalyptic-eschatological paradigm outlined in Part 1, in which the symbolic is able to signify the mysterious reality of the divine.

Ericson goes on to note that Bulgakov described himself as a mystical writer, and that Sergius Bulgakov defines mysticism as going beyond the irrational such as

> [w]e must distinguish between this and the state of mind which borders on the subjective-psychological condition. Mystic experience has an objective character; it is founded on a departure from one's own narrow limitations and a resultant spiritual contact or encounter. ... The whole life of Orthodoxy is

> bound up with vision of the other world. Without that vision Orthodoxy would not exist. (c.f., Ericson 28).[307]

The fact that much of <u>The Master and Margarita</u> plays through a secular, pseudo-psychological condemnation of the Master's vision of the world, and his view of himself as a mystic writer, would seem to confirm Bulgakov's alignment with his uncle's theological view.

Ericson, however, pushes further into the relationship between the art of writing and mysticism in order to fully expose Bulgakov's faith-driven life through an exploration of the notion of creative mastery and visionary experience. He compares Bulgakov's use of symbolism to that of the production of an icon which, again citing Sergius Bulgakov, is seen 'as a branch of symbolic art, but more than that ... a vision of God.' (Ericson 29).[308] Ericson thus astutely describes Bulgakov as a mystical writer of 'an icon in fictional prose.' (Ericson 29). For, in Bulgakov's novel, the signs, expressed ironically and often revealed in dreams, open out the reader to God's mysterious, salvific action on the heroic characters whose lives, in effect, play through the endtimes and, in faith and hope, mark out the way to inevitable restoration of full union between God and humanity. That is why, in the novel, it is so important to recognise sacramental or liturgical symbols in apparently insignificant and everyday things and concepts: for example, candles, wine, witness, days of the week and even, ironically, the comic and ironic use of blasphemy; and symbols of the eschatological scenario in anything technological, such as jazz music or unpleasant noises, animals, such as cats or dogs.[309] When we identify symbols of the sacramental in the activity of the devil, they flag, on the one hand, the Orthodox lack of distinction between sacred and secular and, on the other, reflect the derivative, parasitical nature of evil that attempts to invert God's goodness. Overall therefore, the reader is obliged to seek the signs to God's

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[307] Ericson is citing Sergius Bulgakov. <u>The Orthodox Church</u>. (London: Centenary Press, 1935)168.
[308] Citing Sergius Bulgakov, *op. cit.*, 166.
[309] The dog is often used by Bulgakov to signal the last judgement and the list of the excluded in the Apocalypse, as well as the Satanic interference of science on nature. For this latter, c.f, Mikhail Bulgakov. <u>The Heart of a Dog</u>. Trans. Michael Glenny. (London: Harvill Press, 1999). The black cat in <u>The Master and Margarita</u> is a demon-companion of the devil.

mysterious activity held under a sacred, cosmic canopy (as in the gospel accounts) in order to recognise how each symbol points to God and never, contrary to appearance, to his defeat God by the godless. Bulgakov thus always reflects the Orthodox perspective; all humanity is interconnected and collectively implicated in God's divine plan. However much the communist regime appropriates the symbols of metaphors of *ekklesia* (e.g., as a collective), nothing and no one can ultimately escape or destroy or divert God's cosmic apocalyptic-eschatological plan.

To conclude: in Bulgakov's novel, where human frailty, cowardice and egoism predominate, few individuals carry out good works; they are flawed beings. Even where they do, and although they are not immediately identifiable as believers, they seem, in some way, to be destined to act well because of Christ's love and God's grace acting on them. Bulgakov thus demonstrates that all people play their part in the eschatological narrative, which, read apocalyptically, reflects and reveals God's will through their (unconscious) faith. Unawares, they cue God's eschatological plan.[310] In this way, Bulgakov's work places an even greater emphasis on grace and the mystery of God's activity in the world than might be expected, performing the liminal operation between despair and cowardice to attain courage and hope in the promise. It is, as such, a mystic's reading of the apocalyptic signs in the chaotic, everyday lives and activities of the characters whose destiny it is to reveal God's invisible hand in visible events, and one that fully reflects his cultural and theological connection to Eastern Orthodoxy.

3. Apocalyptic and the Russian novel

Having set out some of the key theological convictions of Orthodoxy that play through Bulgakov's novel, this section aims to situate his work in the context of Russian fiction. According to David Bethea in <u>The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction</u>,[311] the apocalyptic paradigm dominates modern Russian thought in

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[310] Bezdomny is a good example of this.

[311] David M. Bethea, <u>The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction</u>. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

'received notions' of apocalypticism, where Russians are viewed as 'either apocalypticists or nihilists'. (Bethea 12).[312] The nihilist version of apocalyptic leads to agnosticism or the atheistic protest, whereas the true apocalyptist finds the means to engender hope by envisioning a greater future. In whichever version, apocalypticism provides Russian literature with antithetical typologies though which a debate takes place about the boundaries between fact, fiction, and history; and that as the circumstances of historical crisis change, they are further reworked through the biblical plot of John's Apocalypse.[313] As such, it is the dominant textual lens through which the world is evaluated (Bethea xiv - xv), and through which 'foreknowledge of the future' breaks into the present. (Bethea 33).

In the positive apocalyptic text, the means to break both closure and *en*closure by that which is external is achieved in the way revelatory knowledge ruptures time and space to force an opening of, and into the end by that which stands beyond. As such, it marks its mystery, as concepts of one-dimensionality and stasis are opened out to questioning by demonstrating that things are never what they seem. Bethea comments that

> not only does this not destroy narrative, it makes it rich and mystifying. We are constantly presented with Escher-like optical illusions, with narrative hierarchies that, like staircases climbing upward and simultaneously back into themselves, are both circular and open. (Bethea 33).

The embedment of apocalyptic-eschatology in Russian cultural consciousness plays through the debates in modernity on the nature of history. At times, it is proposed as divinely inspired, at others, as atheistic and progressive. However, these alternatives are either prophesied or disconfirmed after the event. (Bethea 36). Meaning thus comes not from within but beyond history, in a disjunction

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[312] For example, between Social Realism with its utopian model of history and its projection of a dystopian counter-model. Even here, however, the ideological narrative will be understood as being divinely directed from beyond the bounds of history.

[313] E.g., between types such as Christ and Antichrist, the holy fool and the Wandering Jew, between Rome and Jerusalem, the city and the land, war and peace, east and west etc.

between God and man. (Bethea 38). For example, Marxism is 'fabulized' and the transition to a utopian society in Socialist Realism is read through the concept of last things. If history is determined by God's divine historical plot, individuals are free to choose between positive and negative ethical actions even as they are constrained by the historical framework within which their actions are fixed. Historical limits can thus only be broken when the characters understand what it is that the author/narrator knows, at which point, they can 'unwrite' their own biographies and break free from their 'epistemological prison.' (Bethea 40). In this sense, Russian literary form and content tend to argue through apocalyptic. In Bulgakov's lifetime the cultural-historical axis for literary interpretation is, of course, the revolution and its modernist project. We will see later how his conservative orthodox faith plays through apocalyptic to attack and deride both.

There are other characteristics that reflect the Apocalypse. For example, the texts are not simply end-determined, they search out *the* end. In a move from micro- to macrocosm the heroes/heroines die in the process of transformation. (Bethea 39). Any literal end is, however, avoided in a period of disconfirmation, usually marked by the strategic use of satire, or 'mock' apocalypse. (Bethea 39). Thus, hope, however frail, is never banished because, in the projection of different points of view, the end transforms the world from despair to hope. In this way, whilst the beginning of the apocalyptic novel *in crisis* is obvious enough, its end is not. Everything depends on whether the outside perspective is able to perform a transformative re-union and re-solution. In this sense, apocalyptic history presents itself as both cyclical (i.e., protological) and linear (eschatological). (Bethea 40ff.).

Christic and antichristic characters often appear in hybrid forms in the modern Russian novel and are represented ironically or parodically. The 'triumphant Lord of the parousia' is, however, missing. (Bethea 42).[314] It would, therefore, be wrong to over-interpret the messianic figure, as the focus works through the triadic paradigms of 'death, judgment and the end of history' within a framework of crisis,

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[314] This is probably because the parousia has not yet happened; a Russian writer never transgresses the outcome of scripture.

judgment and vindication. (Bethea 42, 40). The Christ-like figure is destined to live 'near the end' of his own (and his nation's) end, and must accordingly deal with the difficult choices of his own moment of crisis. This, paradoxically, means choosing death over life, as love is sustained in death. Significantly, therefore, transfiguration (or eternity) comes not through a vision of Christ triumphant, but 'through the book' (Bethea 42), whose symbolic performance (and survival) is reflected in its re-presentation.

Opposites serve the same end within the apocalyptic exposure of the limits of language. Judges and punishers are thus not Christ-like but antichrist-like figures, resembling the human judges and leaders who perform God's will whilst, contrarily, attempting to fulfil that of human authority. (Bethea 42).[315] Through ironic displacement, revealing the truth is viewed as possible within the impossible chaos of discourse (as both mis-translation and translation). Whilst identification and differentiation are impossible within language they are not *within faith*. Moreover, the mutual economy of opposites always sees God's creation as good. As in the Apocalypse every living being is involved in God's protological and teleological history of creation. Contrasts provide the necessary depth of perspective to achieve understanding. God's presence is a future hope, and the New Jerusalem is only a distant promise.[316]

However, if like many other novelists, Bulgakov uses apocalyptic themes, I will argue that, exceptionally, he produces a generic apocalypse, for typical of apocalyptists, his faith is strong and conservative, and his concerns those of the New Testament apocalyptists. The next section considers the subject at the heart of his novel.

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[315] E.g. Pontius Pilate and Woland, in The Master and Margarita, and Strenlikov, in Dr. Zhivago.
[316] In The Master and Margarita, Bulgakov's God is an absent God. However, this speaks of his ever-presence.

4. A discourse on truth, lies and freedom[317]

It is difficult not to draw Bulgakov's own life into the reader's experience of
The Master and Margarita because he actually lives through personal crisis of
conscience and persecution under Stalinism. He portrays 1930's Moscow from the
perspective of a writer disabled from writing freely in Stalinist Russia. He wishes to
define truth against the central Communist tenet of universal truths. However, his
work is proscribed. Thus he asks whether it is possible for a writer to write about
God (as truth) in a state which first, denies God's existence to signal the superiority
of reason against the mysteries of faith, and second, forbids a multi-dimensional
debate.

As Bulgakov views the nature of language as theological, the relationship of
representation to faith and the production of literary works are inseparable.
Therefore, he explores how to represent the mystery of truth in a detheologised,
rational world. This is not an abstract concern. For, from a position of popularity
and fame, Bulgakov's plays are suddenly banned, and his literary worth declared
worthless. He tries to emigrate, but Stalin personally 'asks' him to stay.[318] In this
way, the subject matter of The Master and Margarita is a hermeneutic device
through which Bulgakov attempts to overcome the problem of how to write
anything of integrity or worth in a state which persecutes and restricts the freedom
of freethinking writers (and believers).

Bulgakov stands as an anti-modern intellectual critic of Russian totalitarian
Socialist Realism which, according to him, is grounded in European Enlightenment
thinking and an illogical one-dimensional view of the world. The novel's first three

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[317] Most commentaries and studies of Revelation do not begin with an outline of the text; it is
assumed that the reader will already have some knowledge of it. When it is discussed, what is most
emphasised is its confusing and multi-layered structure, to which the key to a universal message must
be found. It is often argued that, through its structure, cosmological history in its entirety will be
decoded. I will not attempt to provide a structural paradigm of *its* cycles, nor an explanation of its
numerology. These, although well known, are much disputed. I do, however, provide a brief outline of
the first three chapters of the novel in Appendix 2, and of the structure of The Master and Margarita in
Appendix 3. I have not come across a structuralist, generic reading of Bulgakov's novel.
[318] C.f. Andrew Barratt, Between Two Worlds: A Critical Introduction to *The Master and Margarita*
(Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987). "The Novel and its Reception": 14 – 38.

chapters establish the parameters for exploring the prevailing ideology of truth whose roots in modern philosophy also connect to modern notions of history and reality.[319] By attacking, and ridiculing, the state's attitude to God (in which religion is prohibited), Bulgakov enters dangerous territory. The driving question behind the narrative is whether the Soviet rhetoric of atheism is believable and thus whether the party line is tenable, but is presented through an atheistic ridiculing of God.

At its simplest Bulgakov questions whether the truth can ever be exposed in a godless world. He is thus concerned with learning to 'see' (and express) the continuing power of God's Word. The crisis of representation which arises out of this question is not theoretical (as in the philosophical debate on language), as the motivation to communicate the truth arises from a real-life crisis that operates both in and beyond the novel. Thus, in a hermeneutic of his personal concerns, the subject of truth (the existence of God in the face of human evil) is worked first through a fictionalised version of Pilate's question to Jesus (taken from John's gospel), and second in the behaviour of the devil (as an interrogation of truth) towards the literary and theatrical establishments of Moscow (which cues the Book of Revelation).[320]

Having established the critical parameters for the novel, Bulgakov's use of scripture, to discover how the truth can been told and also to subvert the idea that truth can *ever* be represented in a world lacking in (divine) justice, marks its impossibility in Stalinist Russia. The choice between good and evil is not a matter to ignore or take lightly. (It is, however, a matter of the utmost hilarity.) Drawing on the logic of rational-science, and working within the dialectical principle of discourse, Bulgakov satirises the Stalinist worldview *via* the apocalyptic forms and themes into which he also inflects ideas on literary genius; and the whole narrative plays through the perspective of the personal life-or-death choice of the characters within the focus of the imminent end of history. Beginning with a dialectic between

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[319] C.f., Appendix 2 for outline.
[320] Its lists of sins, apostasies, and refusals (to see the signs from beyond) provide the means for Bulgakov to satirise the literary establishment, and each type of and for sin presents a contact point with the supernatural as a rupture into human history through which to view the outcome of injustice to one's fellow man.

myth and history, he goes against the ideological assumption that historical realism offers proof of truth, asking, instead, why mythic history should be thought of as false.[321] This is a concern of apocalypticism to which a cosmological worldview is central. Against this certainty, however, and playing through the (justified) paranoia created by his persecution, his own sense of knowing/not knowing God means that the fullness of knowledge and truth is in *any* case impossible, although a sense of truth can be discerned in the (textual) silence that remains.

From the outset, the epigraph signals the apocalyptic interplay and ambiguity that exist between truths and lies, showing however that, despite itself, evil always begets (divine) justice:

> 'Say at last – who art thou?'
> 'That Power I serve
> Which will forever evil
> Yet does forever good.'[322]

And it is in satire and irony that Bulgakov's use of Revelation comes into its own, acting as the interpretative key to understanding human evil. For after all, what could be more ironic that the devil's work playing into God's hand? The devil is seen to be at work in anything from the smallest meanness of everyday life to the state's persecution of freethinkers. The carnivalesque lampoon of Moscow life mocks the great and the good, as well as the minor players of everyday Moscow life, and its sense of *schadenfreude* is celebrated on the streets of Moscow.[323] Characters are subjected to reversals in fortune which will echo and rehearse that of Berlioz, the influential literary critic (and persecutor of the Master). Responsibility

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[321] Thus Bulgakov's questions engage with the issues which have been central to this study: atheism, theism, subjectivity and the closed-world view of rational-scientific methods.

[322] C.f. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. "Faust. Book One." Marlowe's Tragical History of Doctor Faustus and Goethe's Faust. Ed. Adolphus William Ward. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955)

[323] Satire, lampoon and popular jokes were always seen as subversive to the regime. For an excellent, popular outline of the use and prevalence of jokes in the Eastern Block, c.f., Ben Lewis. Hammer and Tickle: a History of Communism Told Through Communist Jokes. (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 2008). He writes of The Master and Margarita: it 'satirized the world of corrupt officials, neighbour-informants and political police of thirties Russia. … everyone is tainted in Bulgakov's hellish panorama of life in the pitiless Soviet capital.' (Lewis, 33-34).

is thus shown to be a *corporate* affair akin to Bulgakov's orthodox view of man's distorted sense of justice and truth, as well as Arendt's banality of evil.[324]

Bulgakov's use of irony and ironic inversion could not more clearly reflect the orthodox eschatological view. Edythe Haber writes, for example, that the devil

> is not evil in the usual sense; he and Yeshua are not so much inimical as complementary forces. ... one finds that, in general, Bulgakov's Satan and Christ, although they use opposite means, serve the same ends. (Haber, 164).[325]

Juliette Stapanian-Apkarian also recognises how Bulgakov's novel focuses on the ideological manipulation of truth and that, through ironic inversion, demonstrates that representing the truth is an impossible but necessary task that, to that degree, represents its possibility.[326] His dialectic plays with the notion of language as 'symbolic placement and as physical dis-placement of concrete reality', with 'editing' as the 'dynamic line ... history as a construct and with the idea of identity or existence as a function of naming'. (Stapanian-Apkarian 183). This rhetorical approach moves playfully between what is true and false, between art and artifice (Stapanian-Apkarian 185, 186), through disturbed patterns of 'perforated memory', blurred and suspended endings, and what Stapanian-Apkarian calls 'criminal' crossings'. (Stapanian-Apkarian 186 - 87).[327] Thus, Bulgakov's deployment of ironic inversions and reversals provide 'a means for grappling with the cryptic nature of the novel ... a strategy to examine truth displaced by the very signs used

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[324] C.f., Hannah Arendt, <u>Eichmann in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil.</u> 1st published, 1963. (London and New York: Penguin, 2006). This book discusses the ordinariness and mediocrity of Eichmann, the Nazi mass murderer, of whom she concluded that 'it was as though ... he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us – the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil'.* (Arendt 252).

[325] Edythe C. Haber, "The Mythic Structure of Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita" <u>The Master and Margarita: a Critical Reader</u>. Ed. Laura D. Weeks (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996) 164 - 171.

[326] Juliette R. Stapanian-Apkarian, "Ironic 'Vision' as an Aesthetics of Displaced Truth", in <u>Russian Narrative and Visual Art</u>. Roger B. Anderson and Paul Debreczeny, ed. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994) 173 – 200. She calls this, 'Truth and art, Truth and the Word' (Stapanian-Apkarian 173).

[327] This is reminiscent of Steiner's view of transgression as 'acts of "border-crossing" (literal transgression)'. (Steiner <u>Suppers</u>, 402). C.f. chapter 4, above.

to encode it'. (Stapanian-Apkarian 173).[328] As Bulgakov disrupts recognised codes he creates a confusion of tongues which effectively subverts reason, with the deliberate aim of ironically demonstrating the irreducibility of truth. (Stapanian-Apkarian 189ff.). She thus concludes

> The Word is in constant tension with the word. … The heart is the noblest organ, and Truth is found in its wisdom, those "pricks of conscience" and courageous acts of goodness and compassion … There is no relativity with truth, goodness or justice. They simply exist, like Christ with Satan, even in displacement. (Stapanian-Apkarian 197).[329]

The ironic inversions, displacements and confusions of the apocalyptic text are thus precisely that which enable the text to perform apocalyptically, to reveal the Word in words in the gaps between.[330] However, Bulgakov's work is more than satire and irony, and the next section outlines how he works modally in a liminal apocalyptic-eschatological performance.

5. Overcoming the crisis of representation in re-presentation

As already mentioned, in <u>The Master and Margarita</u>, the identity of the author of a book about Jesus is ambiguous. In fact, it is multi-authored. In this, Bulgakov is recognising the dialogical and intertextual nature of narrative representation (as interpretation), whilst at the same time, employing this knowledge to critically interrogate and re-present the distinctions made by redaction-critical rationalists between the form and content of the (superior) 'historical' gospel accounts and the (inferior) mythologised history in Revelation. In one sense, he is pointing out that all that distinguishes the synoptic accounts from the Apocalypse is the presentation of Jesus as a real human being against that of signs and symbols. In another, and by playing through John's gospel (where Jesus is both body and symbol) and

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[328] The concept of irony (from "*eironeia*, meaning 'dissimulation'") enables Bulgakov to trace 'flux, or a confrontation of truths or realities'. (Stapanian-Apkarian 173).
[329] This is not dissimilar to Ward's argument about displacement and the non-appropriation of Christ's body.
[330] Arguably, the trace of this apocalyptic performance remains even in the atheistic and de-theologised apocalyptic texts.

Revelation, Bulgakov conflates the 'historical' realism with mythic history and, through the modernist technique of montage modally performed through apocalyptic, creates the necessary contexture of the apocalyptic-eschatological liminal paradigm which refuses the indifference of modernity to the revelatory power of scripture.

His modal performance is, therefore, of critical importance. Let's, for a moment, return to the New Testament texts: In the gospels, Jesus' physical presence supports and comforts his followers. As he suffers the weight of worldly opposition his loving presence masks what is to come. However, Jesus makes it clear that the Spirit will come from heaven to give them the divine Word. When it comes, they will be ready and able to receive a revelation of the signs.[331] Thus the disciples are only able to interpret and witness to the prophetic signs after his departure from this world. However, even though the Spirit translates the signs that Jesus as Christ (and *Logos*) sends to them, faith is hard to sustain in the absence of love *as presence*. It demands that the believer decide between conforming to the divine (but absent) good, or to the evil (and present) human power. Whilst choice is freely given to the follower, it is hard to make, particularly as the human authorities prepare to persecute *the disciples*. But, as we have seen, the church and its believers are unchangeable and, therefore, the othering of Jesus will inevitably be passed down because the disciples are required to proclaim the truth of his identity. If, however, they choose to conform to the standards of human authority, the follower will be rewarded with the comforts and status symbols of success, and not persecuted at all. Bulgakov's own experience of persecution matches that of the disciples. Their lives as witnesses (which is etymologically loaded with a sense of martyrdom) rehearse that of the novel's hero (the 'Master'); and his life and critical moments of decision involve the experience and interpretation of signs (as contact points with God). In an apocalypse, the individual thus stands naked before his own choice and decision.

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[331] The Apocalypse in fact represents the modal performance of one of those revelations written in Christ's physical absence, and it is arguable that this is what Bulgakov does too.

In his receipt of the Spirit, the prophet of Revelation is, of course, aware of the difference between love and hate, right and wrong. So too, is Bulgakov. Both have chosen the path of persecution in truth's name, but the call for justice and accountability is loud. However, in the Master's book (the first version of which is presented in an account by Woland, the devil incarnate), Jesus (Yeshua) asserts that '[t]elling the truth is easy and pleasant'. (Bulgakov 39). Ironically, of course, this is far from the case, and the paradox of apocalyptic-eschatology (of threshold and barrier) exposed throughout the New Testament becomes Bulgakov's living reality, marked by his modal performance.

In Revelation, there is a sense in which any lack of clarity or doubt, which Jesus' heroic presence (in the gospel accounts) may have obscured, is removed: by broadening the dialectic between personal experience and suffering through a universal, cosmological history, the text draws its performers back to God's original loving intention whilst not diminishing the eschatological way. As the scriptural narrative logic moves from the personal to the universal, the prophet-disciple cannot evade its logic by boldly affirming his beliefs whilst standing behind his master and lord. Because, in performing the text, the macrocosmic historical paradigm ruptures and exposes the micro-hermeneutic crisis of each individual. Similarly, in the gospels, the individual heroism of Jesus signifies something to be imitated; his heroism (as the proclamation of the truth) must be repeated over and over in the unchangeable membership of the church. Christ's revelation is the paradoxical demand for necessary sacrifice in the name of truth as love and justice, something which, ironically, is not easy and pleasant.

In Bulgakov's case, *his* sacrifice involves and revolves through the written text, and it is no coincidence that the 'book in the book' (a central symbol of Revelation) establishes the key to interpreting the whole novel. The 'book' of the Apocalypse makes its appeal (calls out) to Bulgakov as a writer: it symbolises the reason for, and means to persecution, at the same time as it presents the means to overcoming despair and cowardice (through courage inculcated by love) and thus a vindication of its author (God's right judgment). In Bulgakov's novel, witness to the book is thus prioritised just as it is in Revelation: it is a claim to truth and freedom.

In the present time of state persecution the revealed 'book in the book' bears true witness to God's Word: again, ironically, it is the act of the martyr. Thus in juxtaposing two forms of Christian Testament (apocalyptic) narrative, Bulgakov ensures that, as in scripture, the immediacy of personal crisis resonates through the crisis of the universal end of history.

The crisis of the (proscribed) writer *writing* is Bulgakov's crisis of proclamation. As such, it presents, and plays through the crisis of representation.[332] By means of a 'book' within the book, the whole basis of literary realism is questioned, displayed and deconstructed, displaced and subverted and finally, justified within the mythic and apocalyptic construct of the whole, as the intercalation of the Jerusalem texts introduces the critical point of one (divine) man's trial in the past into one man's (the Master's) personal trial in the present.[333] And by making Moscow analogous with Babylon, Bulgakov extends the horizons of present history from the merely human to the divine, eternal and universal. Bulgakov certainly asserts that seeing is believing: that which is before your eyes you witness to; is self-evident, and therefore, true. But on another much deeper level he demonstrates that 'seeing is believing', because only divine self-disclosure opens out the facts to true interpretation. The evidence of 'real' events, mythically portrayed, parallels the 'mythical' events of the alternative gospel *accounts*, historically portrayed. The strategy of intercalating the Yeshua accounts at various points throughout Books 1 and 2 thus provides a series of apocalyptic markers that form the whole narrative structure and content.

I have already made the point that Bulgakov presents four Jerusalem accounts, not one broken into four, and the question of *who* authors the four Pilate chapters forms part of the dialectic on writing and truth. It should matter little, however, who wrote the accounts in the Christian Testament. After all, to a believer they are *all* true. This is almost true of The Master and Margarita: for, on the one hand, the role of the 'book' is to question the representation of reality and truth, or

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[332] The discourse on historical realism and mythologisation in his chapters 1-3 makes this clear.

[333] Also Bulgakov's.

as Stapanian-Apkarian comments, 'to question "real" images and logocentric signs of truth to show that primary texts are persistently edited'. (Stapanian-Apkarian 173). On the other, to show that whichever version of the 'book' is read, it informs the Moscow narrative events - critically, rupturing and inhabiting them – to reveal an actual crisis of representation which plays through the divine nature and possibility of the *limen*.[334]

In the Moscow narrative the devil is free to tell his story. The devil is Bulgakov's and God's advocate in the telling. He is thus Berlioz' and the state's adversary. He shows the way: telling the truth is easy and pleasant (and for him, mischief), and this message acts as comfort to believers and warning to non-believers. Of course, the non-believers fail to recognise the signs of the times; and what is abundantly clear is that, as truth-telling incurs human wrath, the injustice (of their power) will prevail in the choice between life (truth) and death (lies). But Satan's voice is also Bulgakov's, the Master's, and Bezdomny's all of whom witness to the truth. Unlike the devil, however, they tell it at a cost. But, in another theological subtext of ironic displacement, the death of the author-hero (with the courage to witness to faith) will come to signify eternal life, paradoxically, in the survival (and mythologisation) of the book (and its author/s).

6. Recognising the apocalyptic cues

Edward Ericson has (almost exceptionally amongst critics) recognised Bulgakov's orthodoxy. He suggests that, whilst the whole book is peppered with references to Revelation, it is only in the last four chapters of Book 2 that Bulgakov 'moves outside of time and into the eternal day'. (Ericson 151). Unfortunately, Ericson's linear reading misses the liminal economy in the shift to the eternal realm beyond time that returns us to the present through the past. Arguably, Ericson oversimplifies the apocalyptic operation of time, space, and eternity.[335] Fortunately, Bethea's appreciation of the ending as 'a *coincidentia oppositorum*, closing and

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[334] Informs, also, in the sense of giving shape to, and acting as a formative principle.

[335] Eriscson is, however, essentially correct, in recognising that the novel's *telos* lies in the promise of resurrection, a point overlooked or rejected by most commentators.

simultaneously opening, a final circle', shows a greater insight into the liminal workings of an apocalypse. (Bethea 228). And, as many of Revelation's formal patterns of time and space and its motifs of ascent and descent, light and dark, blood and dirt can be directly tied into Bulgakov's hermeneutical process that works from the biblical to the fictional account, we can assume that he well understood the significance of its modal performance. It is also certain that the dominance of Revelation's themes and motifs would be recognisable to Bulgakov's contemporaries, to signal that the events in the Moscow account as comparable to those of the end-time. It seems equally clear that Bulgakov borrows the rapid changes in perspectives from Revelation and John's gospel to provoke an apocalyptic performance of the text. This means that Bulgakov is clear about how to read scripture through the Orthodox view of its significance as a sacred contact point for encounter with God.

I have stated that his novel is technically and thematically dependent on Revelation and John. Bulgakov has arguably seen the similarity between these scriptural texts and modernism's use of juxtaposition and montage. Montage allows Bulgakov to incorporate discrete episodes into a hermeneutic whole which resembles the cycles (of visions) in Revelation *and* the cycles (of appearances and disappearances of Jesus) in John's gospel.[336] His 'gospel' chapters are thus incorporated into the overall scheme of the novel as *markers* of the apocalyptic scheme, impacting on the Moscow narrative both temporally and spatially. The 'book in the book' is of paramount importance to the novel's structure, and the ambiguity of its authoring permeates Bulgakov's novel just as it does the Apocalypse and John. Finally, the theme of how the Word appears in the words is central to the scriptural texts and his novel but, ultimately, the question of who authors the book becomes irrelevant, as it becomes clear that its multi-authoring is multi-messaged from a single author beyond human text. Its author, as recipient of the multi-messaged text, incarnates the message to perform the Word in words, as re-presentation, just as the apocalyptist does in imitation. Thus all three texts demonstrate the power of the multi-referenced, multi-layered liminal complex.

