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A Faith and Learning Journal

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Mens tua hortus meus est:  
Christ and the Canticle Bride in the Biblia pauperum

Jane Beal

Scholars have claimed that the producers of the fifteenth-century Dutch block-book known as the Biblia pauperum intended it to be an instructional tool for children or illiterates, an instrument of propaganda against the Cathar heresy, a memory aid for preachers, a Bible for the lesser clergy, and a conversionary tool in missionary overtures to the Jews. But in her fine edition of the text, Avril Henry argues persuasively that the makers of the Biblia pauperum intended it to encourage devotion and meditation. Since Henry’s persuasive argument was published, however, few scholars have explored the goal of such devotion or the specific means of accomplishing it. In general, it seems clear that the goal of this specific block-book was to foster contemplative devotion to Christ, most probably during the season of Lent that anticipates Easter, and to do so by encouraging readers to view images from the life of Christ in relation to events in the Old and New Testament. The specific means include the introduction of thematic motifs that recur in the highly elaborate, woodcut images of the book.

Thoroughly typological in design, the Biblia pauperum draws on medieval, allegorical interpretations of the Bible in the depiction of the soul’s love for Christ, specifically in images of the Canticle Bride seeking, finding, and adoring her Beloved. Images of the Bride reflect medieval Christian interpretations of the Song of Songs, interpretations that consider the Bride to be Israel, the Church, and the individual Christian soul—and, by extension, as particular souls like those of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene, a follower of Jesus. The Biblia pauperum particularly emphasizes the importance of understanding the Bride as the soul of a faithful Christian, and it does so in order to encourage contemplative devotion to Christ.

The relationship between Christ and the Canticle Bride depicted in the Biblia pauperum encourages the reader to identify with the Bride, journeying with her spiritually through experiences of loss, discovery, and joy to the very threshold of heaven, where she anticipates receiving a crown of righteousness. The reader’s identification with the Bride is, in essence, part of the process of becoming the Bride of Christ. The Biblia pauperum encourages that process, the process of spiritual maturation, through its typological organization, garden imagery, and repeated, visual representation of the relationship between Christ and the Canticle Bride. The garden motif particularly relates to the reader’s experience of reading the Biblia pauperum because the garden can stand symbolically for the reader’s own mind, the locus amoenus where the soul meets her Savior. To explore these ideas, it will be useful to review the typological
nature of the *Biblia pauperum*, to consider the gardens depicted on its various pages, and to analyze the significance of selected images of Christ and the Canticle Bride throughout the book.

**Typology and the *Biblia pauperum***

The *Biblia pauperum*, or Bible of the Poor, is not a title as much as a genre. It refers, as Avril Henry remarks, “to a kind of book, not a particular book” (4). Several late medieval manuscripts, some of which proceed and some of which follow printed editions, exemplify the genre. Yet the blockbook editions of the *Biblia pauperum*, produced in the Netherlands around 1460, merit particular attention because of their standardization, circulation, and status as *incunabula* that show clear connections between medieval and early modern book production. Such attention is now facilitated by facsimile editions with English translations and commentaries by Avril Henry and by Albert Labriola and John Smeltz.2

Even a cursory look at the *Biblia pauperum* reveals that the organizing principle of the book is typological. Indeed, the makers of the *Biblia pauperum* inherited the wealth of the medieval Christian typological imagination. Typological interpretation of scripture is a Christian approach to reading the Bible that sees people, objects, and events in the Old Testament as prefigurations of people, objects, and events in the New Testament. Old Testament prefigurations are known as “types” and their New Testament fulfillments as “antitypes.” Medieval typological interpretations of scripture tend to be especially connected to the life of Christ, and the warrant for such an approach comes from the words of Christ himself.

In the third chapter of John’s Gospel, in his famous conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus prophecies his crucifixion in typological terms:

> et sicut Moses exaltavit serpentem in deserto, ita exaltari oportet Filium hominis ut omnis qui credit in ipso non pereat sed habeat vitam aeternum. (John 3:14, *Biblia Sacra Vulgata* [Stuttgart, 1969, rpt. 1994]).
>
> (For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up in order that all who believe in him may not perish but may have eternal life.)

In so saying, Jesus alludes to events recorded in the book of Numbers. The relevant passage records that Moses and the Israelites were traveling through the desert, and the people began to complain against their leader and God. As a result, God sent venomous snakes among them, which bit them, so that they died. The people quickly repented, so Moses prayed for them, and God instructed Moses to make a snake and put it on a pole; anyone who looked at the snake Moses made would live (Numbers 21:4-9). When Jesus refers to these events in his conversation with Nicodemus in John’s gospel, he creates a typological
relationship between the snake on the pole, the type, and his own body on the Cross, the antitype. As we can see, this very relationship is illustrated in the *Biblia pauperum*:

In this plate, Christ’s crucifixion (in the center) is paired with two Old Testament scenes: Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac (left) and Moses pointing the Israelites to the snake lifted up on a pole (right).

In the twelfth chapter of Matthew’s gospel, Christ establishes another typological relationship, this time between Jonah’s three-day stay in the belly of a whale and his own three-day interment in the earth, saying:

>sicut enim fuit Ionas in ventre ceti tribus diebus et tribus noctibus, sic erit Filius hominis in corde terrae tribus diebus et tribus noctibus. (Matthew 12:40, cf. Luke 11:29-30). (Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.)
This, too, is illustrated in the *Biblia pauperum*, this time on two different pages, one with a plate devoted to Christ’s burial and the other depicting his Resurrection (Labriola and Smeltz, 41 and 43). In the first pairing, sailors are throwing Jonah overboard, off of his Tarshish-bound ship, and the giant fish that will swallow him already appears in the waves; in the second, Jonah is emerging from the mouth of the fish, hands clasped in prayer, near the shore.

From Jesus’ words in the gospels, it is a relatively short distance to Paul’s development of an allegorical interpretation of Hagar and Sarah as representatives of two covenants in Galatians, to Augustine’s image of an earthly Jerusalem and a heavenly Jerusalem in *The City of God Against the Pagans*, and to Gregory the Great’s elaboration of a vast and brilliant array of typological, allegorical, and spiritual interpretations of scripture in his sermons and *Moralia on Job.* Pauline and Patristic allegorical thinking greatly inspired later medieval theologians, as Henri du Lubac has clearly shown in *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture.* Such thinking also inspired countless medieval writers, like Dante in his *Divine Comedy*, and artists, such as the creators of the *Biblia pauperum*.

In response to biblical examples and patristic interpretations, medieval commentators developed a standard set of types and antitypes, the full complement of which we see realized in the 1460 *Biblia pauperum*. The book consists of forty pages about the life of Christ beginning with Gabriel’s Annunciation to Mary in Nazareth and ending with Christ’s Coronation of the Bride in heaven. Each page is arranged on the same model (see the plate of Christ’s Crucifixion above). The model features a triptych that displays a central panel with New Testament events from the life of Christ (antitypes) and two side panels with Old Testament scenes prefiguring those events (types). The windows above and below the central panel depict Old Testament prophets, and the banderoles unrolled from those windows contain scripture verses taken from the books of those prophets. Of all the prophets, David appears the most frequently, and of all the Old Testament books cited, the Psalms feature the most importantly. The top two corner panels feature brief commentaries on the verses and events on the page. The bottom two panels are brief commentaries or titles on the types above them while the lowermost section of the page provides a commentary or title on the central antitype. The page as a whole may suggest the shape of the Cross.

Like the typological contexts, the codicological contexts of the *Biblia pauperum* reinforce the devotional nature and purpose of the book while drawing attention to the centrality and significance of the relationship between Christ and the Canticle Bride. As Nigel Palmer has observed, the *Biblia pauperum* was sometimes bound together with the *Cantica canticorum*, another fifteenth-century block-book devoted to depicting the relationship between Christ and the Canticle Bride (137-65). In these *sammelbande*, or anthologies bound together by their owners (Lerer 1251-60), the edition of the *Cantica canticorum* consists of pages with double scenes, one on top of the other, each from the Song of Songs. The pages include verses from the Song written in banderoles in close proximity to a probable speaker, such as Christ, the Bride or one of the daughters of Jerusalem,
suggesting a drama of intimate conversation. In the top scene of one plate (below),\textsuperscript{5} Christ leads the Bride into their garden with the words:

\begin{center}
\textit{veni in hortum meum soror mea sponsa; messui murram meam cum aromatibus meis. (Song of Songs 5:1b).}
\end{center}

(I came into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I gathered my myrrh with my sweet-smelling spices.)

The \textit{Cantica canticorum} thus celebrates the garden as a pleasant place where Christ and the Canticle Bride can meet, a motif shared by the \textit{Biblia pauperum}.\textsuperscript{6}

\textbf{Gardens and the Biblia Pauperum}

There are five gardens in the \textit{Biblia pauperum}: the garden of Eden, the invisible garden of Mary’s womb, the garden of Gethsemane where Christ prayed before the Crucifixion, the garden described in John’s gospel where Christ was
buried, resurrected, and revealed to Mary Magdalene, and the garden from the Song of Songs where the Bride meets and embraces her Beloved. The gardens function on three levels in the book. First, they depict biblical places and events that occurred within them. Second, in association with other images on the page, they become types prefiguring or antitypes fulfilling God’s will. Third, they stand metaphorically for the mind of the reader that is being transformed from a sinful state to a spiritual state. Each of the gardens appears multiple times in the book, and each deserves the reader’s full attention, but the garden setting in which Mary Magdalene meets Christ merits particular consideration in light of some words of Bernard of Clairvaux which make an explicit connection between the natural garden and the spiritual garden, the garden of the mind.

Bernard of Clairvaux, a Cistercian abbot and reformer, lived in France in the twelfth-century. He later became famous for his rivalry with Peter Abelard as well as his sermons on the Song of Songs. His “Meditation on the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord” (*Meditatio in Passionem et Resurrectionem Domini*) is less well known, but in the fifteenth chapter, his elaboration of the conversation between Jesus and Mary from the twentieth chapter of John’s gospel gives specific insight into the equation of the mind with a garden where Christ and the Canticle Bride can meet, an equation which helps to explain the page of the *Biblia pauperum* that depicts Christ and Mary Magdalene meeting after the Resurrection. As if in the voice of Jesus, Bernard writes:


(Woman, why do you cry? Whom do you seek? You have him who you seek, and you do not know it? You have true and eternal joy, and you cry? You have within the one whom you seek outside. Truly you stand outside a tomb crying. Your mind is my monument. There, not dead but living, I remain for eternity. **Your mind is my garden.** You understood well that I am the gardener. I am the second Adam; I cultivate and keep my paradise. Your weeping, your devotion, your desire—it is my work: you have me within you and do not know it, for you seek me outside. Behold, I appear outside in order that I may lead you back within and you may find within the one whom you seek outside.)

7
In this passage, Bernard makes clear that Christ is the gardener, and Mary’s mind is the garden, the paradise that he, the second Adam, cultivates and keeps. Whereas Mary has sought him in a natural garden, Jesus encourages her to seek him in the spiritual garden of her mind.

This meditation from Bernard of Clairvaux is highly relevant to a page depicting Mary Magdalene and Christ in the *Biblia pauperum*:

In a sense, Mary is an *exemplum* of the Bride (central panel), the individual Christian soul who seeks God. Indeed, she is depicted as the fulfillment of the prefiguration of the Canticle Bride (left panel). This is made explicitly clear in the commentary contained in the top right panel:

Legitur in *Cantico Canticorum*, iii capitulo, quod sponsa cum suum dilectum invenisset dixit inveni quem diliget anima mea et iterum tenebo eum et non dimittam eum. Sponsa hec Mariam Magdalenam significat que suum sponsum id est Cristum videns ipsum tenere voluit qui sibi taliter respondit noli me tangere nondum enim ascendi ad patrem meum. (Labriola and Smeltz 87)
We read in the Canticle of Canticles, chapter 3, that when the bride had found her beloved, she said, “I have found him whom my soul loves; I will hold him and will not let him go.” This bride prefigures Mary Magdalene who seeing her spouse, who is Christ, wanted to touch him. Christ responded, “Do not touch me (noli me tangere); I have not yet ascended to my father. (trans. Labriola and Smeltz 130)

The image of the Canticle Bride depicted here is the second of three that appear in the Biblia pauperum. To understand the typological relationships between the Canticle Bride and her antitypes, the women of the New Testament, who are themselves exemplary Brides of Christ, it will be helpful to review each image in context, keeping in mind that the gardens are intended to flower in the reader’s mind—and, indeed, to represent how Christ meets the reader in the garden of the mind.

**Christ and the Canticle Bride in the Biblia pauperum**

As E. Ann Matter and Ann Astell have shown, Origen established an allegorical reading of the Canticle Bride as the Church or the individual Christian soul in his third-century commentary on the Song of Songs (Matter, *The Voice of my Beloved: The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* and Ann Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages*). By the seventh century, the Canticle Bride was also identified with Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the Latin liturgical tradition, a view further developed and disseminated in the medieval commentaries (Matter, 151ff). These readings differed from Jewish exegetical tradition, which saw the Bride as a figure of Israel, an interpretation validated by other uses of Bride and Bridegroom imagery in prophetic books like Isaiah and Hosea. The fifteenth-century block-book editions of the Biblia pauperum reflect all four of these possibilities, though they emphasize the role of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Mary’s role as Canticle Bride, especially as one with whom the reader can identify, plays a central part in the devotional purpose of the Biblia pauperum from the very first page:
Here the Virgin appears (central panel) as the handmaiden of the explicitly Trinitarian Lord—notice God the Father, God the Son in the form of a baby Jesus with a Cross on his shoulder, and God the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove. At the same time, she also appears as the ideal reader. Notably, Mary hears Gabriel’s famous Annunciation with an open book on her lap. The book symbolizes Mary’s piety generally, but more specifically, it stands for Christ himself, the verbum Dei or Word of God. It is while Mary is meditating on a book that she receives the Word Made Flesh within the hortus conclusus, the enclosed garden, of her womb. It is worth noting that in the Biblia pauperum, the divine life enters Mary through the top of her head—through her mind—rather than, for example, her ear, her heart or her womb directly, as other Annunciation scenes depict. Like Mary, the reader who identifies with her can read an open book, the Biblia pauperum, and receive divine life through the mind. Two other scenes in the Biblia pauperum depict Mary with an open book on her lap, one focused on the Nativity (Labriola and Smeltz 16) and the other on Pentecost (Labriola and Smeltz 49).

In the Biblia pauperum, the Annunciation is paired with a scene from the Fall, when Eve takes the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
after being deceived by the serpent (left panel), because Mary’s obedience to God in accepting his Son contrasts with Eve’s disobedience in Eden. It is paired with Moses before the burning bush that does not burn up (right panel) because Patristic exegestes compared that miracle to the miracle of Mary’s immaculate conception: just as the burning bush did not burn, so Mary became pregnant with the Son of God while still remaining virginal. The typological images emphasize Mary’s obedience and her virginity, aspects of her spiritual purity that connect her to God just as the book in her lap is connected to the Word of God, Jesus. Thus she is depicted, in great typological complexity, as the handmaiden of the Lord.