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[336] In John, these pertain directly to claims about the reality of visionary experience.

The work sets out to ridicule how the historical quest for Jesus (as part of modern discourse) erroneously separates out the 'mythologised' events of resurrection proclamation from Christ's path to crucifixion.[337] However, given the fact that he chooses to interpose a historical account of Jesus' last days in a narrative about the literary totalitarianism of Moscow, the reader could be forgiven for *not* immediately identifying the centrality of Revelation to the overall structure and theme of the novel.[338] But Bulgakov understands that Revelation's poetic and mythologised history of the end of the world is meaningless when viewed through the events of a historicised narrative of Jesus,[339] whereas, as miracle and divine mystery, the resurrection revelations defy and conquer the arrogance of human reason. To miss this is to miss the interpretative key to the novel's form and content. For, from the outset the abundance of eschatological signs clearly point to Revelation's central role as an icon through which the obvious references to John's gospel play into the New Testament as a totality to be performed apocalyptically (following orthodox tradition).[340] For, in effect, he is imitating the form and content of New Testament scripture that, as books within a book, should be read as a whole; and where, as in Revelation, the book inside the book is the interpretative key. Thus, (inter- and intra-textually), the novel represents one book made up of several texts whose details vary but whose overall meaning corresponds to God's will. Alongside this, however, whilst John's gospel is rarely, if ever now, seen as a historical version of the life, trial, death and resurrection of Jesus, he makes deliberate use of the then prevalent view of biblical scholarship that John was an

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[337] In the quest, 'provable' events leading up to the crucifixion are put forward as potential historical sources.

[338] In fact, many critics choose only to foreground the diabolic and fail to recognise the book's engagement with faith, perhaps because communist culture was breaking links to it.

[339] C.f. Leslie Milne, <u>Mikhail Bulgakov: A Critical Biography</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 232. We know that Bulgakov had read Strauss' historical account of Jesus in which he claims that the disciples made up the resurrection events to save their own skins and raise their own status. We also know that he read Renan's 'Life of Jesus'. Renan's aim was predominantly to show that God revealed Himself prior to Jesus, and would continue to do so afterwards; belief in God would, therefore, be strengthened by showing that the whole of history is incomprehensible without Him. He does this by asserting that miracles are unnecessary to prove God's existence; this includes the resurrection event. C.f., Ernest Renan, <u>Vie de Jésus</u>. Ed. Jean Gaulmier (Paris: Gallimard, 1974).

[340] However, he does unexpected things with this reading. For example, I suggest that he uses the characteristics of John's Jesus to develop the theme of schizophrenia in the character of Bezdomny.

eye-witness gospel account [341]which, by passing the ideas and themes of the *corpus* of John through the structure (and content) of Revelation, allows him to debate, with extreme subtlety and irony, with upholders of secular reason. In this sense, the novel *makes scripture* (as a sacred site for revelation), at the same time as it mocks and acts in defiance of the literary authorities and cultural hegemony.

In order highlight the nature and purpose of scripture, Bulgakov thus dares to do what arguably no other fictional account has attempted: that is, by incorporating Revelation into the fictional account of the 'historical' Jesus and the Moscow narrative, he draws the (insider) reader back to an apocalyptic reading of the world-as-text, and marks the New Testament as an inter-dynamic set of texts that form a unified whole through which to perform his personal crisis.[342] The novel is, as such, a polemic against rational modernity, modern biblical interpretation, and also an act of (generic and modal) imitation (the New Testament as an apocalyptic collage); and where its production represents Bulgakov's *via crucis* - a performance of the apocalyptic-eschatological *limen*, that through participation (in the unique events of trial, crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation) is a prerequisite to salvation. Thus, by extension, Bulgakov's novel is a call to personal sacrifice and witness by all persecuted believers.

To further test these ideas, I have selected some themes in <u>The Master and Margarita</u>.[343] At issue are how Bulgakov produces an apocalypse, and whether the apocalyptic liminal complex allows him to speak the truth. Within the parameters of

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[341] E.g., W. R. Inge, "The Gospel of John." <u>A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels</u>. Ed. James Hastings. Vol. 1. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1904): 869 - 895. 'This impression is to be the *true* interpretation of the historical Jesus – the author is infinitely anxious about this. He is writing no mere historical romance'. (886). This view would be current at the time Bulgakov was writing. On the possibly single authorship of the gospel and Revelation, c.f., 880 - 882.

[342] It should be noted that Bulgakov is the first writer to compose a fictional account of Jesus in Russian literature which plays into the present. c.f., A. Colin Wright, "Christ Interrogated: Bulgakov and Others", in <u>Transactions of the Association of Russian-American Scholars</u> in the U.S.A., Library of Congress (1991), 163 – 176.

[343] I have, for the most part excluded those episodes in the Moscow narrative that detail the sins of the populace. Reluctantly, I have opted to do little more than mention the major theme of cowardice, and how the relationship of Stalin and Bulgakov is played out in the dialogue between Yeshua and Pilate.

this study, this would be impossible without demonstrating how, in the violence of a war of words, Bulgakov allows a third voice to emerge out of the liminal ritual of sacrifice. As a supplement to the oppositional nature of human language, it will be the Word that emerges in the rupturing of time and space to engender the courage to hope in the promise. This next section explains the process.

7. Testing the Word in apocalypse

The hermeneutical tests for truth are presented in Bulgakov's first three chapters, but as the book progresses, signs of apocalyptic judgment are more liberally scattered through the text, as trumpets call and thunder and lightening bring the end-times to mind. Recognition builds slowly through the apocalyptic mode where, like a premonition of the coming storm, we sense the storm of judgement.[344]

Bulgakov's novel aims not to *tell* the truth, as such, but to show how to *recognise* truth from lies. The first three chapters set out his argument and methods by much more than simple satire and parody of the literary institution with its compromised fraternity of writers. The idea that speaking the truth is easy is an irony that comes at the highest price. There are those, like Berlioz the literary chief, who say that they speak the truth, but do not. Worse, these 'false prophets' disempower those who do. Arguing within the rules of the prevailing ideological discourse, however, Bulgakov dislodges the logic which refuses to acknowledge its own *partis pris*. He tests theirs, and all words, through the Word (scripture). The ironic displacement of myth and history is his (and John's) way of demonstrating that the truth is achievable through faith in Christ, where material proof is redundant but revelation is not.

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[344] Premonitions of the imminent end are arguably less clear to the reader of Revelation. Although Bulgakov makes veiled and unexpectedly inverted references, his Russian reader would be more familiar with the signs of the End than they. His knowledge of Revelation makes the signs easily recognisable, and the reader's knowledge increases the pleasure of *schadenfreude*.

In Revelation, the letter to the first church (Ephesus) makes plain the way to test words for the truth. Here, the ascended Jesus instructs John to inform the churches that another perspective to the worldly exists. John writes:

> I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. (Rev. 2.2).[345]

Necessarily the test stands within and *beyond* human concerns. But, what is the test of true prophecy? The letter to Smyrna describes false prophecy:

> I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. (Rev. 2.9a).

By taking on a false identity, these 'Jews' can belong to an institution which allows them to avoid persecution. In The Master and Margarita, Bulgakov similarly witnesses to the existence of such a 'synagogue' in 1930s Moscow. It is the club for the literary elite.[346]

Ample references to Revelation mark how the reader should view the encounter between the devil and Berlioz: fear evokes a premonition of what bad things are about to happen; the demonic apparition; the 'oddness' of the atmosphere; and the sudden lack of people. These signs belong to the language of affect, and precede Berlioz' rational discussion about Christ. (Bulgakov 14 - 15). Any true association with Revelation can, however, arise only when Christ is mentioned. As in life, understanding is retrospective to each series of events. Slowly, the timeframe of Easter signals its symbolic link with the Pilate narratives. Learning to recognise the signs, the reader is able to test the authenticity of the characters' words: for example, Berlioz is tested by Woland (and the reader) and

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[345] C.f., 1 John 4.1-6, in which it is stated that 'every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of antichrist, of which have heard what is coming; and now it is already in the world'. (4.2b-3). No wonder Woland laughs when Berlioz (and Bezdomny) denies Christ's existence; he offers the opportunity to change heart and minds, but is delighted when the *status quo* is maintained.
[346] This centres on the literary club, MASSOLIT.

found wanting.[347] At first (rational) sight, judging standards of truth via the devil's word is not the obvious way of discerning the truth. However, the satirical style indicates the economy of ironic displacement, signalled originally by the epigraph, and gradually, performing apocalyptically, the meaning becomes clear.

In Revelation, a warning is issued about the need to test for the Word in words: Jesus says, 'If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you'. (Rev. 3.3.b). Veiled references of this appear in chapter 3 of the novel where Bulgakov writes

> 'Why didn't I notice what a long story he's been telling us?' thought Bezdomny in amazement. 'It's evening already! Perhaps he hasn't told it at all but I simply fell asleep and dreamed it? (Bulgakov 54).

Perhaps Bezdomny the poet *has* been asleep. Time seems to have stood still, and his dream hypothesis and the onset of evening mark the visionary experience, at the same time as sleep is a refusal to 'see' the signs.

In Revelation, the Seven Letters seem to suggest that correction can be made through a return to right practice. There are warning hints of what is to come but it is unclear what that something may be. John's transference to the throne room of God is a symbolic re-enactment of the Eucharist in which Jesus is represented as the sacrificial Lamb, and thus worthy of worship as God. As such, the movement to the divine sphere is simply a logical progression from Revelation 1.4-6. However, in any *first* reading of the text,[348] the content of the great scroll would represent a mystery, an obfuscation of comfort and certainty. On the other hand, the scroll would recall the prophetic scroll of Ezekiel and thus mark the onset of prophecy. Its content, however, would remain uncertain until its interpretation by the prophet. Its impact would be more dramatic than we can now imagine. For, at a first performance, the narrative movement would not allow listeners time to inflect anything into the opening words ('the time is near') than a signal, or

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[347] Berlioz represents a type in the higher echelons of the literary establishment.
[348] Even more likely, it would be a first audition, leaving no opportunity to backtrack over ambiguities.

preamble to the Eucharist (Rev 1.3c).[349] Reversed expectations disturb complacency. Given the tone of brotherhood and of Eucharistic sharing established at the outset, the shocking content of the great scroll series was thus guaranteed to shake its listeners.

It is equally clear that the Seven Churches see their position within the elite of Jesus' followers as secure. In Revelation 1.1, the revelation of Christ is described as a *gift* to his servants

> to show what must soon take place; he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

Many of John's listeners would believe that they, personally, were protected from God's wrath.

In Bulgakov however, although Woland (God's fallen angel) will eventually be viewed as God's messenger and witness to the testimony of Christ, at the outset, the *characters* in the plot fail to make any association between Woland and John's angel. They do not feel the need for comfort and thus, similarly to complacent believers, feel secure in the certainty of their rational (and political) position. Furthermore, signs identifying him as antichrist, and which evoke associative cues to retributive justice, are ignored.[350] From the beginning, Woland prophesies what will take place after his encounter with Berlioz and Bezdomny.[351] He testifies to the truth of Jesus' existence by giving his own witness of Yeshua's encounter with

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[349] C.f. Christopher Rowland (1982), *op. cit.* Even if John's community was steeped in apocalyptic writing, not all apocalypses are concerned with the eschatological. Rowland confirms that Jewish intertestamental apocalypses varied in thematic content; they could, for example, be concerned with ethical understanding within a framework which lacks the dynamic of crisis. On the other hand, participation in the Eucharist is marked by, and as, liminal crisis, and any encounter with God is dangerous.

[350] E.g. Bulgakov 15. Berlioz exclaims, 'The devil!', immediately following his premonition of warning (arising from the pain in his heart, and the apparition of the choirmaster). C.f. Bulgakov 16. Here the description of Woland carries within it signs of the devil, and there is a tone which indicates that these signs were recognised only when it was too late to do anything. about it: 'Afterwards when it was frankly too late, various bodies collected their data and issued descriptions' - the irony is clear.

[351] Berlioz will be decapitated (a displaced sign in itself, c.f., Rev 20.4), and Bezdomny will become schizophrenic (arguably a gift from God. c.f. Bulgakov 110. '[W]e are here to help you in every way we can and unless we do, nothing will come of your plan').

Pilate.[352] The proof is thus hidden in the signs which the protagonists see but are unable to 'see'. In this way, *they* are in the same position as John's first listeners (and us, as readers) who have to move forward with the text before moving back over those signs which so disturbed them in the beginning. In this life, for most of them, it will be too late.

Bulgakov similarly confuses the signs (with his references to diabolic folk-tales) with the more obvious signs from Revelation. In Moscow, the first sign of sacrifice is the ironic death of Berlioz, which, in any case, is more reminiscent of the devil's work in folktales, than any Christian Testament account. The Yeshua trial (pointing towards his sacrifice on the cross) seems to have more to do with Woland's perverse desire to prove Jesus' *existence* than with his actual life and death.[353] Of course, the reason for this recalcitrance is attributable to his fallen nature and his desire to corrupt. Once understood, however, the signs about human injustice to which Woland constantly alludes are seen to signal divine justice. As previously noted, this liminal operation reveals: the hegemon's cowardice that works *on God's behalf*; the evil intentions of Caiaphas that forwards God's will; and the mischief of Woland's crew that exposes the sinners on Revelation's list. Every action of each principle actor reveals the same message. The complex and ironic interplay between earthly and demonic powers thus ensures the right outcome.

Ironic displacement permeates and directs the discourse. For example, in the middle of the prophecy of Berlioz' death Woland asks

> 'Wouldn't it be nearer the truth to say that *someone quite different was directing his fate*?' ....Berlioz had been following the unpleasant story ...about the tram and some uncomfortable thoughts had begun to worry him. ... 'he's a very peculiar character ... but *I ask you, who is he*?' (Bulgakov 21).[354]

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[352] As witness, Satan is ironically martyr to the truth; he cannot escape God's will, even as a fallen angel.

[353] The reason for this is made clear by an analysis of the temporal structure of the book. For an analysis of the structure, see Appendix 3.

[354] Bulgakov 21. (My emphasis.) Not only does this point to a greater power but also to the importance of Woland's identity in the divine scheme of things. NB., in the gospel accounts similar questions about the identity of Jesus abound. A good example of this is in Mark 8.27 ff:

> 'Who do people say I am?' And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter

Revelation makes a similar, but non-satirical, ironic identification of Christ (as the Son of God). Both texts assure justice in judgment (Rev.1.7), and indicate that judgment is imminent (Rev.1.3). The justice *is* inhuman because it is *divine* justice. At first, the difference between the texts seems to be that John's listeners are declared to be fellow-believers. However, Berlioz similarly signals membership of a *fellowship*; he is chairman of MASSOLIT, the official association of writers. Thus the inverted strategy and similarity of position become clear as the Master (the human author of the Pilate narrative) enters the plot, and his persecution is opened out to view.[355] A high-point of the devil's activity in Moscow, the Master's story describes Bulgakov's own vitriolic view of his fellow artists.[356]

In Revelation, in the time before the end, a return to faithfulness (of the Seven Churches) is of paramount importance. Jesus' address foregrounds the nature of the churches' sins against faith. Paralleling those found in the judgment scenes in the concluding chapters, they are

> the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.
> (Rev. 21.8).

The list thus matches the sins of the individual churches, bringing them into the drama of the actual end. An abandonment of love for Christ, as the first sin mentioned, is the key to all the rest. Love is the test for unveiling the truth. It is defined as a turning away from faith in Christ, who *is* love and freedom (Rev. 2.4, 1.5b). A caution is given: 'Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and

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answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

C.f. John 5.12, compared to John 6.42 ff; the Pharisees continually seek rational explanations for Jesus' identity in the face of irrational and miraculous events and Jesus says: 'you judge by human standards; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgement is valid; for it is not I alone who judge but I and the Father who sent me'. (John 815-16).
Bulgakov's devil, when placed over the template of John's Jesus, mirrors the behaviour of Jesus, and in that he is the advocate of God, possesses similar powers.
[355] Immediately after the half-way stage of Book 1.
[356] From this point onwards, various members of the club are punished for their complacent compromise with state literary policy.

do the works that you did at first'. (Rev. 2.5). This also holds true for Bulgakov's protagonists.[357] The Moscow episodes are based on John's lists of sins.[358] The urgency to acquire the ability to read the signs is made clearer in the following three chapters of the novel where the importance of witnessing to the truth is further strengthened against images of human sinfulness.[359]

The nature of cowardice is a dominant theme in the novel. It is explored throughout in various characters, but dominantly in the Master and Pilate, both of whom are redeemed in the end. The theme of cowardice, however, is directly played against that of forgiveness. How Bulgakov interprets the concepts of faith and love is unfolded in the subplot of Margarita and her love for the Master. In the end, *her* lack of fear overcomes *his* cowardice in the face of evil, and it should be noted that in the second list of sins in Revelation (Rev.22.13), cowardice has disappeared, suggesting that Bulgakov uses this to exonerate the Master.[360]

The promise given to those who turn back to the love of Christ (loving *as* Christ loves), and the way to be free from sin (a preparedness to sacrifice one's life for truth) comes in the 'permission to eat of the tree of life that is in the paradise of God'. (Rev. 2.7b). In Revelation, the site of the tree of life is Ephesus. The word for tree is the same as that of the cross. The cross (as life) ironically displaces the

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[357] C.f., Bulgakov 344, in which Pilate lists the inhabitants of Jerusalem in similar terms.

[358] In 1 John 3.12ff, murderers are those who kill a brother: 'We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. ...Whoever does not love abides in death. All who hate a brother or sister are murderers'. This theme is strongly represented in MM; a brother writer who betrays a fellow brother is a murderer, and thus abides with the devil in the realm of death. C.f., Chapter 13, "Enter the Hero", in which the Master's book is 'trashed' by a series of publishers and critics, and the Master becomes aware of the dark forces at work (Bulgakov, 165 – 168). Incidentally, Bulgakov had a similar experience, in which previously performed and unperformed works alike were vilified in the literary press; c.f., A Colin Wright, <u>Mikhail Bulgakov: Life and Interpretations</u> (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1978) 142; Andrew Barratt (1987): 50; Ellendrea Proffer, <u>Bulgakov: Life and Works</u> (Michigan: Ardis, 1984) 305 – 306.

[359] C.f. below on Bezdomny's attempted witness.

[360] C.f. 1 John 5.16ff: 'If you see your brother or sister committing what is not a mortal sin, you will ask, and God will give life to such a one'. The question of whether cowardice constitutes a mortal sin forms part of Bulgakov's discourse on cowardice and the fact that it is not included in the second list of sins, may have led him to decide on the outcome of the novel, in which Margarita pleads for the Master, and the Master releases Pilate from his torment, reflecting the orthodox belief in intercession for the souls of sinners.

tree at the centre of the idolatrous cult to Artemis.[361] The sacrifice of Christ on the cross is celebrated in the Eucharist, and is thus conflated into the image of the tree as food of eternal life. This first letter, therefore, establishes the context for the whole of Revelation. The closing chapter of <u>The Master and Margarita</u> is similarly shot through with conflated or associated symbols. The lovers are murdered by Woland's aid and executioner, Azazello, who gives them a loving-cup of Falernian wine. This wine figures strongly in the Pilate narrative. The mention of the wine thus symbolically draws together the two narratives in Eucharistic imagery. The lovers die together but are immediately resurrected. (Bulgakov 416-417).[362] Revelation makes it clear that Jesus is the 'faithful witness, the first-born from the dead', and that he 'loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood'. (Rev. 1.5a, b). Throughout Bulgakov's novel, blood is a recurring image; it represents the sacrifice of Jesus, the coming of judgment, as well as the sacrament of Eucharist.[363] Each time a reference is made to the colour red, blood, blood-red and so on, the simultaneity of these aspects is brought to mind; this is also true in Revelation. The associations between blood and wine, death and life are thus unmistakable in both texts.

If, in Revelation, the remaining sins are synthesised through that first sin, they are linked by their attachment to human power, and thus to idolatrous practice. At the moment of judgement the list of sins clearly refers to those mentioned in the seven letters. Wealth (Rev. 2.9a), lying (Rev. 2.9b), idolatrous gluttony (Rev. 2.14), adultery (Rev. 2.20), hypocrisy or false faith (Rev. 3.1), indifference (Rev. 3.15): each is brought to the fore. The later list elucidates these, something Bulgakov uses to his advantage. In <u>The Master and Margarita</u>, the sins of murder, lying, and lack of cleanliness are, however, represented in a more literal fashion, in a series of carnivalesque episodes in which the Devil and his henchmen

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[361] Allen Brent, <u>The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order</u> (Leiden: Brill, 1999) 168 - 177. Ephesus is the *first* church to be named and it gives clues to interpretation of the others.

[362] In fact they simultaneously die together (in the Master's flat) and apart (Margarita in her own home, the Master in the clinic), are raised, and left for dead. Their final disappearance, though, speaks not of mortal death, but of divine death and either the first resurrection or the first death, where the soul haunts the earth. C.f. Bulgakov 437.

[363] Examples in <u>The Master and Margarita</u> are: 50; 340, 341; and in Chapter 23, in which an ironic figuration of the mass is found. (Bulgakov 298-313).

exploit the greed, cowardice, and hypocrisy of Muscovites. These are, furthermore, organised to demonstrate the analogy between Moscow and Babylon as harlot. Similarly, the judgement performed on both cities can be attributed to the sins described before their respective fall.

Any lingering doubt about Bulgakov's technique of incorporating the apocalyptic-eschatology of Revelation into the Jerusalem narratives can similarly be tested in almost any episode. Before concluding this chapter with a justification of the novel as an apocalypse, therefore, I will complete my reading with an interpretation Judas' death, in Chapter 26 ("The Burial"), as this clearly deals with the issues of sacrifice, ordinariness and forgiveness that I discussed in chapter 4 of Part 1.

8. Sacrifice, witness and redemption

The Jerusalem narrative depicts the murder/execution of Judas by Pilate's secret security man, Arthanius. This is the final episode of the Jerusalem narrative, and is intercalated at the peak of Woland's activity in Moscow, just after the Master's release. Margarita is reading this part of the manuscript which she had saved from the fire, as described previously, a sign for the purging power of hell. Standing for Satan (God's advocate and adversary), Arthanius carries out Pilate's human desire for retributive justice against the man who has betrayed Yeshua.[364] Obvious references to Passover (with its associations with the Last Supper and the Eucharistic feast) and to Revelation abound. As Passover begins, Judas begins his fateful journey to death:

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[364] In the preceding episode, Pilate has a long and complex discussion with Arthanius, in which he claims to want to save Judas; Arthanius reads the subtext, doing the opposite of Pilate's supposed wish (ironic displacement). He thus murders Judas and provides Pilate with a report which is couched in such a way that Pilate understands that his orders have been carried out. I have not made a point of relating the various betrayals and casually opportunistic denouncements to Bulgakov's own times, particularly focused on the literary and theatrical world in the Moscow accounts. It almost goes without saying that Bulgakov satirises and parodies his own world in Stalinist Russia throughout the text. This has been much written of in other works. The work of Lakshin, Barrett, Proffer and others give good account of specific detailing, references to names, articles and so on that Bulgakov sends up in his work.

On foot Judas hurried on, not noticing the menacing turrets of the fortress of Antonia, deaf to the call of the trumpets from the fortress, oblivious of the Roman mounted patrol with their torches that threw an alarming glare across his path.

As he turned past the fortress Judas saw that two gigantic seven-branched candlesticks had been lit at a dizzy height above the temple. But he only saw them in a blur. They seemed like dozens of lamps that burned over Jerusalem in rivalry with the single lamp climbing high above the city – the moon. (Bulgakov 357).

Typical of Bulgakov's exaggerated interplay of imagery, here and throughout the text, the call of the trumpets (along with a satirical modern counter-part, the whistle) signals the role of Satan in apocalyptic retributive justice. [365] The 'alarming glare' in association with previous image-juxtapositions intensifies the obvious metaphors and metonyms. The vision of two giant candlesticks is drawn directly from Revelation 1.12 ff, in which Jesus appears as the judge in the midst of the symbols for the seven churches.[366] The lamps, which compete with the candelabra and the moon, are those which light the Passover feast in people's houses. Thus it is as if the whole of Jerusalem were judging Judas, and celebrating his death in the sacrificial feast.

The moon paradoxically symbolises both the works of God and the devil. Bulgakov's ability to demonstrate the dual working of images is thus consistent throughout.[367] Critically, in this chapter, Pilate envisions joining Yeshua on the moonlit path to eternity: 'he set off along that path of light, straight up towards the moon'. (Bulgakov 360 - 361).[368] Judas is killed in the moonlight, walking 'in chequered carpets of moonlight' before being stabbed, the knife recalling the sacrificial ritual. (Bulgakov 357-358). As Arthanius returns to report to Pilate, he

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[365] C.f. Bulgakov Chapters 2 and 16, in particular. The Roman cavalry ironically signifies both the brutality of the Empire, and the divine retribution of the four horsemen of Revelation; it is present at the public trial of Yeshua, and at his execution. Pilate is a cavalryman; his servant, Muribellum, symbolises an extreme of Roman so-called justice.

[366] In chapter 23, "Satan's Rout", the scene is an ironic displacement of God's throne room; descriptions are exaggerated and florid, in the same way as John's various descriptions of heaven; candlesticks are held up by Negro slaves, many of the architectural features are reminiscent of Revelation, in which gem-stones figure all the time (e.g., Rev. 4, 21.9 ff).

[367] Often, shattered or fragmented moonlight signals the devil's activity, a pure beam of moonlight the path to eternity and bliss. Both, however, work to the good.

[368] It should be noted that there has been much written about the moon's association with Gnosticism. However, I believe that it rather reflects the soul's progress towards restoration.

rides past the 'seven-branched candlesticks flaring over the temple [and] the moon above them', and thus the death scene takes place between the first and this second apocalyptic image of judgement. (Bulgakov 360).

Bulgakov associates sacrifice with judgement. He links them to the liminal process of transformation where justice prevails. Thus the death of Yeshua leads directly to Judas' retributive sacrifice. Both sacrifices point to human injustice. In judgement, retribution comes before redemption. In Revelation, the judgement of sinners leads to the gift of and opening to eternal rest for the witnesses (as martyrdom). The imagery of the apocalyptic genre thus symbolically plays between retributive and redemptive justice.[369] Its coherence is recognisable in Bulgakov's novel through its imagistic allusions and its linear/cyclical structure.

In Bulgakov, the degree to which the vindication and justification of the witnesses depends on retributive justice is ambiguous. Justification comes from judging between the relationship of true witness, failure to witness and the deliberate refusal to witness. As in the gospel narratives, the question of Judas' redemption in the Final Judgment is difficult to decide unequivocally. Judas is undoubtedly a *type* for the sinner: his part in Yeshua's death is not in doubt. But Bulgakov's account is couched in signs which make this pairing with Yeshua clear.[370] Judas lies dead - stretched out like a figure on the cross - a patch of moonlight shining on his left foot. (Bulgakov 359). Arthanius asserts ironically to Pilate that Judas *will* rise again, 'when the trumpet-call of their messiah sounds for him'. (Bulgakov 367). This reminds us that the dead will be judged according to their deeds, but whether (like Pilate) Judas will be redeemed for the necessary part he played in divine history remains a mystery;[371] it is the same for the Master. Yet, as Andreopoulos notes, in Orthodoxy, despite our necessary lack of complete understanding, the sense remains that restoration is possible, if not likely.   In The

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[369] This may be the meaning of the twinned giant candelabra; or they may represent the twinning of Jerusalem with Babylon and Moscow – as flawed churches.
[370] C.f. chapter 4, above. It is suggestive of the pairing between Jesus and Judas of which Steiner speaks.
[371] C.f. Rev. 20.11ff. In some parts of the world, Judas and Pilate are revered for their necessary role in the death of Jesus.

Master and Margarita, the mediating voice of *Logos* is paired with Satan's. Satan acts as advocate for *and* adversary of God. As such, it is his hand that cynically carries out divine judgement.[372] In Bulgakov's text, Satan is the voice of the guiding angel. Like Pilate, and Bulgakov himself, that voice is always double-edged. The epigraph, however, enforces an interpretation in which possibility of forgiveness in its very impossibility exists as a certainty. If the third, and mediating, voice of love and forgiveness is sometimes difficult to identify within the fogs and mists of human language where meaning is ambiguous, yet Bulgakov creates hope and reinforces the meaning of divine justice. The characters who are driven to serve God's will (whilst wishing the opposite) will also be forgiven.[373] His faith dictates that it be so.

But this is not all. In chapter 2, Yeshua has told Pilate that: he feels sorry for Judas; that all men are good; that the kingdom of truth and justice will come; that no power will be needed in the coming kingdom; and that *all* will be reconciled to the 'one God'. (Bulgakov 39 - 41). This seems to go against Revelation's view of sinners who pass across to the finality of 'Death and Hades'.[374] However, Bulgakov is simply drawing the gospel message of forgiveness of the enemy into the apocalyptic text to highlight the Orthodox view of the paradoxical nature of justice and reconciliation. In this way, it is certain that Bulgakov believes that in the final reckoning the impossibility of imperfect humans (specifically, the cowards) to forgive their enemies will be overcome at the time of final judgment.[375] For fear makes cowards of us all, and Yeshua's example as a self-confessed coward when combined with his role as the forgiving judge of men essentially guarantees this (as he was in life, so *must* he be in death).[376] The Master (a coward), in any case, finds

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[372] The very fact that God is able to unlock the door to the pit to release Satan is a paradoxical proof of his divine control.

[373] What Bulgakov cannot stomach is those who serve their personal, petty gain, thus echoing John's warning to the Churches, critiqued for their complacency, indifference and greed.

[374] Rev 21.14-15.

[375] Again this goes some way to answer Steiner's protest against anti-Judaism arising out of the pairing of Jesus and Judas, as well as his comments on the ordinariness of most people.

[376] C.f. Luke 23.34. 'Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.' Although the utterance is lacking from some ancient versions, it is one of the most well known of the crucifixion speeches. Bulgakov provides it in the account of the execution (Margarita's reading of the Master's chapters, 372): Pilate witnesses to Matthew the Levite, 'Remember – before he died he said that he blamed no one.'

the strength (across time and space) to release Pilate from his particularly difficult bonds of cowardice, recognising in Pilate's cowardice, a suffering comparable to his own. Pilate moves off to join Yeshua, following him in a stream of moonlight which leads heavenward. Thus, critically, the Master's authorial act in 1930s Moscow provides the apocalyptic moment of witness (which is one of recognition and sacrifice) as a moment of forgiveness.

Perhaps Pilate is also destined to be one of the elect who will reign with Christ in the millennium (another interim before the End); perhaps Bulgakov believes that only those from the earlier times qualify for entry to a newly created Eden in the New Jerusalem.[377] For, paradoxically, it seems that the Master is granted peace *not* light (it was what he requested). Much has been made of this distinction. Does this resting-place represent the final peace of Eden, or could it reflect some interim place until the final End?[378] The arrival of the Master and his lover at the very dawning of Easter Sunday certainly points to a final incorporation into, and with God. Bethea, however, gives a more complex answer:

> What is the meaning of this ending and how does it function alongside of, in dialogue with, the elaborate apocalyptic subtext? It would be a mistake … to see this final moment as anything resembling an apocalypse of terrible judgment and retribution – that is, the Apocalypse of John. Pilate deserves punishment, yet the Master frees him. … A great deal has been made of the fact that, in the divine hierarchy of things, the cowardly Master deserves the limbo of peace, while Yeshua and his executioner deserve the ascent into the light. Pilate, who joins the philosopher on the lunar path, has indeed suffered more than the other characters, but it does not logically follow that he is more worthy than the Master, his author. No, Bulgakov's unorthodox apocalyptic vision is finally benign and his horses and horsemen redemptive, at least inasmuch as death, the ultimate mystery, can be understood as a joyful opening into a state beyond history. The guiding intelligence here is not that, dominating Revelation, of the avenging Christ, but that of the merciful Lamb; for this reason Margarita's voice ("Let him go!") emerges as especially resonant. Hers is the voice of the compassionate Virgin, nowhere to be found in the last book of the Bible. (Bethea 227).[379]

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[377] There are only 144,000, and Yeshua, Judas and Pilate have after all been part of the exceptional moment of divine irruption in history

[378] Ericson argues that the Master's resting place is a place of eternal fulfilment, but he points out that moonlight is always in some way associated with duality and the devil. C.f. Ericson (1991) 166.

[379] This last comment is perhaps questionable. C.f. Rev. 12 and 13, in which the woman clothed in the sun symbolises both the Virgin and the Church.

For Bethea, therefore, the redemptive end is clear, and certainly: he is right to flag the significance of the Virgin's intercessionary powers, but is wrong to say that there is no evidence for her compassionate presence in the text. As Kovacs and Rowland point out, from very early on, the *Woman Clothed with the Sun* has been viewed as the (compassionate) Mother of God and a symbol for the (suffering but hopeful) Church.[380] Bethea's reading also reflects the vernacular, collective beliefs of ordinary Orthodox Christians.

Two further points deserve clarification: first, in the dialectic between myth and history,[381] Bulgakov demonstrates that antinomy in mythological symbols does not mean the non-existence of a final truth. Truth does not fall into the either/or category: it stands beyond knowledge. Yet, within the limitations of human language, we can only make decisions based on that principle. The failure of language to represent this paradox is, however, paradoxically overcome by this use of antinomy. As with Barth, Bulgakov accepts the *limen as barrier* as much as he affirms it *as threshold* to a truth beyond. This is because de-coding the images, ultimately, calls for wisdom, not logic.[382]

George Krugovoy has commented that

> antinomy is the limit that a mythological symbol can go [to]. At that point it describes the paradox of being. … In the cognitive aesthetics of *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov elevates antinomy to an efficient tool. At the same time, antinomy becomes a no less potent device for correlating the semantic and formal levels of the narrative. (Krugovoy 10).[383]

Krugovoy points to an aesthetic of imagination as a 'mirror-principle' in action, a reaction to direct 'seeing'.[384] To me, the message is clear enough: Bulgakov *cannot* make assertions beyond his own Christian convictions of faith, hope and love. Antinomy is a way of presenting the liminal complex, out of which the mediating

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[380] C.f., Kovacs and Rowland, *op. cit.*, 136 ff.
[381] Truth and lies, imagination and reality etc.
[382] Rev. 17.9.
[383] George Krugovoy, The Gnostic Novel of Mikhail Bulgakov: Sources and Exegesis (Boston: University Press of America, 1991). This provides detailed information on the main source material and reading of the author.
[384] He denies any orthodoxy in Bulgakov's approach to Christianity.

voice resonates the necessity of the impossible possibility of forgiveness and love. As such, it provides a means to create hope in the wordless silence between.

It is only in the re-presentation (the apocalyptic performance) that faith, in love as *forgiveness*, can incorporate despair. By incorporating despair, it is overcome. Incorporation does not mean its disappearance but its transformation into powerlessness. In this way, the multi-layered conclusion of the novel not only includes the love of the enemy but also recognises that it is the complexity of proliferating visions of an end-beyond-the-end which opens out the meaning of truth as understanding.[385] Bulgakov will not presume to make God's judgment for Him. The Master cannot pre-empt God's judgment in the end that is not yet. Thus he re-presents the interim nature of Revelation (and the Christian Testament as a whole) and the call to 'come'.

Finally, in giving light to Pilate, but only rest for the Master, Bulgakov perhaps reflects the bifurcation of the apocalyptic vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation. The first half of chapter 21 provides peace and rest in a vision of Eucharistic communion, but also a domestic life without pain. The second half of the chapter emphasises the eternal radiance of God's presence. In chapter 22, the visions of Eden, the river, the tree of life (the vine metonym in Bulgakov's vision for the Master), and finally, the lack of light ('there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun…') signal the primary aspect of the New Jerusalem – safety, peace and restoration to God's presence.[386] Bulgakov thus provides the Master and Pilate with the particular aspects of eternity for which they respectively crave. However, the aspect which the Master most seeks forms an envelope around the glory of God's light. So whilst, there are different ways of interpreting the detail of the end, the overall tenor is understood. If I am correct, Bulgakov conflates the Christian accounts into one mythological text. He thus understands both the literary *making* of Revelation and the apocalyptic *hermeneutic* which directed it.[387] In this,

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[385] NB Bulgakov's last words were, 'Take me, forgive me.' C.f. Ellendea Proffer (1984) 500.
[386] C.f. Bulgakov 431.
[387] In this, Bulgakov's approach is arguably like that of Austin Farrer. C.f., epigraph to chapter 6.

he achieves a monumental feat that ridicules modern reason at the same time as it witnesses to faith.

9. Apocalypse

A final question remains as to whether, *as apocalypses*, Bulgakov's novel and Revelation overcome, or, in any way, resolve the crisis of representation through their handling of the liminal complex away from modernity's closed, rational reading.[388] Undoubtedly, both texts draw together the liminal complex of simultaneous experience of that which 'is not, is, and will be'. Affirming Ward, in the negotiating violence of sacrifice (as a sacrifice for all men), the communion of hope is fractured, displaced, integrated, dispersed and extended. The theological nature of language (which makes the apocalyptic text believable) is demonstrated but forced to face into its own impossibility. The performance of the apocalyptic text thus reveals the burden of its task.

That Bulgakov and John saw their works as of immense if not apocalyptic-eschatological importance cannot be doubted. Krugovoy writes that:

> Bulgakov felt that his novel carried a message of lasting importance. … His last wish concerning the future of the novel was expressed in the words addressed to his wife: "They must know … They must know."
> (Krugovoy 292).

The closing passages of Revelation make its apocalyptic importance equally clear: not one word must be changed. Whilst unique in themselves, they are not, however, exclusive: both men know that visions will come to others. Mytho-poetic performance will expand these visions. As long as the witness is tested against the principles of suffering love, faith, and hope, the truth, in whatever forms it takes, will out.

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[388] I.e. faith and hope arising out of the Christian apocalyptic-eschatological paradigm of the *limen*.

The Master and Margarita includes the structural and thematic motifs which, together, form the generic elements of a biblical apocalypse: pseudonymity, visions, a guiding angel, chosen recipients, movement between different worlds (a cosmology of eternity and time, of heaven, hell and earth), and the transformatory and liminal rupture of past and future into the present. I argue, furthermore, that his strategy of the book-in-the-book reflects both the form and content of Revelation and the formation of the New Testament books. Additionally, the formal and thematic elements are arranged into cycles that intensify and exaggerate the initial hermeneutic concern.[389] The *limen* is continually in play as the critical point and axis of all questioning. It is a complex in which some learn 'sight,' whilst the vision of others is occluded by godlessness. Often those who think that they have vision are shown to be 'blind', but this latter only serves to underline the mystery and glory of God's activity through which to pray.

Furthermore, the cinematic mode of montage is pre-empted in Revelation which exemplifies the *function* of series of juxtaposed, montage 'shots', in which extreme imagery evokes polarised emotions liminally affect, and correct, the reader's vision. Although evidently influenced by current art practice, Bulgakov's techniques of ironic displacement, montage, and the juxtaposition of opposites recognise and adopt the form of Revelation's image-cycles to create the same linear and cyclically referential effect. Themes woven into the formal structures of time and space thus create a contexture which ensures the cohesion of the text's form and content. In this way the apocalyptic genre is both reproduced and built on. Additional themes and forms do not detract from this.[390] A conscious drawing from the intertext informs, and 'in-forms' the apocalyptic technique. The text is thus associated with a multitude of texts. It expands on its generic forebears in a multi-layering which both complicates and deepens meaning. The apocalyptic genre is distinguishable by the conscious play of these interacting elements. Like a complex

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[389] C.f. Appendix 3, on the patterns and structure of the novel.
[390] For example, much has been made of the Menippean satirical mode of Bulgakov's novel and the carnivalesque nature of the Moscow episodes. But as Fowler is at pains to point out, adding to and developing a genre does not stop it from being one.

piece of music, it makes use of many apparently dissonant voices in order to resonate in one pure voice.

An apocalypse foregrounds either the rupture of the transcendent into the temporal, or alternatively, the transportation of the human into the eternal. Transgressing the *limen* creates the critical moment. It imports the knowledge of the future-present and the past-present to transform the way in which the present-historical crisis is viewed. Only in the liminal performance of the text can the third voice emerge.[391] Thus Bulgakov's novel, in line with other apocalypses, re-presents divine encounter in a particularly textual way. For, paradoxically, the Master does *not* meet with Yeshua, and God is only present in His absence. Similarly, Revelation refuses a meeting with Christ, *except* of course through visual symbols. Christ stands above and behind the visionary recipient and opens the seals to the eschatological cycles, where again, God is the absent (invisible) presence.[392] However, the unspoken call to communion in the Eucharist (symbolically and thematically referenced in both Revelation and Bulgakov) draws the discerning reader towards the possible in the impossible. The call points towards, and invites participation as encounter, where a third voice is incarnate as foreknowledge, thus giving a foretaste of the eternal in the mediated temporal/atemporal space at the limit of performed language.

Both texts thus adhere to Bakhtin's concept of a 'super-addressee', where utterance focuses on the referent that speaks 'in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical 'time''. (Milne 227 - 229). Metaphor and symbolisation reduce that distance. However, whilst the texts deal with 'great time', it is only when this breaks through into the reader's own time that meaning is intensified, and is as such reincarnated by 'the flesh-and-blood creature, the reader holding a book'. (Milne 227). The performance of the text thus demands a liminal hermeneutical process in which the reader participates with the author, the characters *and* the

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[391] It is not that of Bulgakov, but of Christ.
[392] In the next chapter, we will see how the weight of this absence dominates much of Pynchon's discourse; it will be equated with injustice and unfairness of the cruellest kind.

referent beyond all of these. Nowhere is this expectation of the mediatory process more clearly expressed than in the apocalyptic text, where the end is end *and* beginning, a linear *and* a cyclical processing of divine history.

Throughout this study, I have been building up to the question as to whether, despite the enormous gap between them in both time and space, The Master and Margarita is an apocalypse like that of John's. Bethea asserts that an apocalypse proper can only be one that falls within the Judaeo-Christian tradition of the intertestamental and early centuries of our era. He is cautious about calling Russian apocalyptic texts *apocalypses*.

> [P]erhaps we can speak of a subset of the modern novel which takes the core elements of the biblical genre and adapts them to its own hybrid form. (Bethea 40).

However, as Fowler has shown, a genre develops and mutates its form and content, thus remaining sufficiently recognisable enough to give a generic match.[393] Against this, Ericson argues that the mood of Revelation pervades Bulgakov's novel. He also affirms Bulgakov's orthodoxy. However, by asserting that only chapters twenty-nine to thirty-two actually parallel Revelation, he fails to see the apocalyptic whole which, as Bethea stresses, stands at the heart of many Russian novels in the modern period.[394]

Whilst both critics clearly recognise the significance of the biblical text(s) to the form and content of Bulgakov's novel, I have attempted to show that the novel expands on content.[395] However, this is accompanied and directed by references

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[393] C.f. Bethea (1989). The elements taken up by these novels are: 1. God determines history but man can freely choose between good and bad actions; 2. The last stages of history are determines through a tripartite paradigm of 'crisis-judgment- vindication' and is predicted by seers (Bethea 39); 3. history is a total event, and the end will be a return to a new beginning; 4. understanding that history and working out how to react to it is discernible only by seeking out and correctly interpreting signs of God's will (Bethea 40); 5. a supernatural messenger seeks out a seer through whom the signs will be given and interpreted. (Bethea 40).

[394] Ericson writes that, 'the apocalyptic conclusion to the novel stands in a relationship to St John's Revelation that is parallel to the relationship between the Master's novel and the four Gospels of the New Testament'. (Ericson 2, 151). C.f., Edward E. Ericson, "The Apocalyptic Vision of Mikhail Bulgakov's 'The Master and Margarita'", Studies in Slavic Language and Literature, vol. 6 (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991).

[395] Introducing a historical fictional account that is like a gospel narrative.

from Revelation itself. To that extent, Bulgakov passes his 'gospel' account through the apocalyptic milling machine. Like John of Patmos, he also follows the technique of intertextual incorporation so as to juxtapose and conflate the images and their theological message. However, he goes further than this: his production of a theological and mytho-poetic whole simultaneously presents the liminal paradigm of 'was, is, and is to come' of Christianity.[396] He takes the different narrative forms of gospel account and apocalypse and fuses them into one apocalyptic fiction. The book-in-the-book arguably thus provides a means (and an excuse) to do this. In this way, The Master and Margarita becomes a testament that imitates the Testament. This is all the more apparent when the Jerusalem chapters are taken to be, in one way or another, either supernatural, or visionary, experiences of various characters. Thus Bulgakov re-presents the multi-voiced testament within an overall narrative, driven by a single paradox established by the epigraph.

10.   Conclusion

At the outset, I proposed that, despite an already cultural apocalyptic mindset driven by Revelation, Bulgakov's production, of what is perhaps one of the only modern Christian generic apocalypses, is nonetheless an extraordinary achievement. Given the socio-political and theo-ethical context of Stalinist totalitarianism, the apocalyptic text, with its recourse to ironic displacement, is furthermore an effective tool of Christian witness, capable of great subversion whilst, at the same time, proposing an effective counter-cultural paradigm. For, within the rhetoric of apocalypse (which simultaneously signals the impossible possibility of the Word in the word) Bulgakov's apocalypse produces hope in the future promise. Bulgakov writes

> What would your good be doing, if there were no evil, and what would the earth look like if shadows disappeared from it? After all, shadows are cast by objects and people. There is the shadow of my sword. But there are also shadows of trees and living creatures. Would you like to denude the earth of all the trees and all the living beings in order to satisfy your fantasy of rejoicing in the naked light?

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[396] Imitating and not imitating the Christian Testament organisation into discrete books.

This makes it clear that the way in which the apocalyptic text is read is of extreme importance, and thus I recapitulate Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's explanation of the early Christian economy of the apocalyptic text that

> [a]pocalyptic language is not simply the vehicle for theological-eschatological ideas … but as a mythic-poetic language, evokes imaginative participation. The metaphoric and symbolic character of apocalyptic language resists any attempt at logical reduction and closed one-dimensional interpretation. Its aim is not explanation and information, but the expression of visionary wholeness … that cannot be expressed in propositional language. (Schüssler Fiorenza 305).

A true apocalypse will thus stand against the modern project of taxonomic and rational explanations of history. Time, space and corporeality will be ritually deployed within the exaggerated modification of mythologised apocalyptic history of the text, where the hermeneutic of the *actual* historical moment takes place within the *mythologised* historical space of apocalypse. The interpreter takes part in the text that, spatially and temporally, plays between historical past, present, future, and whole time and space. And as Bethea points out, recognition of the 'canonical subtext' (i.e., the entire New Testament) predisposes an interpretation in which readers are 'simultaneously aware of their openness and closedness, and of the boundary between *Wahrheit* [fact] and *Dichtung* [fiction].' (Bethea 34). This is apocalyptic-eschatological liminality at its best.

In chapter 8 we will see, however, that, although Thomas Pynchon subverts the apocalyptic form, his subversion similarly and unintentionally only serves to re-open the issue of the possibility of the apocalyptic moment in its impossibility, as it plays through the dualisms of modernity and a modal performance of the *limen* as barrier.

Domesticating terror: paranoia, resistance and revelation

[U]nder the final arch …   is a judgment from which there is no appeal.

1. Introduction

Throughout this study I have compared (and paired) the complex liminal paradigm of Christian apocalyptic-eschatology with the one-dimensional, closed version of modernity (and Adam). One speaks of creation, incarnation and relationship; the other of death, desire, indifference and atomism. To complement this theological perspective, in chapter 6, I outlined the distinction between the literary genre and mode of apocalyptic and set out some principles for approaching the readings in the chapters 7 and 8.

In the first, I presented an apocalypse to which faith is the key. I showed how the Russian writer, Mikhail Bulgakov writes an apocalypse in a discourse between eastern orthodox faith and (communist) modernity (whilst parodying and ridiculing its arguments and methodologies); the form, content and tone of Bulgakov's apocalyptic-eschatology arguably undermine the structure and logic of modernity as the text works affectively on the reader through the fluxional border crossings of its characters, apocalyptic-modally performed. At the same time, the interlacing of rational argument (his satirising of western historical and philosophical argument) and the Christian message (of God's love and goodness working towards freedom and forgiveness) allows Bulgakov to present an orthodox Christian position in the face of, and in defiance of, Stalinist totalitarianism, injustice and non-freedom. It must be admitted that this novel may prove to be an exceptional example of the apocalyptic genre-form in modernity. However, the uniqueness of <u>The Master and Margarita</u> does not mean that apocalyptic texts are unusual. On the contrary, many modern and postmodern texts go beyond Derrida's

apocalyptic tone by writing in the modal form, not only in the theoretical sense outlined in chapter 6, but also in their references to, and focus through the eschaton of Revelation as a modal cue ideas of Armageddon. In this chapter, I take a postmodern example of the apocalyptic mode in which, however, fatalism, indifference and despair are central, to look at how its subjective, closed view fails to carry us beyond the world of flux. What remains common to both texts is, of course, the debate between revelation and the problematic of representation out of which a decision between the two must ultimately be taken.

I will explore the work of the American writer, Thomas Pynchon, predominantly through his epic novel, Gravity's Rainbow, referring to the dominance of limit and boundary, eschatology and apocalyptic in his ideas and literary style.[397] Unsurprisingly, the emotion that dominates Pynchon is fear, reflected through chaotic, obfuscating systems of meaning. This does not make it easy reading. However, like Bulgakov, his work is shot through with irony and humour that demonstrates the persistence (and insistence) of the human will to 'live'. His characters both resist and seek to break free from death and injustice, at the same time as they seem to capitulate to them. His characters huddle together. Befuddled, they muddle along, either in random encounters or in isolation. As we saw in Part 1, however, where Pynchon holds up some exemplars of hope, this is arguably hope as foreboding. Fatalism, in the end, wins through.

Throughout this chapter, I will consider *inter alia*: Pynchon's narrative; how, philosophically, Jacques Derrida's nuclear discourse reflects Pynchon's worldview; his strategy and narrative of paranoia through Richard Locke; an apocalyptic-eschatological reading of Pynchon by Elizabeth Wall Hinds in which she suggests that he constructs a means to relationship through language itself. Thus, conclusions on Pynchon's crisis of representation are drawn through her essay on wit, the supernatural and the possibility of negentropy (or reversal) – this latter, despite the influence of Calvinism on Pynchon's resistance to a 'malicious' Puritan God, and his attribution of entropy as part of 'that set of malicious laws of ... a God

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[397] Thomas Pynchon, Gravity's Rainbow (London: Picador, 1978).

that designs not the best but the worst plots for (or against) his Preterite,' (Wall Hinds 23-24).[398] The following concerns will be of particular interest: delusions of persecution; sacrifice, homosexual wish-fantasy and the desire for death; the elect and the preterite; liminality and fear of the void; and finally, the will of language to defer, or even defeat, the imminent end. Against and in relation to Pynchon, I will look at Mark's gospel through negative liminal and apocalyptic-eschatological readings that reference and contrast Pynchon to the gospel text. In this way, I seek to demonstrate (and draw together) the close relationship between the liminal paradigms presented in Part 1.

2. 'Seeing/not seeing' and desiring the end: an overview of Thomas Pynchon

Pynchon's oeuvre reflects the recent dialectic between science and philosophy. He is well-known as a postmodern master of liminality, in what Stuart Moulthrop describes as elucidating 'doubleness, a tension between the structure that exists and a metastructure that either does not yet exist or is not apparent'.[399] Thus his work offers insights into the postmodern crisis of representation, predominantly inculcating however, the fatalism, atomism and indifference of despair with barely a glimmer of hope. For, tellingly, Pynchon writes, there 'was no difference between the behavior of a god and the operations of pure chance.' (Pynchon 1978, 323). At its simplest, therefore, he is associating a vision of chaos and void with that of an unloving god. So, the call for meaning and relationship with the other goes unanswered and fatalism kicks in.

> She has turned her face, more than once, to the Outer Radiance and simply seen nothing there. And so each time taken a little more of the Zero into herself. It comes down to courage, at worst an amount of self-deluding that's vanishingly small … her appeals to a day not of wrath but of final indifference. . . . (Pynchon 1978, 150).

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[398] Wall Hinds (2000) 23-40. The desire to pre-empt the end is arguably one taken by some sectarian movements in England in the seventeenth century, and in my view is still a prevalent characteristic in recent Republican foreign policy.

[399] Stuart Moulthrop, "Polymers, Paranoia, and the Rhetorics Hypertext". The New Media Reader: 1990s: Writing on the Edge, 1991.
http://www.newmediareader.com/cd_samples/WOE/Moulthrop_Polymers.html.
There are no page references in this text. downloaded on 20.09.2008.

Engaging with complexity and the duplicity of systems, rejecting or resisting God, Pynchon proposes that the human condition struggles towards meaning through theories and systems that cannot staunch the sense of there being no ultimate meaning, no frame of reference and no relationship beyond the chaotic struggle and desire for it at the interface. Even if meaning does exist it is delusional or beyond our grasp.

> He had decided long ago that no Situation had any objective reality: it only existed in the minds of those who happened to be in on it at any specific moment. Since these several minds tended to form a sum total or complex more mongrel than homogeneous, The Situation must necessarily appear to a single observer much like a diagram in four dimensions to an eye conditioned to seeing the world in only three. Hence the success of failure of any diplomatic issue must vary directly with the degree of rapport achieved by the team confronting it. … it was a neat theory, and he was in love with it. The only consolation he drew from the present chaos was that his theory managed to explain it. (Pynchon 199, 158ff).[400]

Meaning is provoked by (accidental or coincidental) encounter – the two cobbled together as a series of (sometimes shared) momentary insights that, in the end, do not add up to anything much, however great the desire for love and relationship. In this sense, Pynchon embodies the crisis of representation in the disembodying (virtual) reality described by Ward.

It is clear that on a theological level, Pynchon is influenced by a certain Puritanism that is inflected with pessimistic apocalyptic (and Gnostic) sonority.[401]

> It's been a prevalent notion. Fallen sparks. Fragments of vessels broken at the Creation. And someday, somehow, before the end, a gathering back to home. A messenger from the Kingdom, arriving at the last moment. But I tell you there is no such message, no such home -- only the millions of last moments . . . no more. Our history is an aggregate of last moments. (Pynchon 1978, 148-9).

Thus, in relation to representation, he tussles with notions of desire, life and death, meaning and non/no meaning in epic narratives that spell out both the proliferation

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[400] Thomas Pynchon, *V.* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1999). Chapter 7.

[401] It is generally accepted that Gnosticism believes that the demiurge, or imperfect god, created the material (evil) world as a means to entrap divine souls in human bodies. Beyond the demiurge stands an unknowable Supreme Being as the embodiment of goodness. As such, it is dualistic. Spiritual knowledge (as esoteric mysticism) will free the soul from the evil of matter.

of word and text, and their simultaneous death in a cosmos that is, at best, indifferent, at worst conspiring against us. The desire to break free from meaning/no meaning is as strong as in some of the Absurdist and Existential writers of the previous generation but for, arguably, different reasons.

> "I want to break out -- to leave this cycle of infection and death. I want to be taken in love: so taken that you and I, and death, and life, will be gathered inseparable, into the radiance of what we would become. . . ." (Pynchon 1978, 724).

Within this duplicitous world of smoke and mirrors in which meaning is envisioned, sought and misread, it is perhaps inevitable that paranoia pertains: sometimes it is straightforward

> "You one of those right wing nut outfits?" inquired the diplomatic Metzger.
> Fallopian twinkled. "They accuse *us* of being paranoids."
> "They?" inquired Metzger, twinkling also.
> "Us?" asked Oedipa. (Pynchon 2000, 32).

At other times, it surfaces as a cynical system of meaning which refuses and abuses the analogical principle of proportion and relations-in-difference

> The Serpent that announces, "The World is a closed thing, cyclical, resonant, eternally-returning," is to be delivered into a system whose only aim is to *violate* the Cycle. Taking and not giving back, demanding that "productivity" and "earnings" keep on increasing with time, the System removing from the rest of the World these vast quantities of energy to keep its own tiny desperate fraction showing a profit: and not only most of humanity -- most of the World, animal, vegetable, and mineral, is laid waste in the process. (Pynchon 1978, 412).

Thus, somewhat differently to say, Samuel Becket who views the liminal barrier as the prison-house boundary to inevitable stagnation or to stasis and suffocation, Pynchon simultaneously proposes (and views with fear) the violent influx and rupture of the closed liminal paradigm by some unknown, ungraspable outside power.[402] To that degree, Pynchon's liminal play both embraces and reviles complexity theories.

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[402] C.f., for example, Samuel Becket, Endgame: a Play in One Act. (New York: Grove Press, 1958). The play's subject is despair, but the will to live persists despite the incomprehensibility of (and thus lack of relationship with) the world. He writes: 'Nothing is funnier than unhappiness … it's the most comical thing in the world. And we laugh, we laugh, with a will, in the beginning. But it's always the

Having established the basis for arguing Pynchon's (dualistic) obsession with the *limen*, in the following section, I give a brief outline of the plot of Gravity's Rainbow, paying particular attention to the strategy of paranoia which is prevalent in all his work that, I suggest, is apocalyptic-modally produced.

3. The narrative (of paranoia)

Michiko Kakutani, in his review of Pynchon's Mason & Dixon, writes

> The Great Big Question in Thomas Pynchon's novels, from "V." (1963) through "Gravity's Rainbow" (1973) and "Vineland" (1990), has been: Is the world dominated by conspiracies or chaos? Are there patterns, secret agendas, mysterious codes - in short, a hidden design - to the burble and turmoil of human existence, or is it all a product of chance? Are the paranoiacs onto something, or do the nihilists have the key to it all?[403]

Arguably, the two go hand in hand. Set in the later years of World War II, Gravity's Rainbow is clearly an extended metaphor of paranoia in which the German deployment of the V2 rocket bomb over London figures centrally. Chaos figures too, and random wanderings, warnings and promises are confused, convoluted, and directed in a metaphorical hermeneutics of the end. At full speed the narrative, like the rocket, moves towards death (this is eschatology as the end of the human archive), the novel's elaborate and richly textual nature paradoxically seeking both to defer and bring about 'the absolute zero' of death (Pynchon 1978, 3), in which the human and the technological are merged in one last, and fatal, missile launch. (Pynchon 1978, 750 - 760). The rocket, in a fatal covenant with gravity, becomes thus the emblem both of a closed system and of death itself. The rainbow covenant of the title may evoke God's covenant with Noah, and the re-making of creation, but for Pynchon its parabolic logic

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same thing. Yes, it's like the funny story we have heard too often, we still find it funny, but we don't laugh any more'. (Beckett 18-19.).