The emphasis on Marian devotion in the Biblia pauperum might well lead us to suppose that the fourteen depictions of Mary in the book are all, in fact, depictions of the Canticle Bride. This supposition appears to be at least partially correct: the woodcut depicting the coronation of Mary in heaven reinforces it, not only because of the obvious bridal imagery, but also because Song of Songs 8:5 is cited in the top right banderole: “Que est ista que ascendit per desertum?” (Who is this who comes up from the desert?)
Yet, in other woodcuts, the Canticle Bride is distinguished from Mary in one essential way: whereas Mary consistently appears with a halo around her head to indicate her sanctity, the Canticle Bride of the Song of Songs never does. This can be seen in the plate depicting the visitation of three women to the sepulcher of Jesus.

On this page, in the central panel, three women—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Joanna (cf. Luke 24:10)—look for Christ in an empty tomb or, in this case, coffin. (Significantly, the lid has been turned so that the tomb is in the shape of a Cross.) In the left panel, Ruben looks for Joseph in a well, but does not find him, because his brothers have sold him into slavery, and on the right, the Canticle Bride looks for her Beloved. All three images are connected by the theme of seeking. As the commentary in the top right panel makes clear, the Canticle Bride is a type of Mary Magdalene “que suum dilectum quesivit in tumulo et postea in orto invenit” (“who sought her beloved in the tomb and afterwards found him in the garden”) (Labriola and Smeltz 86, 129). Mary Magdalene can thus represent the individual Christian soul who seeks Christ.
This image, the first of the Canticle Bride as a type, depicts the Bride seeking her beloved after she has lost him. The Canticle Bride is outside of the city, perhaps in a garden or a wilderness, and she is bent over in grief. One hand holds her belly as if in pain, and the other holds a fold of her head-wrap to her eyes as if to wipe away tears. Words from the Song of Songs spring forth from her forehead on a banderole: “Quesivi illum et non inveni” (“I have sought him and have not found him”) (Labriola and Smeltz 86, 129). Notably the words flow, not from her mouth or her heart, but from her mind, the seat of her rational thought. The reader who identifies with the Bride in this moment is similarly seeking intimacy with Christ, but instead experiences a great sense of loss and grief when meditating on Christ’s death. In response to sorrow, the reader can, like the Canticle Bride, continue to seek Christ in the garden of his or her own mind.

On the very next page, which we have seen once before (see page 11 above), the Canticle Bride is again presented as a type of Mary Magdalene. The image depicts the Bride finding her Beloved and reaching out to touch the one she has discovered at last. As the image (below) shows, Christ and the Canticle Bride meet in their garden and embrace.
The banderole over their heads states: “Tenui eum nec dimittam” (“I held him, and I will not let him go.”) (Labriola and Smeltz 87, 130). Their garden is sparsely decorated, but the three trees in the background most probably signify the three Crosses at Calvary. The reader who identifies with the Bride in this moment experiences the joy of recognizing and reuniting with Christ, the Beloved.

The Canticle Bride appears for the last time on the fortieth and final page of the *Biblia pauperum*, not once, but twice.

The Bride appears on the left as a type, the Shulamite crowned by Solomon, and the commentary in the top left panel explains that she is Christ’s spouse.

Legitur in Cantico canticorum, iiiii capitulo, quod sponsus alloquitur sponsam sibi eam sumendo dicit tota pulchra es amica mea et macula non est in te veni amica mea veni coronaberis. Sponsus verus iste est Cristus qui assumendo eam sponsam que est anima sine macula omnis peccati et introducit eam in requiem
eternam et coronat eam cum corona immortalitatis. (Labriola and Smeltz 96).

We read in the Canticle of Canticles, chapter 4, that the Beloved addresses his Bride, and taking her to him, he says, “You are all fair, O my love, there is not a spot in you; come my love, and you will be crowned.” The true beloved is Christ who by taking her as His spouse, a soul without stain of sin, brings her to everlasting rest and crowns her with the crown of immortality. (Labriola and Smeltz 139).

As the type, the Canticle Bride here stands for the individual Christian soul, \textit{anima sine macula}, but as the antitype, she represents all Christian souls collectively.

The second image of the Bride, as the lowermost \textit{titulus} or verse makes clear, represents all Christian souls or the corporate Bride: the Church. The verse reads: “Tunc gaudent animae sibi quando bonum datur omne.” (“Then the souls rejoice when every good is given to them.”) (Labriola and Smeltz 96, 139). The very plurality of souls in this line, \textit{animae}, indicates that this final image of the Canticle Bride represents \textit{Ecclesia}. Here, on her knees, with her head slightly bent and her hands in a prayerful position, she adores Christ Jesus, the Beloved who has become her Bridegroom. In response, Christ prepares to bestow on her a crown of righteousness. However, unlike the Canticle Bride who prefigures her on the left, this Bride is not yet crowned.

The suspension of the crown above her head depicts a moment of high tension and anticipation, the moment before the Bride receives the fulfillment of her promised reward. It is clear that she is in heaven, but the emptiness around her leaves the reader to imagine what heaven is like. Similarly, the reader who identifies with the Bride in this moment is left to imagine what the actual coronation will be like. As Avril Henry observes, “This page may be the last in a group of four asking the reader to contemplate the Last Things, a process [that is] essentially a prayer for personal salvation” (127). It is not only a prayer, but also a moment of anticipation because crowning is, on the one hand, a symbol of elevation to reigning status and, on the other hand, a literal part of some medieval marriage ceremonies—and thus, a sign that a woman has become a bride, married to her bridegroom.

As we have seen, the \textit{Biblia pauperum} depicts the relationship between Christ and the Canticle Bride, a Bride who represents the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, the individual Christian soul, and the Church. The ca. 1460 Dutch block-book encourages the individual reader to identify with the Bride, allowing the mind to become a garden where it is possible to meet Christ. Such identification allows the reader to seek Christ in the face of loss, to find him in joyous discovery, and to adore him in anticipation of heavenly reunion and reward. The final page of the \textit{Biblia pauperum}, a veritable celebration of nuptial imagery, ultimately points the reader away from a material reality to a spiritual one when the commentary in the top right corner records the Angel of the Apocalypse saying to Saint John the Divine: “veni ostendam tibi sponsam uxorem
agni.” (“Come, and I will show you the Bride, the Bride of the Lamb.”) (Labriola and Smeltz 96, 139). For, although readers have been able to meditate on many images of the Bride, they have not yet, in fact, become her. The Biblia pauperum, however, intimates that, one day, they will, for the spiritual transformation of the faithful will be complete at Wedding Feast of the Lamb when Christ and his Bride are united in heaven at last.

Notes

1 When I refer to the Biblia pauperum in this essay, I mean the printed edition of ca. 1460 produced in the Netherlands. The term can encompass additional books and, indeed, designate an entire group of books of a similar type. (For more on the genre, see Avril Henry’s introduction to her edition of the Biblia pauperum.) In this essay, however, I will use the term in a narrower sense.

2 The images reproduced in this study come from the latter edition.


4 For the development of the allegorical sense in medieval exegesis, see Henri de Lubac, Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture, vols. 2 and 3 trans. E.M. Macierowski (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000 and 2009).


6 A number of different versions of the Biblia pauperum exist, many of which depict Christ and the Canticle Bride. Susan L. Smith discusses some of the fifteenth-century manuscript versions, and she argues that in the images depicting the Disrobing of Christ before his Crucifixion, Christ is co-identified with the Bride, for his body and her allegorical status both represent Ecclesia or the Church (Smith 126). The ca. 1460 Dutch blockbook does not appear to be directly influenced by this tradition, but it does provide an interesting context for comparison.

7 This is my own, original English translation of Bernard of Clairvaux’s Latin passage.

8 For treatment of the Bride as a figure not only of Israel but of the Shekinah, the Holy Spirit, the Qabbalistic Matronit, and other entities, see Marvin H. Pope, ed.,
The association of the Annunciation to Mary in Luke with the experience of the Canticle Bride in the Song of Songs is evident in *Commentaria cantica canticorum*, written by Rupert of Deutz, a twelfth-century Benedictine theologian of Deutz Abbey in Liege, Belgium. Concerning the first verse of the Song of Songs, he wrote,

An overflowing Joy, O Blessed Virgin, a powerful love, a rush of delight wholly seized you, wholly captured you. It intoxicated you deep within, so that you perceived “what I has not seen, nor here heard, and has not figured into this human heart” (1 Cor. 2:9), and you said, **Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.** For to the angel you said, “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). What “word” was that? What had he said to you? “You have found favor,” he said, “with the Lord: behold, you shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus” (Luke 1:30-31). And again, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you, and therefore what shall be born of you will be called the holy one, the Son of God.” Was not this word from the angel a word and a promise of the kiss of the Lord’s mouth as even now at hand? (Norris 25)


10 In the Latin commentary tradition, *Eva/Ave* were paired and contrasting anagrams of the same letters, with *Eva* referring to Eve and *Ave* to Mary, since *Ave* (“Hail”) was the word the angel spoke to Mary at the Annunciation.

11 This association is so commonplace for medieval people that Chaucer refers to it in the prologue to the Prioress’s Tale (line 469) in his *Canterbury Tales*.

**Works Cited**


Bryan Mead

Films and short stories are communicative acts, and as such they carry meaning. Since meaning-making is an interpretive process, the fact that filmic and literary stories can carry meaning at all implies the existence of an interpreter, or an audience, who ascribes that meaning. Likewise, if there is meaning to ascribe, it follows that there exists a creator, or an author, who first inscribes meaning to a film or text. Authors continually face the problem of relating their intended meaning in such a way that their audience has no choice but to correctly interpret their message. To achieve this end, inscribers of meaning must use the tools of their chosen medium which, in the case of literature and film, are aesthetic tools. The rhetorical tradition, from Aristotle’s Rhetoric to modern-day short-story manuals and film production handbooks, is full of writings meant to assist communicators in this quest.

Film adaptations of literary texts provide interesting test-cases for the meaning inherent in particular stories. Not surprisingly, different iterations of the same story can carry culturally, religiously, and theologically contradictory messages. The Apostle Paul’s recurring concern that other preachers were “disturbing” and “distorting” the gospel of Christ so that his churches would follow a “different gospel” serves as an archetype for spiritually divergent messages presented about the same story (Gal.1:6-7 NASB). This is why, for Augustine, communicators with eternally important messages must make more effective use of their medium’s tools than those with merely temporal concerns. He writes that since

there has been placed equally at our disposal the power of eloquence, which is so efficacious in pleading either for the erroneous cause or the right, why is it not zealously acquired by the good, so as to do service for the truth, if the unrighteous put it to the uses of iniquity and of error for the winning of false and groundless causes? (Augustine 457)

The ultimate hope for communicators of the truth is that audiences clearly receive their message so that they then ponder and respond emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. This act of response moves the audience from receivers to actors, from receptive-audience to self-communicators. After hearing a message an
audience member must convince himself of what he has heard. The initial act of communication

exerts such pressure upon him from without; [but] he completes the process from within. If he does not somehow act to tell himself (as his own audience) what the various brands of rhetorician have told him, his persuasion is not complete. Only those voices from without are effective which can speak in the language of a voice within. (Burke 39)

The spiritually charged messages of literature and film become especially evident when analyzing film adaptations of texts by overtly Christian authors such as Flannery O’Connor. A particular case is O’Connor’s 1953 short story “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” which filmmaker Jeri Cain Rossi adapted into a short film titled “Black Hearts Bleed Red” in 1993. While Rossi uses O’Connor’s story as source material, the changes made alter the story’s meaning significantly, making each version’s moral vision, while theologically-charged, oppositional to its counterpart. These divergent theological aims aesthetically manifest in the two versions’ use of violence. In “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” violence serves as a means of revelation for both characters and audience, forcing the story’s characters and readers to examine their repressed sinful inclinations. Violence in “Black Hearts Bleed Red,” in contrast, does not spark character revelation and, instead, further solidifies each character’s moral philosophy and, consequently, also removes audience revelation. Ultimately, this revelatory aspect to violence in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” enables a spiritual call to action, supporting its distinctly Christian prophetic vision. The aesthetics in “Black Hearts Bleed Red,” in keeping with the film’s anti-Christian worldview, reject revelation, never challenging its characters nor its audience to assess matters of sinfulness.

The fact that violence serves a revelatory purpose in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” is not surprising because, for Flannery O’Connor, literary violence was a theological tool. She bound her use of violence to the literary grotesque which, according to O’Connor, attempts to illumine the “deeper kinds of realism” that representations of everyday reality make “less and less understandable” (O’Connor, “Some Aspects” 814). And though O’Connor argued that all novelists “are fundamentally seekers and describers of the real,” she added that “the realism of each novelist will depend on his view of the ultimate reaches of reality” (815). As an outspoken Catholic writing from the mid-1940s through the mid-1960s, O’Connor saw herself in conflict with prevailing notions of reality. She believed that mystery was as important, if not more important, than the known, and that knowledge of the “whole man” was only possible by examining the mysterious aspects of life (817). In contrast, writers following the “popular spirit” were holding “more and more to the view that the ills and mysteries of life will eventually fall before the scientific advances of man” (815). For modern writers, the absence of the eternal meant temporal man could be known; for O’Connor, the presence of God and man’s eternal nature inevitably led to mystery. Additionally, the modern elevation of scientific humanism meant the
rejection of moral absolutes, meaning man controlled all notions or definitions of right and wrong. O’Connor’s Catholic faith would not allow her to reject moral absolutes, the deprivation of man, the need for redemption, or the mystery of Christ’s salvific act. O’Connor scholars, long fascinated by the author’s violent characters, argue that O’Connor constructs violence as a two-fold act of revelation. Violence in her stories first reveals truth to the characters before, secondly, revealing truth to O’Connor’s readers.

Narrative violence as “the precursor of some kind of [character] revelation” appears in most of O’Connor’s stories, including “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” (Foster 271). The main character in O’Connor’s story is an outwardly pious woman called “the grandmother” who uses violent rhetoric to maintain a sense of control over every aspect of her life. In the first paragraph of the story she tries to convince her son Bailey, with whom she lives, to take his family on vacation to east Tennessee rather than to Florida because she “wanted to visit some of her connections in east Tennessee and she was seizing at every chance to change Bailey’s mind” (O’Connor, “A Good Man” 137). Rather than voice her desires, the grandmother instead sets out to scare Bailey and his family with news of an escaped convict named “The Misfit.” However, her violent rhetoric, rather than scaring the family, reveals her true feelings and affirms her inability to control her environment. Bailey, seeing through his mother’s masquerade, doesn’t “look up from his reading,” and her grandchildren directly confront her, asking her why she doesn’t just “stay at home” (137). Ignoring their rebuttals, the grandmother asks her grandson John Wesley what he would “do if this fellow, the Misfit, caught” him, to which the boy responds, “I’d smack his face” (137).

Even though the family’s response to the grandmother’s violent rhetoric confirms her lack of control, she continues to utilize violent imagery as a controlling mechanism. She rationalizes sneaking her cat into the car even though her son doesn’t “like to arrive at a motel with a cat” not only by imagining that the cat “would miss her too much” but also because she was “afraid he might brush against one of the gas burners and asphyxiate himself” (138). As with her fear tactics related to the Misfit, her thoughts and actions with the cat challenge Bailey’s control over her life. In the grandmother’s mind, she knows better than Bailey and his wife. She fancies her ideas and desires as more dignified than those of her son. This rationalization of authority explains the grandmother’s comparison between her own travel attire and that of her daughter-in-law. When from the car she sees that the “children’s mother still had on slacks and still had her head tied up in a green kerchief,” she ponders her own outfit, thinking that, “in case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady” (138). Again, the grandmother uses violent rhetoric to elevate herself above her family, designating herself as the real authority figure.