[403] http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/04/27/daily/pynchon-book-review.html?_r=1. Michiko Kakutani, "'Mason & Dixon': Pynchon Hits the Road With Mason and Dixon". (New York Times: April 29, 1997).

is a curve each of them feels, unmistakably. It is the parabola. They must have guessed, once or twice -- guessed and refused to believe -- that everything, always, collectively, had been moving toward that purified shape latent in the sky, that shape of no surprise, no second chance, no return. Yet they do move forever under it, reserved for its own black-and-white bad news certainly as if it were the rainbow, and they its children. (Pynchon 1978, 209).

Pynchon simultaneously resists and projects a libidinous comfort in this moment of absolute end. In the final instant death and life merge at the interface and are momentarily at one. Despite a nostalgia for something greater, love is solipsistic and the impossibility of breaking into relationship *almost* certain. However, at the same time, Stuart Moulthrop affirms that

> *Gravity's Rainbow* provides us with an essential tool for understanding complex systems: the cognitive strategy called paranoia. This state of mind, Pynchon observes, constitutes "the onset, the leading edge, of the discovery that *everything is connected,* everything in the Creation, a secondary illumination—not yet blindingly One, but at least connected…." (Moulthrop. C.f., Pynchon 1978, 703).

The connectedness of everything is, of course, reflective of the postmodern project of immanentism and virtuality, and for our purposes therefore, the theme of the relationship of the body to death is central to how Pynchon resists but is subsumed by a metaphysics of desire in which the body is both reified and disappears.[404] Moulthrop sees Pynchon's relation to complexity as a positive aid to understanding the liminal nature of hypertext in the virtual world of computers in that

> paranoid enlightenment contains a strong parallel with exploratory hypertext, a system of expression in which everything is indeed connected. But Pynchon's concept of paranoia has even greater relevance … for it gives us a useful way of understanding both connections and disjunctions, both links and gaps—both the present structure and the numinous presence of "what does not yet exist." Paranoia as Pynchon defines it is a *liminal* condition, a threshold state where the mind encounters the "leading edge" of a higher knowledge. Because the paranoid perceiver is still rooted in reality and history, his cognition depends in part on

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[404] C.f., Ward, <u>Cities</u>, chapter 5: *Spinoza*, pp131ff. Unlike Spinoza, Pynchon's arguably Gnostic perspective cannot rise enough to view this connectedness as good.

rational constructs—connections and correspondences, lines of influence and causality. (Moulthrop).

However, I would tend to argue to the contrary that Pynchon's work serves only to emphasise his engagement with the negative liminal model, and the fact that he applies several complex scientific theories to the structure and theme of the novel (chaos, information, and entropy helping to create a convoluted and ambiguous narrative line) does not make meaningful encounter with the numinous any more likely. Furthermore in relation to reality and history, in Mason & Dixon, he writes that

> Facts are but the Play-things of lawyers, - Tops and Hoops, forever a-spin…. Alas, the Historian may indulge no such idle Rotating. History is not Chronology … nor is Remembrance, for Remembrance belongs to the People. History can as little pretend to the Veracity of the one, as claim the Power of the other, - her Practitioners, to survive, must soon learn … that there may ever continue more than one life-line back into a Past we risk, each day, losing our forbears in forever, - not a Chain of single Links, for one broken Link could lose us All, - rather, a great disorderly Tangle of Lines, long and short, weak and strong, vanishing into the Mnemonick Deep, with only their Destination in common. (Pynchon 1998, 349).[405]

For together, the interrelations of chance, chaos, information and entropy underpin a double-sense of acceleration to, and deceleration of, the end which, in Gravity's Rainbow, is the vanishing point and parabolic curve of the rocket. Thus the narrative projects a series of complex episodes, consisting of a huge cast of seemingly random and unconnected characters, which the reader strains to order into coherence.

Characters from vastly different locations find their way into 'the zone', the area in which the rocket launch is sited (the site of Gnostic enlightenment?). However, Tyrone Slothrop (a type for Ulysses) loosely ties together the whole tangle of lines (divided into four books).[406] For, inexplicably, the rocket's path is

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[405] Thomas Pynchon, Mason & Dixon. (London: Vintage, 1998).
[406] The novel thus also plays through the journey-type of the epic genre.

mapped into his cognition without, however, his being able to decode its meaning. His attempt to do so mirrors the reader's own efforts. Slothrop's resulting paranoia is exaggerated and exacerbated by the discovery that he is being monitored in relation to the rocket's movement. The apocalyptic tone is apparent and is reflective of Derrida's point that it occludes as it promises to open out meaning. For, as Moulthrop suggests (although, in his case, with great enthusiasm)

> Paranoids produce not just delusions but delusional systems, structures of compound association that attempt to embrace "everything in the Creation." ... infinitely extensible, repeatable, and emergent, with an inexhaustible latency of other orders. (Moulthrop).

The double-movement of liminal near, or promised, encounter as no-encounter creates rhythmic acceleration. This permeates the book as the rocket's flight to London parallels Slothrop's flight to the 'zone'. His decision to 'drop out' (to accept nature for what it is) does not, however, stop the novel's climactic end which, in effect, describes a ritual sacrifice (of the abused, homo-erotic substitute) as self-fulfilling death-wish.

Gottfried (a victim of Weissmann, a sadomasochist and the rocket's mastermind) is placed into the rocket, prepared, and fired into the parabolic arc of the rocket's path.[407] For Gottfried it is the ultimate gift of love to his tormentor and lover. It is a voluntary sacrificial act but at the same time, an outcome of embodied persecution.

> What are the stars but points in the body of God where we insert the healing needles of our terror and longing? (Pynchon 1978, 699).

His 'zero' moment at the interface (the liminal point at which life and death intersect) only momentarily precedes the final 'delta-t' (*delirium tremens*) of the cinema audience innocently sitting at the final point of the rocket's descent (thus ignorant of their imminent death). This final, human, bomb marks the Apocalypse

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[407] Gottfried: 'God's peace'. Weissmann: a man robed in white.

which Pynchon prophesies in a final 'hymn' of death redolent with bathos and pathos.

> There is a Hand to turn the time,
>
> Though thy Glass today be run,
>
> Till the Light that hath brought the Towers low
>
> Find the last poor Pret'rite one ...
>
> Till the Riders sleep by ev'ry road,
>
> All through our crippl'd Zone,
>
> With a face on ev'ry mountainside,
>
> And a soul in ev'ry stone. ... (Pynchon 1978, 760).

Human life will end *without* new life; their past (memory) inflected only in that future fossilisation. (Pynchon 1978, 760). Thus the text re-presents the duplicity of mis-interpretation/interpretation, manipulations of power and the resulting inevitability of paranoia. In the failed attempt to find serenity in the midst of chaos, it is a discourse on the psychology of thermodynamics and the inevitable heat-death of life. Modally, the novel interweaves apocalyptic techniques of montage, which are employed to illustrate the effect and ability of scientific theories to create new worldviews through rich textual supplementarity.

The theories which most inform his work are the Second Law of Thermodynamics (with its logic of an inevitable increase in entropy, and information theory (with its logic of information coding, in symbols, impulses, and rapidity of transmission). The subset of cognitive mapping plays into both.[408] Thus Gravity's Rainbow centralises mapping errors, which I define structurally through Clune's comments on 'path integration', which

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[408] Alan C. Clune, "Finding One's Way Through "Wayfinding", 2000. Pscholoquy. 11, no. 58, Cognitive Mapping. <psychprint.ecs.soton.ac.uk/archive/00000058/>. Access date: December, 2003. NB. There are no page numbers in URL texts. Clune writes that cognitive mapping is constituted by, "psychological transformations by which an individual acquires, codes, stores, recalls, and decodes information about the relative locations and attributes of phenomena in the everyday spatial environment".

involves the integration of sensory … information available to the subject during translations and rotations, but it does not involve prior planning of the route by the subject. … 'The primary assumption of the model is that all of the systematic errors in the subject's performance is the result of error in sensing the outbound path and representing that information in memory' … In other words, one cannot acquire an elaborate representation of the traveled path until one has traveled some of the path. (Clune).

The statement informs this chapter, as Pynchon's narrative takes its theatre of players forward to the 'zone' without knowledge of the destination, the journey, or the code to their interpretation. It re-presents the difficulty of representation in present time by integrating the error factor which is built into that process, and the lack of future in his liminal paradigm.

The logics of entropy and chaos create a disturbing, punctuated narrative. Episodes are presented as a series of short, disconnected film-reels.[409] This is a similar line taken to Derrida in his essay on the apocalyptic tone. Thus, unlike Bulgakov, Pynchon rejects any 'common sense' representation of meaning (through relations-in-difference) in favour of randomness and void. However, similar to Bulgakov, his text warns at the same time as it attempts to comfort. The comfort he proposes relies on submission to the natural order (as disorder and randomness), thus contesting and protesting against any (complete) notion of spiritual relationship with God as promised by the analogy of being.

In that the whole book is hermeneutically driven through its epigraph, Pynchon is protesting not only against the cynical exploitation of humanity caught up in the arms' race, but also against the goodness of God.

Nature does not know extinction: all it knows is transformation. Everything science has taught me, and continues to teach me, strengthens my belief in the continuity of our spiritual existence after death. (Wernher von Braun).

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[409] Between episodes, the book graphically marks this effect by a series of linear squares that resemble a film reel.

Ironically, Wernher von Braun is the driving force behind the creation and use of the V1 and V2 rockets of death: continuity does not mean fulfilment. And as an atheistic protest, this places Pynchon within the confident tradition of natural science and modernity. However, his allegiance to chaos (including, I suppose, Darwinism) and information theories subverts this, and thus also situates him within the postmodern debate of continuation and end discussed throughout this study.

In the next section, I consider via Derrida how, in Pynchon, the apocalyptic war of words plays through the negative liminal paradigm of representation that point into despair, immanentism and death, with the aim of establishing the parameters for understanding his underlying adherence to what we could be called virtual (not real) economies of the eschatological.

4. 'Nuclear Criticism': war in the name of the Name

If, in "Of an Apocalyptic Tone", Jacques Derrida describes the confusing, obfuscating and manipulative tone of language in the name of the name, in "No Apocalypse, Not Now", he considers the way in which the nuclear threat (and the prospect of a total end in self-destruction) is played out in the rhetorics of which Pynchon is part.[410] Derrida invents the term 'nuclear criticism', to foreground how, in view of a definitive nuclear end, the eschatological discourse is critically fuelled by a perception of *acceleration.* It is not the first (or last) intensification of a narrative of catastrophic ending; rumours about wars, and of the final war, have been rehearsed and repeated throughout the apocalyptic discourse. However, present rumours 'make us look like sleepwalkers' because we are now facing an event unique in history (a term reminiscent of the apocalyptic call to watch). (Derrida No Apocalypse, 20).

Paradoxically, despite the knowledge that death faces us all (whether the end comes sooner or later), the need to *slow down* has become as critical to the

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[410] C.f, *op. cit.,* chapter 3 above. Jacques Derrida, "No Apocalypse, Not Now (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven missives)", in Diacritics, vol. 14, Summer (1984) 20-31.

apocalyptic rhetorical strategy as the simultaneous *pick-up in speed*. He describes this double-movement as a rhetoric of speed which

> would seek in the stockpile of history (in short, in history itself, which in this case would have this blinding search as its function) the wherewithal to neutralize invention, to translate the unknown into a known, to metaphorize, allegorize, domesticate the terror, to circumvent (with the help of circumlocutions: turns of phrase, tropes and strophes) the inescapable catastrophe, the undeviating precipitation toward a remainderless cataclysm. The critical slowdown may thus be as critical as the critical acceleration. (Derrida, No Apocalypse 21).

The rhetoric aims to control the uncontrollable.[411]

Derrida strategises the notion of speed in what he calls a 'genre or rhetorical form' of nuclear warfare, in which he sends out (or projects) 'inoffensive missiles: in a discontinuous, more or less haphazard fashion'. (Derrida No Apocalypse, 21). All writing is apocalyptic in tone. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Derrida consciously adapts and extends it to displace and disrupt the neutralising rhetoric fuelling the American eschatological nuclear discourse, which is grounded in the conviction (and expectation) of the state's right to dominate and control the means to the End.[412]

Derrida thus 'proliferates' arguments in a projection of missiles, or *missives.[413]* Critically, these foreground the dangers inherent in a severance of the political from the scientific, the social from the technical. He writes that whilst

> these competencies are so dangerously and effectively dissociated ...[yet] from another point of view, they have never been so terribly accumulated, concentrated, entrusted as in a dice game to so few hands ...Among the acts of observing, revealing, knowing, promising, acting, simulating, giving orders, and so on, the limits have never been so precarious, so undecidable. (Derrida No Apocalypse, 22).

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[411] Pynchon's tale refutes the possibility of this slow-down, and yet, paradoxically, his narrative inevitably conforms to this double-movement.
[412] Arguably, Pynchon attempts this at the same time as he critiques the power policies of the economic/military pact.
[413] In his seven 'missives' the allusion to the letters to the Seven Churches in the Apocalypse is clear.

Our times embody the imminent expectation of the end; apocalyptic-eschatology as such is nuclear criticism read negatively. (C.f., Derrida No Apocalypse, 25 - 26). Consciousness of a loss of control is real and fills the American apocalyptic text with paranoia. For the limit becomes more ambiguous as the critical moment of decision (as sight of the end) becomes a real possibility. Society is thus dis-abled from participation, a notion that uncannily describes Pynchon's eschatological view. Derrida further speaks of the

> fabulously textual [nature of the nuclear discourse which] depends…on structures of information and communication, structures of language … structures of coding and graphic decoding. (Derrida, No Apocalypse 23).

The 'fable' of a nuclear end fuels the war industry and our literature that perhaps is nowhere better expressed than in Pynchon. And following Freud, Derrida asserts that, 'there [is] no difference in the unconscious between reality and a fiction loaded with affect', because a rhetorical strategy (of persuasion or dissuasion) deals *not* with proofs, but with belief or doctrine (*doxa*). (Derrida No Apocalypse, 23). The only authentic proof would be an actual nuclear war which destroys everything and thus leaves no trace of the discourse in its wake. There is no doubt that Gravity's Rainbow *is* fabulously textual. It also plays through information theory, and the structure of coding and decoding – the very things to which Derrida refers. Inevitably until the end, Pynchon's narrative cannot destroy everything and can only play through its nuclear discourse. And as his use of chaos theories opens language out to the laws of thermodynamics and entropic measurement, he adds to views of a definitive end, where the acceleration towards nuclear destruction forms part of the increase in chaos and disorder (Derrida's randomness), and the final loss of energy (the void).[414] Derrida suggests that the overwhelming aim of a nuclear rhetoric is to ensure that America's will 'prevails';

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[414] C.f, Peter Freese, From Apocalypse to Entropy and Beyond: The Second Law of Thermodynamics in Post-War American Fiction. (Essen: Verlag Die Blaue Eule, 1997) 496ff, in which he discusses the centrality of heat-death and its notional interconnection with information theory in The Crying of Lot 49. Pynchon's early short story, Entropy also focuses on the association of these two theories. Thomas Pynchon, The Crying of Lot 49 (novel) (London: Vintage, 2000), and "Entropy", in Slow Learner: Early Stories (London: Picador, 1985) 77 - 94.

Pynchon understands this irony. Again, like Pynchon, Derrida appreciates that the nuclear age suspends

> judgment before the absolute decision ...the historical and ahistorical horizon of an absolute self-destructibility without Apocalypse, without revelation of its own truth, without absolute knowledge. (Derrida <u>No Apocalypse</u>, 27).

Thus, within literature, the end is rhetorically signified by the 'archive's' destruction, and with it an end to the 'softening' of personal death (with its re-memorisation which is held within the archive that is the 'ineffaceable trace'). (Derrida <u>No Apocalypse</u>, 27). This is a terrifying prospect of the horizon as void. It is what Pynchon critically faces in <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u> - although, more accurately, the heat-death, which stands at the centre of his oeuvre, represents the stasis of the archive in the stilling of all activity. The result, however, is the same. All one can hope to do is to grasp onto the wisps of relationship as one goes towards that sad end. Thus, in Mason & Dixon, Pynchon observes that

> "Which else would have been lost forever to the great Wind of Oblivion,-- think," armsweep south, "as all civiliz'd Britain gathers at this hour, how much shapely Expression, from the titl'd Gambler, the Barmaid's Suitor, the offended Fopling, the gratified Toss-Pot, is simply fading away upon the Air, out under the Door, into the Evening and the Silence beyond. All those voices. Why not pluck a few words from the multitudes rushing toward the Void of forgetfulness?" (Pynchon 1998, 747).

For Derrida, the tactic of 'deferral' intensifies in the face of this particular fear. And even in that last grasp at relationship, Pynchon's paranoid-eschatological rhetoric is thus also a delaying tactic. The strategy of deferral (to 'gain' time) is manifested in both literary and political forums. (Derrida <u>No Apocalypse</u>, 29). The rhetoric of the politicians, moreover, invests in an inversion and confusion about those in whose hands the responsibility for the final decision rests; 'putting off' the time allows them to point to a temporal moment in which they will take back control from the technicians. (Derrida <u>No Apocalypse</u>, 29).[415] Pynchon is more than aware of this.

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[415] Derrida emphasises the irony of this argument for *deterrence* with its inversion of that which people generally understand as the political state of play.

> The System may or may not understand that it's only buying time. And that time is an artificial resource to begin with, of no value to anyone or anything but the System, which must sooner or later crash to its death, when its addiction to energy has become more than the rest of the World can supply, dragging with it innocent souls all along the chain of life. (Pynchon 1978, 412).

For, '[l]iving inside the System' some madman (the demiurge?) 'bent on suicide', and thus also, genocide drives it forward. (Pynchon 1978, 412). The tactic of *deterrence* is thus thoroughly objectionable and is a threat in itself, because it

> has no "original meaning" nor measure. Its "logic" is the logic of deviation and transgression, it is rhetorical-strategic escalation or it is nothing at all. It gives itself over, by calculation, to the incalculable, to chance and luck. (Derrida No Apocalypse, 29).

Reneging responsibility in this way transgresses the limits of discourse in a metaphysics of violence. Pynchon, too, foregrounds this hypocrisy in the grasp for power. For example, in Mason & Dixon, he writes

> "To rule forever," continues the Chinaman, later, "it is necessary only to create, among the people one would rule, what we call … Bad History. Nothing will produce Bad History more directly nor brutally, than drawing a Line, in particular a Right Line, the very Shape of Contempt, through the midst of a People, - to create thus a Distinction betwixt 'em,- 'tis the first stroke. - All else will follow as if predestin'd, unto War and Devastation." (Pynchon 1998, 615).

However, for Derrida, the randomness which inheres in the multi-messaging ('in the very process of calculation and the games that simulate the process') means that some messages (to 'escape all control', and to 'avert the worst') will *necessarily* be directed at 'the power of a death machine'. (Derrida No Apocalypse, 29). This is Pynchon's apocalyptic warning (and, paradoxically, his comfort). Leibnitz stands behind this discourse. Also Heidegger's subsequent question: 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' (Derrida No Apocalypse, 30).[416] The ultimate human dilemma forces us to imagine (whilst being incapable of imagining) the end-event. Chance wanderings of messages of the end (the deferred end, it

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[416] A return to theist arguments.

must also be said) both divide and exponentially repeat 'the first time and the last time alike'. (Derrida No Apocalypse, 30).

For Derrida the primary rhetoric of the first and last time is the Apocalypse. (Derrida No Apocalypse, 31). And, as in John's text, nuclear discourse involves 'the name alone'. The name is *alpha* and *omega*.

> The name of nuclear war is the name of the first war which can be fought in the name of the name alone, that is, of everything and nothing... is thought about the limits of experience as a thought of finitude. (Derrida No Apocalypse, 31).

Nuclear discourse is none other than the Derridean discourse of limits extending beyond the limit and the impossibility to think beyond limits. It is, he asserts, epitomised in the invitation to 'come' in Revelation.[417] (As such the desire for death drives language fundamentally, but this cannot be detached from the concomitant desire for the other. Again it is this against which Pynchon protests.) However, to risk encounter means giving up the archive, the memory and the inheritance of the name. (Derrida No Apocalypse, 29). For Derrida therefore, the war for (and in the name of) the name is *not* worth fighting. He follows Shem (and his family), who (after fighting for the 'name') decide that the war (for the name) is a pointless war, choosing instead to

> spend a little more time together, the time of a long colloquy with warriors in love with life ...in order to make the conversation last, even if they didn't understand each other too well. (Derrida, No Apocalypse 31).[418]

Pynchon similarly re-presents this point of view

> Now there grows among all the rooms, replacing the night's old smoke, alcohol and sweat, the fragile, musaceous odor of Breakfast: flowery, permeating, surprising, more than the color of winter sunlight, taking over not so much through any brute pungency or volume as by the high intricacy to the weaving of its molecules, sharing the conjuror's secret by which -- though it is not often that Death is told so clearly to

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[417] C.f. chapter 3.
[418] Derrida is presumably referring to a non-biblical exegesis of Shem as there is no reference to his narrative in the Genesis narratives. It should be noted that Abraham is a descendent of Shem.

fuck off -- the living genetic chains prove even labyrinthine enough to preserve some human face down twenty generations . . . (Pynchon 1978, 10).

Ironically, simultaneous with its acceleration of the movement to the End, is a prolongation, or deferral of that end, brought about through an elaborate and complex play of language. But, there is not much hope or confidence in that deferral, for 'the same assertion-through-structure allows this war morning's banana fragrance to meander, repossess, prevail.' (Pynchon 1978, 10).

Derrida's essay helps explain his own view of the metaphysics of violence, in which deferral is a negotiated peace (life) in the language of war (the inevitability of death). His play on nuclear discourse exemplifies that which, in an apocalyptic tone, seems to accelerate the discourse of the end in a deterrence of the actual end. Presumably, Derrida is ironically demonstrating the critical effect of slowing down the process (moving us towards the end), to show how we desire to keep the archive intact (in a deferral of the 'Last Day' in which the end of man and the loss of his archive coincide). Similarly, in Gravity's Rainbow, Slothrop chooses to 'drop out' of the zone with its accelerated movement to the rocket and death. Thus Pynchon is making a similar point: humankind is caught in the web of intertext and context, between acceleration which seeks deceleration, in which chance and randomness play their potentially destructive part. But, in the end, the end will come, name or no name.

We are increasingly aware of the expression of this double-bind within postmodern discourse, to the point that it is now woven into the structure and themes of our recent literatures, and some would argue in our political and social discourse.[419] The apocalyptic tone of its discourse is inevitable because we are aware of the real threat of (nuclear) destruction. Derrida's ironic tone, however, aims to raise that awareness through critical deconstruction; it is a criticism which, arguably unlike Pynchon, calls out for change. This suggests that Derrida, unlike Pynchon, is not a fatalist.

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[419] For example, in recent coverage of the banking crisis and deregulation (2008), and in the 'axis of evil' discourse on terrorism (George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, January 29th,2002).

To conclude: Derrida's narrative of nuclear discourse provides a context for, and way of reading Pynchon, in whose work the trace of the Word is an absent presence that conspires to elicit *death* and the death-wish. To that extent, Pynchon's work seems to undermine Derrida's. However, if life is celebrated in both Pynchon and Derrida, Pynchon's fatalistic apocalyptic tone fails to completely convince the reader of its worth whereas there remains always the sense of writing as *scripture* (the sacred in the apophatic) in Derrida. In Pynchon's fictional world, this is because any sense of Ward's erotic community of participation has arguably been replaced by the libidinal and random collisions of lost souls.[420] The Christian community is displaced in the supplementarity of multi-messaged *différance* (as interference). And in Pynchon, interference encapsulates a double sense of conspiratorial meddling, and of the displacement, fragmentation and subsumption of the weak. Unlike Bulgakov, this meddling, whilst invoking the diabolic, does not point to the inevitable outcome in the good *via* acts of evil and indifference, for his is a Gnostic view of evil. In this sense, interference points to difference as alienation, reification and indifference; also to transgression. It points to Barth's early understanding of the dialectical process, in which the weaker proposition is subsumed by the stronger; and to Massumi's 'static' as non-movement, where 'the space of the crossing, the gaps between positions on the grid, falls into a theoretical no-body's land'. (Massumi 4). As such, Pynchon works within a paradigm of oppression, enclosure and stasis.

Having thus established that Pynchon subscribes to the negative liminal paradigm, the next section considers the relation between Pynchon's paranoid enlightenment and the apocalyptic text.

5. Pynchon, paranoia and the apocalyptic text

The richly textual nature of <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u> seeks both to defer and bring about the final moment of death, in which the human and technological are merged in one last, fatal, missile launch of the rocket's fatal covenant with gravity. But this

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[420] Thus Pynchon follows a Freudian libidinal logic. C.f, Ward, <u>Cities</u> 123ff., and 50ff.

is a pessimistic vision of the end. Of the merging of life and death at the interface (a critical concept in his work), Pynchon writes

> The true moment of shadow is the moment in which you see the point of light in the sky. The single point, and the Shadow which has just gathered you in its sweep … (Pynchon759 - 760).[421]

Destinerrance is interpreted through an extended and intensified metaphor of paranoia, into which random wanderings, warnings, and promises are confused, convoluted and directed in a figural hermeneutics of a fatalistic end. And arguably as in Bloch, despair is directed to the limit of a 'fixed' horizon, and the negative 'drive-feeling …refers to a something that is external to it '. (Bloch 108).[422] Here, the something is death. But unlike Bloch, in Pynchon, the psychosis of paranoia (an emotion of anxiety and terror) plays centrally in the eschatological scenario as his characters struggle to make sense of their view of the world in a critical confrontation between their inner and outer worlds at the point at which the *limen* dissolves. This is how Bruno Arich-Gerz describes the double-bind of paranoia

> [paranoia] depends on the paradoxical arrangement of two contradictory aspects (… Bateson's *double bind* theory …), according to which the paranoiac regards himself as torn between two opposing, yet each by itself reasonable alternatives; … it lacks contours and a "form", [and] thus appears an abstract and delusionary structure of *thought* rather than an evident, or concrete system. As a consequence, it is usually impossible for the paranoid individual to decide whether the symptoms he … develops are the result of a self-delusion, or were imposed on …him from outside – all the individual knows is that these symptoms are real and own a self-eternalizing dynamism, and as a consequence appear [to be] an endless mechanism overtaxing the individual's mental capacities. (Arich-Gerz 1 - 2).[423]

He details the double-bind of 'inner boundaries' as '*bindings*' (Arich-Gerz 1), thus providing a metaphor through which to explore the inner conflict of a closed system breaking down from within. The impossibility of escape from the inner world of the mind (in which opposing forces are at play), the fear of being 'worked on' from the

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[421] Gottfried's last words as the rocket reaches its zenith prior to its descent.
[422] C.f. Section 6, chapter 4.
[423] Bruno Friedrich Arich-Gerz, "Bind-Bound-Boundaries: The Concept of Paranoia in Charles Brockden Brown, Joseph Heller and Thomas Pynchon", in Diss.thema: america (University of Konstanz/Cologne, 1999). <http:// www.sense.uni-konstanz>. Access date: August, 2003.

outside, compel the paranoiac's fear to break into, and be played out in, actions. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in Gottfried's death, where he is bound into the rocket, in the sadomasochist binding by the dominating Weissmann, and the loving compliance of the submissive, abused Gottfried. Persecution, self-delusion and resistance conflict with the desire to appropriate and gain power over. Everything gets muddled but not because of any lack of logic, because this double-bind reflects the tension inherent in antinomy.[424]

Of course, the paranoiac view mirrors the thought-world of the apocalyptic seer (in which the supernatural forces itself into the inner dynamic of history to affect the way in which the world is seen). Both involve a hermeneutic of lost control (liminal activity). However, there is a distinction between the two: The apocalyptist's fear of the human sphere and his acceptance (however fearful) of the revelatory process takes place in the performance of a communion with the text where difference-in-relation is maintained. The paranoiac (in Pynchon's apocalyptic scenario), however, sees time and place collapsed into each other in a world created not by God's desire for right relationship but as punishment and evil-doing. In paranoia, the problematic of an apparent liminal transgression creates serious issues about reality, delusion, and wishful thinking. The relationship between the 'interface' and the 'zone' (as the location of conspiratorial activity) is, therefore, of central importance to Pynchon's eschatological scheme in Gravity's Rainbow: as the paranoiac seeks to break out of the inner zone to the outer, he also resists the intruder attacking him within. Pynchon's is thus a fiction loaded with psychotic affect, where the dissolving *limen* signifies the crisis and despair of death. It is caught in the double-bind of desiring escape whilst equally wishing to remain within the known space of a 'psychic landscape'. (Arich-Gerz 1).

Arich-Gerz does not mention that the resulting battle is fought out in a combat of 'name-calling' between 'us' and 'them'. In Gravity's Rainbow the power of the name is a constant theme. Words 'ensnare'. (Pynchon 1978, 99). The relationship between truth and lies involves how things are named. (Pynchon 1978,

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[424] In dialectics, the existence of rational, but opposing concepts.

177, 234). The importance of the name to the concept of the soul is repeatedly marked. (Pynchon 1978, 302, 321,590, and 734). Pynchon understands the relationship between naming and the numinous but it is a relationship which embodies a veiled threat. (Pynchon 1978, 668). Never mind that although Pynchon's paranoiac is 'innocent', when weighed in the balance, the odds will always be overwhelmingly stacked against him. In <u>Thomas Pynchon: Wit and the Work of the Supernatural</u>, Elizabeth Wall Hinds describes this perceived imbalance as a resistance to a 'malicious' Puritan God in whose creative scheme entropy stands within 'that set of malicious laws of ... a God that designs not the best but the worst plots for (or against) his Preterite'. (Wall Hinds 22 -23)[425] Pynchon's is therefore an atheistic protest. God sets the world in motion. Life is an unjust movement back to the void. The paranoiac is the preterite of the Gnostic demiurge.[426] In God's predetermined plan he will be 'passed over'. Thus Pynchon's complaint against God is like Job's

> It is all one; ...[God] destroys both the blameless and the wicked. When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covers the eyes of its judges – if it is not he, who then is it? (Job 9.22ff.).

However, whereas Job gets his day in God's court, God does not (cannot) answer Pynchon's complaint, and there is no mediating power of Christ. For example, he writes

> Ndjambi Karunga and the Christian God were too far away. There was no difference between the behaviour of a god and the operations of pure chance. ...the gods had gone away. (Pynchon 1978, 323).

The grace of election is beyond the bounds of his preterite bindings. God is unjust. Innocent preterites pay for the vision of absolute death where death exists for the benefit of God and his elect. However, preterites are embodied in, and engage with, the drive towards a death-desire to which the elect are committed who believe

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[425] Elizabeth Jane Wall Hinds, "Thomas Pynchon: Wit and the Work of the Supernatural." <u>Rocky Mountain Review</u>.Spring (2000), 23 – 40.
[426] Preterite: damned soul.

themselves to be free from death: ensnarement in the libidinous ritual of the elect forms as it informs their paranoia.

As the *via crucis* in Gravity's Rainbow paints God in the darkest, most cruel terms, its outcome is marked by the death of the innocent victim. This is not the God of the New Testament because death, not resurrection, is exposed as the object of desire (the 'name' *in the name of the God-of-death)*. As preterite and prophet, Pynchon resists any concept of a just sacrifice, and rebels against the prison-house (as enclosed system) which produces its paranoia towards and at the limits. Theologically, this is a challenging protest.

In his 1973 review, One of the Longest, Most Difficult, Most Ambitious Novels in Years: Gravity's Rainbow by Thomas Pynchon, Richard Locke points out that in V., the heroine declares that 'the act of love and the act of death are one'. (Locke 1).[427] This cynical view implicates, and subverts, any view of God as a creative God of love. In Gravity's Rainbow, the association between sex and death is further fetishised. They are worshipped for their magical powers. This is *religion* played out in abnormal forms of sexual desire and self-gratification and linked to the V-2 rocket. This is religious *perversion* where death and sex direct a course of action to which one has an excessive and irrational commitment. Such is the outcome of *paranoia*. Locke thus concludes

> [Pynchon immerses] himself in "the destructive element" ... exploring paranoia, entropy and the love of death as primary forces in the history of our times. (Locke 1).

Derrida has summed up apocalyptic-eschatology (as a thought of finitude) as discourse in the 'name alone' (of everything and nothing). Pynchon is more ambivalent. However, whereas elsewhere in Derrida textual play suggests the possibility of hope, spirit and the trace of presence, in Pynchon, the imminence of death seems to subsume life. It is a shift from life (*existere*) to death (*corrumpere*).

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[427] Richard Locke, "One of the Longest, Most Difficult, Most Ambitious Novels in Years: Gravity's Rainbow by Thomas Pynchon", New York Times, March 11 1973. C.f. Thomas Pynchon, V. Picador ed. London: Pan Books, 1975.

It reflects what Moltmann calls the apostasy of despair, grounded in Adam's subjective, negative view of liminality.

In the following section, I trace the journey that some of Pynchon's characters make towards the end. In some ways comparable to the way of the cross in the gospels, the way hardly leads to transformation in faith, hope and love. Whilst the reasons for this have, to some degree, already been made clear, I will later reflect on why this is a mistaken view, even given the cultural text, and consider whether this reading of Pynchon is irrevocable or entirely unequivocal.

6. **Against the way of the cross: travelling to the *Magnificent Necropolis*?[428]**

Gravity's Rainbow is temporally situated in 1944 and 1945, and spatially, in England, France and Germany. Perhaps more than any other novel the multi-voiced text creates an atmosphere charged with informational interference, with references to Calvinism, Manichaeism and Gnosticism, Weimar and World War 1, pre-war England and the U.S. As Locke writes, 'Europe is the stage, and the universal object of passion is a fetish of universal death: the V-2 rocket'. (Locke 1). Lacking references to Nazi death-camps, Pynchon instead 'flashbacks' to the Herero uprising in Southwest Africa in the early years of the century, where the Germans constructed concentration camps. Some characters are carried in from his first novel, V., and Lieutenant Weissmann, *aka* 'Captain Blicero', the sadomasochistic lover of *V.*, becomes the driving force behind the creation of the V-2 rocket. He holds priest-like status in the cult of death-desire.[429] In V., Weissmann has 'deciphered the mysterious atmospheric radio signals that spelled out Wittgenstein's proposition, 'the world is all that is the case''. (Locke 2). Locke writes that in Gravity's Rainbow

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[428] Locke 5.
[429] Blicero signifies 'white death'.

> At the end of the war he [Blicero] commands a Nazi rocket station from which he finally blasts off a secret missile, numbered 00000 and headed for the North Pole, the Herero land of the dead. In the body of the rocket he has imbedded behind a plastic insulating shield, a fair-haired Aryan boy whom he has been torturing and buggering devotedly throughout the war in partial compensation for the loss of a black South-West African lover, a Herero native called Enzian. ... himself a leader of a group of African expatriate rocket technicians ... who have dedicated themselves to assembling one more model of Blicero's rocket of death. (Locke 2).

Reinforcing the association of eschatology, paranoia and homo-eroticism, he adds

> The intricate plotting and world-annihilating, phallic, homosexual imagery are well-known characteristics of paranoia. (Locke 2).

Sexual symbolism, the rocket's destructive power, conspiracy and paranoia conjoin.

Beginning with the fall of the rocket on London as a marker at one end of gravity's rainbow covenant, the rocket's path forms the tragic u-shaped trajectory of the entire narrative

> A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it to now. ...Is this the way out? ... No, this is not a disentanglement from, but a progressive *knotting into* - ... of maturing rust, developing through those emptying days brilliant and deep, ... with blue shadows to seal its passage, to try to bring events to Absolute Zero ... and it is poorer the deeper they go ... they are under the final arch ... It is a judgment from which there is no appeal. (Pynchon 1978, 3 - 4).

The accelerated opening of the eschatological scenario offers no hope of salvation, as its ending demonstrates.

> The screen is a dim page spread before us, white and silent. The film has broken, or a projector bulb has burned out. It was difficult even for us, old fans who've always been at the movies (haven't we?) to tell which before the darkness swept in. The last image was too immediate for any eye to register ...it was *not a star*, it was falling, a bright angel of death ... the last delta-t. There is time, if you need the comfort, to touch the person next to you, or to reach between your cold legs. (Pynchon, 1978, 760).

At each end of the rocket's trajectory stand two demonic figures: Blicero and his counter-part in London, the English Pavlovian psychologist, Edward Pointsman.

Pointsman's aim is to discover 'the stone determinacy of everything, every soul'; thus that which Pointsman proposes, Blicero ensures. Between these two points a Pavlovian response to the desire for death plays out in a dance of sexual extremes. Thus Locke concludes that

> Pynchon doesn't create characters so much as mechanical men to whom a manic comic impulse or a vague free-floating anguish can attach itself. (Locke 4 - 5).[430]

All are victims of the 'God who sent out a pulse of energy into the void', whose interface is the rainbow which assures, not the covenantal promise of continuing life in Genesis, but a covenant with death. (Pynchon 1978, 524).

In another pairing, two characters (Roger Mexico and Tyrone Slothrop) mock-heroically resist the fall into paranoid death-obsession where life is hell. Each in his way fights the conspiracy: Roger refuses to recognise the grandiose plot (life is just an 'impersonal nihilistic void');[431] Tyrone escapes experimentation. He dresses up as a rocket-man, parodying Blicero's pursuit of the rocket-sacrifice, and thus prefigures Gottfried's embodiment/sacrifice. In the end, by 'dropping out', he is viewed by the rest as a fragmented, lost figure of mythic proportions. (Pynchon 1978, 735 - 743).

> He's looking straight at Slothrop (being one of the few who can still see Slothrop as any sort of integral person any more. Most others gave up long ago trying to hold him together). (Pynchon 1978, 740-1).

Enthusiasm and ecstasy are Dionysian where, in the liminal flux, the individual self submerges itself as it both reneges on and voluntarily gives itself up to the immanentism of the greater whole and to fragmentation, and where affect defeats the 'reason' of the *analogia entis*. Slothrop is, therefore, a Nietzschean Dionysus, for his excess, intoxication and madness break down his individual self. The revelation which induces this decision irrupts in the 'Zone'

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[430] Locke does not discuss is the relationship between sexual extremes, pornography and solipsism. In terms of cultural shifts, this is an area of Pynchon's work that has much relevance.
[431] Locke 3.

> Slothrop sees a very thick rainbow, … a stout rainbow cock driven down out of pubic clouds into Earth, … and his chests fills and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural. (Pynchon 1978, 626).

No longer part of the conspiracy, he stands as an axial symbol of escape (also of solipsism). So too does the rocket which rides the interface: 'It may be possible to ride the interface'; however, its trajectory can only ever lead to the end, and the end of relationship. (Pynchon 1978, 731).

Pynchon critiques society's paranoid delusions of power/disempowerment through rocket symbolism (an emblem of the death-wish), and demands justice and grace: 'What we need isn't right reasons, but just that grace. The physical grace to keep it working. Courage, brains, sure, O.K., but without that *grace*: forget it'. (Pynchon 1978, 741). The complex intertext and technical knowledge, which associates entropy (in the Second Law of Thermodynamics) and Information Theory, performs heat-death by inflecting one into the other. He thus develops eschatology through his exploration of paranoia, attributing everything to a gigantic plot in which delusions of persecution convince the paranoiac that the end will be catastrophic and total. The relationship between 'outside' and 'inside', and the mediating role of the *limen* (as the desire to ride the interface) symbolically conjoin as a dual fear of, and desire for, the void (as only natural). God is deeply implicated.

As Pynchon explores these issues, it is questionable whether he can ultimately restore any sense of normalcy or hope. Freedom from paranoid obsession comes only through an acceptance of life-as-death. Dropping out points into atomism, immanentism and disembodiment, and as Locke concludes: 'Pynchon's sensibility and achievement … are limited by the very paranoid traits that he is ostensibly criticizing'. Gravity's Rainbow is thus 'a magnificent necropolis'. (Locke 5).[432] Any imitation of sacrifice or the way to the cross is thus cancelled out, rendered void, by death as (conspiratorial) end.

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[432] This metaphor feeds a negative vision of the City of God and the New Jerusalem.

A central theme of apocalyptic 'sci-fi' scenarios that permeates American fiction is the idea that scientific progress leads to man losing control of man-made technology and progress. Peter Freese makes a convincing case for seeing this as an essential change in the direction of apocalyptic fiction.[433] Exceptionally, Pynchon's in-depth understanding of his chosen scientific paradigms increases his ability to see metaphorical connections between physical laws and concepts of language. The use of apocalyptic techniques of juxtaposition and montage, furthermore, exaggerates the emotional association between scientific ideas and mythological narrative, and thus makes relevant Freud's thesis 'that there [is] no difference in the unconscious between reality and a fiction loaded with affect'. The conflation of these concepts in his psychotic apocalyptic-eschatological narrative forms a doctrine of despair which in nuclear discourse is a question of doctrine and not of proof.[434] However, Freese argues that Pynchon does sometimes hint at hope.

> *The Crying of Lot 49*, then, makes use of an associative combination of the two competing paradigms of 'The End,' but whereas the slim novel cleverly refers to several individual elements from the time-honored inventory of apocalyptic images, its major referential horizon is constituted by the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which is ingeniously conjured up with regard to both its complex history … and its gradual mutation from a frightening harbinger of the inevitable ultimate chaos to the hopeful instigator of negentropic creativity. (Freese 559).

And, from his early short story, "Entropy", onwards, Pynchon's oeuvre consistently plays through and with these paradigms. Thus, in Gravity's Rainbow, reversal, or return, is an *impossible* dream, whereas in The Crying of Lot 49, Pynchon offers some hope of *negentropy*. In Gravity's Rainbow, the preterite/prophet continues to resist the movement to entropic heat-death and stasis, and yet any sense of negentropy fades. Integration of economic and military interests is seen as part of

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[433] Peter Freese, From Apocalypse to Entropy and Beyond: The Second Law of Thermodynamics in Post-War American Fiction. (Essen: Verlag Die Blaue Eule, 1997).
[434] Pynchon draws the physical laws of the universe into his apocalyptic text set in an earlier war, but his socio-political context is that of the Vietnam War. Moreover, Pynchon wishes to 'relate the history of Germany to that of America and indeed the entire Western world'. (Locke 3), and it is in relating the activities and proclivities of the Old World to the New that the influence of the Apocalypse on Pynchon can most clearly be seen.

the removal of the *limen*.[435] It is always negative; it results in entropy. There is furthermore an ironic association between exchange and entropy: 'To integrate … is to operate on a rate of change so that time falls away: change is stilled'. (Pynchon 1978, 301). Thus path integration plays into the themes of the narrative; dispersal and diffusion are fore-runners of integration and heat-death, offering an *explanation* if not a proof of his argument.[436]

All is driven by fear of the void. However throughout, the writing process itself seems to attempt the deceleration of the process. Thus Derrida's nuclear discourse is again evidenced. Pynchon is a prophet of doom: the Day of the Lord is unstoppable by any human action. Yet the talk seeks to delay it. Thus the preterite-prophet, within the constraints of scientific knowledge, and however faintly, performs a heroic function. By attempting to fight off paranoid obsession in a final bid for freedom, there is some small remnant of hope. The journey or way, however, is theologically delusional as evidenced in <u>Mason & Dixon</u>. First

> All the way back to the Visto, Mason is seiz'd by Monology. "Text, --" he cries, and more than once, "it is Text, -- and we are its readers, and its Pages are the Days turning. Unscrolling, as a Pilgrim's Itinery map in ancient Days…." (Pynchon 1998, 497-98).

And second, in defiance of the name of the name, 'the Crime [is what] they styl'd 'Anonymity'. (Pynchon 1998, 9).

But it is the 'magnificent necropolis' of <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u> (that begins and ends with the fall of the rocket) that reveals how, as humankind stands beneath the arc of death, anything (i.e., life) in-between is just 'theatre'. (Pynchon 1978, 3).

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[435] I have found no references in my limited reading on Pynchon to the war in Vietnam which, at the time he was writing <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u>, was infecting the American psyche with a sense of the pointlessness of war driven by what was perceived as the cultural imperialism and world-dominating drive of the U.S. government. In my view, the conviction, which asserts that economic and military interests must be combined in order to produce a safe world, plays a significant part in the nuclear criticism of the novel. This is represented in the continuing economic exchanges which take place between the Allies and the Germans to permit the development of the rocket.

[436] Whilst the social shifts and fragmentations which take effect in America in the 1960s do not necessarily receive Pynchon's approval, ironically, they are continually fed, and, therefore, forgiven through the entropic effects of information theory, thus reinforcing the very paradigm which he sets out to critique.

The audience (actors and readers) are 'at the movies. (Pynchon 1978, 760). Reversing the reel is impossible. (Pynchon 1978, 745ff.).[437] The final hymn comically sees 'every last Pret'rite' targeted, and dealt the death-bow. (Pynchon 1978, 760).[438] Transformation (beyond death) and the continuation of the spirit (which the epigram of Wernher Von Braun asserts) turn out to be the memory of a face in the landscape, and the soul of man caught in stones. (Pynchon 1978, 760). Pointsman's proof in fact.

The novel's ending in song provides in an absurd sense of release from anxiety. From this perspective man's covenant with the earth does not seem so bad: 'Elite and Preterite, we move through a cosmic design of darkness and light'. (Pynchon 1978, 495). The novel, as an apocalyptic mode, thus achieves its hermeneutic of transformation in death although, as Locke points out, it risks subsuming this fact in the 'sentimental and comic characters … [who] do not have the intended force to counterpoint the theme of death'. (Locke 5).[439] And following Steiner, this implies that we are all 'ordinary'.[440] There is no messianic saviour. Paradoxically, because the authoritarian voice of the narrator is solely in control, Pynchon takes on the role of the very god against whom he protests. His eschatological punishment both extemporising as it defers, and defers to, the absolute end of archive.

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[437]C.f. "Back in Der Platz" in which the notion of negentropy is related to playing a film backwards: 'the Great Irreversible is actually reversed as the corpse comes to life'. (Pynchon 1978, 745), and 'they're all showing up at Der Platz these days. But the alternative is to start keeping some out and not others, and nobody's ready for that …Decisions like that are for some angel stationed very high, watching us as our many perversities ….being carried on under a sentence of death whose deep beauty the angel has never been so close to …'. (Pynchon 1978, 746). The strain of deciding between the elect and the preterites is arbitrarily taken by the rocket. This passage is immediately followed by Weissmann's (Blicero's) Tarot reading (Pynchon 1978, 746ff) which clearly shows his ritualising and sacrificial death cult to have the upper hand. As Locke comments: this, 'is a scream of sadomasochistic orgasm, a coming together in death … [thus] the book could be read as as a serio-comic variation on Rilke's 'Duino Elegies' and their German Romantic echoes in Nazi culture'. (Locke 2).

[438] We are encouraged to join in the singing; it offers some small comfort.

[439] Locke's view disagrees with that of Wall Hinds.

[440] C.f., Section 7, chapter 4 above.

The shadow of Revelation is long. This brief reflection on <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u> demonstrates the persisting influence of the apocalyptic genre within postmodern American fictions. Whilst God's absence disallows any breakthrough from another world, Pynchon's texts are shot through with the fragmented memory of expectations from Revelation. They have, after all, produced the culture to which he belongs. Pynchon inflects into his work the indignation of Job. He protests against the arbitrary injustice of a creation made to run down to a final heat-death. Emotionally, this is driven by science and knowledge of man's inability to reverse the movement towards the final end of the world we inhabit.

To conclude: If his apocalypse-as-necropolis reflects a journeying that induces a desire to resist the paradigm of election, or that of redemption and salvation, it misses the mark. For it is trapped within the paradigm it seeks to evade.

> But out at the horizon, out near the burnished edge of the world, who are these visitors standing . . . these robed figures -- perhaps, at this distance, hundreds of miles tall -- their faces, serene, unattached, like the Buddha's, bending over the sea, impassive, indeed, as the Angel that stood over Lübeck during the Palm Sunday raid, come that day neither to destroy nor to protect, but to bear witness to a game of seduction . . . What have the watchmen of the world's edge come tonight to look for? Deepening on now, monumental beings stoical, on toward slag, toward ash the colour the night will stabilize at, tonight . . . what is there grandiose enough to witness? (Pynchon 1978, 214).

The watchers are witness to a cynical and indifferent end. Pynchon replaces the redemptive voice of Christ with his own voice (of bathos and despair). It is a tragic voice in which resistance is all but gone.

However, if the dominant effect is of despair and fear, any text which employs apocalyptic techniques will arguably also evoke the possibility and hope of reversal.[441] For, as with all deconstructive methods, the original paradigm is inflected in its counterpart. A trace of hope is never quite extinguished and neither

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[441] The techniques are of the juxtaposition of opposites, extreme exaggeration, and ironic displacement. It should be noted that many critics recognise references, however oblique, to the Bible and religion, and suggest that Pynchon maintains a Christian and even quasi-theological perspective.

is the sense that some people deserve salvation more than others do. In <u>Christian Allusions in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon</u>, Victoria H. Price writes

> The picture of annihilation in the modern world is reinforced by the … word Armageddon, which signifies the final destruction of Evil at the end of time as we know it. Equally present in the allusion, however, is the vision of a final victory of the forces of Good. (Price 188).[442]

Whilst it is true that it is impossible to completely erase the apocalyptic cues, I tend to feel that in Pynchon's paranoid strategy this evokes the trap of the conspiratorial nuclear discourse (of which Derrida writes) written in an apocalyptic tone. It also the case that Pynchon does engage in a debate with God, but his is the punishing God of the Old Testament conjoined with that of the Enlightenment (the distant clockmaker of Paley). His text remains, therefore, an atheist's complaint.

7. Reading Mark's gospel through an atheistic hermeneutic

Detachment from context is a technique (employed by critics such as Barthes) that here can be employed to demonstrate the synchronic similarities between the apocalyptic text of Mark and its closed-model descendants. Mark's gospel is unique because the resurrection and incarnation are not figured as such. In the journey to the cross, a paranoid mood of anxiety permeates the text behind which stands the fear of death. Because of this unique characteristic, I would like to suggest that if Mark's text is detached from his 1st-century world and Christian tradition and further interpreted through a closed atheistic model its meaning will quite logically be subverted (and perverted). One reason for doing this is to provide an extreme example of the logic of modern and postmodern methods and the inevitability of their interpretative outcome in despair (an outcome of which many rational-historical and literary-critical methodologies seem to be in denial). Another is to test the open liminal model of apocalyptic-eschatology to see if Mark's gospel can despite this sceptical approach maintain its sense of hope and promise. As such, the next two sections form a pair.

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[442] Victoria H. Price, <u>Christian Allusions in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon</u> (New York: Peter Lang, 1989).

In Pynchon's oeuvre, the messianic is never entirely absent and some aspects and cues pertain in his characters and roles.[443] In Mark, the strength of Jesus' unique messianic presence and message seems, at first sight, unlike the fugitive nature of Pynchon's 'heroes'. For one thing, on one level, he has an immensely strong physical presence. However, on another, because of its extreme apocalyptic tone and mode, the reader soon sees that this is far from stable: Jesus' identity is constantly subverted, and his physical nature displaced and punctuated with absences, ambiguous changes and transformations, as well as abusive and violent misappropriations similar to the nuclear discourse of Pynchon. Another similarity between these texts is an interrogation of the struggle between the elect and preterite (those who will be passed over or rejected) that focuses on the identity and nature of insiders and outsiders (who stand or fall in the name of the name). Identification of people in the know against those who cannot grasp the encoded map of meaning is unclear. In this sense, disturbing themes foregrounded by Pynchon in <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u> can be applied and used to question the Christian paradigm in this most elusive and fugitive of the gospel narratives. One dominant example is the fear of the imminent end, and the potentially self-destructive paranoia of those facing it.[444]

Beginning with a proclamation of joy, the narrative journey in Mark works its way through a landscape of obfuscation, displacement and threat to end in confusion, betrayal, defeat, fear and flight. There is no vision of glory, no New Creation. As in Pynchon, there is an epigram that, from the outset in Mark, gives an assurance and signals the continuation of life after death. But this is not openly stated or explained, and as in Pynchon, the reader is repeatedly forced to return to the epigram to interrogate its real meaning. In Mark, of course, it figures Jesus as the *good news* for humankind. But this statement requires recognition of the key to

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[443] For example, Slothrop and Mexico in <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u>; Pierce Inverarity (a dead, but absent presence), and the Romantic heroine, Oedipa Maas (a character in search of embodiment) in <u>The Crying of Lot 49</u>).

[444] The dating of Mark's text is disputed amongst biblical scholars. However, the current view is that it was written within the context of the Jewish War, shortly after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans. This context provides an explanation of its violent and defensive mood. I will take its ending to be 16.8.

Christ's identification (God's appointed one), which only arises from his resurrection from the dead. In other words, the cultural intertext seems to be essential. However, even if the reader does not know the key, the opening sets a tone that goes well beyond Pynchon's assertion of the certainty of life after death which, through its novel's ironic tone, transpires that the promise of life after death is little more than a faded palimpsest of (human) marks in the fossilised landscape. Gravity's Rainbow thus tests Von Braun's epigram and finds it not to be untrue but wanting. In Mark, the text is at odds with its epigram. However, the narrative impulse of both seems to demolish any sense of good news instead inducing a cognitive dissonance between the opening lines and the reader's (and characters') common sense. As such, the epigram gives false hope by misleading the reader.

Mark's opening dictates an understanding of Jesus as fully-fledged hero/redeemer who, as victim and sacrifice, embodies divine heroism, and seems to know what actions to take despite the many plots and violent opposition, despite the characters' apparent inability to interpret the map or code as they move with him towards the cross. As such, because of the epigram, the reader often feels that he is an insider who has been provided with a secret knowledge that overrides that of the characters'; that is, of course, until the cry of abandonment at the moment of his death, and the betrayal and dispersal in fear of his closest followers. To that degree, Mark's gospel is arguably far more shocking than Pynchon's novel. It places an enormous strain on the reader, for, without the intertextual references of the other gospels and texts, how can he possibly return from its end to its confident beginning and still find it convincing?

The use of Pynchon's worldview as the ground to interrogate Mark's hermeneutic of the *via crucis* further threatens to subvert the assertion of the good news of the *name* of Jesus as Christ when we realise that, just as Derrida's discourse of name-calling (in the name of the name) plays in Pynchon's work, Mark's central focus also involves a naming (and shaming) of powers (between good and bad, supernatural and human). If we proceed with Pynchon's attitude towards textual duplicity and delusions of persecution (and most certainly the *limen*

is a central focus of violence in exaggerated zonal differentiations between insiders and outsiders), then Jesus' personal sacrifice might also be said to be a symbolic forerunner of Pynchon's paranoid obsessive (and the libidinal death-wish). In which case, Mark witnesses not to the truth of God's salvation (through participation in hope and promise) but to the development of a fetishist religion (shot through with a critical judgment of God as the cruel conspirator).

Power, in Mark, involves the naming of *Jesus as Christ.* Furthermore, as the interface between the divine and the human, he bears the full weight of the problematic nature of relations-in-difference and which, paradoxically, seems to end in failure and the closed end that subsumes life in death. Against this, in Gravity's Rainbow, there is a telling passage in which Pointsman considers his quest for the knowledge of what exists beyond the Zero. He is remembering the work of Kevin Spectro who

> did not differentiate much between Outside and Inside. Spectro saw the cortex of the brain as an *interface organ, mediating between the two cortexes, but part of them both*. "When you've looked at how it really is," he asked once, "how can we, any of us, be separate?" '(Pynchon 1978, 141-142).

This provides a rare paradigm through which to consider the Christian view of Jesus Christ as mediator between God and man. However, it points, at best, to immanentism because it fails to take relations-in-difference seriously. And we already know that we are at one (at best, as in Spinoza) in the movement to and desire for death.

In Naming the Powers, Walter Wink similarly argues that no distinction is made between spiritual and material spheres in the first-century.[445] Supernatural powers intermingle with human and material powers. (Wink 39). Everything is part of one universe. The sense of being able to cross between worlds is a constant. Furthermore, boundaries between the supernatural and the natural world often

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[445] C.f. Walter Wink, Naming the Powers: the Language of Power in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984). He writes that, in Paul, for example, there is no distinction between secular and religious, supernatural and natural: 'he must regard authority as a single whole, including earthly and heavenly powers, with no clear mark of demarcation between them.' (Wink 46).

seem to undermine man's means to 'sight'.[446] However, if visionary experience goes unquestioned, its authenticity does not. Ideas about authenticity and transgression are thus two sides of the same coin; there is much interference from both human and supernatural spheres (which mirror each other) within a complex, often confusing system. This is strangely similar to Pynchon's paranoid strategy: deciding between right and wrong is thus not necessarily easier in this premodern complex of worlds than in our own era - it is just explained differently. As previously stated, interference encapsulates the double sense of meddling (or plotting) and displacement in which the weaker proposition of a dialectical principle is subsumed by the stronger. Interference suggests fracture and liminal transgression where life is punctuated by a metaphysics of violence. Truth is ruptured and subverted. The cosmic system of heaven and earth is both open *and* closed but the interface remains the critical place at which to learn to 'see'. Mark's characters must, just as in Pynchon, be able to distinguish between good and bad spirits and, therefore, between good and bad visions, and the texts share the confusion of voices and textual interference. The hope of authentic revelation, however, motivates Mark precisely because its life-changing knowledge-as-wisdom will allow difference to stand amidst the interference and dissolving of the *limen,* authentication providing the necessary authority for those changes. However in Mark, interpenetration of worlds is easier from 'outside'. Angels and demons are thought to cross between worlds with impunity, the latter often making their home in the world.[447] And as in Bulgakov, evil and the diabolic work to the same ends as the angelic. In Pynchon, suspicion that this may be the case forms and informs his paranoia. But by use of the paranoid strategy, his mind is already made up to the bad. This is evidenced by the opening lines of Gravity's Rainbow

> A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare to it now. It is too late. (Pynchon 1978, 3).

The end was, is, but will be no more; at least in terms of nuclear discourse.

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[446] This point is not particularly highlighted by Wink.

[447] Of course, the inhabitation of the world by demons is made sense of by the developing mythology of the fall from heaven of Satan, a narrative formed in the intertestamental apocalyptic literature.

Let us then look at what then happens when the Pynchon's pessimistic, almost-closed view of the end is used as the interpretative key to Mark. The selection is on the grounds that, unlike the other gospels, representations of resurrection and incarnation are absent, and, moreover, the text is shot through with supernatural and human interferences, gaps, evasions and displacements which reflect a deep anxiety and even, perhaps, a certain paranoia. Its overall mode is, furthermore, clearly apocalyptic-eschatological.