Ultimately, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” transposes the grandmother’s violent rhetoric of control into violent action exhibiting her helplessness. The first instance of this takes place soon after the grandmother’s tactics seem to work. Not long after the family begins their vacation, the grandmother tells the
children a story about an old family house off the main road. Yet, knowing that Bailey “would not be willing to lose any time looking at an old house,” she creates a story about “a secret panel” that “all the family silver was hidden in” when Union General Sherman’s soldiers overtook the region, but which “was never found” (143). The story of treasure and war excites the children, who pester their father to grant the grandmother’s wish to visit the home. Annoyed, Bailey consents, but soon after he turns the car around and turns down what the grandmother thought was the correct road “a horrible thought came to her” that her directions were incorrect (144). This realization “was so embarrassing that she turned red in the face and her eyes dilated and her feet jumped up, upsetting her valise in the corner,” removing the newspaper hiding the cat, causing the cat to spring “onto Bailey’s shoulder” and the car to flip over several times (144). Thus, the grandmother’s confidence turns into fear, and her violent rhetoric of rationalization which both brought the cat into the car and made the family turn down an unknown road leads to actual and uncontrolled violence. The grandmother initially maintains her appearance of control after the violent car wreck as she curls up under the dashboard, “hoping she was injured so that Bailey’s wrath would not come down on her all at once” (145). This desire for personal injury reintroduces her violent rhetoric as a way to remove the family power dynamics. The grandmother, rather than repentant or concerned for the health of her family members, can only think of her pride. She would rather have physical injury than emotional injury. Soon after, when it is clear that all family members are alive, the grandmother says that she believes she “injured an organ” (145). Much like the opening scene in the story, the family ignores this violent rhetoric, inverting the grandmother’s intended purpose.

However, the book’s final violent confrontation transforms the grandmother, revealing her helplessness and removing her violent rhetoric. The Misfit, used as a rhetorical device by the grandmother early in the story, is in the car the family flags down to help them after the crash. The grandmother immediately recognizes him and tells him so, to which the Misfit replies that it “would have been better for all of you, lady, if you hadn’t of reckernized me” (147). This interaction between the grandmother and the Misfit causes Bailey to reassert his authority over his mother by turning “his head sharply” and saying something to her “that shocked even the children” (147). Finally, the grandmother loses her controlled demeanor and begins to cry. However, the Misfit quickly usurps any authority Bailey has. Rather than using violent rhetoric to establish his power over the situation, the Misfit uses actual violence. He has his fellow criminals lead Bailey and his son into the woods, and with Bailey gone the grandmother, hoping to avoid real violence, begins a dialogue with the Misfit. In place of her violent rhetoric is a relational rhetoric. She continually tells the Misfit that he looks to be from “good blood” and that his family was probably full of “nice people” (147). Yet, as with her violent rhetoric, her rhetoric of comfort is not successful, failing to assuage the Misfit from violent actions. The party soon hears two shots from the woods, and the grandmother switches to a spiritual rhetoric in which she asks the Misfit if he has “ever prayed” and if he prayed Jesus would help him (150). This tactic also fails and the rest of the
grandmother’s family is led into the woods. Finally, alone with the Misfit, “the grandmother found that she had lost her voice,” only able to repeatedly say “Jesus” to herself (151). Faced with the truth that her rhetoric is meaningless and her control an illusion, the grandmother absent-mindedly repeats the name of life’s real controlling agent. She further recognizes her helplessness when she hears more gunshots from the woods and calls out “Bailey Boy, Bailey Boy” as if “her heart would break” (152). “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” aesthetically constructs the grandmother’s vulnerability by removing her varying rhetorics of control, and by the end of the story she mumbles at the Misfit, “not knowing what she was saying,” in a way inconceivable at the beginning of the story (152). The narrative violence overpowers the grandmother’s rhetoric of violence, revealing her helplessness and accentuating her need to give up control.

In addition to being revelatory for O’Connor’s characters, scholars contend that through violence O’Connor “wants to shock” her modern readers “into existence” (Ben-Bassat 186). This audience revelation is more important than the revelation experienced by the story’s characters. While O’Connor’s characters may learn the error of their ways, her ultimate target is her reader, and violence is O’Connor’s “strategy for displacing her readers and opening them to the invitations and demands of God’s grace” (Raab 442). Without revealing truth to audiences, violence in these stories, and the grotesque in general, loses its main function. Grotesque depictions of violence are exaggerated, distorted versions of reality, and these grotesque acts “cannot be understood when one fails to grasp the moral function of distortion” (Presley 45). What the grotesque aims to present is the “image of man” as “broken,” even though this image “has not always been nor should it necessarily remain” as such (45). It is a literary mode that “continually reminds us of what once was and, better still, what yet might be” (45).

To accomplish audience revelation, O’Connor first establishes, then removes, ironic distancing. Her stories do this through grotesque-ing oppositional characters. On one side is a character coded as “righteous” through an embodiment of self-righteous morality, which in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” would be the grandmother. On the other side is a character coded as “immoral” through their rejection of morality, which in this story would be the Misfit. In O’Connor’s fictional worlds both the righteous and immoral character are comically excessive in their respective morality and corruption. This extremity allows the reader to maintain an ironic distance from the characters, judging both the righteous and the immoral for their excess. Readers can laugh at the grandmother’s poorly veiled inward pride just as they can judge the unrepentant violence of the Misfit. Yet, O’Connor does not allow the reader to remain distanced because she conflates the dichotomous characters with the audience. As Judith Wynne convincingly argues:

[I]t is not difficult for the reader to find himself cheering the [immoral characters] in their struggle to break through the righteousness of the moralists. But his [cheering puts] himself on the side of the murderers, psychotics, extortionists, fanatics, and sadists. Now the reader has no intention of shifting his own values
to enable the acceptance of the acts of the [immoral characters] as normal. He knows that he himself is normal in much the same way as are the characters against whom the [immoral characters] fight. (47-48)

This is particularly evident in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find.” For more than half the story the reader remains distanced from the grandmother, viewing her merely as a comic character who deserves comeuppance. When the Misfit, the agent of that comeuppance arrives, however, the reader must reassess the comic detachment because the reader’s hopes for comeuppance, being realized, conflict so strongly with the reader’s own morality. The grandmother’s rhetorical pleas turn from comic to tragic, and the reader must decide whether to align with the Misfit, whose own claim that the grandmother “would have been a good woman…if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life” resembles the reader’s own assessment of the woman, or to align with the grandmother. The turn from comedy to tragedy forces readers to connect with flawed characters and reassess their own morality. Ultimately, readers must confront “the absurd normality of the grandmother and the normal absurdity of the Misfit,” recognizing “the total spectrum of the human condition, and the [reader’s] own place in it, to be both comic and grotesque” (43). The story challenges readers to recognize themselves in both the grandmother and the Misfit, realizing the fallen nature of both the characters and themselves.

The alterations made by Jeri Cain Rossi to the narrative and characters in the short film “Black Hearts Bleed Red” removes this two-fold act of revelation present in O’Connor’s story, allowing neither characters nor audience the opportunity to change. Much of the impetus for these alterations comes from Rossi’s involvement with an underground film movement called the “Cinema of Transgression.” The movement’s de facto founder, Nick Zedd, published a manifesto in 1985 that reads like an introduction to hedonism, promising to “break all the taboos” of the age and arguing that “the only hell is the hell of praying, obeying laws, and debasing yourself before authority figures” while the “only heaven is the heaven of sin, being rebellious, having fun, [having sex], learning new things, and breaking as many rules as you can” (6). While O’Connor’s aesthetic meant to shock readers into a recognition of their sin, the Cinema of Transgression wanted to make a “direct attack on every value system known to man” (6). Whereas the former argued for the tradition of the Church, the latter rejected all traditional values. The Cinema of Transgression sought to awaken film-goers to the freedom found in rejecting every power-structure. It was a “transformation through transgression” aimed at converting viewers “into a higher plane of existence in order to approach freedom in a world full of unknowing slaves” (6). Their argument was that “any film which doesn’t shock” audiences toward this end “isn’t worth looking at” (6). Thus, even though O’Connor’s and Rossi’s aesthetics emphasize audience response to what each artist considered neglected truths, these truths are so divergent that Rossi had to make some changes to O’Connor’s Christian-tinged tale. Yet, by altering the characters and narrative in the ways Rossi does, the story never achieves these
revelatory goals. The film’s characters, rather than awakening to a new-found freedom in sin and rebellion, remain static manifestations of good and evil while the film’s audience, rather than being shocked into breaking rules and rejecting traditional values, remains distanced from the narrative and morally superior to the characters.

Unlike her literary counterpart, the character of the grandmother in Jeri Cain Rossi’s “Black Hearts Bleed Red” never experiences revelation. In fact, the film alters the grandmother character significantly. Rather than seeking control through an outward appearance of piety, the grandmother character in the film rejects all notions of piety. Yet, rather than foregoing a pious character, the film transfers many characteristics of the grandmother in the book to the mother, who becomes the character attempting to uphold traditional religious and cultural values in “Black Hearts Bleed Red.” This shift in attitudes also shifts the power dynamics from those of the short story. The grandmother’s violent rhetoric in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” sprang from her attempt to wrest control from her son and daughter-in-law. However, in the film, the grandmother firmly controls the children and Bailey, leaving the mother without any decision-making influence.

In the film, the grandmother’s control over the family at the mother’s expense is clear in the first scene. A radio plays a Chuck Swindoll sermon as the mother and her children eat breakfast around the kitchen table. However, violent imagery overshadows the religious ambiance. The son, John Wesley, points a toy rifle at each member of his family before firing the gun at one of the stuffed animal heads adorning the kitchen walls. Just like the radio sermon filters as background noise, the mother is equally ignored by her children. The son, John Wesley, asks his mother if he can see if “Eula May” is awake. The mother responds: “You finish your cereal, and you call her grandma.” Then the daughter, June Star, ignoring her mother’s command, tells her that “Eula May told me that when we get back from Florida she is going to cut my hair and paint my nails.” Thus, prior to the grandmother’s appearance in the film, “Black Hearts Bleed Red” establishes a contrast between the traditional values of the mother and the grandmother’s rejection of tradition. The film also presents the children’s adherence to the grandmother’s wishes rather than the mother’s, a point driven home when the children greet the grandmother with “good morning Eula May” as she enters the kitchen and then when they follow the greeting by telling her that “momma told us not to call you Eula May.” When the grandmother tells the mother that she “sounds like an old fuddy-duddy,” the children repeatedly sing “momma is a fuddy-duddy,” making their allegiances clear. The mother’s only response is that “Jesus hears everything you say,” ironically contrasting the omniscient hearing of Jesus with the children’s refusal to listen.

In “Black Hearts Bleed Red,” the grandmother also has control over her son Bailey. After Bailey enters the kitchen, the grandmother condescendingly asks the mother whether she is going to “wear those curlers” in her hair, to which the mother sarcastically replies that she might find the time after she feeds her baby and cleans up after her children, husband, and the grandmother. The film then cuts to a shot of the grandmother smoking and drinking in the bathroom while silently laughing at herself in the mirror as she overhears Bailey and his
wife arguing about the grandmother’s behavior. While the mother claims that the house has “turned into a tavern” since the grandmother arrived and that Bailey’s mother is probably drinking whiskey in the bathroom, Bailey repeatedly yells that it is “[his] momma you’re talking about.” The scene also continues the aesthetic dichotomy between religious imagery and immoral behavior. Not only does the Swindoll sermon remain on the soundtrack, but a picture of Mary holding baby Jesus hangs on the wall behind the grandmother as she drinks in the bathroom, offering a symbolic contrast between the holy Mother and the unholy grandmother.

The film’s inversion of power dynamics alters the story’s climactic revelatory scene, removing all semblance of character revelation. In the film the grandmother does not sneak a cat into the car and does not create a story to get her grandchildren excited about an out-of-the-way house. Instead, it is an argument between mother and father about the grandmother that causes the car accident. When the Misfit and his gang arrive, it is also the mother who recognizes him as the criminal rather than the grandmother; and rather than changing her rhetoric from violence to comfort when the gang takes Bailey and John Wesley into the woods, the grandmother in the film preserves her immoral behavior by flirting with the Misfit. The soundtrack also maintains the religious/immoral dichotomy throughout the scene. First, the radio in the Misfit’s car plays Hank Williams’ gospel song “Calling You.” Then, after two shots ring out from the woods, the film cuts to a close-up of the mother as she recites the Lord’s Prayer while, off-screen, the grandmother asks the Misfit if he’d like a cigarette. Thus, violence, rather than being revelatory for the characters, further accentuates the disparate worldviews of the mother and grandmother. Through the violence each character becomes further ensconced in his or her ways.

Violent actions in “Black Hearts Bleed Red” ultimately also lead the grandmother to reject all notions of family. After the mother, baby, and June Star follow the gang into the woods, the grandmother tells the Misfit that she “doesn’t know them” and that the family just picked her up. While the grandmother in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” loses control of her rhetoric as the gunshots killing the mother, June Star, and the baby are fired, the grandmother in the film is passionately kissing the Misfit on the hood of his car as the gang executes the last members of her family. The grandmother’s lack of revelation does not save her from death, though, as the Misfit, conflating the grandmother with his own mother, quickly becomes enraged, throws the grandmother to the ground, and shoots her several times. In the end, both the overly righteous and the immoral characters in “Black Hearts Bleed Red” die without revelation, fully believing until their deaths that their philosophies were correct.

The preceding analysis alludes to the fact that, like “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” “Black Hearts Bleed Red” provides grotesque, oppositional characters to establish ironic distance between audience and story; yet, unlike O’Connor’s short story, the film never removes this distance to elicit audience revelation. The “righteous” character in the film, the mother, embodies over-the-top religious fundamentalism. She listens to Christian sermons on the radio, adorns her wall with religious iconography, tries to scare her children into good behavior by
telling them that Jesus is listening to them, and openly challenges anything she
sees as immoral behavior. Likewise, the “immoral” grandmother in the film
exemplifies blatant unrighteousness through her self-destructive smoking and
drinking habits, her constant flirtations with strangers, and her disregard for her
family’s well-being. In O’Connor’s short story, the righteous grandmother’s
confrontation with the immoral Misfit and the tonal shift from comedy to tragedy
that accompanies it forces the reader to question his or her allegiance. The reader
must choose between the oppositional characters. Yet, in “Black Hearts Bleed
Red,” the viewer does not have to choose between oppositional characters
because the climactic confrontation is between the immoral grandmother and an
equally immoral Misfit. Since the ultimate conflict is between two grotesquely,
and similarly, constructed characters, and since neither of the characters realize
the error of their ways, the audience may remain distanced from and morally
superior to each of them. The violent killing of the grandmother’s family, rather
than revelatory, is satirical and detached. Consequently, both the alteration of the
grandmother character and the removal of character revelation in the climactic
scene eliminates audience revelation. Therefore, while “A Good Man Is Hard to
Find” forces readers to identify with both righteous and immoral characters to
assess the full range of human sinfulness, “Black Hearts Bleed Red” distances
audience from characters and rejects individual assessment of human sin.

The differing prophetic aims of “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” and
“Black Hearts Bleed Red” manifest in each version’s use of violence. In
O’Connor’s original story, violence has a revelatory function for both the
characters in the story and for the story’s readers. It is meant to challenge
character and audience notions of self-reliance and sin. This revelatory aspect of
violence makes “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” a distinctly Christian work using
aesthetics for distinctly Christian purposes. It fulfills the story’s inherent
theological incentive. “Black Hearts Bleed Red” also attempts to fulfill its
philosophical purposes but is less successful because it rejects the revelatory
aspects of violence. In the film violence is not revelatory to character or
audience, allowing the characters to remain free of self-assessment and audiences
to maintain ironic distance from the actions within the story. These two versions
of the same story demonstrate the importance of Augustine’s challenge. Since
communicators of the truth will always face opposition, they should discover and
utilize the tools of their chosen medium as proficiently and powerfully as
possible. O’Connor’s aesthetic of violence in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find”
moves beyond character revelation and positions the reader to recognize and
respond to their personal sin. And while Rossi’s “Black Hearts Bleed Red”
proves that divergent messages will always exist, the communicator of truth must
trust that his or her diligent work will not come back void.

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Readings from Classical times to the Present. Ed. Patricia Bizzell and
Bryan Mead


From Zen to the Cross: The Rise of Christian Haiku in America

John J. Han

Introduction

Aesthetically, traditional Japanese haiku is based on East Asian religious traditions, most notably those of Buddhism, Shinto, Taoism, and Confucianism. Buddhism teaches enlightenment through meditation and the oneness of all lives in the universe, Shinto is a system of nature and ancestor worship, Taoism pursues the action of non-action (wuwei) and wholesomeness—the Tao, the ultimate reality—through union with nature, and Confucianism upholds the five virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity. Underlying many premodern Japanese haiku are the sentiments of one or more of these religions.

Since haiku came to the English-speaking world—a predominantly Christian culture—at the turn of the twentieth century, it has experienced significant transformations. Some American haiku poets embrace—and even convert to—Eastern thought, yet most others today write haiku that sound more Western than Eastern in content, style, and mood. In his preface to The Unswept Path: Contemporary American Haiku (2005), a collection co-edited by Ed. John Brandi and Dennis Maloney, William J. Higginson writes that with the publication of the anthology, “American haiku nods graciously to its Japanese roots, but also claims its place as a full-grown member of the family of American poetry” (12). It is a valid statement that recognizes fundamental cultural differences between East and West. Higginson’s remark also serves as a declaration of literary independence that recalls Ralph Waldo Emerson, who claimed in “The American Scholar” (1837) that the modern American scholar should learn to think without resorting to the ideas borrowed from Europe.

Most American haiku poets today first learn Japanese aesthetics and then develop their own styles. Some write neoclassical haiku, others write new-style (shintai) haiku, and still others write vanguard haiku. Recent years have seen the increased popularity of humor poems written in a traditional haiku form (5-7-5 syllables), light-hearted three-liners that use haiku as a tool for word play. Collections of such humor haiku have achieved more commercial success than their literary counterparts, most of which are published by small presses and read by a small fraction of the overall readership. Typically, these 5-7-5 humor haiku do not refer to nature or seasonal changes, which constitute an important part of traditional haiku. Rather, these humor poems address popularly oriented topics,
such as vampires, zombies, baseball, hockey, computer error messages, marriage, and pregnancy.

In addition to humor haiku, an interesting new trend has arisen in the English-language haiku world: Christian haiku. Some Christians adopt the form of haiku as an instrument for conveying spiritual truths or for sharing Christian humor. Most of these haiku lack literary merit; they are typically in a 5-7-5 syllable count, which is not a dominant style in professional English-language haiku today. Considering that haiku—a deeply Asian form—is now widely popular in the predominantly Christian United States, this essay will examine how traditional Japanese haiku has been transformed into a poetic form suitable for Christians. We will discuss four types of Christian haiku, examine some exemplary Christian haiku, and then reflect on the current state and future of Christian haiku.

Four Types of Christian Haiku

Most of today’s Christian haiku appear to be written by those who did not have rigorous training in haiku but are skillful at playing with words. Their poems typically sound witty and clever, yet, unlike literary haiku, they do not invite a re-read for an appreciation of a deeper meaning in the poem. Such poems, which I would term “instrumental Christian haiku,” can be found in popularly oriented poetry books and on websites that target a Christian—especially evangelical Christian—audience. Instrumental Christian haiku can be divided into three categories: (1) devotional or sermonic haiku, which are written to cultivate faith and to spread the Word; (2) Bible haiku, which poetically retell biblical events; and (3) humorous haiku about funny Christian stories. These instrumental haiku hold little literary merit, so they are not taken seriously by mainstream haiku circles. However, one would be hard pressed to ignore the fact that such haiku have more popular appeal than literary haiku.

Although most Christian haiku are instrumental in nature, an increasing number of literary Christian haiku are also produced, which is an encouraging development. Literary Christian haiku provide a thoughtful perspective on life and reveal spiritual sensibility through hints and suggestions, instead of straightforward, one-dimensional statements. Literary Christian haiku, which mostly appear in prestigious haiku journals such as Frogpond and Modern Haiku, evidence that an Asian poetic form can successfully take root in a predominantly Christian culture.

Devotional or Sermonic Haiku

There are several devotional or sermonic haiku books available on the market. An example is Clark Osborn’s Christian Haiku: The 17-Syllable Devotional (2007), which shows a thematic haiku and related Bible verses on each page. The author notes that he learned haiku for the first time when his son
brought a haiku writing assignment from school. When the son explained to him the classic 5-7-5 format, he was hooked on haiku. Regarding his initial haiku “inspiration,” he writes,

A wordsmith at heart with a penchant for being more than just a tad verbose, Haiku forced me to get my thoughts out in just 17-syllables. While my early efforts were more of a secular and comedic nature, God quickly showed me that this was something He had given me to do for Him. To borrow a line from the movie “Chariots of Fire,” I feel God’s pleasure when I write. Of course I’m really not writing anything that hasn’t already been written, I’m just writing it a little different. To be certain, it is the Word of God and the Holy Spirit which have provided any and all inspiration in the following pages. (Osborne)

Below is an example from page 13 of the book:

**Navigation**

Life navigation
If you can’t take direction
You’re gonna’ get lost

I know, God, that mere mortals can’t run their own lives, That men and women don’t have what it takes to take charge of life. So correct us, God, as you see best. Don’t lose your temper. That would be the end of us.

    Jeremiah 10:23-24 (MSG)

Show me the right path, O Lord; point out the road for me to follow.

    Psalm 25:4 (NLT)

Your teacher will be right there, local and on the job, urging you on whenever you wander left or right: “This is the right road. Walk down this road.”

    Isaiah 30:21 (MSG)

Train me, God, to walk straight; then I’ll follow your true path.

    Psalm 86:11a (MSG) (Osborne)

The theme of this page is navigation—the navigation in the voyage of life. The three-line haiku is followed by four passages from the Bible—Jeremiah 10:23-24, Psalm 25:4, Isaiah 30:21, Psalm 86:11, all of which augment his poem. Whereas literary haiku speak through specific images, mostly from nature, this haiku is straightforward, exhortative, and preachy. It sounds like a three-line summary of
a sermon. Some readers may dislike the one-dimensional nature of the poem, but others—those who accept church teachings—may like the poem’s lucidity.

Many Christian websites contain devotional or sermonic haiku like the one above. On November 4, 2007, a Christian poet whose ID is “ffoggy” posted three haiku under the heading “Three Christian Prayers/Poems in Haiku Tradition.” They read,

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father  
Hear the prayer of our hearts  
And grant us your peace

*

**Mary**

Head bowed to the ground  
As her accusers disband  
You wrote in the sand

*

**His Prayer**

You teach us to pray  
In holy reverent words  
Lord, give us this day

Diction in these poems is unambiguously clear—there is no room for misunderstanding on the part of the reader. It is customary not to entitle a haiku, but in the case of haiku whose purpose is exhortative, using a title should be acceptable.

**Bible Haiku**

The second type of Christian haiku retells Bible stories in three lines. Michael Coughlin, who ministers to children, posted eighteen haiku composed by those children on the website “Christian Haiku.” Five of them are below:

when Jesus was a  
baby his mommy held him  
and loved him so much

—Nathan (age 4)
* crucifixion time
Christ on the cross for sinners
and he rose again
—Alexandra (age 6)

* Noah built an ark
he brought animals with him
there was a great storm
—Bailey (age 9)

* Jesus died for me
on the cross he bore my sins
suffering my shame
—Michael (age 34)

* Malachi is the
messenger of the Lord God
last O.T. prophet
—Michael (age 34)

The poems are three-liners that read more like prose than poetry. However, they still can be considered haiku in their use of a 5-7-5 structure, and such poems could serve as excellent instructional materials in children’s Sunday school or in a church event for kids.

My own senryu (humorous and satiric haiku on human nature) based on Genesis chapters 2 and 3 exemplify Bible haiku as well. They read,

bone of my bones!
Eve’s beauty makes a poet
out of Adam

* Adam gazes at Eve
no wonder Milton’s Raphael
warns him to cool down
God strolling
they peek from behind trees—
Adam and Eve

*

God’s rhetorical question:
“Where are you?”
Adam’s heart sinks

*

Adam blames Eve
Eve blames the serpent
the buck never stops ("Adam and Eve")

These five poems recapping a biblical event in haiku language belong to the genre of summary haiku.10

Humor Haiku on Church Life

A good example of book-length haiku on church life is Episcopal Haiku: The Church, Its Ways, and Its People, Seventeen Syllables at a Time (2007). Co-authored by Sarah Goodyear and Ed Weissman, this volume humorously portrays the Episcopal Church’s ritual and Episcopalian idiosyncrasies. Five poems below are taken from the volume:

Stand, sit, kneel, stand, kneel:
it’s quite a good workout for
a Sunday morning.

*

We’ll cheer at the game
but not at church. What would
people think of us?

*

The great litany:
saying it is like walking
the great labyrinth.
See the junior choir,
like a row of pert sparrows
singing their hearts out.

* 

Do priests really see
God better with their backs to
the congregation?

Although religious in content, the poems show that the co-authors do not take them or their denomination too seriously and that even something reverent can be a topic for good-intentioned humor. In this regard, the poems have the potential to attract even non-Anglican readers.

**Literary Christian Haiku**

The poems we read above were written by either those who had little training in haiku writing or those who may knowingly break the many haiku rules. (A traditional 5-7-5 structure is not an important rule, a rule that is not heeded by professional haiku poets anyway.) As a welcome trend, more and more artistically sophisticated Christian haiku are being published—primarily in prestigious haiku journals, such as *Frogpond: The Journal of the Haiku Society of America* and *Modern Haiku*. Below are five poems that appeared in *Frogpond*:

like Judas I sell my parents’ house
—Ellen Prattle, Rhode Island
(*Frogpond* 33.3 [Fall 2011], p. 9)

* 

Sunday morning
rain coming down
at righteous angles
—Michael Fessler, Kanagawa, Japan
(*Frogpond* 34.2 [Spring/Summer 2011], p. 9)

* 

when did it start
to be about loss
Christmas lights
—Anne K. Schwader, Westminster, CO
(*Frogpond* 34.2 [Spring/Summer 2011], p. 18)
* cold church  
  funeral hymns  
  the color of breath  
  —John Parsons, England  
  (*Frogpond* 33.2 [Spring/Summer 2010], p. 17)

* Easter sunrise  
  kneading the song  
  in the bread  
  —Jayne Miller, Wisconsin  
  (*Frogpond* 33.2 [Spring/Summer 2010], p. 36)

* church bells…  
  the pack of gum I stole  
  fifty years ago  
  —John J. Han, Manchester, MO  
  (*Frogpond* 37.2 [Spring/Summer 2014], p. 40; reprinted in Robert Epstein, ed., *Beyond the Grave: Contemporary Afterlife Haiku*, West Union, WV: Middle Island Press, 2015, p. 89)

In the first poem, the author feels like Judas Iscariot—who betrayed Jesus to the authorities—as she sells the house inherited from her parents. In this one-line haiku (*monoku*), the speaker’s sense of remorse is compared to a well-known incident in the Bible. In traditional haiku, figures of speech (such as simile, metaphor, and personification) are rarely used, but in the case of this poem, the simile is both apt and clever. In Fessler’s haiku, the speaker recalls the Christian virtue of righteousness as the poet observes the rain falling on Sunday morning. Schwader’s haiku regards a believer’s response to the complaints that too much electricity is wasted in Christmastime—a poem that draws a parallel with the New Testament woman who broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus’ head (Luke 7:37). Parsons’s poem, which begins with “cold church,” portrays a funeral scene, contrasting the lifeless body with the breaths of the living (“the color of breath”). Miller’s haiku describes a scene in which the narrator (or someone else) sings while kneading bread dough. Finally, my own haiku was inspired in part by St. Augustine’s *Confessions* in which the author remorsefully recalls his youthful theft of pears from his neighbor’s yard. According to St. Augustine, he stole them not because he was hungry but because he was sinful. Likewise, as an elementary school pupil, I stole gum from a roadside store owned
by a very old man—not because I craved gum, but because my classmate told me that it would be thrilling to steal from a man who was too senile to pursue us. Each of these six haiku captures a moment in a believer’s life through poetic imagery instead of a prosaic statement.

**Christian Haiku: Where It Stands, Where It Is Headed**

The poems examined above reveal several characteristics of contemporary Christian haiku. First, except for the ones published in *Frogpond* and other respected venues, Christian haiku are generally written in a 5-7-5 structure. (In professional haiku circles, which prefer free-style haiku, the average number of syllables used in a poem is twelve, not seventeen.) Adherence to such a “rule” likely reflects the poets’ desire to convey a message in clear language rather than through suggestions or understatements. For them, lucidity is more important than artistic refinement.

Secondly, many Christian haiku are didactic and moralistic, which is somewhat inevitable considering that they use the form of haiku as a mere tool for sharing the Gospel or spiritual merriment. If someone invented a poetic form that better suits Christian haiku poets’ needs, they would easily discard the form of haiku. The didactic and moralistic nature of Christian haiku should not be criticized unless they are wordy or flowery.

Third, most Christian haiku are three-liners designed for Bible study, evangelization, or spiritual growth. With the exception of *Episcopal Haiku*, it is hard to find humor haiku among Christian three-liners today. This may indicate the spiritual zeal of Christian haiku poets, whose preoccupation is with the spiritual aspect of life. What makes *Episcopal Haiku* striking is that its poems display a balanced attitude toward life—instead of antagonizing the world, they showcase an attitude that savors moments of God-given delight in this world without succumbing to the world.

Fourth, most Christian haiku purport to be poetry, but they are actually prose arranged in three lines. An example can be found in Goodyear and Weissman’s *Episcopal Haiku*:

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Foot-washing seems strange
to some. But they just love to
Get a pedicure.
```

The text can be rearranged as one-line prose like this:

```
Foot-washing seems strange to some. But they just love to get a pedicure.
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The use of the word *But*—a crucial transition device in Japanese poetry—indicates that this haiku has poetic potential, yet the poem in part declares and in part exclaims.
Another example of prosaic haiku is by Roger W. Hancock, whose website “Haiku Poems—Christmas” presents more than a dozen three-liners. One of them reads,

Season’s Feelings

Feelings, my feelings;  
to me Christmas is snuggling,  
in front of a fire.

The entire first line and the phrase “to me” in the second line seem unnecessary, and the whole poem can be half-condensed without compromising its meaning. The reader already knows that the poet is writing to express his thoughts and feelings. Also, with the exception of a sequence, a single haiku does not need a title.