8. Interference on the way to Mark's tomb

In The Genesis of Secrecy, Frank Kermode reflects profoundly on the liminal 'going-between' of interpretation with its accompanying 'stealth and violence'.[448] This section highlights how this is brought to the fore in Mark's gospel and Pynchon's oeuvre. I have already discussed Pynchon's strategy of paranoia that involves the human desire (and nature) to identify patterns and order in the fluxional text that is simultaneously countered, and almost overcome by an inability to decode them. The strategy is manifested by the characters in his novels and is passed on to the readers as they inhabit them. As such, the reader is struck by a profound, psychotic-inducing irony: there is no escape from the treachery of textuality where its dualisms as well as its supplementarity are a means to defer the inevitable end of archive; that this may, furthermore, be the plot of a malevolent God. The apocalyptic tone and mode of his work, of course, works through and foregrounds the liminal: it is at the interface that the crisis occurs as a dangerous and violent negotiation between annihilation or assimilation and appropriation. Similarly, in the gospel of Mark, apocalyptic symbols pepper the text as a series of assaults and irruptions that induce the anxiety and fear of paranoia. Thus, in both authors, the central concern is that of interpretation as entry into the dangerous (sacred) space of liminality.

In Mark, Jesus' ministry, like that of many of Pynchon's characters, takes the form of a liminal journey. Locations are significant to every action, each of which

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[448] Frank Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy: on the Interpretation of Narrative. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979) 1-2.

requires correct interpretation. Crossing the Sea of Galilee and the countryside (mountain, sea, wilderness and plain), he moves from house to house, town to town, city to city, until, eventually, he arrives in Jerusalem, the centre of the Temple cult. Symbolically, mountains and deserts are places of revelation and prayer, the sea of chaos and flux. Towns are places of conflict; houses that should be safe are invaded from without and the Temple is an area of confrontation. The entire landscape is mapped out by demons and human enemies who confront and question his claim to authority because, unlike the ordinary heroes of Pynchon, Jesus stands out as the key (player and signifier) not only to the journey but to the textual code. However, Jesus *only* identifies himself publicly as the Son of God during his trial. The disciples first hear the news (second-hand) from demons, or they deduce it by inference.[449] Jesus commands the demons to silence; he does not want his name to be known. Yet every action and word speaks of his authority as a unique, supernatural (and perhaps divine) power.

In terms of right judgment, everything hinges on the ability of the actors to interpret, and correctly act on, the evidence placed before them. Thus whilst he seems to know the minds of enemies and disciples, his identity, apparently so clearly determined at the outset of the text, is continually undermined.[450] On the one hand, the Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees accuse him of being ruled by the devil – a reasonable deduction as his identity has been affirmed by the demons themselves.[451] Right interpretation similarly becomes increasingly problematic for the reader (despite his secret knowledge of the epigram) who knows of Jesus' time spent in the company of the devil and cannot be sure of what took place there. Doubts proliferate. The good news is asserted and apparently evidenced by healings and miracles. At the same time, it is subverted by the accusations of devil-power. (The declaration of the demons can be interpreted as the worship of Jesus by demons.)[452] His teaching in parables is open to a double-interpretation.[453] His (apparently) flagrant disobedience of the Law seems to flaunt God's Word.[454]

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[449] E.g. Mark 1.24, 1.27, 2.5-12.
[450] E.g. Mark 2.8; 4.13.
[451] C.f. Mark 1.24; 220ff; 5 etc.
[452] E.g. Mark 3.20-30.

The mixed messaging creates an atmosphere of tension and confusion. The interference of the code thus increases the threat of paranoia as what began in an unequivocally authoritative 'naming' descends to the basest of name-calling.[455] What this means for the followers inside the text (who are trying to recognise and interpret things correctly) is that their faith seems to collapse, driving them to betrayal, fear and paranoia – in similar ways to those of Pynchon's characters. For these insiders fully inhabit the negativity of marginalisation and failed apocalypticism, where the kind of transformation is the opposite of what they expect. Each observer similarly needs not only to know how to interpret the signs but also how and when to *name* the powers, the problem being that, for the populace who follow and observe Jesus' actions, there is apparently no mediating power, whereas for the elect, insider group who are being directly taught by Jesus, evidence from outside confounds the truth of their secret knowledge. The reader thus witnesses how the expectation of liminal transformation is overturned to reveal the negativity of marginalisation and failed apocalypticism when interpretation becomes misreading.

Within a short time, whilst it is clear that the disciples are sufficiently impressed to follow Jesus, the narrative voice shows them to be incapable of interpreting the signs, despite being his intimates to whom he tells the secret truth.

> To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables: in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven'. (Mark 4.11-12).

This brings to mind Pynchon's horror of insider knowledge that passes over the outsider/preterite, but to the believing reader, Jesus' appointment of twelve disciples is a sign of restoration of Israel in the kingdom. However, things are not that simple: even though the promise is made, whether the disciples' expectations are fulfilled or their understanding unequivocal is far from clear. The reader is left to guess their expectations from their response to events, and Jesus' reaction to

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[453] E.g. Mark 4.
[454] E.g. Mark 2.5ff, 2.15ff, 2.23ff.
[455] E.g. Mark 2.7, 15ff, 18ff, 23ff; 2.20ff.

it.[456] The populace, to whom Jesus preaches, seems to consist of outsiders. Yet Jesus asks the disciples why *they* cannot understand what seems quite obvious to the reader (and the outsiders). Jesus has to interpret the parable *for the disciples*, yet still they cannot work out *what the underlying secret* in this secret interpretation is.

Furthermore, Jesus introduces an eschatological threat at this point that undermines any confident sense of being a privileged insider and subverts the disciples' position. He explains how easy it is to accept his teaching when it looks like an easy route to earthly glory, but how, as soon as it means giving up comfort and status, the faithful will be caught by Satan's power.

> [For] when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ... others ...hear the word, but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word. (Mark 4.13-20).[457]

This message is counter-intuitive to expectation, and three points arise out of these examples: the dual aspect of the apocalyptic-eschatological scenario has been invoked;[458] the teaching contains the message that already 'the time is fulfilled' (Jesus *is* proclaiming the good news as himself); and finally, the veiled threats given to his followers undermine their confidence. The reader also knows that the good news involves the naming of Jesus, as the Son of God, which has ushered in the time of fulfilment.[459] Being on the brink is not comfortable, and the fact is that no one actually witnesses God's revelation to Jesus or the initial proclamation by Jesus. Even for the reader, it is only the epigram that lets them in on the secret. And even though his followers have witnessed his power to silence the demons' proclamation of his name, and whilst it was natural to accept his invitation to discipleship on the understanding that, shortly, they will be privileged in an earthly

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[456] E.g. Mark 2.18ff, in which Jesus has encouraged them not to fast. He speaks in the language of eschatological expectation, in which he presents himself as the bridegroom who will be taken away before the incursion of the endtimes prior to the coming of God's kingdom.
[457] This is, of course, Bulgakov's point.
[458] I.e., between the promise of the kingdom and the threat of damnation.
[459] I.e., that the kingdom of God is near.

kingdom, his veiled threats undermine any certainty of such an outcome.[460] The identification of insiders and outsiders has consequently been subverted and the reader is forced to inhabit this state of being and mind as the narrative persists in ironically displacing expectations. As Jesus' identity and status is undermined, the protagonists' and the reader's ability to interpret physical events as they move forward to tragedy are similarly affected. Questions proliferate and, as Kermode affirms, 'More interpreters mean more interpretations'. (Kermode Genesis, 3). In this case, all driven apocalyptic-modally.

Another episode, in Galilee,[461] is formed by two water-crossings.[462] Jesus goes off alone, telling the disciples that he will return later.[463] As they cross the sea, a storm frightens the disciples. Jesus reappears and commands the storm to abate; the disciples are overawed. Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith. (Mark 4.35-41). In the second crossing, the disciples are again in a boat. (Mark 6.45-52.). They see Jesus walking on the water. Taking him for a ghost, they are terrified.[464] He reassures them, and calms the winds. At this point the story takes a peculiar turn, declaring that 'they did not understand about the loaves',[465] because, 'their hearts were hardened'.[466] Whilst this apparently has nothing to do with Jesus' actions on the water, the criticism is implicit. For, sandwiched between these two events, Jesus has performed a series of miracles, given the disciples the power to drive out

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[460] The Jewish expectation of the kingdom is earthly, not eternal. The disciples would naturally have accepted his words to mean the former, not the latter.

[461] The location is of crucial importance. Major revelations take place in Galilee. C.f., Mark 1.14, 14.28.

[462] Mark is fond of using the technique of *inclusio*, into which he intercalates important symbolic actions. I have already alluded to the fact that Jesus is a traveller and that architectural, geographical and topographical locations mark out his journey. In the gospel, there are repeated references to all three; they act as liminal signposts. These express the liminal complex and act as end-stops, thresholds, and spaces of liminal transformation. Crossing the water, a traditional symbol of chaos, is thus another important *limen*.

[463] Jesus' movements are also important markers in the structuring of the narrative; he is constantly disappearing and reappearing. C.f., J. Lee Magness, Sense and Absence: Structure and Suspension in the Ending of Mark's Gospel, *op. cit*. This movement was picked up by Graham Greene in his novel, The Power and The Glory, (London: London Readers' Union, 1941), a modern reworking of the gospel.

[464] The disciples' belief that they have seen a ghost further undermines the reliability of their witness to faith. C.f., below, on the transfiguration of Jesus.

[465] This is a reference to the feeding of the crowd immediately prior to the crossing.

[466] Mark 6.52. John's *Gospel* takes a similar approach, except that it is much clearer in this account that the bread with which Jesus feeds the multitude is a multiple symbol for the Eucharist, and Word. C.f., John 6, in particular, the loss of belief that arises from the Eucharistic allusions (John 6.60ff, 7.1ff etc.).

demons, cured a man plagued by a 'legion' of demons, cured a woman with haemorrhages, brought a girl back to healthy life, and 'fed' the five-thousand.[467] Against this, we know that Jesus' own family and community have rejected him, and that the Baptist has been executed by Herod (events which from henceforth haunt the text). The disciples have witnessed extraordinary events. They have been given great power, but his rejection (as mad and dangerous) by so many people both weakens *and* confirms the evidence before them: having power is dangerous, and John's death highlights the probable outcome for those preaching the coming kingdom.[468] Thus whilst the existence of powers are not in dispute, *their* influence over power is. In faith, the disciples have accepted power but it is a power they seem not to have control of or understand. Simultaneously therefore, they question what power means for their wellbeing and transformation. Thus in a narrative that constantly questions the meaning and price of power, the characters show increasing signs of paranoia, deriving almost exclusively from the difficulty of identifying (and naming as not naming) Jesus and what he stands for. Without an unequivocal answer to these questions, disciples (and readers) cannot decide between insiders and outsiders. Double-binds confront them at every turn. In the accusation of being in league with the devil, and in his condemnation by the main religious factions, the question of authenticity is increasingly difficult to determine.

> At this point, it is worth rehearsing the definition of paranoia seen earlier

> it is usually impossible for the paranoid individual to decide whether the symptoms … are the result of a self-delusion, or were imposed … from the outside – all the individual knows is that these symptoms are real and own a self-eternalizing dynamism, and as a consequence appear an endless mechanism overtaxing the individual's mental capacities. (Arich-Gerz 2).

Mark's gospel inculcates anxiety and fear over secret meanings and misreadings, and as Kermode concludes

> We glimpse the secrecy through the meshes of a text; this is divination, but what is divined is what is visible from our angle … a momentary radiance. … And we

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[467] The Sermon on the Mount is the highpoint of his preaching outside Jerusalem.
[468] Herod's belief that Jesus is John *resurrected* undermines the notion of Jesus' future unique resurrection.

> interpret always as transients ... both in the book and in the world which resembles the book. (Kermode 1979, 144-5).

The irruptions and interferences make revelation something to fear, and recall the negative end of Pynchon's delta-t and 'the Outer Radiance'. (Pynchon, 1978, 209). Also of the fact that all 'is Text ... we are its readers, and its Pages are the Days turning. Unscrolling, as a Pilgrim's Itinery map in ancient Days'. (Pynchon 1998, 497-8). Only faith will sustain confidence.

Thus, the question arises that even if the disciples are not paranoid, this may *not* be the case with Jesus. The parable of the strong man (who is bound prior to the plundering of his house) illustrates the double-bind paradigm (of boundedness and boundaries) proposed by Arich-Gerz, and the power of mythic inversions and confusions.[469] Has the voice that Jesus heard at his baptism and in the wilderness experiences made him delusional (about his identity and role)? Do his encryptions, his refusals to be identified, point to a persecution-complex or to schizophrenia? Does he intend to induce (or demand) paranoia in his (male) followers? At the half-way point in the narrative, when the question of Jesus' identity has become almost unbearable, he asks: 'Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to *this* generation?' (Mark 8.11ff). The insider-reader may take comfort in this. And yet, signs of his power have been given already. He contradicts himself; he cures a blind man but tells him (as he has told them all before) not to witness to the healing but healing is viewed as a true witness to God's presence. (Mark 8.26). The interpretative tension is at breaking point. As if he knows this, Jesus asks the disciples *how* people identify him.[470] He then checks this against the disciples' secret knowledge: 'who do you say that I am?' (Mark 8.27-30). Peter at last *names* Jesus as *Christ* – a correct interpretation of the signs. He swears *them* to secrecy (like the demons). No one else must know. The importance of secrecy to the plot is thus reinforced and the question as to why he *cannot* be identified

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[469] C.f., Mark 3.20 ff., and Ched Myers, <u>Binding the Strong Man: a Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus</u>. (New York: Maryknoll, 1988, 2000), 164ff. Satan is the strong man, but Jesus is stronger; he will be bound in order to break Satan's power. However, this set against Jesus' family wanting to bind and restrain Jesus whom they think is mad. The question of boundaries and bindings is thus central to the difficulty of decoding meaning.
[470] Some say John, others, Elijah.

remains critical. They would like to shout it from the rooftops. Jesus seems to provide the answer

> [H]e began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and must be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mark 8.31-33).

This is *not* what Peter expects. He rebukes Jesus for it. In turn, Jesus rebukes Peter. Anyone calling him to glory and power rather than to rejection and suffering must be in league with the devil. (Mark 8.32ff). The divine path is contrary to tradition one of persecution - to the point of execution as self-sacrifice. *This* is the good news. The prize is, however, resurrection. However, given the lack of Jesus' resurrection in the gospel, discerning this is not easy matter. It may be another sign of paranoia.

Jesus calls on the disciples to submit themselves to the same rejection, persecution and death as Jesus. In this life, salvation is possible only through pain and persecution because

> "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed he will rise again." …Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." (Mark 10.28).

It is an understandable resistance to Jesus' paranoid statements. However, Jesus persists

> "I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age – houses, brothers, sisters, mothers and children and fields, with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life. (Mark 10.29-30).[471]

His rhetoric intensifies the fear and inevitability of persecution and marginalisation, of being passed over in this life in return for the promise of a substantial return for the disciples both *in this life and the next.* Being bound to Jesus means a

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[471] C.f. Mark 9.31-32.

simultaneous reinforcement of the ties that bind, at the same time as the boundary collapses. It is a mixed message.

Let us return to Locke's article. He compares the homo-erotic symbolism in Gravity's Rainbow to the classic symptoms of paranoia. Referring to Sigmund Freud's, The Mechanisms of Paranoia, he writes that:

> what was characteristically paranoiac about the illness was the fact that the patient, as a means of warding off a homosexual wish-phantasy, reacted precisely with delusions of persecution … At the climax of his illness, under the influence of visions which were "partly of a terrifying character, but partly, too, of an indescribable grandeur," [the patient] became convinced of the imminence of a great catastrophe, of the end of the world. (Locke 2).[472]

This definition accords disturbingly with Jesus' visions and with many intensifying later incidents. In chapter 13, the delusion described by Freud seems to be fulfilled in Jesus' prophesy of the destruction of the temple. Prophesying terrifying eschatological scenes (of which they will be a part) Jesus tells the disciples how to behave after his death. In a stroke, he removes for *this* generation the Jewish expectation of salvation *in this life*. He is also removing himself. Telling them not to worry about persecution, death, and tribulations, he promises to return to 'gather his elect'.[473] By this promise, Jesus has become their means to salvation or a homo-erotic symbol of a cult of death.[474] As his return is not evidenced in the text, the reader could be forgiven for thinking the latter.

Even before this incident, Freud's grandeur delusion manifests itself immediately after his altercation with Peter about the nature of his identity. Jesus takes four of his disciples up a mountain. As they stand before him, he is 'transfigured':

> His clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah and Moses who were talking with Jesus. (Mark 9.2-7).

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[472] Citing Sigmund Freud, "The Mechanisms of Paranoia" (1911).
[473] Mark 13.27.
[474] Freud also talks of the patient believing that he is the only 'real' surviving man (Locke, 2); this is like Jesus.

The sign which he has denied 'to this generation' has *literally* been shown to the disciples.[475] The voice of God openly identifies him. Again they are sworn to silence.[476] The secret must be kept from outsiders. Thus the sign does/does not make things clearer.[477] As in Pynchon, the protagonists struggle with their cognitive mapping. Personal experience seems to direct them to the illogic of the death-wish fantasy.[478] In Pynchon, the vision is Armageddon as death-seduction.

> But out at the horizon, out near the burnished edge of the world, who are these visitors standing . . . these robed figures -- perhaps, at this distance, hundreds of miles tall -- their faces, serene, unattached, like the Buddha's, bending over the sea, impassive, indeed, as the Angel that stood over Lübeck during the Palm Sunday raid, come that day neither to destroy nor to protect, but to bear witness to a game of seduction . . . What have the watchmen of the world's edge come tonight to look for? Deepening on now, monumental beings stoical, on toward slag, toward ash the colour the night will stabilize at, tonight . . . what is there grandiose enough to witness? (Pynchon 1978, 214).

It is the actual end of hope because fatalism and anticlimax have taken over. (Pynchon 1978, 760). In Mark, after the ascent to the mountain, where Jesus is displayed as a glorious figure, he descends to Jerusalem to be humiliated, tortured, mocked, tried, and executed in the most shameful of executions.[479] He cries out on the cross that even God has abandoned him. However hard the disciples try to stay faithful to Jesus, they apparently resist Jesus' drive to death-sacrifice. Disillusion seems to overwhelm them. The narrative terminates in confusion, flight and dispersal.

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[475] The vision of Jesus transfigured bears a resemblance to the disciples' conviction that they have seen a ghost walking on the water; the former is said to be an actual occurrence, the latter is said to be an error. Both resemble post-resurrection scenes; the transfiguration is very similar to that of the ascension in Acts 1-11.

[476] Until Jesus rises from the dead.

[477] C.f. Mark 9.9ff. The disciples question each other about 'what this rising of the dead could mean'. It baffles them. (Is it physical or spiritual resurrection?)

[478] I take the view that Pynchon picked up on this passage with its apocalyptic references to the Son of Man in bleached white clothes; he certainly emphasises the white light and the bleaching quality of the death-sacrifice of the rocket ascent before its fall into darkness. There are almost too many references to bleached light: 'white abyss'. (e.g., Pynchon, 151).

[479] Following the transfiguration at the midpoint of the narrative, the remaining half is taken up by Jesus' journey towards the cross.

In neither narrative is there a climactic end in glory and New Creation but only a fall into darkness and loss. The crystal clarity of the crucifixion set against the appalling absence of resurrection scenes in Mark apparently undermines the content of the opening proclamation of the name. Stripped of the context of the canonical collection of gospels, in which resurrection and exaltation mark out the victory of new life over death, the suspended ending, when read through the atheistic protest, makes nonsense of the joyous proclamation of its epigram.[480] Jesus may as well be viewed as a paranoiac, encouraging membership of a schizoid and masochistic sect of men who submit voluntarily to paranoid delusions. Only the opening lines contradict the narrative drive into fear, danger, and paranoia.[481]

The enemy is hard to identify. The plot to kill Jesus involves insiders as well as outsiders. All points to the actors' resistance to his message of death. The opening, however, does cue the reader to believe that the followers of Jesus cumulatively misread, refute, betray, and desert the *via crucis* advocated by Jesus. As his power is increasingly manifested, the call to reject power (in the sense of domination and appropriation) is intensified by Jesus himself. The reader, even the *informed* believer, is, therefore, forced to cyclically re-trace his steps via the beginning of the text.[482] The question therefore remains: does Mark's gospel signal the indifference suggested by Pynchon of a sadomasochistic God (echoed in the abandonment and betrayal of the twelve) (Mark 15.34)?[483] Certainly, the text could imply that the disciples first reject, and then reinterpret Jesus' message.[484] Thus decontextualised, Mark's gospel might be thought to end on an even bleaker note

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[480] The cultural intertext, in some ways, makes the interpretation of a single text too easy. We all know the cumulative narrative of the gospels. An analysis of the text by isolating it from the canon strengthens the impact of the lack of resurrection. Whilst this is an artificial process, it serves to heighten the hermeneutic difficulties presented by Mark's text to its first readers.

[481] In the history of commentary on Mark, even when the socio-historical context has been conjectured, its end has been predominantly seen as an incomplete, inadequate or partial replicate of Matthew, or the cobbling together of previous oral traditions. (There is no evidence for either position.)

[482] In itself, the beginning is an ambiguous one; we have not been told *who* speaks the words that *name* Jesus as Christ.

[483] A few women followers witness the crucifixion or go to the tomb following his burial (Mark 15.40ff, 16.1ff, respectively). In the context of 1st–century Palestine, the witness of women is largely disregarded; in a patriarchal world, the presence of women does not represent authority; even if the women had passed on the report of the angel, their witness would not have stood up to scrutiny.

[484] In favour of a theology of glory, in which they are leaders.

than <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u>. The reader who has no knowledge of the entirety of the Christian paradigm may be hard pressed to see it any other way.

In the final section, I will briefly attempt to draw together some of the main arguments presented in the thesis through the ending of Mark. I will consider how Mark's apocalypticism, whilst employing many of the strategies of Pynchon (including that of paranoia), does not fall into the negative liminal paradigm and why Pynchon, despite his resistance to apocalyptic-eschatology, shows a trace of living hope in the will of language to participate in relations-in-difference.

9. 'Do not tell anyone': the insider joke of Mark's gospel

Let me begin with another statement by Kermode that I believe sums up the paradox and problematic of the apocalyptic nature of language at the heart of this study: that 'we are programmed and prefer fulfilment to disappointment, the closed to the open.' (Kermode 1979, 64). If, like Kermode, one takes an apparently traditional secular, non-partisan perspective of language (and the will to meaning as fulfilment), the desire to make sense of the middle through its ending becomes a fiction of comfort and consonance:[485] on the one hand it speaks of the absolute need for 'well-formedness' – a grammar without which nothing can be understood (or fulfilled), but on the other, of where the boundary stifles change and security risks stagnation (something of which Kermode fails to speak). However, the discourse at the heart of this study involves two partisan rhetorics of interpretation that fight it out in the apocalyptic text. In detheologised or anti-theological and atheistic rhetoric there is either condemnation or denial of order (and analogy) that, in an attenuated version, asserts the human desire/will for order (knowledge and understanding) but of the impossibility of its decoding. The Christian theological view, to the contrary, proposes an analogical view which through relations-in-difference points forward to the creative good, reconciliation, restoration of right

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[485] C.f., Frank Kermode, <u>The Sense of an Ending</u>. Studies in the Theory of Fiction. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967). Kermode's central thesis is that eschatology (that he terms apocalyptic) is the key to all reading: the end irrupts into the middle of the a text to inform and form its characters. I would, of course, deny the possibility of non-partisan interpretation.

relations and fulfilment through participation and extension.[486] Both positions argue through the *limen* and involve notions of revelation (a means to understand), eschatology (the end of understanding as we know it) and the *limen* (the mediation of understanding in the fluxional state of no understanding). This makes them, of necessity, apocalyptic. However, Christian theology attempts to provide a narrative of faith, hope and love against that of despair and indifference. For this reason, I have attempted to present a complex interpretation (and performance) of the apocalyptic narrative of Christ and the crucifixion that shuts down faith (concealing the Godhead in its own mystery) at the same time as it opens out the actuality and promise of revelation, and thus to prevent dualism.

In this section, I take the abrupt and astonishing end of Mark's gospel in order to seek the positively revelatory in its apparently brutal closure to revelation.

> 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. … But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (Mark 16:6-8).

The three women who, unlike the male disciples, have been brave enough to go to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, like the men, run away. To that degree, as loyal witnesses to Jesus' crucifixion, they seem (finally, as a last word) to reflect the three fatal flaws in his followers: their flight in silence both betrays and denies the truth of resurrection. There are no subsequent reports of resurrection appearances to lift the faithful out of loss. Consequently, the reader is left with the silence of the empty tomb that resonates with fear, disappointment and perplexity. What the reader is meant to make of this forms my brief reading.

The end of Gravity's Rainbow confounds, disappoints and leaves the reader bereft because the epigram points to life after death but the actual narrative ends in death *tout court*. Of course, things are not quite as straightforward as that. For in

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[486] In secular terms, this is what Kermode denotes (like Steiner) as a 'pleromatist' position: that we have an inbuilt 'fore-understanding', or intuitive sense of meaning and fulfilment. C.f., Kermode Genesis, 64-5.

fact, the epigram does not lie, but neither does it fulfil its promise, because the life-after-death that Pynchon ambiguously encodes in the mass of deflections, culs-de-sac, missiles (as missives) and mis-messages does not reflect the desired expectation of continued identity and relationship but marks instead the inevitability of fragmentation, atomism and fossilisation. This revelation seems to cheat us with false promise: it is not the truth we expected but, according to the strategy of paranoia, the death we desired (as a hidden truth). Similarly, if we accept the ending of Mark as a deliberate strategy (not some aborted effort), there is no doubt that this narrative can also be interpreted as resistant to the optimistic and upbeat message of the liminal Christian paradigm of death/resurrection. For entirely against the expectation of its epigram, it ends in betrayal, denial, fear and desertion, confusing the reader and leaving him similarly bereft. The end is counter-intuitive to its beginning: we do not like it which, as Kermode points out, is 'why somebody added the extra twelve verses'. (Kermode 1979, 66). For this reason, Mark's gospel has often been dismissed as inadequate or incomplete far more than it has been proposed for literary or theological genius.[487] The desire for sense and consonance is, as both Pynchon and Kermode affirm, part of being human, and so, in one way or another, we defer and re-script the end. Arguably however, there is another way of reading Mark which overturns a Pynchon-type interpretative key to its code. But we should hold on to paranoia, not as a strategy of the despairing preterite but a tactic for keeping hold of secret truth.

There are few points that I would like to re-establish before responding the end of Mark's gospel (without adding to its ending!). First, I acknowledge my own position beyond the text. For as Kermode is at pains to point out

> Our divinations are made necessary by the fact of our occupying, inescapably, a
> position in history which is not the position of the text we cultivate and not a position
> of which we have much objective understanding, though it helps to constitute the

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[487] Throughout Genesis of Secrecy, Kermode discusses the approach of biblical scholars, including the view of Mark as a crude, patched-together or incomplete text, against the extant text and the will to find meaning. E.g., 55ff, 81ff. He makes one extremely insightful comment: that it was only after Mark gained 'institutional approval' as the earliest gospel that these accusations (in particular in relation to the ending) created new perspectives and readings. (Kermode 1979, 66).

complex of prejudices we to the task of discovering as sense ... in the text we value ([as] another element of prejudice). (Kermode 1979, 4).

As such, whilst Mark can be interpreted through Pynchon's strategy of paranoia and what Ward calls, the 'culture of seduction, simulacra and death', I will be seeking signs of the cosmological account in Mark's community, as a faith community 'analogically related through desire'. (C.f., Ward <u>Cities</u>, 68 and 77 respectively). Second, in so seeking, I am accepting that Mark's gospel is deliberately encoded; furthermore, that because it is apocalyptic-modally driven it has its own grammar (of revelation and obfuscation) that involves a complicated pattern (and battle) of insider/outsider that works internally (on the characters) and externally (on the readers), some aspects of which I have already looked at. It is, *par excellence*, both a text of conflict in the name-of-the-name and a text-in-conflict. Third that, for this reason alone, an apocalyptic performance is essential to decode or make sense of it.

The steps to interpretation are to ask *who* is speaking *to whom*, as well as why and how he speaks. In Mark, as I pointed out above, the authorial voice is problematic from the outset. So let us first consider who the actual reader and intended audience/s may have been with some presuppositions about temporal, spatial and generational gaps. It is safe to assume that on one level the readers are members of the Markan community (to whom the text belongs and has value); second, that the gospel was written in the aftermath of the fall of the temple in 70CE, a generation after Jesus' death. We can assume that they live in Judea and that they have experienced direct persecution. Even without the expertise of recent scholarship, Mark 13 gives some telling clues about the temporal and spatial interference of this later situation (the text's contemporary) time, place and generation that is forcing decision through crisis.

> ... when you see the desolating sacrilege ... *then those in Judea* must flee to the mountains ...
> ... if anyone says to you *at that time*, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!' ... do not believe it.
> ... *in those days, after that suffering* ... he will ... gather his elect from the four winds.
> ... *this g*eneration will not pass away until all these things have taken place.