Fifth, probably the biggest reason for Christian haiku’s popularity lies in its humor. Humor is a distinctive element of American culture, and many Americans try to relieve stress through reading light-hearted materials. Humorous haiku consisting of only three lines serve as a superb tool for meeting their emotional needs. Moreover, religious literature does not have to be somber; Jesus himself used humor as a teaching tool, and humor is found in the Old Testament as well.

Finally, it should be noted that the form of haiku is not a monopoly of a certain group of poets who supposedly know how to write it. The form belongs to everyone—everyone has the right to use it in a way that serves his or her purpose. Despite the good intentions of what I would call the haiku police, it is impossible to dictate the “correct” way to write a poem among the general public. Those who wish to publish their haiku in established journals or anthologies will need to abide by a set of aesthetic rules, but those rules are not always applicable to those who do not aspire to write artistic haiku.

Poetic forms change with the passing of time. Since haiku came to North America more than a century ago, it has undergone various changes in both form and content. Many contemporary English-language haiku are experimental and avant-garde; The Unswept Path, an anthology mentioned earlier, showcases some of the most innovative trends in haiku writing. In their ground-breaking style, contemporary English-language haiku may surprise Basho and other Japanese poets from the seventeenth century. The fact that some contemporary haiku consist of only one word may even shock those poets. On the other hand, Basho may completely accept the current trends in haiku writing. He taught that the haiku form is open to constant innovation: “Don’t follow in the footsteps of the old poets—seek what they sought” (qtd. in “The Haiku Path.”)

Christian haiku disregard the original “haiku spirit” and accept only the shell of the poetic form, but they are still haiku. Similar to traditional Japanese-style haiku, Christian haiku can claim their rightful, unique place in the history of haiku—they are a product of a non-Asian culture in which haiku is thriving as a poetic genre. Christian haiku deserve more critical attention despite their lack of
literary value; they have secured a sufficient number of readers that cannot be ignored. It is also an encouraging sign that more and more sophisticated Christian haiku appear through professional venues.

Notes

1 An earlier version of this essay was presented at Missouri Baptist University’s Sigma Tau Delta meeting on 29 November 2011. A Korean version was published in the Spring 2014 issue of Wilderness magazine (pp. 231-54) in Seoul.

2 The word haiku (俳句) is both singular and plural. It is similar to the English words “sheep,” “deer,” and “moose,” hence “a haiku,” “two haiku,” “three haiku.” It is erroneous to say, “I have written several autumn haikus.” The correct usage is, “I have written several autumn haiku.” Also, two derivatives of the word haiku are worth noting. Haikuist is an English word that means a haiku poet. Haijin (俳人) is a Japanese word for a haiku poet and is contrasted with shijin, which is a generic term for a poet. Haiku was originally called “hokku” (発句, strating verse) until the turn of the twentieth century, when Masaoka Shiki (正岡 子規, 1867-1902)—one of the four great haiku masters, alongside Matsuo Basho (松尾 芭蕉, 1644-94), Yosa Buson (与謝 蕭村, 1716-84), and Kobayashi Issa (小林 一茶, 1763-1827)—adopted the term. Initially, “hokku” referred to the first three lines of haikai no renga (俳諧の連歌, also called haikai), comic or vulgar linked verse written in collaboration and very popular in the sixteenth century. Matsuo Basho, the first great haiku poet, was an accomplished haikai poet who elevated hokku as a respectable, stand-alone poetic form in the late seventeenth century.

3 Many traditional Japanese haiku reflect the sentiments and values of those religions. For instance, Matsuo Basho’s didactic haiku below is tinged with a Taoist view of humanity and nature:

Kuchibiru Samushi
(Zayū no Mei. Hitō no tan wo yū koto nakare.
Onore ga chō wo toku koto nakare.)

Mono-ieba
Kuchibiru samushi
Aki no kaze

My Lips Feel Cold
(My motto:—Never speak of another man’s faults or of your own virtues)

When I speak, my lips feel cold—
The autumn wind blowing. (qtd. in Miyamori 166)
In Taoist thought, nature is hierarchically higher than humanity and thus speaks more eloquently and wisely than human language. Such a concept of nature is starkly contrasted with the Western way of thinking in which uttered words have the power of creation.

Also, considering that, in his twenties, Basho was trained as a Zen Buddhist monk, it is unsurprising to find many of his haiku exude a Buddhist understanding of life. An example follows:

Come, see real
flowers
of this painful world. (qtd. in Stryk 54)

In Buddhist philosophy, life is a sea of suffering, which comes from an attachment to what is visible but is in reality illusory. At the same time, Basho’s haiku shows that amidst suffering, temporally beautiful things—such as flowers—deserve our attention because they are short-lived like humanity and reduce the existential pain.

In addition to reflecting Taoist and Buddhist sensibilities in his poems, Basho shares his Shinto sensibility in some of his haiku. The following poem was composed during his visit to a Shinto shrine in Yamada:

last day of the month, no moon…
embracing a cedar tree
one thousand years old, a storm (qtd. in Ueda 108)

In this work, the poet describes the imposing atmosphere created by an old cedar. In the words of commentator Tosai,

The Inner Shrine is worshiped as a sun deity; the Outer Shrine, as a moon deity. With no moon, the invisible deity seemed even more august, and the poet looked up to the cedar tree as her holy manifestation. The phrase “embracing a cedar tree” probably refers to the poet who was so awestruck that he found himself moving rhythmically in a trance. (qtd. in Ueda 108)

Meanwhile, Basho expresses his Confucian longings for his deceased parents in the following poem:

Kōya Nite

Chichi haha no
Shikirini koishi
Kiji no koe
On Kōya

Hearing a pheasant’s cries,
How I longed for my dead parents! (qtd. in Miyamori 135)

This haiku was written on Mount Kōya (高野山), a site of an important Buddhist monastery. When the poet heard the wailings of a pheasant that broke the silence of a deep mountain, he recalled his parents. In Confucian culture, one does not simply move on after his or her parent dies. The soul of the deceased parent is present in the life of the left behind and thus deserves respect and reverence.

Meanwhile, the March 15, 1963, issue of Time magazine published an article, “Hymns in Haiku.” The article reports on Rev. James Tetsuzo Takeda, the senior chaplain of Rikkyo University (立教大学, St. Paul’s University) who composes Christian haiku that are “brief meditations upon the mysteries of the Christian year” (“Hymns”). Below is a Lent haiku by Takeda:

At Morning Mass
The water has lost its chill:
Lent has come.

For Easter, the priest wrote the following haiku:

The light of Spring
Now streams
Into the empty Tomb.

Christian haiku written by a Japanese believer show that haiku can be written from any religious or philosophical perspective. Takeda’s poems certainly expand the cultural horizon of haiku.

4 Among Buddhist poets in contemporary America are Lawrence Ferlinghetti (b. 1919), Jack Kerouac (1922–69), Allen Ginsberg (1926–97), Gary Snyder (b. 1930), Sam Hamill (b. 1943), Jane Hirshfield (b. 1953), and Stanford M. Forrester (b. 1963).

5 World Haiku Review—an online haiku journal edited by Susumu Takiguchi, Kala Ramesh, and Rohini Gupta—publishes haiku in three categories: neoclassical haiku, which contain kigo (季語, a season word) and kireji (切れ字, a cutting word) and abide by the 5-7-5 syllable rule; shintai (new style) haiku, which do not require traditional structure; and vanguard haiku that are “[t]he most radical (freest)” among the three (“About the World Haiku Review”)

6 Those who are new to haiku may find it beneficial to understand what haiku is and how it is written. It is easy to find definitions of haiku both in print and
online. For example, “A Note on Japanese Haiku,” included in The Four Seasons: Japanese Haiku (1953, 1958), offers a classic understanding of haiku:

The haiku is a seventeen-syllable poetic form that has been written in Japan for three hundred years. It has been enormously popular without becoming banal. For the haiku does not make a complete poem in our usual sense; it is a lightly-sketched picture the reader is expected to fill in from his own memories. Often there are two pictures, and the reader is expected to respond with heightened awareness of the mystical relationship between non-related subjects. (n.p.)

More recently, in Haiku: A Poet’s Guide (2003), Lee Gurga characterizes haiku as “the poetry of the seasons” (1). According to him,

The essence of haiku resides, in part, in its ability, through the use of a seasonal image, to convey some sense of the natural world and the passage of time. One can write short poems that do not contain these elements, but they do not reach their full potential as haiku in the sense that it is understood by those who have made haiku practice an art. (3)

Meanwhile, in 2004, the Haiku Society of America defined haiku as “a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition” (“Official Definitions”).

My understanding of the form and style of haiku is fundamentally identical to those of English-language haiku teachers such as Harold Gould Henderson, William J. Higginson, Lee Gurga, and Jane Reichhold. For the sake of my own haiku practice, I have written and use the following definition of haiku:

Haiku is a minimalist, imagistic form of lyric poetry originating in Japan and generally comprising three lines of up to five, up to seven, and up to five syllables, respectively. As a short poetic form, it emphasizes succinctness, concreteness, immediacy, and objectivity. Classic haiku originated as a form of Zen meditation, and many modern haiku reflect a Zen Buddhist sentiment. As an internationalized poetic form, however, haiku can now be written from a variety of philosophical and religious perspectives.

Haiku is almost always written in the present tense and typically consists of two phrases (sentence fragments). It never uses titles and rarely uses capitalization except for proper nouns. The first-person pronoun “I” should be used only if absolutely necessary. Some poets use punctuation marks such as a dash, a semicolon, an ellipsis, and an exclamation point to mark the transition between the two parts of the poem. Haiku tend to avoid artistic contrivances, such as rhymes and figures of speech, which
give the impression of artificiality. It always avoids abstractions and judgmental statements.

Haiku evokes the tranquility and wonders of nature, portrays the passage of time as reflected in seasonal change, and ponders the meaning of human life as inspired by the non-human world. Classic haiku typically include a kigo (a season word such as “cherry blossoms” and “icicle”). Contemporary haiku normally include either a kigo or a non-Japanese seasonal reference (such as “Halloween”). The haiku attitude towards nature is generally reverential.

A good haiku captures an enlightening (aha!) moment in ordinary occurrences, thereby touching the reader’s heart and reverberating through his/her mind for an extended period of time. Haiku covers a wide range of moods and attitudes toward life—serenity, sadness, emptiness, loneliness, stoic acceptance, contentment, delight, humor, and sarcasm.

In defining haiku, two comparable poetic forms deserve attention: senryu and what I call humor haiku. Similar to haiku, they are usually written in three lines. Unlike traditional haiku, however, they do not refer to nature; instead, they find humor, wit, satire, and sarcasm in urban life. Senryu focuses on the foibles and follies of human nature, while humor haiku offers observations on various subject matters such as spam, pets, ethnicity, vampires, and work life. Senryu and humor haiku are distinct from—and certainly not inferior to—nature haiku. (Some haiku theorists use unflattering terms such as zappai, pseudo-haiku, or doggerel verse in reference to humor haiku.) It is important to note that classic haiku and zappai have different origins, and humor haiku is a distinctly American—not Japanese—poetic form which is different from nature haiku.

The increasing popularity of senryu and humor haiku in the United States demonstrates their capacity to appeal to readers across cultures—perhaps much more than classic haiku, which is fundamentally a Buddhist poetic form. Humor is part and parcel of American culture, and well-written senryu and humor haiku provide light-hearted insight into contemporary life. For the sake of convenience, “haiku” may be used as a generic term for senryu and humor haiku. (Han, “On Haiku Poetics” 115)

7Most professional haiku poets today tend to dismiss the kind of haiku written to convey an explicit message or silly humor. The Haiku Society of America makes it clear that many of the haiku popularly written today are not real haiku but senryu (satiric haiku) or zappai (low-class three-liners that do not reach the artistic standards of haiku and senryu):

Many so-called “haiku” in English are really senryu. Others, such as “Spam-ku” and “headline haiku,” seem like recent additions to an old
Japanese category, *zappai*, miscellaneous amusements in doggerel verse (usually written in 5-7-5) with little or no literary value. Some call the products of these recent fads “pseudohaiku” to make clear that they are not haiku at all. See “haiku.” (“Official Definitions”)

The wording in the quotation above is milder than how some haiku purists actually feel about what they call *pseudohaiku*—a term that reveals their elitist attitude. Their derisive view of what they consider nonliterary haiku is akin to that of literary novelists who look down upon popular ones. In reality, the line between *literary* and *popular* is blurry, and a literary work can be as commercially successful as a “popular” work. Even if a line were drawn between literary and popular, one would find it difficult to acknowledge that a literary work is necessarily more satisfying than its counterpart.

8 In *Genesis* 2:23, Adam sings a song of delight when he sees Eve for the first time. Some English translations—such as the New Living Translation—consider the song as part of narrative prose. Other translations render the song as a poem in a block quotation. The Revised Standard Version’s translation is an example:

> Then the man said,
> “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

9 In Book 8 of his Puritan epic *Paradise Lost* (1667, 1674), John Milton exhorts Adam to love Eve but avoid passion and carnal pleasure. The angel is concerned that Adam is too much attracted to Eve’s external beauty.

10 Among summary haiku books are David M. Bader’s *Haiku U.: From Aristotle to Zola, 100 Great Books in 17 Syllables* (Gotham, 2005; 112 pages). It is a collection of world masterpieces in 5-7-5 syllabic form. My own summary haiku sequences include:


11 This poem exemplifies one-line haiku (*monoku*) that is gaining increasing popularity in the mainstream haiku world.
In many Japanese short-form poems, the turn is indicated by words such as “nevertheless,” “however,” “yet,” and “but.” Below are three tanka (waka, “short songs”), each of which includes a turn. The first two poems are by Ono no Komachi (小野小町, the ninth century), one of the six best waka poets of the early Heian period. The third poem is by Izumi Shikibu (和泉式部, b. 974?), one of the Thirty-six Medieval Poetry Immortals (中古三十六歌仙, chūko sanjurokkasen):

Although there is not one moment without longing, 
* 

I thought to pick the flower of forgetting for myself, 
* 

Although the cricket’s song has no words, 
* 

One might add a poetic flavor by changing the haiku as follows:

foot-washing…
strange to some but they love to get a pedicure

In this revision, the first line consists of a single word (foot-washing), and the two remaining lines form a simplified fragment. English-language haiku generally avoid punctuation marks except the ellipsis, the dash, and the colon, so the revised version removes two periods.

This haiku could be revised for the sake of conciseness as follows:

white Christmas…
my dog and I snuggle by the fire
This revision significantly changes the meaning of the original haiku, yet it captures, in only a few words, the peacefulness by using the images of a pet and a fireside.

15 D. Elton Trueblood’s *The Humor of Christ* (1975) is a well-known study of the way in which Christ uses humor in his teachings. A more recent study is Earl F. Palmer’s *The Humor of Jesus: Sources of Laughter in the Bible* (2001). Other scholarly or popular books on the humor and irony include Jakob Jonsson’s *Humour and Irony in the New Testament* (1985) and Dean J. Burkey’s *Holy Laughter!: Humor in the Bible* (2011).

16 Perhaps the most well-known one-line haiku is by Cor van den Heuvel: “tundra” (1963), which was reprinted in *Curbstones* (1998). Another example is “core,” written by John Stevenson and published in *Live Again* in 2009. Both poets are highly influential figures in North American haiku today.

17 The haiku spirit expresses (1) simple awareness of the present, (2) living this moment to the full, and (3) experiencing the flow of life energy (“The Haiku Path”).

Works Cited


For Further Reading

Books on Haiku


Collections of Christian Haiku


Book Reviews


Reviewed by Kelly Leavitt

While international and comparative higher education research has burgeoned in recent years, there has been little investigation of international Christian higher education. Editor Joel Carpenter, professor of history and director of the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity at Calvin College, recognized this gap in scholarship after meeting with worldwide Christian higher education leaders. Therefore, Carpenter, alongside Perry L. Glazner, professor of educational foundations at Baylor University, and Nicholas S. Lantinga, professor at Handong Global University in South Korea and former director of the International Association of the Promotion of Christian Higher Education, seek to offer “a fascinating survey of the landscape” of Christian higher education worldwide in their book, Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaissance (23). Through its writing style, organized structure and continuity, as well as its comprehensive approach, this text offers readers a pioneer study of Christian higher education research within the robust field of international and comparative higher education. However, while it is an essential beginning resource, there is still vast territory within Christian international and comparative higher education research waiting to be explored.

The book consists of 11 chapters—including an introduction and conclusion—organized by countries and regions of the world, written by Christian higher education scholars and leaders. Each chapter provides a history and development of Christian higher education before moving to its current issues and future challenges. With each chapter touching upon three topics—history, current issues, and future challenges—the book maintains continuity throughout its chapters, which makes the broad, extensive book approachable. Providing an overview of Christian higher education’s past, present, and future in each region also makes the book a comprehensive survey and offers a helpful comparative analysis of the regions.

In assessing Christian higher education’s history and development worldwide, Glazner and Carpenter note three primary influential factors of Christian higher education’s development throughout its history: Christian missionaries, nationalization, and secularization, as well as the role of government
and politics in each region. For instance, after the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, China opened to Western missionaries who began to establish educational institutions, and missionary societies joined forces in the early twentieth century to open higher education (69). Similarly, missionaries are responsible for the establishment and development of higher education in Korea: “colleges established by missionaries...are regarded as Korea’s first modern colleges” (91). Additionally, nationalization and secularization have influenced Christian higher education. The authors define nationalization as, “the process whereby leaders change the governance, purposes, curriculum, and culture of a university or of an entire university system to uphold the interests and ideology of the state” (279); they define secularization as “the removal of Christianity from a privileged position in a university or college’s mission, governance, public rhetoric, membership requirements, curriculum, and ethos (e.g., worship)” (279). According to Glazner and Carpenter, nationalization and secularization work collaboratively, one influencing the other. In some cases, the rise of nationalization, due to revolutions, for instance, causes secularization to occur across many Christian universities. In this case, such universities may identify as Christian by their name or denominational association, but they fail to uphold Christian values. While some such political upheavals can cause universities to stray from their core Christian values and move toward a secularized identity, Glanzer and Carpenter also highlight how a liberal democracy ironically acts as “a major enabler” of Christian universities, encouraging diverse religious universities and supporting privatization (285). These three components—Christian missionaries, nationalization and secularization, and the role of government—have been influential in Christian higher education’s development throughout the world.

In addition to these historical patterns, Glanzer and Carpenter maintain four primary themes of Christian higher education’s current condition worldwide: massification, privatization and access, as well as globalization and instrumentalization. Massification refers to the phenomenon of “the tremendous increase in the number of students graduating from secondary schools and demanding higher education” (286). Although higher education across the world is growing, and Christian higher education plays a role in that growth, secular institutions still largely outnumber their Christian counterparts. The bulk of this higher education “boom” is within private institutions, and the majority of Christian institutions are private. While this privatization growth encourages the growth of Christian institutions, Glazner and Carpenter warn readers of the unequal access and isolation that often comes as side effects of privatization. However, the rise in globalization helps to distill isolation among universities, and continues to change education. Glazner and Carpenter borrow Philip Altbach’s globalization definition: “the reality shaped by an increasingly integrated world economy, new information and communications technology (ICT), the emergence of international knowledge network, the role of the English language, and other forces beyond the control of the academic institutions” (293). Globalization enables universities to easily connect with each other, and especially Christian institutions to engage in partnerships. Finally, instrumentalization refers to the
trend focusing on professional degrees versus general education. While the authors argue that Christian universities should prepare students for jobs, they state the necessity of incorporating the liberal arts into professionally focused forms of education, so students understand the purpose behind their chosen career paths. Thus, Christian universities currently have the potential to grow amidst the massification and globalization, but universities need to be aware of the negative effects of privatization.

Finally, the editors’ firm grasp on the challenges facing Christian higher education makes the book a relevant resource. According to Glazner and Carpenter, Christian universities need to focus on holistic education and resist increasing pressures from the state and the growing secular higher education community. Christian universities, according to Glazner and Carpenter, should “seek to incarnate a holistic vision of human flourishing grounding in Christ and the vision of the kingdom of God” (297). In addition, Glazner and Carpenter suggest Christian higher education institutions should invest in the co-curricular lives of the students and continue to develop broader partnerships with other Christian universities. Finally, a common challenge to Christian higher education institutions noted by all authors is keeping their institutions’ Christian identities while still engaging with the world. Private Christian universities run the risk of maintaining their religious identities at the expense of withdrawing from the public arena, which runs counter to a Christian mission. Glazner and Carpenter assert—regardless of the present and upcoming challenges—the necessity of Christian universities to uphold biblical standards and maintain a distinct Christian identity: “The most fundamental threat facing the Christian university is when Christians lose their way and substitute other loves such as academic prestige, love for knowledge or humanity, or even institutional survival for their first love: for God, God’s truth, and God’s reign” (303).

*Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaissance* is a helpful resource for both Christian and non-Christian higher education administrators or faculty. The book is an invaluable resource because of its approachable writing style and continuity between chapters. While there are a variety of chapter authors representing various regions of the world, each of the authors writes for a broad audience; it would be easy for the writers to lose readership with Christian or education jargon, but each of the chapter authors eschews this, which helps the text contribute to the broader field of international and comparative education.

Although this book is an excellent resource, it makes the reader aware of the wealth of research still to be done within international Christian higher education. For instance, campus internationalization and study abroad or educational exchange initiatives are two areas of international and comparative education that could be studied within Christian higher education. Since *Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaissance* gives readers an essential understanding of the landscape of Christian higher education worldwide, perhaps the next step is to explore what Christian higher education is doing to make its students global citizens and encourage a diverse engagement with Christian faith.

Reviewed by Cordell P. Schulten

One of the most persistent and practical of life’s questions is: what is my particular purpose for living? Or, as Doug Koskela puts it, what is my missional calling? Since hundreds of volumes have been composed upon the topic of vocation throughout the centuries of Christian thought, it would be easy to dismiss this relatively brief and contemporary work as having little to add to the abundance of insights already penned by theologians and philosophers, but that is not the case. Drawing upon both theological inquiry and his personal experiences with students, Professor Koskela engages the subject of vocation through drawing a framework that distinguishes between missional calling, direct calling and general calling. He carefully describes the chief characters of his three dimensions of calling and then sets each within its Biblical context. Having clarified the distinctions among these aspects of vocation, Koskela then articulates what may be the most helpful contributions his book offers by providing practical suggestions and guidelines for discerning an individual’s missional calling, confirming the instances of direct calling, and obeying the general calling that is upon every person’s life who is seeking to be a follower of Christ.

Koskela begins his discussion of vocation with the idea of missional calling. He defines “missionsal calling” as the main contribution that God intends your life to make it to His kingdom. It will be the common thread that runs throughout your life experiences reflecting a sustained and specific purpose to which your life gives expression. Examples of missional callings suggested by Koskela are improving life for children on the autism spectrum, fostering spiritual formation for young professionals, or providing clean water to people who need it. Whatever the particular missional calling may be in a person’s life, it will be characterized by five basic features. First, it will generally align with the gifts and abilities God has granted to the person. Second, missional calling will involve something that the person is passionate about and which gives them joy. Third, it will usually take a significant amount of time, prayer and consultation with others within a community of faith to discern the focus, scope, and full nature of a person’s missional calling. Fourth, it will be lived out in many ways throughout a person’s life and not just through the person’s career or specific work positions. A person’s work will most often be instrumental in the fulfillment of his missional calling, but it will rarely exhaust the full scope of that calling. Finally, Koskela suggests that a person will generally have only one missional calling in a lifetime. In sum, missional calling may be viewed as the particular verse a person’s life contributes to advancement of God’s kingdom work in the here and now.

Next, Koskela distinguishes missional calling from a direct call by God upon a person’s life. He notes that a common misunderstanding among many
who are seeking God’s will for their lives is to confuse missional calling with direct calling. This often occurs since many of the most vivid stories of calling in the Bible are examples of direct calling. Take, for example, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Jeremiah, and Paul. Koskela defines “direct calling” to describe those occasions where God expressly instructs a person to do a specific task. He readily acknowledges that God is still issuing direct calls to his children, though few today should expect to hear an audible voice from burning bush. Instead, the reality of the present work of the Holy Spirit through the living Word of God may indeed confront a follower of Christ with a sense of direct calling to a particular task at a specific place in time and space. Once again, Koskela outlines five features that characterize a direct calling. First, in possible contrast to missional calling, a direct calling may not align with a person’s acknowledged gifts and abilities. This is often evident by a sense of inadequacy that a person feels when confronted by a direct calling. Yet, Scripture is replete with the truth that God’s direct calling, if indeed it is from Him, will be accompanied by His enablement to fulfill the task assigned. Second, a direct calling may not align with a person’s passion nor be a source of joy. One of the best examples of this aspect of direct calling is the prophet Jonah who had no desire to preach in Nineveh and had to be taken to the very depths of despair before he responded in obedience to God’s direct call. Third, and again in contrast to missional calling, a person will usually have little doubt about the task that is being assigned, but there will always still be a need to confirm that the direct calling to a particular task is from God and not from some other source. Koskela warns that this is the most important aspect of direct calling and further provides very practical guidelines for the confirmation process that includes both personal self-examination through spiritual disciplines of prayer, mediation upon Scripture and even fasting. He also urges that the person seeking confirmation submit to a community of faith’s review and counsel regarding the authenticity of the direct calling. Fourth, Koskela observes that direct callings may vary significantly in duration and scope. While a person’s missional calling will find expression in nearly every relationship with others throughout a person’s entire life, instances of direct calling, when and if they arise, may be very brief in duration and may call the person to serve only one other person. Finally, in stark contrast to missional calling, some people may never experience a direct calling while a few may have several instances of direct calling at various stages of life. Here, Koskela provides helpful counsel especially to an eager young believer who is stifled in his spiritual service to others because he is waiting for a “Damascus Road” experience, which may never come.

The solution Koskela offers to those who are thwarted by either a lack of discernment of a missional calling or an absence of a direct calling is daily obedience to the general calling that God has issued to every one of His children. General calling is the kind of life that God calls all believers to follow. Koskela describes it as being open to a variety of articulations such as a life characterized by regular prayer or one that is growing in faithfulness as a follower of Christ. Unlike both missional and direct calling, there is no need to seek out or discern general calling since it is expressly embodied in Scripture and the life of Christ.
As such, it will be taught and supported by a person’s community of faith. Consequently, being in church fellowship with other believers and giving attention to the teaching and preaching of God’s Word is the very place where general calling will be heard. Koskela also warns that adherence to general calling by God’s daily supply of grace will not assure a person that life will always run smoothly, nor should a person neglect general calling due to a lack of passion or joy. Instead, a person must trust himself each day to God’s ongoing work in and through his life according to His purpose and for His glory.

As a whole, I found Koskela’s discussion of vocation under the framework of missional, direct, and general calling to be helpful and so recommend this work to both those seeking and guiding others on the vocational journey. I was, however, somewhat disappointed by Koskela’s lack of further engagement of the Scriptures, especially within his chapters on direct and general calling. The notion of direct calling is completely dependent upon a person’s being led by the Holy Spirit, and yet, Koskela offered little Biblical reference and explanation to this explicit work of the Holy Spirit as it is taught in Galatians 5 and Romans 8. Finally, Koskela’s notion of general calling fails to recognize its essential theological foundation in the doctrine of God’s creation of human beings imago Dei and its completion in God’s ultimate redemptive purpose for believers—conformity to the image of Christ. The discussion of general calling could have been substantially strengthened and clarified by some poignant quotations from Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Discipleship, especially his final chapter.

Reviewed by Glenn Hopp

Lauren F. Winner, who is a writer, an Episcopal priest, and a seminary professor at Duke Divinity School, has written a book that many audiences will find appealing. Its subject is the images we use for God and how we can rely too much on certain stock pictures: God as king and God as shepherd. Winner turns to scripture to find some less familiar pictures and metaphors for God as a way of guiding the reader to notice in the everyday world analogies that increase and freshen our awareness of God. It is a consistently engaging and smart book that will be embraced by many.

Scholars will appreciate Winner’s impressive range of examples, the thorough endnotes, and the annotated bibliography that not only cite relevant studies but also continue discussions begun in the text with additional observations and references. Lay readers seeking devotional reading will respond to the inviting informality of her first-person voice: “I do a lot of reading by the bookcase in my kitchen, seated in a brown leather chair, which some students dropped off for temporary storage, and which I hope they never reclaim” (109). Teachers of writing, especially creative nonfiction, will point approvingly to the way Winner blends the friendly narrative voice with the scholarship. In the reference quoted above from her chapter “Bread and Vine,” for example, she explains that she is reading a monograph called *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs* by Psyche A. Williams-Forson about African-American women and the self-expression they have found in cooking chicken: “I get this experience three times a year, if I’m lucky: a book I want to stay up all night reading, a book that excites me more than I can convey” (109-110).

Winner then takes us further behind the scenes of her research to remark on how the monograph spoke to her, especially the chapter on women packing shoe-box lunches for their family members traveling in the Jim Crow South, where they were refused restaurant service. That comment prompts Winner to recall other readings about food preparation and its capacity for nurture as well as nutrition. Winner’s goal in the chapter is to elucidate the biblical image of God as a provider of food: “Here is God preparing food for the Israelites journeying in the wilderness: God is not just abstractly raining coriander flakes down from the heavens. God is staying up late to prepare shoe box lunches for people on a perilous journey” (112). One of the supreme pleasures of her book is this twin tack of writing her chapter while showing how the ideas for the chapter shaped themselves in her reading and thinking. Many people think of research as the dry spadework dutifully preceding a writer’s uncovering of her own golden insights. Among its other merits, this book gives a wonderful picture of how research stimulates and deepens a writer’s own ideas in a healthy tangle of cause and
effect. Winner happily credits the seminal writers whose work has further bloomed in her own thinking.

Such a learned familiarity of style consistently surprises by linking unexpected references. Winner reminds us, for example, that Jesus called Himself the bread or manna of life (a staple of the diet: “No one holds caviar riots; people riot for bread” [93-94]), which later connects with this contemporary concern about cutting carbs:

And doesn’t it seem strange that so many of the weight-loss diets that are popular today take aim at staple foods, food that are inexpensive and easy for the earth to yield? The instruction to lose weight by avoiding carbohydrates and eating more meat seems like an instruction to eat the food that is costliest for the planet to produce. (115)

This chapter covers an amazing breadth of food and drink references: Adam and Eve making food a shorthand for disobedience, the challenge in the modern world of finding the food metaphor meaningful (“I have never been hungry for more than thirty-five minutes” [94]), cooking as a dependable pleasure (“I enjoy the chaotic whirl of a kitchen when you are trying to concoct three different courses at once” [99]; “I wonder if providing food makes God feel, as it makes me feel, needed and important” [100]), a Maxine Kumin essay associating memories of her mother with making blackberry jam, the reverse-Communion image by a thirteenth-century Saxon mystic named Mechthild picturing Jesus wanting us to give Him our “crumbs of pain and adversity” (116), biblical images of intoxication and its suggestiveness, and more.