(Mark 13: 14, 21, 24, 27 and 30 respectively).[488]

As we saw in the last section, Jesus repeatedly accuses the disciples of not being able to interpret the myriad of signs of divine power and authority. His power is misread and he warns them that his (and their) authority must be understood an inverted model of power: the last shall be first. They seem to resist this message, misread the signs and finally, go on to betray, deny and desert him. But this is because 'that suffering' and 'this generation' speak to future events beyond their own. Conversely, this explains why when, in Mark 8.12, Jesus asks and answers a question of his own ('Why does *this generation* seek a sign? Amen, I say to you, no sign will be given to *this* generation'), it means that he is speaking to the original followers of Christ and not to the reader. Two things are, therefore, significant: first, two time-frames are running simultaneously. The first reader is *embodied* in the text, as it were standing behind the disciples and followers. Second, because of current events and the time gap, the reader believes that he stands closer to the end than Jesus' contemporaries (who ushered in the beginning of the end) and thus is better placed to interpret it. In other words, unlike many of Christian communities, these believers (unlike Peter and Paul, for example) have not left Judea, and they represent a second generation of early Christians in ever-increasing conflict with other authorities, including Jews and Romans. This is why the voice of Mark is paranoid and projects itself as a nuclear discourse of deferral and end, at the same time inflecting itself into the discourse of which Jesus is the originator and key; and how it can proclaim the reality of the good news with an acuity that the disciples could not have had on their way to the cross. Jesus' voice and message thus presents throughout a double-meaning: the present reader must learn to decipher its code; a code that says that 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away'. (Mark 13.30). His voice has been passed on through the Spirit (and apocalyptic performance), revealing the secret meaning and thus opening up that past (as present) moment. It is the folding back of future (present) into the liminal complex as a completion of its prophetic moment. Mark,

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[488] C.f., also Mark 10:29ff.

as such, presents the reasons for the urgent, conflictual tone, and for its necessary obfuscation.

Let us now consider who speaks to the first reader/s. For me, Mark is a quintessentially apocalyptic text in tone, in mode, and perhaps in genre, for I would argue, controversially no doubt, that there are strong parallels and affinities between the opening lines of Mark's text and the opening lines of Revelation.

> The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him to show his servants what must soon take place; he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near.[489]

These lines are severally understood as title, introduction, salutation, and a promise of prophecy.[490] The subject, however, both is/is *not* the revelation of John of Patmos. In a Trinitarian movement, revelation is directed *through* God *to* Jesus as Christ via whom, in his exalted state, all revelations come, thence to the Spirit and extended to believers. In turn, prophecy, arising out of scriptural revelation, *becomes* scripture. As such, apocalyptic interpretation evokes the power of the Word in words; revelation is the hidden Book inside the book; and Christ is incarnate in the words. If we put the centrality of the Baptist to one side for a moment, the opening lines of Mark's gospel evokes this sense

> The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'[491]

Much has been made of the fact that the scriptural references symbolise John (who appears immediately after this passage). I suggest, however, that, driven in an apocalyptic mode, the scriptural hermeneutic has produced a revelation (in the

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[489] Rev, 1.1-3.
[490] C.f., David Aune, <u>Revelation 1-5</u>, *op. cit.*
[491] Mark 1.1-3.

Spirit) from *Christist*.[492] Place the words 'The revelation of Jesus Christ' before 'The beginning of the good news' and the apocalyptic mode is brought into play, immediately establishing the text within the expected charismatic context of its (contemporary) readers. The scriptural passage thus points to the apocalyptic strategy of incorporating prophecy within the narrative.

Let us take a closer look at the 'epigram' in Mark. The scriptural reference is a composite one, made up from passages from *Malachi, Exodus* and Isaiah.[493] By itself, this perfectly illustrates the apocalyptic multi-messaged voice of the montage technique.[494] First, in Malachi, the 'messenger' is reminiscent of the Jesus of Revelation who will return to judge humankind on the Day of the Lord. The temple is a centrally important location in the apocalyptic-eschatology of Mark; Jesus makes a symbolic, prefigured return to it in the *via crucis*.[495] Second, in Exodus, the tone is even more apocalyptic: as in Revelation, the guiding angel resonates (intertextually) with the revelation given by Jesus (as the Word).[496] Third, whilst the final reference from Isaiah seems most clearly directed to John the Baptist, as Steve Moyise writes

> Joel Marcus thinks the ascription to Isaiah was deliberate because Mark wants to tell his readers that 'the beginning of the good news' is 'written in the prophet Isaiah. Isa 40.3 … is quoted because the restoration promised in Isaiah is being fulfilled. Isaiah looks forward to a time when the heavens would be rent (64.1), the Spirit poured out (61.1), good news would be proclaimed (40.9-10) and God would come in power (40.10). (Moyise 22).[497]

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[492] So far as I am aware no one has suggested that this opening is like that of the Apocalypse, but as soon as one makes the comparison the similarities become clear. Furthermore, in Paul, the opening of Romans makes clear his dependency on scriptural hermeneutics, and the opening of Galatians, the importance of revelation in Christ.

[493] C.f., Steve Moyise, The Old Testament in the New: an Introduction (London: Continuum) 2001) 21ff.

[494] Similarly, there is a myriad of allusions to the Hebrew Bible in the Apocalypse. C.f. Moyise (2001) and The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation. (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1995).

[495] e.g., from chapter 11 onwards, the temple is central to the plot in which the *via crucis* is played out. C.f., particularly, Mark 13 and the cleansing of the temple in Mark 11.15ff. It is here that Jesus forefronts the first and second commandments: to love God, and to love the fellow human being (Mark 12.28ff).

[496] I do not wish to suggest that Mark takes references from Revelation; Mark pre-dates Revelation by at least thirty years. Apocalyptic texts were understood, and the charismatic nature of the early Church well known enough, for the mention of angels to create an association in the minds of any reader.

[497] C.f., Joel Marcus, The Way of the Lord. Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1980).

Marcus' hermeneutic shows how the scenario, that is recognisable in Revelation, is also evident in Mark, where in the apocalyptic-eschatological scenario, God and Satan proclaim Jesus' identity.[498] The good news is proclaimed, the spirit poured out, supporting believers as it supported Jesus, and for the same reason - his name.[499] Thus in Mark, the angelic messenger can be interpreted as Christ and the Spirit (enlightening Jesus in his life and his followers after his death and resurrection). Its voice reflects the Trinitarian movement to the believer (as prophet-proclaimer) where throughout, the Trinitarian voice is arguably that of the pre-crucified, crucified *and* resurrected Jesus, presented through a liminal experience of the reader/writer. In all these examples, the revelation is sent to lead believers to the place prepared by God. The structural markers in Mark are geographical, topographical, and architectural:[500] thus it is not to Jerusalem, as the City of God, to which believers will be led in the endtimes but to the mountains near Galilee.[501] In the Exodus passage, the angel of the Lord is the judge who will not forgive transgression. In Mark's 'little Apocalypse,' the Danielic 'Son of man' (as judge) alludes to Jesus as the Son of God.[502] Thus again, the apocalyptic interpretation becomes clear.

Throughout the previous section, I highlighted how Mark's gospel insists on keeping his identity secret. Let us look again at Jesus' proscription to the disciples against identifying him in relation to the gospel's end.[503] In the tomb scene, the women see that the tomb has been opened and that the body of Jesus is not there. Instead, they find a young man dressed in white and 'sitting on the right side'. He

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[498] C.f., Mark 1, the fact that God speaks performatively over Jesus in baptism, and Satan immediately tempts him in the wilderness points to the war of the name. And in the moment of death, the temple curtain is rent and the apocalyptic scenario of chaos and void evoked by the onset of premature darkness. (Mark 15.38, 33).

[499] Mark 1.10-11, 13.9-13.

[500] C.f., Elizabeth Struthers Malbon. Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991. She gives a consummate outline of the significance of ironic displacement and the fugitive nature of Jesus, and of the symbolic nature of geographic, architectural and urban markers in the gospel of Mark.

[501] Mark 14.28, 16.7. Mark stresses Jesus' arrival from and return to Galilee. In relation to the origination of Mark's text, it is likely that a sect of believers resisted the disciples' decision to remain in Jerusalem. It can certainly be inferred that Mark's readers are the group which witnessed the resurrected Jesus in Galilee, and who refuted a theology of glory. And that they believed that only in the Second Coming would Jesus return for the true followers, themselves.

[502] Mark 13.24ff.

[503] C.f., Mark 8:18, 30.

announces Jesus' resurrection and departure to Galilee which he orders them to pass on to Peter and the disciples.

> 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. … But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (Mark 16:6-8).

The young man's instruction *ironically inverts* the instructions of Jesus to be silent. With resurrection, Jesus' divine status has been witnessed and can now be proclaimed. The final sign has been given. (Not only do we have classic signs of a divine messenger but also the classic response to one: the women are dumbstruck and in awe.) They flee in terror. However, the irony of flight from revelation only serves to signals the transformation of events (and interpretation) for the inner circle. Of course they *will* tell Peter. Of course, the message will be communicated, as Ward points out, thus conferring and creating community. (C.f., Ward Cities, 111). The second generation (with their text) present ironic evidence of that reality. The epigram explodes its good news as a continuing, performative gift from God; its proclamation declaring participation in Christ's body which does not 'dissolve or absolve' but expands *en Christoi*. (Ward Cities, 95). However, anyone *outside* the inner group will not be able to read the signs, especially if they are trying to read the events proleptically (as the disciples), or retrospectively through inappropriate modern historical methods. In this case, as in Pynchon, no matter how many times the reader returns to the epigram for clarity, and no matter how many times he wonders at the apparent incomprehension of the proliferation of signs in the narrative, the Markan strategy will continue to keep secret right interpretations of Christ's identity by confusing our readings between those who 'see' and those who are blind.

Similarly however, it may be that the Markan apocalyptic strategy of ironic displacement can also be applied to Pynchon. Wall Hinds reflects that his puns

transfigure the landscape ... not by virtue of demonic presences [but through a] *supernatural effect [coming] from the will of language itself* [made tangible] through visible and readable signs. (Wall Hinds 24).

For as she points out

[a]s these characters are selected out of grace, the systems they inhabit offer another kind of magic, a possibility for a life-generating alternative ... This other motion toward grace originates in the dozens of puns ... that perform not only to mark the accidental homonymic relationships among sounds, but more actively to create entire plots ... these puns [in fact] reinscribe the sacred into the secular world. (Wall Hinds 24).

In this way the characters (and the reader/hermeneut) living within a 'God-determined universe' can choose between two modes of understanding. The first takes the pun (in Mark, the parables and signs) at face value, the second as *a marker for an alternative system of meaning*. She is not suggesting a Derridean sense of a gap between the word and the thing, rather that the pun

works to *direct meaning* from linguistic condensation [circularity] 'backward' so that the things themselves [are incarnated after the] linguistic fact, not unlike the Biblical generative actions that begins with 'the Word'. (Wall Hinds 29).

This is a fine exposition of the apocalyptic liminal performance and complex of God's performative word, reflecting, as such, a theology of liminality (creation and incarnation). Pynchon's pun ironically displaces the despair and pacifism of the Calvinist view of the end by inflecting another word-system (and therefore, world-system) into the existing one. This technique surely coheres with the Christian apocalyptic mode of text production and interpretation.

Thus, without the code - the (divinely informed) message passed on from the tomb- as the decision for faith in the critical moment, it will be impossible to know what it means 'to be called by God as an embodied soul to participate in Christ's body', or of the reality of the ontological scandal of participation in the Eucharistic statement: 'Take, eat, this is my body'. (C.f., Ward Cities, 77). Only an apocalyptic-eschatological performance of the text will light up the full import of the call to follow and imitate in participation, through suffering sacrifice to forgiveness, faith,

372

hope and love, where Christ's body expands in ours. Ward understands this. For Christ's displacement, which he also recognises in Mark, can be none other than expansion.

> The displacement of the one, archetypal body, which engenders a transcorporeality in which the body of Christ, is mapped onto and shot like a watermark through the physical bodies, social bodies, ecclesial bodies, sacramental bodies … available only in and through textual bodies … [But] in the analogical account of bodies, within an account of incarnation and creation, only the body of Christ (hidden, displaced and yet always pervasive for always disseminated) is the true body and all these other bodies become true only in their participation within Christ's body. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 93).

Mark's strategy of obfuscated beginning (in the unidentified, identifying voice of Christ) and of halted closure (as a signifier of the key to his identity and status) forces frenzied interpretative re-views and a re-cycling of intra- and intertextual aspects of the text as the crisis of liminal performance. Today's reader must re-perform the text in the quest for a cohesive narrative whole which seems to present as it defies coherence. Thus Mark is set on demonstrating the deeply troubling nature and discomfort of revelation in representation, and which displaces and subsumes human reason; whereas Pynchon wishes to exemplify the crisis of reason in relation to a perceived lost and fragmented reality. In neither case do the characters remain unscathed. For if judgment is beyond human control, uncertainty, ironically, represents the only possible, and sane, certainty. It is thus at the point at which language fails that faith and hope come to the fore through a hermeneutics of ends and beginnings, in which ironic displacement is the key. And it is only when either narrative is understood as a performance of revelation in and through the apocalyptic text that its ambiguity discloses the crisis, need and key to decode the apocalyptic encryption.

10.   Conclusion

Throughout this study, I have emphasised that reading concerns interpretation which must not be viewed naively: the controlling ideology of cultural coding and decoding needs to be viewed with suspicion, deconstructed and opened out to view before any personal hermeneutic can really begin. Equally, one's own

perspective needs interrogating to identify the influence (and infection) of that view in the personal prejudices that are informed by it. Arguably, an awareness of and concern for this problematic is what Mark, Bulgakov, Pynchon and perhaps all (necessarily apocalyptic) writers recognise. The text is a violent site for a war of words. Furthermore, the apocalyptic writer understands the profound irony of proposing a view (especially as his voice often resists the prevailing hegemony) that risks persecution and isolation, or through supersession, turns into the very thing that it seeks to critique and avoid. However, as Bulgakov understands, the will to evil, when mediated through Christ's body, cannot but illumine the good.

On a profound level, like Mark, Pynchon's work tussles with the problematic of both seeing and not seeing. In his case, prevarication as a means to survive may seem preferable to taking sides or arriving at a conclusion between codes, especially when the theological option cannot fully evidence (rational-scientifically) the goodness of the God in the fluxional world-as-text. On the other hand, as Wall Hinds suggests, perhaps like Mark, his encoding is so deep as to confound most of his contemporary readers. (*I* am *almost* certain that he remains caught between the closed barriers of the *limen*!) This is not true of Mark's gospel journey through the treacherous webs of textuality which, as it forces the reader to revisit its end through its epigram, defies and challenges the abrupt, cauterised and abusive end to ironically expose what Ward describes as the giving and receiving of signs - mediated and displaced through Christ's body (as an 'object' which cannot be fully 'grasped, catalogued, atomised, comprehended') to form and inform a 'new collectivity of relations' and 'series of relational relays' that carry down to and into our own signs of the times. (C.f., Ward <u>Cities</u>, 111).

Epilogue

This thesis has explored the experience of reading the apocalyptic text through the performance of the *limen*. The association of revelation and liminality forced an engagement with the crisis of representation and participation that has, I hope, resulted in the presentation of fresh ways of reading as theological response to the world-as-text, in particular through the crucifixion-resurrection event and the way of the cross, which have been used to interrogate atheistic or detheologised views in modernity and postmodernity. In the epilogue, I give a brief overview of this study, reflect on its academic and cultural context and consider how this helped form my thinking. I conclude by proposing some areas for future development.

1. Overview

Part 1 consisted of five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced key concepts in relation to the problematic relation between revelation and representation. Chapter 2 considered liminality in relation to apocalyptic interpretation and performance, and concluded with a comparison between God's Word and the flawed medium of the text. Chapter 3 explored the modern/postmodern crisis of representation. Chapters 4 and 5 engaged in engaged more fully in the theological discourse on modernity between dialectics and analogy, principally by considering apocalyptic-eschatology and liminality in relation to the cross and the suffering body. It focused on a critique of the methodology of Jürgen Moltmann in his theologies of hope and the cross, and used the theological 'freight' of Graham Ward's analogical worldview (and the notion of relations in difference) and his index of participation (as a cosmological dwelling place of created order) to supplement Moltmann's dualist approach. As a whole, Part 1 established the nature and significance of the apocalyptic text and apocalyptic performance against that of the truncated, dualistic liminal paradigm and consequent readings of modernity, as a theology of liminality and reading.

Part 2 narrowed its focus to concentrate on comparative readings of specific literary texts, from the broader literary canon beyond scripture, presenting forensic readings of apocalyptic works by two authors (Mikhail Bulgakov and Thomas Pynchon). Its aim was to present reader-response analysis of non-scriptural apocalyptic forms through scriptural interpretations that demonstrated the performance and experience of the *limen*. As such, it illustrated how two liminal paradigms (the one geared through relation to the divine, the other through resistance of rejection of God) influence and direct our views of the recent cultural text and showed how some works of fiction take up the ideas, form and content of apocalyptic. In demonstrating the pervasive and complex nature of apocalyptic, I hope that I have enhanced the reading experience of New Testament scripture and the literary canon beyond it.

2. Seeking a methodology and thinking

I came to theology and biblical study late. Coming from a background in literary criticism, the primary aim in all my work has always been, first and foremost, to be a good 'reader'. As I hope this study has shown, interpretation is a thorny subject because, what constitutes a good reader depends on what you mean by 'good' 'text', 'writer', and the act of 'reading'. For example, in cultural studies it is often considered impossible, insufficient and unjustifiable to interpret a single text from within the boundaries of the text itself: we know that we live in post-theological, culturally diverse, global times and are increasingly aware that our interpretations relate to a diachronic and synchronic cultural intertext replete with ideological prejudice. As such, we need to tease out and put into context our own, inevitable presuppositions; any reading, on one level, marks itself out as relative. My own reading of apocalyptic, therefore, only represents one 'book', or voice, within the (encyclopaedic, open-ended) book of the world-as-text. Of course, extraordinarily, the Book of Revelation tells us this, except, that its truth is relative only to the degree that it will be judged by, and as, God's Word.[504]

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[504] In other words, Revelation works clearly through the analogical principle of relations-in-difference and a co-equal participation that reflects and imitates the Trinity. This goes against most recent discourse. Intertextuality and intratextuality are part of our contemporary view of meaning-making but are a consciously central focus of scripture as a means to production and interpretation.

If my approach to reading and writing have thus been informed and formed by cultural theories, including semantics and the making of meaning, on another level, my first 'take' on any text is through what used to be called closed, or close, readings (without reference to historical context and authorial history); the *attempt* to cast an 'innocent eye' over a text (temporarily ignoring the diachronic and synchronic) thereby reducing prejudice and preconception by affording primary respect to the words. In this sense, I believe that imaginative reading (first innocent, then both hermeneutic and suspicious) works on several levels. I subsequently take account of 'tradition', that is, other people's views but only after spending time working through a text without recourse to secondary reading. This approach aims at developing an intimacy with the text itself before broadening out to the interpretative critique of others.

As a discipline, theology has *always* refused the taxonomic process of later modernity: it is by nature interdisciplinary even if, within its confines, it resists the critique from outside.[505] With this in mind, it has been a natural enough step to cross the disciplinary divide from literary criticism into (New Testament) biblical scholarship (despite a patchy knowledge of Koine Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew languages) to read scripture from cultural, literary-critical and (to me) newly-found theological perspectives. My approach has been therefore to be receptive to, and grounded in, the recent traditional biblical forms of analysis (such as sociology, psychology and anthropology; and redaction-historical and form criticism), then to extend my reading through recourse to mainly literary-critical and philosophical methods; in particular, that of reader-response which recognises the critical, challenging, rhetorical and subversive process of any reading, including taking seriously the impact (and dialogism) of Christian narratives and thought within our own and others' culture.

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[505] 'Theology's business has always been the transgressions of boundaries. It is a discourse which requires other discourses for its very possibility'. (Ward 2000, ix). C.f., Chapter 1 above. Section 4: "The language of theology".

With such a broad approach, an early challenge was to learn to accept the limitations, constraints and opportunities of the western biblical canon as scriptural enclosure, and I have spent considerable time trying to understand (resistantly) the logic (and power plays) behind the move to orthodoxy from the more fluid, heterodox perspectives and traditions in early (and some later) Christian trends. In the end, I have taken up the concept of 'canon' to develop the notion of sacred scripture (as a holy place of encounter), moving away from interrogations of the reasons for, existence and justification of, the boundary fence. This has allowed me to perform creatively through the theological 'enchantment' of enclosure (the entry into liminal performance).

I have found it equally difficult not to be confounded by the illogic of redaction-criticism. Its demand for linguistic expertise, although hugely useful, often downplays a deeper semantic problematic of authenticity and translation. For example, the passing-over of the known loss of some original language versions: for example the Koine Greek Septuagint version of the Hebrew Bible used by early Christians, or the Book of Revelation (the earliest extant versions of which consist of non Latin or Greek fragments).[506] An awareness of the complex gaps and overlays of different versions and canons, together with descriptions of earlier versions, in the end however, has served me well when played through the concept of palimpsest which has, for me, come to symbolise both the paradoxical reality of the fluxional, chaotic nature of representation itself and the human will to meaning and cohesion.

Redaction and form critical methods, which aim to foreground inconsistencies of style and content (mainly with the intention of stripping out interpolations to get closer to the words of the historical Jesus or the earliest textual versions), have also raised my sceptical hackles in relation to the unspoken prejudices and theological positioning of its proponents. But again, this approach has helped

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[506] For excellent information on the many extra-canonical and canonical versions of apocalyptic texts, c.f., Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, Revelation: the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ. In collaboration with Rebekah Callow. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), and Eds. James C. VanderKam and William Adler, The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Chrisianity. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), and http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Book_of_Revelation. (Taken from the web, 14.10.2008)

deep my reading skills, providing an opening through which to explore the ideological drifts of modern biblical interpretation as well as the notion of textual interference, difference and deferral, all of which inform my work on the relation between apocalyptic, transgression of limits and representation.

If these factors have informed and formed my thinking, in the end, the closest definition of my approach to reading and interpretation culturally and academically is probably summed up by Steiner's view of reading (from Plato): that *good* reading must conjoin the three semantic fields of 'the theological, or the 'trans-rational', the philosophical and the poetic'.[507] This is because I actively seek those 'profoundly disquieted analyses of the creative' imbued with 'intellectual resonance and drama of feeling'. (Steiner Grammars, 42). In other words, in the reading performance I look for life-changing and life-affirming experiences. Additionally, in relation to translation, Steiner's view of both the possibility and impossibility of translating between the universal and the particular, I believe that this is something that we must learn to view as a (divine) challenge and gift.

> Translation is the donation of being across space and time, the counter-statement to Babel without which culture, "the monuments of the intellect", the acts of speech would subsist, if at all, in monadic isolation. (Steiner Real, 202).[508]

In other words, language, when detheologised, is diminished and attenuated. Thus theologically, good reading (of the lines, the letters and aporia) has to be analogically (and cosmologically) driven to yield meaning; and this involves the simultaneous acceptance, questioning, doubt and even rejection of revelation (of the Word) in words.

To conclude: it is arguably this multi-faceted, complex approach that distinguishes my work on apocalyptic from many biblical and literary scholars as it works between semantics, literary criticism and theology. To that degree, I seek to expose and explore the prejudice, critique and judgment that are embodied in Christian scripture whilst at the same time, intertextually and contextually,

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[507] George Steiner, Grammars of Creation (London: Faber & Faber, 2001).
[508] George Steiner, Real Presences. (London: Faber & Faber, 1991).

highlighting them in human discourses beyond. In this sense, it is an exploration of language (as ultimately theological) and the language of theology which without the analogies of faith and being is arguably an impossible task.[509] And whilst this is also an acknowledgement of scripture and tradition, it demonstrates the attempt to raise the awareness of (inevitable) ideological positioning and the problematic of mediation in our will to meaning. Ultimately, these interplays and interrogations help to structure the main thesis *and* process of this study of apocalyptic in which I wish to affirm that it is only by playing the liminal performance (of the flawed medium of the text) *through* the logic of analogies of faith and being (where human words and actions gain credit on the basis that they *imitate* the form of the divine Word itself at the same time as they are inflected by doubt and inadequacy), that Christ's revelation has the potential to open out the hope and promise of knowing in unknowing. It is in this sense truly a knowing that defies reason which is why I have interrogated logic in relation to affect.

3. Where next?

In the simplest terms, this thesis has attempted to present a fresh eye on what constitutes apocalyptic literature and the significance of the approach to its 'reading' through a performance at, and of, the limits of language. I have presented this via a discourse on representation, meaning and analogy in order to demonstrate that the New Testament narratives of the imminent end induce an awareness of the fluxional, unstable nature of the world-as-text, and at the same time show how revelation (as God's self-disclosure) irrupts into, and gives meaning to our words (as a secret gift of knowing in unknowing). I have concluded that these are reflected in its form, content and function (where liminal performance is a faith-response to the divine will). Extending out from scripture, I have wished to further show how the Christian apocalyptic literary tradition permeates many of our literary texts and of necessity, dominates our thinking. Whilst this adds to the

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[509] In this, I have been influenced by Karl Barth who wrote 'there really might be and should be no profane language … [but] all serious reflection upon human language about God must start from the fact that actually everything is quite otherwise'. (Barth 1960, 51).

existing body of work on hermeneutics, there is much that I have not sufficiently explored. Graham Ward concludes <u>Cities of God</u> with the following comments

> The matrices of power – economic, political, cultural and historical – that brought about and continue to produce alienation, solipsism, incommensurate and unequal differences, are complex. The theologian's task is to keep alive the vision of better things – of justice, salvation and the common good – and work to clarify the world-view conducive to the promotion of those things. (Ward <u>Cities</u>, 260).

In particular, there is more to do in relation to a just God and justice, judgment, power; and communal exclusivity and the common good. This section therefore briefly outlines how I might further develop the work on the apocalyptic text begun in this study.

a. Goodness and justice

Moltmann's insistence on the incorporation of suffering into notions of (divine) love will continue to be interrogated by believers and sceptics alike: his thesis of the relational difference between the grieving love of the Father and the obedient, submissive love of the Son involves a hierarchical, paternalistic relationship of power that many find problematic in our times. Moltmann asserts that it is with 'signs and expressions of a profound abandonment by God' that Jesus dies on the Cross crying, '*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachtani*'.[510] His death, not as a hero but as a humiliated, shamed, betrayed and broken man of faith, remains problematic in relation to love, goodness and justice. Thus, when Moltmann asserts that Jesus' understanding of his relationship with God (anthropomorphous/ theomorphous) is such that his Father has given him over (and betrayed him to) to death and sin, we have to interrogate what justness means here.[511] This radical giving-over to corruption certainly foregrounds the reality of the body and death. Yet Moltmann asserts that this also represents the Father's humiliation of himself. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 283). This seems so contrary to creative goodness, that

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[510] Mark 15.35: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me'.
[511] 'God made Christ sin (2 Corinthians 5.21), Christ is the accursed of God'. (Moltmann <u>Crucified</u>, 196). Moltmann is citing W. Popkes, <u>*Christus traditus*: Einer Üntersuchung zum Begriff der Dahringabe in Neue Testament </u>(1967) 286ff.

again, his interpretation must be re-questioned, not only in relation to his use of it to argue for the siting of the atheistic protest (with its sins of arrogance and despair) within this outrage (and analogous outrages) but also on the grounds of the ontological scandal of God's death in God. The struggle of the ordinary man who loses faith in the face of violence and injustice remains a problematic, and is central to apocalypticism.[512] The view of God as irrationally demanding is, of course, also reflected in the story of Abraham and Isaac (as the sacrifice of the son by the father) which, whilst manifesting the true believer's unremitting willingness to obey God's demands, seems not unreasonably to be an impossible substitution. The work of Søren Kierkegaard and Jacques Derrida may help to unpack this paradox.[513]

The concept of impossible substitution and notions of a just God complicates and informs the crucifixion narrative, and is thus an area that I would like to revisit. It could, for example, be argued that Moltmann is subscribing to Pynchon's view of the libidinous, misappropriation of the Son by the Father in a reversal of the Freudian Oedipal complex. Freud's view of patriarchal family relationships complicates the dialectic between a loving and a hostile God. His proposal of the inherently sexual nature of family relations subverts the notion of a shared and suffering love. For, as Ward points out, in homosociality, narcissism, not loving relationship, is viewed as primary. Parricide forms part of the non-containment of narcissism in a 'complex weave of libidinal relations'. (Ward Cities, 125).[514] If the concept of killing the father can today be viewed as a natural form of resistance and protest which drives the rival son towards freedom, in the crucifixion, however, we are not confronted by the death of the *father* (as God, and other), but of the *son*. Within the Freudian framework it points to an unjust, authoritative and hostile father that, as such, justifies the natural drive of man to parricide as well as the

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[512] C.f., Section 7, chapter 4.
[513] Jacques Derrida. Donner la mort. (Paris: Galilée, 1999). Søren Kierkegaard, "Crainte Et Tremblement." Trans. E. M. Jacquet-Tisseau P. H. Tisseau. Oeuvres Complètes. Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1972. ---. Fear and Trembling. Trans. Alastair Hannay. (London: Penguin Classics, 1985).
[514] C.f., Ward Cities, "Freud", 122-126.

despotism (perhaps) of Carlyle's great man theory.[515] In Moltmann therefore, a profound question about proportionality in the analogy of relations-in-difference remains unanswered.