Other chapters are similarly resonant and stimulating. Winner writes about the reference in Galatians 3 (“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ”) and asks what this “endlessly suggestive” (37) notion of clothing ourselves in God means. Another chapter on smell unlocks the link between smell and memory and explores, among other topics, St. Paul’s language describing Christians as being the “aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.” Thus the “aroma of Christ is diagnostic” (80), she tells us. A humbling chapter on laughter suggests that “when God laughs in the Bible, the laughter is derisive” (181). A chapter on flame explores the volatile nature of that image and suggests that keeping God’s fire alive is a challenge—our impulse is want to tame it into a kind of divine pilot light when its essentially wild nature resists such domestication. The first chapter dwells significantly on the image of God as friend. After pondering the audacity of ranking ourselves as friends of God, Winner tells us that “Theodoret of Cyrus, a fifth-century bishop, said that friendship with God is the entire goal of the Christian life” (17). From this encouragement come comments about what our own friendships teach us about being friends with God, about Chrysostom’s remark that God’s special friends are the saints and the poor, about the mutual well-being that friends desire for one another. Animating and deepening it all are Winner’s honest personal reflections: “I know that I could live anywhere if I had
two or three real friends” (21). Who would not follow a literary guide as forthright as that?

This candor ranks high among Winner’s virtues as a writer. I shall follow her practice of anecdotal examples for a moment and mention how often in reading her book I thought of a comment I had recently made in a literature class. We were studying *The Prince*, and I wanted to lessen somewhat Machiavelli’s notorious reputation by reminding the class that Machiavelli does not say that Christianity is false but does imply that it is generally useless for achieving worldly desires. He is able to show his readers how often in the compartmentalized living of the Renaissance people found it natural to color their worldly goals with religious conviction and how illogical and even silly that was. Machiavelli was, if anything, too candid in exposing the selfish motives of his early-modern readers, but his candor also hit on a truth about Christian faith.

Winner’s candor leads her to explore images that are unsettling and to ask questions and to make comments that push matters even further. She cites images of childbirth that Isaiah uses to characterize God and then bluntly states: “If you attend a church that follows the lectionary, you will never hear that verse read on Sunday from the lectern, not once. Perhaps the lectionary crafters find the picture of God squatting and grunting in labor as disconcerting as I do” (136). She explores the verbs in the image to show that Isaiah is more detailed than simply saying that “God is like a woman in labor” (138), and she explores a laboring woman’s breathing as a reflection of both experiencing pain and managing pain: “The image of God as a laboring woman puts together strength and vulnerability in a way that tells us something about God and how God works” (151).

The last chapter discusses images for God in the Bible that are not explored at length in her book. The one that gets the most attention is the image of God as a battering husband and Israel as a faithless wife, as in the angry, violent words of Ezekiel 16:36-42. Winner sets this chapter in a women’s prison where once a week she co-teaches a class. She knows that as many as 90% of imprisoned women, according to some studies, have been victims of abuse: “To be sure, God as battering husband has little to do with my daily life: I have never been hit. But for many, battery is routine” (245). Although she finds the Ezekiel passage “sickening” (244), she chooses not to razor it out of her Bible. Then a compensating strategy presents itself from her co-teacher Sarah. In a discussion of the second chapter of Malachi, Sarah paraphrases a verse to give the class a better understanding: “‘I hate divorce,’” says the Lord God Almighty. ‘But I also hate a man covering his wife with violence as with a garment’” (246). The clothing image and the role of God as an defender of abused wives provide Winner with a counterbalance to the disturbing images in Ezekiel: “Sarah often says, since this is the Word of God, we are committed to wrestling with it, in the belief that it will eventually bless us, even if we come away from the wrestling limping, like Jacob” (248). This wholehearted desire to dedicate the self to experiencing God more fully and more faithfully characterizes her entire book.

A good book in a sense is like a wrestling match in the give-and-take of idea pushed against idea and the thoroughness with which writer leads reader toward new insights. Winner’s book takes us to the mat in invigorating ways.
Metaphors and similes are useful only up to a point, of course, but their usefulness can uncover truth if we are willing to look beyond conventional limits. At one point Winner mentions that after her parents divorced her mother stopped sending out her yearly Christmas letter because she was locked into thinking of it as having to be uniformly positive and beautiful. Winner’s book shows that she is willing to question such easy expectations and thinking to find a fuller friendship with God.
All of a sudden, Ross Macdonald seems to be everywhere. Kenneth Millar (1915-83), the American-born, Canadian-raised crime novelist who wrote under the name Ross Macdonald, won a best-selling readership and some critical acclaim during his lifetime, but the recent revival of his books may establish him as a writer of enduring and classic stature. Black Lizard, a paperback imprint of Random House, has now brought back into print all the novels of Ross Macdonald, including the eighteen featuring Lew Archer, the loner private eye that continued the literary heritage begun with Dashiell Hammett’s Sam Spade and Raymond Chandler’s Philip Marlowe. The newest Black Lizard title, *The Archer Files*, reprints all of the Lew Archer short stories, some of Ross Macdonald’s essays on writing, and selected scenes from novels the author never completed. The Library of America recently published four of the Archer novels in a collection edited by Tom Nolan, the author of a biography of Kenneth Millar. This new LOA collection is titled *Ross Macdonald: Four Novels of the 1950s*. Two more Library of America anthologies on Ross Macdonald also edited by Nolan are planned, one for the summer of 2016. In addition, a remarkable collection of letters between Kenneth Millar and Eudora Welty illustrates an intriguing and affectionate literary friendship. This book, *Meanwhile There Are Letters*, is co-edited by Tom Nolan and Welty biographer Suzanne Marrs. Finally, filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen have announced that their next project will be a big-screen version of one of Ross Macdonald’s most admired books, *Black Money* (1966).

The list of popular authors influenced and indebted to Ross Macdonald is lengthy, and these disciples have not stinted their praise for their mentor. Sue Grafton wrote of her admiration for the Archer books in her preface to Tom Nolan’s biography of Kenneth Millar: “From [Ross Macdonald] we finally understood that the crime novel could be as challenging, as astute, and as rarefied as the sonnet” (8). Nolan’s biography *Ross Macdonald* (Scribner, 1999) documents more praise. Robert B. Parker, the creator of the Spenser series and an expert on the hard-boiled school of detective literature, hailed Ross Macdonald’s literary accomplishments: “I owe him. . . . For in his craft and his integrity, he made the detective form a vehicle for high seriousness” (414). Jonathan Kellerman cites a used Ross Macdonald paperback he bought for a dime as the
spur to his own writing career: “It gave me a focus on the whole southern California thing, what I call the malignance behind the palm trees” (413). James Ellroy, the current dean of L.A. noir fiction, dedicated his 1984 novel Blood on the Moon “to the memory of KENNETH MILLAR” and said “Ross Macdonald—on an emotional level—for me is the great teacher” (414). In addition to Welty, a list of past and present literary admirers of Kenneth Millar’s work includes Iris Murdoch, John Fowles, Joyce Carol Oates, Jonathan Lethem, and Haruki Murakami.

One of the staples of the Archer novels is the intricacy and ingenuity of their plotting. Kenneth Millar sometimes faulted the lazy plotting of many Raymond Chandler books even though Chandler’s novels in other ways provided inspiration for him. In “The Writer as Detective Hero,” one of the nonfiction writings editor Tom Nolan includes in the Library of America volume, Millar writes:

I learned a great deal from Chandler—any writer can—but there had always been basic differences between us. One was in our attitude to plot. Chandler described a good plot as one that made for good scenes, as if the parts were greater than the whole. I see plot as a vehicle for meaning. It should be as complex as contemporary life, but balanced enough to say true things about it. The surprise with which a detective novel concludes should set up tragic vibrations which run backward through the entire structure. (873)

In The Chill (1964), one of the Archers slated for the second Library of America collection, details concerning three murders dovetail and resolve themselves on the very last page of the narrative. A Ross Macdonald novel usually features this type of Swiss-watch connectedness where the unexpected revelations of plot both surprise and reveal personality. In The Way Some People Die (1951), for example, the culprit shoots one of the victims six times, the last three shots coming after the victim has fallen. In considering the evidence, Archer notes the cruelty of the overkill, and that detail repurposes his thinking from accepting the shooting as self-defense to viewing it as part of a larger pattern of greed and malice.

Kenneth Millar loved the way a novel of detection called for an excavation of the past suggestive of the antecedent action of Greek tragedy. This dredging-up disclosed how the sins of one generation haunted and scarred the lives of the next. Plotting became for Millar a tool for showing that the past is never really past. He also noticed and appreciated the careful plotting of other writers. He seemed to feel that a writer who took care to weave an intricate design of causal events chose to shirk the laziness that often resorted to gratuitous violence or sex to hold readers’ attention. His wife, Margaret Millar (1915-94), was also an accomplished crime novelist, and in one of his 1978 letters to Eudora Welty, Kenneth Millar praised the deft resolution of his wife’s latest novel: “She finished a book in the middle of the attack [of shingles], a wild tragic-farce which is also a
mystery novel that solves itself in the last sentence, indeed I think in the last or second-to-last word of the last sentence” (396). (One of Margaret Millar’s novels, *Beast in View* [1956], has been included in another newly published Library of America volume, *Women Crime Writers: Four Suspense Novels of the 1950s.*)

An additional appeal of the Archer novels is the striking image or simile. Millar had a poet’s deftness for finding the phrase that could say much with little, that could establish setting, create atmosphere, disclose personality. The climax of *The Barbarous Coast* (1956), for example, returns Archer to one of the murder scenes from months earlier, an ocean-side Hollywood cabana. He investigates, not sure what he is looking for. Then he spots on one of the louvered blinds in a dressing-room door “a series of indentations which looked like toothmarks, around them a faint red lipstick crescent, dark with age.” Archer connects the details from his talks with suspects and realizes that the wife of a philandering mogul had observed through the blinds her husband’s infidelity: “I examined the underside of the soft wooden strip and found similar markings. Pain jerked through my mind like a knotted string, pulling an image after it. It was pain for the woman who had stood on this bench in the dark, watching the outer room through the cracks between the louvers and biting down on the wood in agony” (414). Such suggestive imagery colors the Ross Macdonald canon. Tom Nolan reports in his biography that Ken Millar had an ability to quote copiously from poetry as well as to recall the phrasing of his own prose. Nolan relates that one admirer mentioned to Millar a simile she enjoyed from *Black Money*: “A little pale moon hung in a corner of the sky, faint as a thumbprint on a window,” only to have the author slightly correct her so as to preserve the verbal rhythm he had carefully worked out: “... faint as a thumbprint on a windowpane” (397).

Another primary pleasure of the series is observing the growing development and depth of Lew Archer. He is a detective with an open heart and a compassionate moral sympathy. About his detective, Kenneth Millar said in a 1973 interview in the *Journal of Popular Culture*: “Like several good private detectives I know, he’s a better man than most of the people he has to work with. That’s what makes him effective. He’s in control of himself. He’s not a moral ideal, not a paragon, but a guy that’s fairly trustworthy.” The moral seriousness of the Archer novels beginning with *The Way Some People Die* imparts a greater spiritual density to narrator-hero Lew Archer and to the unfolding series. A murder becomes for Archer less a puzzle to sort and solve than a murky pool to wade into and be stained by. Seeing such frailties makes him receptive to the humanity of others and to their desperate searches for security. More than one critic has compared Archer the detective to an unofficial priest/confessor in getting witnesses and suspects to surrender their moral and psychological burdens. In book after book characters respond to the detective’s empathy and often find it restorative and cleansing. In the final sentence of chapter 16 of *The Barbarous Coast*, Archer says, “The problem was to love people, try to serve them, without wanting anything from them. I was a long way from solving that one” (320). Consequently, the detective rarely turns his back on human suffering. *The Doomsters* (1958) begins with an escapee from a psyche ward pounding on Archer’s door before sunrise. He wants to tell the detective the circumstances of
his father’s death six months earlier and his own wrongful incarceration in the asylum. Archer is not so sure he wants any part of the tangled events, but his compassion overrules his caution: “It was one of those times when you have to decide between your own convenience and the unknown quantity of another man’s trouble. Besides, the other man and his way of talking didn’t go with his ragtag clothes, his mud-stained work shoes. It made me curious” (438). The last three chapters of *The Doomsters* contain the exposed culprit’s extended confession of four murders. By that time, the case has become so resonant of greed, familial guilt, and suffering as to make the scene as much a spiritual and psychological release as a knitting together of motives and clues. A reviewer in *The Atlantic Monthly* wrote accurately in saying that “most mystery writers merely write about crime. Ross Macdonald writes about sin.”

These merits of plotting, writing, and character merge in *The Galton Case* (1959) to make for one of Ross Macdonald’s best novels and a turning point in his career. It is a book the author has discussed at length in the essay “Writing *The Galton Case,*” which is also included with the novel in the Library of America collection. The novel draws on autobiographical elements of exile, identity, and the hunger for connection. Millar was born in California but led a nomadic life growing up in Canada. The case concerns a wealthy California matriarch who uses Archer to reach out and attempt to heal her estrangement from a runaway son and heir, someone absent for twenty years. The plot uproots generations of the family’s life and digs deeper into the past than any previous Archer novel; it confirms our need to look at the past squarely and humbly and to make room for its painful truths. In spite of this depth of emotion and idea, however, *The Galton Case* does not sacrifice the enjoyment readers expect from popular detective fiction. The last third of the novel excels at the red herrings and misdirection crime novelists cultivate. As a fuller picture of the buried past emerges, these concluding chapters spotlight one character in particular who transforms in Archer’s eyes from waif to opportunist to possibly the fulfillment of long-harbored hopes. Plot and idea merge. His shifting appearances are both the result of adroit plotting and a peeling-back of the layered venality that in time tempts us all. Millar’s subsequent novels all follow the generational template set forth in the ambitious design of *The Galton Case.*

Some Archer fans, of course, might quibble with editor Tom Nolan’s choices for the first LOA omnibus. *The Way Some People Die,* for example, is a strong novel, but it features a subplot involving organized crime. Millar was probably not at his best in rendering professional hoodlums, who can seem a bit clichéd in his pages, and eventually he abandoned such melodrama. *The Ivory Grin* (1952) is another early Archer novel that might have made for a better choice for the anthology. Nevertheless, Nolan speaks correctly about how success in a popular genre can hide artistic accomplishment when he tells interviewer Scott Timberg at Salon.com: “[Ross] Macdonald matters because I think he’s one of the finest fiction writers in American literature, not just detective fiction but all of American modern fiction. The things that are most interesting and appealing about him, and valuable to people still, are the beauty of the expression, of the language, the beauty of the prose, which has poetic qualities
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and is informed by a great lyric talent.” The quartet of Archers included in Nolan’s collection, the five nonfiction “other writings,” a detailed chronology of the author’s life, and helpful annotations to the texts all make for an impressive and enjoyable collection of the work of an underappreciated writer.