That Freud coheres with the atheistic polemic is unsurprising, but Moltmann's model could be accused of presenting an argument for the means justifying outcomes that exposes the Father's action as a misuse of power. Ward's self-affirmed Christ-centric view may again help to overcome this. In any case, there is still much work to do on divine and human power and the relationship between hate, fear, desire, love and forgiveness (of the unforgivable as a divine imperative);[516] work that must include a deeper reflection on the notion of scapegoating, self-sacrifice and sacrifice on my part, as well as a clearer sense of the co-equal nature of the Trinity and its extension in participation (of which Ward writes).

b. Social groups, community and crisis

Another area that I feel I have inadequately considered is that of insider/outsider groups in the apocalyptic text. I *have* made the point that the perspective of the reader is important; and that for the disempowered the apocalyptic text offers the means to protest and comfort, whereas for the powerful elite, it encourages extreme rhetorics of violence against their enemies through the promise of protection by God. Here, we reenter the realm of dualism and dialectics, and the tendency of language to reverse meaning. The liminal performance paradigm may help to open this problematic to clearer view.

Although in predominantly literary readings, I have been reluctant to introduce sociological issues of social organisation, two models that I came across subsequent to this study may help with the issue of power and social inclusion/exclusion. The first is Mary Douglas's theory of cultural bias in which she

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[515] Arguably, Weissmann and Gottfried (the strategy of paranoia and the death cult) in <u>Gravity's Rainbow</u> reflect this problematic.

[516] Again Derrida provides a helpful starting point for interrogating the concept of forgiveness. C.f., <u>On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness</u>. Trans. Michael Hughes Mark Dooley. (London: Routledge, 2001).

posits four models through which to negotiate power.[517] Douglas asserts that individuals make shifts in their social environment 'by negotiating with others about standards and values, about how life should be lived' to form and re-form their worldview. (Douglas 182). Social context is constituted by the accumulation of past decisions and actions and the specifics of each new context. Thus individual development can be said to be made up of two dimensions: a rationality (or cosmology) and social context. She calls the two dimensions 'group' and 'grid'. In addition to the axes of rationality and social context, Douglas posits four archetypes: insular (or fatalistic); hierarchical; entrepreneurial (or autonomous); and sectarian. Each type possesses a mutually exclusive logic. Whereas all four play into the human, when I discussed this with Douglas in 2005, she affirmed my view that if the fatalistic, insular type is removed, this model might help in considering the nature and dynamic of the Trinity. In turn, this may be usefully applied to Ward's notion of co-equality in the Trinity as well as participation and extension in the faith-bound community to mark the dynamic movement between organisation types and their potential for the common good.

The second model, paradoxically, comes out of organisational theory. Triarchy theory proposes that we are unwittingly addicted to hierarchy but that there are two alternatives: heterarchy and responsible autonomy.[518] This complements Douglas as well as highlighting a hegemony of hierarchy in modernity. Brought together, these two theories provide a picture of alternative models of power and social cohesion and the dynamic impulse at work between them which may help open the problematic of exclusivity to view.[519] Michael Thompson, additionally, presents a theory of the 'clumsy solution' which both reflects the messiness of representation and knowledge systems, and takes account

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[517] Mary Douglas. "Cultural Bias". The Active Voice. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982) 183-254. Michael Thompson and others took this theory up and developed it more fully. Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis and Aaron B Wildavsky. Cultural Theory. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1990). Both take an anti-dualist view. Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous may also help in terms of patriarchalism and cultural bias.
[518] Gerard Fairtlough. Three Ways of Getting Things Done: Hierarchy, Heterarchy and Responsible Autonomy. (Axminster: Triarchy Press, 2005). Fairtlough, it must be said, takes a Darwinist view.
[519] The work of Stuart Clegg, op.cit, on power may also help here.

of the tensions between multiple perspectives.[520] Thompson argues that despite the human desire for elegant, ordered solutions, we are incapable of bringing them about. It may be that by bringing the liminal paradigm to bear on these models, we can gain a clearer sense of the shifts between power models in New Testament scripture (for example, sectarian, hierarchical and isolationist) against the co-equality of the Godhead. These latter may also offer the means to reflect on examples, in apocalyptic (collage) forms and content, of clumsiness (note, not randomness) and the unstable, fluxional nature of representation.

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[520] Michael Thompson and Marc Verweij. <u>Clumsy Solutions for a Complex World</u>. (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

Appendix 1

The Prophetic Performance of Scripture[521]

Professor Christopher Rowland, Oxford University, 2002

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[521] (Unpublished Lecture Notes, not to be reproduced without permission of the author). Please note that the footnotes in Appendix 1 are the work of Professor Rowland despite the continuation of numbering from the main body of the thesis in the University of Exeter's copy of this thesis.

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An outline of the first three chapters of The Master and Margarita

Appendix 1 gives an outline of the first three chapters of Bulgakov's novel, and provides the reader with the main argument for reading the whole: a debate about the irrational nature of reason in modernity which Bulgakov presents as the work of the devil. It represents Bulgakov's means to satirise and critique the ideological fault-line of communism. It should be read in conjunction with Appendix 2 which provides a structural outline of the whole novel, as a means to emphasise its apocalyptic generic form.

The novel opens, in Moscow, on a discussion between a poet and his editor.[522] The subject is the poet's recent poem on the life of Jesus. The conversation is set up as a philosophical discourse between master and disciple. Berlioz, the editor, argues logically through thesis and antithesis. But, as the editor is critical of its rhetorical style, he begins with a *parti pris*:

> the editor had commissioned the poet to write a long anti-religious poem. … the editor did not care for it. Bezdomny had drawn the chief figure in his poem, Jesus, in very black colours, yet in the editor's opinion the whole poem had to be written again. And now he was reading Bezdomny a lecture in order to stress the poet's fundamental error. (Bulgakov 15).

Bezdomny's error is his completely realistic portrayal of Jesus which reads like a historical account. It matters not that the portrayal is satirical, or that it contradicts the gospel narratives. Berlioz demands a re-write that shows unequivocally that Jesus never existed. The account must show that Jesus is a mythological character,

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[522] Ivan Nikolayich Bezdomny and Berlioz.

thus that he is a fiction. Bulgakov herein presents a satirical critique of Kantian dialectics which marks the falseness of the dialectical process.

As good party members, both men are atheists (Bulgakov 18). Berlioz' premise is that Jesus did not exist. Young Bezdomny is keen to learn from the expert, and listens assiduously to Berlioz, who, in a step-by-step argument, lays out the historical proof for Jesus' non-existence (Bulgakov 15ff.). First, there is no historical evidence. Second, myths that predate the gospel accounts present a similar character and plot. Therefore, Berlioz concludes, Jesus is a mythological character. If Jesus did not exist, then neither does God. Furthermore, everyone knows that myths tell lies. Thus any account describing the life of Jesus as a real event is a dangerous threat to literature (and to the state). Accordingly, and for truth's sake, Bezdomny should explain how myth and rumour disseminate the *untruth* of a thing, and not use techniques of historical realism. Berlioz concludes that:

> You have written a marvellously satirical description of the birth of Jesus, the son of God, but the whole joke lies in the fact that there had already been a whole series of sons of God before Jesus, … not one of these ever existed, including Jesus, … instead of the nativity or the arrival of the Magi you should have described the absurd rumours about their arrival. But according to your story the nativity really took place! (Bulgakov 17).

Bezdomny's satirical account of Jesus' life is thus dangerous.

It is at this moment in the discussion that the devil arrives, and that Bulgakov's 'joke' begins in earnest.[523] Although the men are disturbed by the paranormal signs which accompany his arrival, they ignore them, and allow the devil (dressed and speaking immaculately) to join their discussion.[524] His presence, of course, bears precise witness to the paradoxes of Historical Realism and mythic

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[523] Bulgakov attacks the party line of the current literary establishment. His strategy for countering prevailing opinion (and its form of discourse) is to introduce the least-expected character to join the debate because, ironically, belief in the devil and superstition is rife.

[524] Despite all the warning signs (visions, strange atmosphere, groundless fear and inexplicable pain), the "rumours" of the devil's (Woland) arrival are refused. Both reject any initial intuitive identification and turn into cognitive dissonance. It is logically impossible (Bulgakov 13-15).

power. As a 'mythic' character, in entering the plot, the devil transgresses the boundary between mythic history and historical realism. He playfully takes issue with Berlioz' one-dimensional view. The devil (Woland) is free to question Berlioz' view in a way that a Muscovite (who values his life) cannot. Thus within the framework of Berlioz' own thesis, Bulgakov is able to argue that if the devil (who is of equal mythological status to Jesus) exists, then Jesus exists.[525]

Although the devil predicts Berlioz' (imminent) death and the (forthcoming) schizophrenia of Bezdomny, the editor, in an act of cognitive dissonance, finds a rational explanation for this man's ambiguous and mysterious identity and authority. He takes Woland to be an expert historian (Bulgakov 18 - 25). Woland does nothing to disaffirm this, allowing Berlioz to draw his own erroneous conclusions about his identity. The devil lies by omission. Despite the fact that he is openly amazed at their lack of belief, his ability to argue rationally entrances Berlioz, and the two engage in a dialectical play on Aquinas' five proofs, and Kant's sixth (Bulgakov 16).

In a strategy designed to disturb the men's complacency, the devil asks if God does not exist, who then rules the world? Bezdomny replies that man rules himself. At this point we begin to see how Bulgakov engages Revelation to support his own critique of human hegemony, as the devil replies

> 'I beg your pardon', retorted the stranger quietly, 'but to rule one must have a precise plan worked out for some reasonable period ahead. Allow me to enquire how man can control his own affairs when he is not only incapable of compiling a plan for some laughably short time, such as, say, a thousand years, but cannot even predict what will happen to him tomorrow?' (Bulgakov 20).[526]

His comments refer to their discourse on God and also satirise the party obsession with forward planning. Woland continues. He affirms that Jesus did exist.[527] Despite

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[525] As the devil is immediately identifiable, the reader understands the joke.
[526] C.f. Rev. 20, in which Satan and his cohorts are confined for a thousand years during which Christ rules the earth with his faithful followers.
[527] Thus God exists.

Berlioz' protestations he states that: 'There's no need for proof', because 'He existed, that's all there is to it'. (Bulgakov 25 - 26).[528]

This is a defining moment. Until now, Berlioz has tolerated the stranger's discourse because he admires Woland's debating skills.[529] He changes his mind about this man's identity, rationalising that he must be a foreigner (separate from, and, therefore, ignorant of, the Russian literary scene). Berlioz repeats that the requirement of any argument is *proof*. Woland does not attempt to provide proof. Instead he gives an entrancing account of Jesus' interrogation and trial by Pontius Pilate which provides intricate and convincing historical details.[530] Narrated from a 'fly-on-the-wall' perspective, at first his story does not substantially contradict the gospel accounts. But it certainly supplements them. Thus Jesus (Yeshua) is brought to Pilate by the High Priest who wants him killed.[531] Pilate accuses him of threatening to destroy the Jerusalem temple. He has him beaten.

As Roman hegemon, Pilate is indifferent to Jewish opinion. (He hates Jerusalem). However, he is strangely attracted to the vagabond with radical philosophical ideas. Thus he asks Yeshua what truth is.[532] Bulgakov deviates from the gospel, as together Pilate and Yeshua discuss its meaning. Warning Yeshua that his life is in his hands, Pilate counsels him to watch his words. Yeshua, however, asserts that everything (his life included) is in God's keeping. Whilst Yeshua accepts that his preaching about a kingdom of truth *could* be taken as a criticism of the *status quo*, he assures Pilate that his use of metaphorical language (about the fall of the temple) was a mere rhetorical device. Yeshua has never actively recruited followers. There is one follower, a certain Matthew Levite, but he is unwanted. Matthew insists on calling himself a disciple, but this man is an untrustworthy witness, who has taken to writing inaccurate, exaggerated accounts of Yeshua's life

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[528] It counters the *parti-pris* of Berlioz that because there is no historical proof, Jesus does not exist.
[529] Woland's knowledge of history, as well as the necessary method of exposition is beyond doubt.
[530] C.f. Bulgakov, Chapter Two, "Pontius Pilate": 27 - 53.
[531] Jesus is renamed in his story. The name change gives an 'authentic' feel to the account.
[532] The reference to truth comes from John's gospel.

and preaching. Yeshua has begged him to burn them because they are dangerously misleading.[533]

Against the gospel accounts, Pilate finds Yeshua *guilty*, not because of the accusations about the temple's destruction, but because of his seditious attitudes against *all forms of political state power*.[534] Yeshua's seditious claims declare that there are no evil men on earth, that there is only one God, and that Yeshua believes in Him (Bulgakov 37, 39).

> All power is a form of violence exercised over people, and that the time will come when there will be no rule by Caesar nor any other form of rule. Man will pass into the kingdom of truth and justice where no sort of power will be needed. (Bulgakov 41).

Although he would like to let him off, it is this which Pilate cannot allow to go unpunished and he considers trying to circumvent Roman law. However, he cannot disregard it. He is hegemon. The idea of going against Rome and its gods is inadmissible even in private philosophical discourse. Much as the vagrant philosopher affects him, and much as Pilate recognises and despises the manipulation of the evidence presented by the Jewish High Priest, he is forced to condemn Yeshua. But Pilate does ask Caiaphas to request Yeshua's pardon from the crowd. The High Pries refuses. In its general tone and outcome, therefore, Woland's account is much the same as that of the gospels. Pilate regrets condemning Yeshua. He is, however, too cowardly to go against the law.[535]

Does Woland's account offer the historical proof which Berlioz seeks, or is it, like Bezdomny's, a myth written as historical realism? These questions feed into the events taking place in Moscow. Through irony, they show the power of myth to expose a truth for the present. They thus undermine the prevailing dogma of which Bulgakov is so critical. In providing an expanded interpretation of Yeshua's

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[533] The idea of burning manuscripts is repeated throughout the novel. Bulgakov burned part of his own manuscript. Thus burning is a recognisable resource for the persecuted, but driven, author.
[534] An accusation in Luke's gospel.
[535] Pilate, as a type for Stalin, demonstrates Bulgakov's complex attitude to, and relationship with leadership.

sentence to death by Pilate, Woland can freely discuss the nature of truth vis-à-vis the responsibility of power where, in the face of personal feeling, a complex relationship exists between duty (to the letter of the law) and genuine justice.[536]

What makes Woland's account substantially different from the gospel is the personal nature of the private conversation between Pilate and Yeshua. Like the conversation of Berlioz, Woland and Bezdomny, it is intimate and graphic. By analogy, Bulgakov thus encourages the reader to explore what lies behind Pilate's reluctance to condemn Yeshua to death in the gospel accounts, and what lies behind Berlioz' desire to show up Jesus as a fiction. Woland suggests that, despite his shabby appearance, Yeshua attracts Pilate because of his erudition and charisma, made more intriguing through his ability to cure his disease (violent headaches), as well as his dis-ease with life. By offering Pilate unconditional friendship, Yeshua removes his sense of loneliness, and gives Pilate an alternative view of the world which provides him with hope. The hope is, however, accompanied by an equal measure of anger and fear.[537]

Yeshua and Pilate are brought to life in Woland's account. His descriptions accord with Russian and European nineteenth-century novels and the traditions of Historical Realism. Yeshua (the bastard son of an unknown father) is a vagrant. His characterisation is thus typical of the lone hero described by Bethea. Standing alone, he proclaims his knowledge of the world, prophesying that human power will, one day, disappear. Like the Jesus of Bezdomny's poem, he is a hero who, although he has every possible fault, is completely alive (Bulgakov 15). At worst, he is a lunatic. At best, he is a 'holy fool', a common type in orthodoxy and in Russian literature.

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[536] Because of its lack of adherence to the 'letter' of the gospel accounts, many commentaries propose that Bulgakov has included alternative sources beyond the canon. E.g., from the apocryphal apocalyptic texts and in the historical fictions of the life of Jesus. Their inclusion is used to undermine any idea of Bulgakov's Christian orthodoxy, but orthodoxy does not approach the bible in any literal way and the apocrypha and popular versions play through everyday practice.

[537] This accords with Bloch's and Moltmann's view of hope and the salutary as being accompanied by fear.

In relation to the earlier discourse about Jesus, the reader must first question whether Woland's historically 'real' account is a satire meant to reinforce Berlioz' original argument. Stylistically, it re-presents what the editor has just rejected. Then one must ask whether it supports or subverts his criticism of Bezdomny. Even though Yeshua is a weak and cowardly human, the story brings him to life: it is good literature. Second, however, the theme of justice and truth infects the Moscow narrative, by connecting it to the subject of the discourse taking place. Third, both narratives are littered with premonitions (visions and prophetic clues) that emphasise the strangely threatening words of Woland, thereby constructing a picture in which history is forced through a wider lens than that of the immediate present. The perspective on the Moscow discourse is changed as it is charged with the apocalyptic-eschatological.

To complicate matters further, in the Moscow chapter, we are told about a historically real account of Jesus which distorts the reality of history. It makes Jesus life-like, when, according to Berlioz he never existed. In the Pilate narrative, Yeshua declares that Matthew (a contemporary witness to, and recorder of, the events of his life) writes an essentially falsifying account of Yeshua's history through mythological exaggeration. Thus we are told of a mythologised account which distorts the historical reality of Yeshua, a character who in Woland's account, really exists. In both cases, it is the book within the book that distorts the truth. In the discourse on truth-with-proof, which is being played for high stakes, Bulgakov foregrounds the role of the story-in-the-story which is designed to force a deeper reflection on the nature of proof in truth and again plays through the Apocalypse.

The reader begins to think of Matthew's record as a gospel account which, because of Berlioz, must be viewed as a mythologised (false) account.[538] Bulgakov's strategy, however, plays with the realism of the Yeshua narrative. It interpolates the Moscow novel at four strategic points, ironically displacing the mythological tone of the Moscow account with its own truth. Thus Bulgakov opens out to

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[538] This Matthew produces his account before the death of Yeshua. Within the context of redaction criticism it differs from the gospels which represent post-crucifixion interpretations of the Easter events by writers who did not witness those events.

question the *unreal reality* of the events which are unfolding there. As the Moscow characters repeatedly attempt to break free from the events of this particular Easter Week, they are unable to dislodge the mythological logic of the narrative in which they operate. This exposes, and therefore critiques, the falsity of their world.

Bezdomny's reaction to Woland's story shows this tactic in operation. Reason makes the poet question whether he has dreamed Woland's account. Berlioz' reaction is, however, immediately to feed it back into the preceding discourse on proof. Triumphantly he declares that the story contradicts the gospels, thus playing into Woland's hands. Woland understands that this point challenges the story's authenticity, but Berlioz is nonetheless easy to best:

> 'surely,' replied the professor [Woland] with a condescending smile, 'you of all people must realise that absolutely nothing written in the gospel accounts actually happened. If you want to regard the gospels as a proper historical source ...' He smiled again and Berlioz was silenced. He had been saying exactly the same thing to Bezdomny on their walk from Bronnaya Street to Patriarch's Pond. (Bulgakov 53).

Berlioz is forced to change tack. He asks the devil 'to prove the authenticity of [his] version' (Bulgakov 55), thus repeating his original demand for proof. The devil can affirm its details because he was an actual witness at the scene![539] A witness's account is proof. This shocks Berlioz, but only momentarily. Logically, the difference in time and location forbids Woland's explanation. Berlioz rejects it. He finds an alternative, rational explanation of his own: the professor is mad. He must, therefore, be a lunatic foreigner. Thus the narrative begins its thematic downward spiral into madness.[540] Bezdomny, however, takes refuge in silence. It is the silence of confusion.

This is unsurprising. Woland has just given an account in a form identical to that which Bezdomny himself produced (and which provoked the original discourse). It is, moreover, equally convincing. Neither of the men notes this

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[539] He was there, '*incognito*'. He thus swears both men to secrecy, again, no doubt, resonating into current Soviet practices.
[540] At this point, however, it remains within the abstract nature of the discourse.

correspondence. They fail to ask what Woland means by it.[541] Noticing Bezdomny's silence, Woland pressurises him in a new way. He asks if the poet can confirm the existence of the devil. Bezdomny was complacent about the existence of Jesus. Now he is outraged. Of course the devil does not exist. (The reader is beginning to understand the joke; the devil's discourse plays through inversions and opposites, but the devil cannot lie.) Bezdomny accuses Woland of 'playing the amateur psychologist'. (Bulgakov 56). Woland has already predicted that Bezdomny will find out what schizophrenia is (Bulgakov 23), and thus he retorts

> 'Whatever I ask you about – it doesn't exist!' He suddenly stopped laughing and with a typical madman reaction he immediately went to the other extreme, shouting angrily and harshly: 'So you think the devil doesn't exist?' (Bulgakov 56).

His 'mad' logic mocks the fact that any unacceptable idea is simply rejected as nonsensical.[542] However, it also acts as a divine warning. Woland asks Berlioz the same question

> 'at least say you believe in the devil! I won't ask anything more of you. Don't forget that there's still the seventh proof – the soundest! And it's just about to be demonstrated to you!' (Bulgakov 57).

His threatening tone is not lost on Berlioz. He recognises the need to inform the authorities about this dangerously insane foreign professor who must be dealt with before something awful happens. This is a premonition. However, to appease Woland, Berlioz feigns agreement. Woland calms down and his 'reason' is apparently restored. True to tradition, however, Berlioz' acknowledgement of the devil's existence opens up the devil's work (as advocate and adversary). Thus the dialectical process has triggered the critical moment of choice (as life and death) between truth and lies. Berlioz affirms the truth (of the devil's existence) believing it to be a lie. The devil is thus released to action. Judgment is called, and minutes

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[541] Before telling his story, the line of Woland's argument had been that the truth needed no proof. Logically speaking, all that Woland has achieved is a confirmation of Berlioz' initial point about the dangers of realism. However, as he has already asserted that Jesus existed, his story has moved the argument to a different level away from Berlioz' *parti-pris* to Woland's point-of-view. The devil wins the argument by all means – rational argument, and historical-realist account.

[542] This satirical jibe would cue the reader to the reality of the use of psychology to condemn intellectuals who speak against the state.

later Berlioz dies in the exact way predicted earlier by Woland. Slipping beneath the wheels of a tram, he is decapitated (a familiar form of satanic execution). In relation to reason, Berlioz has lost his head![543] This is the seventh proof.

As in all apocalypses the events confirm the signs. Apparitions turn into material beings. Premonitions happen in reality. For the reader, Berlioz' failure to acknowledge the prophetic signs fatally undermines his rational reading of the world. The devil has won the argument, proving Jesus' (and God's) existence through the events enacted in the park. This is *not* proof by analogy with another account. It is proof by supernatural crossings of the boundaries of space and time. This is a rupture of man's history by the supernatural. This reality lends authenticity to the Jerusalem story. Thus contrary to rational argument, but within its framework, Woland, as advocate, builds his case, and wins. As adversary, he issues a death sentence against those who discredit God, his activity marking the difference (and necessary association) between human and divine judgment.[544] The discourse on truth is thus a matter of life or death - for Yeshua in the Jerusalem narrative, for Berlioz in the Moscow narrative, and thus for us all.

The case for retribution and justice plays out clearly in Woland's Jerusalem account. If in the Moscow narrative there has been pretence of civilized debate, in the discourse between the High Priest, Caiaphas, and Pilate, however, the priest aggressively dismisses any suggestion of clemency towards Yeshua. However unjust that decision may be, Bar-Abba will be released.

Pilate warns:

> The weeping and lamentation will be bitter! Then you will remember that you saved Bar-Abba and you will regret that you sent that preacher of peace to his death! (Bulgakov 47).

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[543] The relationship between losing one's head (a symbol for realism) and insanity (ideological and/or theological error) is a constantly recurring theme from this point on.

[544] Obviously, the fate of many artists of this period, who disappeared after being condemned for their ideas, is not lost on the reader. The retribution of their persecutors makes pleasant reading, just as in Revelation, the violent end of Babylon (Rome) would be pleasing to its contemporary readers.

Caiaphas accuses Pilate of treason against Rome, threatening:

> It was not peace that this rabble-rouser brought to Jerusalem and of that, hegemon, you are well aware. You wanted to release him so that he could stir up the people, curse our faith and deliver the people to your Roman swords! But as long as I am alive …I shall not allow the faith to be defamed and I shall protect the people! (Bulgakov 47).

Both men's words are prophetic, and they 'sound' in the Moscow narrative. Caiaphas takes a politically rational position, and thus plays devil's advocate. But Pilate speaks the truth. It will not be Yeshua's preaching which causes the temple's downfall, or the war between Rome and the Jews. That can be attributed to human choice (and the followers of the prevailing Jewish ideologues who have just condemned Yeshua to death). Caiaphas' premonition is a lie, the outcome of which is nonetheless true. This kind of witness, which plays through irony, is repeated in the words of characters throughout the novel. As false witness, it subtends the witness of Berlioz and any other supporter of modern reason and the communist ideology, but particularly that of the literary establishment that, for Bulgakov, is the false priesthood of the regime.

Structural patterns in <u>The Master and Margarita</u>

<u>Book 1: (3; 3; 5 + 1 + 5; bridge)</u>

Wednesday sunset to early evening.
First cycle: (3) truth and proof; (witness to antichrist) witness to Christ:[545]

1: (Prologue and interlock with epilogue). Discourse on God between fallen humans and antichrist (pairing of writers)
2: (1st intercalation) trial of 1st witness. Devil's witness to Christ.[546] Pilate[547] discourse on truth.
3: Discourse on devil and 7th proof. Execution of fallen man.[548]

Wednesday night to dawn
Second cycle: (3) 'Seeing,' and failed second witness/writer:[549]

4: (interlock with cycle 1). Pursuit of truth (and antichrist). 'Seeing'/baptism.
5: Witnessing to truth (anti-type of Lord's Supper).
6: Exile and persecution of witness

Thursday day time.
Third cycle 3: Part One: (5 + 1 + 5) Devil's preparations for trials:

7: Establishing antichrist's HQ.
8: Discourse 'dual' between witness and antichrist. (interlock with cycle 2)
9: Second witness to exile and persecution
10: Preparation of show trial (Variety Theatre)
11: Schizophrenia – between 2 worlds – torment of witness (interlock to ch 8, parenthesis to ch 13)

Thursday night.

Centre-point of Cycle 3: (1) Devil's trial

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[545] Satan witnesses to Christ, humans deny witness: Satan as God's advocate, man's adversary.
[546] Yeshua: type for perfected Adam, paired with Pilate.
[547] Pilate: type for human justice and cowardice; paired with Yeshua and literary critics.
[548] Berlioz: type for Second Beast.
[549] Bezdomny: type for John the Baptist (comes before but ranks after), paired with Berlioz and Master

12: Devil's show trial (Part A); exposing sins (inclusio between chs 11, 13)

Thursday night to Good Friday morning.
Cycle 3: part 2 (5 + 1): Revelations interspersed with devilry:

13: Master[550] appears to disciple. (paired writers)
14: secondary witness, escaping the devil (to dawn Friday). (parenthesis to ch 11)
15: Devil's show trial (Part B) Bosoi's vision of judgment on sins (rehearsal of ch 12)
16: (2nd intercalation) Disciple's witness to Christ: The execution of perfect man (and theodicy).
17: Day of antichrist (God's advocate) and human anxiety (interlock to cycle 4).

Friday daytime to afternoon.

Bridge to Book 2: (1)

18: (interlock with Book 2) Devil's day leading to funeral of witness to evil

Book 2: (5 +1 + (2) + 5 + 1; + epilogue)

Friday morning to midnight.
Cycle 4: (5 + 1): displacements of Christian chrism, baptism and eucharist:

19: (interlock with Book 1; introduction to Book 2) heroine's[551] revelations and premonitions; pact with antichrist.
20: displaced Chrism (rehearsal of ch 4).
21: displaced baptism – punishment of persecutors of writers (interlock with ch 13).
22: role identification and preparation for displaced eucharist.
23: displaced eucharistic ritual (rehearsal of ch 5).

24: redemptive justice - the primary witness/writer is released; divine tests,

forgiveness, pardon – (interlock with chs 21 [cycle 5] and 13 [cycle 3]).

Friday night.
Intercalation of paired chapters; centre-point between paired cycles 4 & 5.

25: (3rd intercalation of Jerusalem narrative) heroine witnesses hero's witness; attempt at human revenge as justice - manipulated by antichrist)
26: (4th intercalation of Jerusalem narrative) heroine witnesses hero's witness; revelation of justice as divine retributive justice carried out by antichrist

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[550] Master: type for fallen Adam, paired with Eve, Bezdomny and Pilate.
[551] dual type for Eve/Church; paired with Adam type.

Saturday dawn until night.
Fifth cycle: part 1: (5 + 1) fall of Babylon/harrowing of hell :

27: (interlock with Book 1, cycle 3); human enquiries about trials and antichrist's activities (Friday to Saturday midday) – beginning of destruction of Babylon by fire
28: (daytime to dusk) more devilry and continuation of destruction of sites of human wickedness
29: (dusk) (interlock with chs 24, 32) Fate of hero and heroine (Adam/Eve) decided

– promise of Eden; rupture of space by Jerusalem characters – divine redemptive

judgment of witnesses.

30: (dusk) exodus from day of destruction by primary witnesses – their displaced execution/death – master passes on the role of witness to disciple.
31: (night-time) witnessing fall of Babylon – sign of covenant to witnesses.

32: Absolution and salvation in Eden (witness forgives and releases Pilate)

(interlock to ch 24).

After Easter.
Epilogue:

(interlock to ch 27 and ch 1) Human explanations of events; portent of future cycles; discourse on remembrance and forgetting of truth, on imagination and reality.

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