Kenneth Millar’s status as a popular and critically accepted author grew in large measure from a 1969 front-page review by William Goldman in The New York Times Book Review of The Goodbye Look, the fifteenth Archer novel. In his review Goldman called the Archer books “the finest series of detective novels ever written by an American.” One year later Eudora Welty described herself in an interview in the Times Book Review as a longtime fan of Ross Macdonald’s books. When the next Archer novel, The Underground Man, appeared in 1971, the Times asked Welty to write a front-page review, and she enhanced the crime novelist’s reputation further with her discerning praise: “The Underground Man is written so close to the nerve of today as to expose most of the apprehensions we live with” (Library of America 910). At that time a correspondence was beginning between Millar and Welty, and the newly published collection of their letters edited and annotated by Tom Nolan and Suzanne Marrs provides both a record of the shop talk of two accomplished writers and, more importantly, a close look at a growing, loving relationship.

Millar and Welty met only a handful of times. One of the recurrent topics of their correspondence was his invitations to her and anticipations for her to come from Jackson, Mississippi, to attend the annual writers’ conference in Santa Barbara that he helped organize. Following such visits in 1975, 1976, and 1977, their letters exude the enthusiasm of two creative people whose batteries have been freshly charged. We also see candor in the letters. At one point Millar has been invited to edit an anthology of suspense fiction, and he asks Welty, an avid reader of mysteries, for her recommendations. They both consider, reread, and then reject as overrated Helen Eustis’s 1947 academic novel The Horizontal Man. Continually, they share their views on their reading. Welty’s enthusiasm is particularly appealing: “I love [Chekhov] above all short story writers ever born—do you?” (148). He replies that he does: “I learn from his letters that if he hadn’t become a writer he would have become a psychiatrist. (So might I.)” (150). Millar calls attention to an abstract locution in one of his sentences and tells Welty:

That last sentence may betray the fact that I have been reading fairly late Henry James, The Wings of the Dove [1902]. It’s a terribly poignant novel, but at this point I’m not quite sure of it. I started it once years ago, but didn’t get through it, though I love James. This time is different: it holds me in more kinds of suspense than one. (146-47)

Welty solicits his ongoing opinions as he continues with the James novel. His conclusion, for whatever it may reveal about Henry James’s book, speaks clearly about Kenneth Millar’s sense of compassion:
Having diligently read my way through *The Wings of the Dove* I think I can report that it is safe for you to give it a skip. Line by line it’s marvelously wrought but somehow overcharged with electricity that fails to flow from scene to scene, and by emotion which is elaborately known but not quite felt, like a model of the circulatory system without any heart attached to it. (152)

Millar’s sense of purpose and passion also comes across in a passage about a writers’ conference that Welty could not attend:

My day was filled with memories of you. It was my annual day to go to the S.B. Writers’ Conference and answer questions. If I can judge by the questions and the voices in which they were posed, the students were a cut above previous years, as a whole, but there was the usual lack of focused seriousness, without which teaching time is mostly wasted. And I must say that there was something missing, a lift and rectitude, like a bird’s joyousness in flight, which you always brought to our meetings. (396)

Each correspondent certainly found a receptive heart and soul in the other. Eudora Welty never married. Ken Millar’s marriage to Margaret Millar brought together two people with different temperaments—he more convivial, she more of a loner—who further struggled with the pain of their daughter’s troubled youth and early death in 1970. The outlet and solace Millar and Welty found in each other seems to have been considerable. Their letters become a chronicle of a loving relationship that assumes greater poignancy in the late 1970s when Millar’s memory began to fail. Eventually the sharp mind that built such intricately plotted novels faded from the Alzheimer’s disease that became fatal in 1983. During Millar’s last two years, Welty loyally continued her letters to him and with Margaret Millar’s permission even visited Ken Millar a few months before his death. Welty began, first, a story and, later, a novel based on her love and concern for Millar during his decline. She later destroyed over a hundred manuscript pages of the novel before her death in 2001; her unfinished and fragmentary story “Henry” is published (462-90) for the first time as an appendix in this collection. *Meanwhile There Are Letters* is an inspiring book and a wonderful tribute to two sensitive and gifted people.

Reviewed by John J. Han

This book is an updated Penguin Classics edition of Frederick Douglass’s well-known slave narrative that originally appeared in 1845. A gut-wrenching memoir written by a former slave, it reflects the indomitable spirit of the African-American narrator who experienced the scourge of slavery but escaped it with determination and courage. The suffering of the slaves in this book can be excruciating to read, the incidents may sound surreal for some of today’s readers, yet Douglass’s narrative is a reminder of a painful chapter in U.S. history. More than a slave narrative, Douglass’s memoir contains universal truths for today’s readers—the possibility of human cruelty, the importance of literacy in gaining freedom, and the ways in which religious teachings can be distorted to justify social evil. The author’s persistent pursuit of self-education—which he rightly believed would lead him to true freedom—is poignantly portrayed in the work. Douglass’s eloquent prose style itself is a testament to his hard-earned literacy.

Throughout the narrative, Douglass describes the inhumane, brutal treatment of slaves. Some slaveholders are kinder than others, but whippings were common, defiant slaves were killed, slaveholders with small means bought young black girls to produce future slaves, and slaves were traded alongside animals in the market. The inhumaneness of slave trade in Chapter 18 is somewhat similar to what Harriet Beecher Stowe describes in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), yet unlike Stowe, Douglass does not portray whites as angelic figures. Some slave owners are initially kind to him but end up hostile. Mrs. Sophia Auld is a case in point. Initially “a kind and tender-hearted woman” who teaches Douglass to read, she stops doing so under pressure from her husband, who tells her that a literate slave would learn to think and thus become discontented about his or her life. Mrs. Auld’s episode is remarkable in that slavery corrupts slave owners themselves.

One of the pervading themes of Douglass’s narrative is reading as a means of freedom. As a bright young boy, the author realizes that education—especially literacy—is the way to freedom. However, Douglass’s self-education is a long and arduous process. When Mrs. Auld stops teaching him how to spell basic words, Douglass finds creative ways for self-education. In a rarely humorous scene in this narrative, the author explains how he bribed poor white boys with bread, asking them to teach him how to write. In return for physical bread, he was seeking “more valuable bread of knowledge.” Having no pen and paper, he practiced handwriting in the dirt. Once he saw a new word, he committed it to his memory, trying not to forget it. Sadly, as a literate black man, he was an exception rather than the norm in his day. When he published his narrative in
1845, the title ended with “Written by Himself”; the author had to assure the reader that he was indeed the author of the memoir.

On his journey to emancipation, Douglass experiences some additional moments of clarity. At age sixteen, he engages in a two-hour fight with his notoriously cruel master, Mr. Covey, and subdues him. After the fight, Mr. Covey does not whip Douglass anymore. This incident provides Douglass with a sense of self-confidence, as well as the realization that evil should be confronted, not avoided: “This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood.”

Douglass also gains self-confidence through reading *The Columbian Orator* (1797), a language arts textbook popularly used in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In the book, he reads a dialogue between a slaveholder and his slave, each of whom defends his position on slavery; Douglass is also touched by Sheridan’s powerful speech on Catholic emancipation. These documents reaffirm for him the wickedness of slavery: “The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights.” Considering that he read *The Columbian Orator* when he was twelve, a highly impressionable age, one can easily imagine how such a text could have formulated his lifelong ideas about social justice and human rights.

Douglass’s narrative shows that the Bible was used as grounds for both slavery and anti-slavery. Chapter 9 includes an interesting episode involving a Methodist camp meeting in 1832. After the meeting, some slaveholders become even crueler whereas others become kinder to slaves. Slave owners found justification for slavery in the Bible. For example, Master Thomas Auld “found religious sanction for his cruelty” based on Luke 12:47, which reads, “He that knoweth his master’s will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.” Slave owners also found a biblical justification for oppressing blacks based on the interpretation that God cursed Ham, the supposed ancestor of black people. On his part, Douglass and his fellow slaves call the Christianity of slaveholding America corrupt and immoral. Ironically, both slaveholders and slaves prayed to the same God; a difference is that the former believed that God sanctioned slavery, whereas the latter prayed for freedom from those slaveholders. Another irony is that, despite his abhorrence of pious, slave-holding Christians, Douglass still converted to their religion. Apparently, he held a complicated relationship with Christian faith.

Douglass’s straightforward prose style is sometimes complemented by poetic lines. Chapter 8 includes a sadly lyrical passage in which the author describes his grandmother whose utility has expired and thus is left to die alone:

She gropes her way, in the darkness of age, for a drink of water. Instead of the voices of her children, she hears by day the moans of the dove, and by night the screams of the hideous owl. All is gloom. The grave is at the door. And now, when weighed down
by the pains and aches of old age, when the head inclines to the feet, when the beginning and ending of human existence meet, and helpless infancy and painful old age combine together—at this time, this most needful time, the time for the exercise of that tenderness and affection which children only can exercise towards a declining parent—my poor old grandmother, the devoted mother of twelve children, is left all alone, in yonder little hut, before a few dim embers…. Will not a righteous God visit for these things?

This passage clearly reflects a mind that, through training, has internalized the beauty of words. As Ira Dworkin rightly notes in her introduction to the current volume,

Douglass used his autobiographical opportunity to do more than document his experiences; he performed his literacy in a style that placed his genius beyond reproach. His intellectual performance became a foundational argument against not only slavery but also the American libel of racial inferiority.

Times have changed, and Americans live in a multiethnic, multicultural society in the twenty-first century. However, Douglass’s memoir still captivates readers with harrowing episodes and, more importantly, with his unceasing desire to pull himself out of the pit of bondage. It is a story about human survival and human triumph that has universal appeal. Slavery is evil, yet it continues to exist in some parts of the world. Douglass’s narrative shows that, being created equal, humans deserve respect and dignity and sometimes need to fight to gain them.
Poems

“Zurbaran’s Crucifixion” and Other Poems

Janice Witherspoon Neuleib

Zurbaran’s Crucifixion
The Art Institute

How many hours spent on this bench?
Not so many as he has hung on that cross,
a brutal piece of wood, suspended
in blackness, the beautiful
body awkwardly slung,
shoulders uneven, head bowed.

Is he the father and the son?
When a man dies for another,
how does the exchange work?
What does the recipient gain?
How can one thank
the broken figure, repay the price, admire the beauty,
and bear the torture borne?

Year upon year, he hangs
naked, wounded, spent.
Before him, I gaze and wonder,
a new me each time I come.

Hoping perhaps to solve
the mystery that will not yield
its secret nor even
hint at why he died this way.

What beauty in such suffering,
what sorrow in such mystery,
the magic beckons, tantalizing
with questions that only
death will answer.
Good Friday, 1613, Riding Westward: 2012

Dearest Donne, I read now,
*Burn off my rust and my deformity;*
*Restore Thine image so much, by They grace,*
*That thou may‘st know me, and I‘ll turn my face.*
Forty, fifty years now I’ve read these words
Good Friday after Good Friday,
year after year, watching the words turn.
Now here am I, ten years beyond your fifty-nine.

Each year your words change
as my experiences temper
meaning, mystery, and magic.
Metaphysics bemused my infant
understanding when first we met,
yet now the great paradoxes,
the ambiguities, the double helix
of being say all there can be to say.

My students muse on the Aztec calendar.
I say that when I join you and yours,
that will be my world’s end,
and then I’ll turn my face,
straight on into paradox,
paradise, and promises you made.

Pine Tree

At my birth in 1943
my father planted a pine tree.
Last I saw it, the oak beside no longer rivaled
the size of that straight
scented spear.

I soon imagined that I would live
as long as that pine tree survived.
Mother died in ’96, and I went home.
It stood still, tall, green--dark red
peonies beneath.

I haven’t been home since
and am afraid to ask
about its fate.
Pine Tree 2: Homecoming

My tree was born when I first came to light.
She sprouted low beside a young white oak,
the one that grandma saved from grandpa’s ax
when they, new wed, first claimed this land.

Now newborn cones, soft green, hang high,
high as the summit of that craggy oak.
I gaze in wonder, two and seventy years
now gone, yet she’s as green and straight

as when we both began to plant deep roots.
I too stand tall, surrounded by soft ghosts
of all those strong ones gone and bow my head
in wonder, love, and awe that we still grace

this place: the old, the sturdy youth, the clan
then planted, now strewn far, well met this day.

Inklings

Years later, we drove through Oxford,
searching for the road where Lewis lived,
the house he built for all his entourage.
The famous C. S., known to all his friends
as Jack, had said a dog made heaven Heaven.

Lewis died the day Kennedy was shot,
his face barely noted in the news
that cold November. His friend and
partner in belief, Tolkien, peeled
away the mystery, smoothed the memory.

Careless of the wheel of fortune humans
know, a cloud of angels hugged the earth that day,
blue eyes heavy as they carried saints away.
Their cloud peeled back thin barriers
between rough death and sweet eternity.
Mixed Media, Three Poems

Eldonna DeWeese

Short Story

A fragile creature
   of summer
Caught my attention
   between the bites of cereal
   and the words of St. John.

He swooped in
   and then became still
as though inviting
   contemplation,
his tentative sensors
   wafting the winds of my breath.

Who taught you, slender one,
to overdress your pastel body
   in long-oval gossamer wings
   of green-tinted net?
Who taught you to wash your face
and preen your antennae
   under your short arm
   in graceful, curving parabolas
   that flip straight
   when the long tip
   escapes you?

There are expensive details in your design;
   Yet, who knows
   the destiny
   you dressed for?

Are you one tiny syllable of the Word?

Book closed,
   breakfast ended,
   I go to do the wash.
One-Act Play

Setting:
Drippy-wet day in early fall.

Backdrop:
Dark grey storm clouds, no sun.

Actors:
A forceful breeze,
a fully-leaved, rain-dampened tree.

Performance cue:
Slight shift of clouds that released
a narrow shaft of morning sunlight.

Action:
A happy chorus of trembling, sparkling leaves,
dancing in the spotlight
against the dark grey clouds.

Audience response:
Awe and delight
that a chance glance out my kitchen window
could have caught the brief,
unpublicized performance.

The opening in the cloud quickly closed
and turned off the spotlight.

No curtain call.
Sunday Morning Saxophone Solo

With grateful delight,
we felt our devotion transported,
not by our words,
sung or spoken,
but by the silent words of our hearts—

Wafted on rich, liquid notes,
beautiful, pure notes,
spiraling cleanly upward,

An incense to the Father.
“Communion” and Other Poems

Todd Sukany

Communion

I find an empty altar and kneel there to die. I am not surrounded by flickers of light, wax drips, or holy water. Silence. Silence.

Silence. I hear my heart cry out, “Oh, to die is gain” and an echo return, “Go. And live.”

Simple Solution

The Fountain of Life cannot be found for yourself, it’s a gift offered another.

Without it, the person will forever be young, youthful as the first scent of offense.

Shall We Gather

Peace, like dew, glides down a blade of grass, steadies our breath before we settle back into the soil.
Barren Trees

A master came looking for figs, 
a return on his investment.

He moved under the canopy, 
looked deep into a barrage 
of foliage, deep toward the core. 
He scoured eye level, up, then down.

Expectations. Unfulfilled. 
*Drop that trunk* 
*and let cord wood dry.*

Today, Marla came in 
just as the rest of the class 
was leaving. She’d been 
a week in The Ward, nursing 
her core. She was still close 
to feelings that she’d been a waste 
of space, taking up so much soil, 
when others are clearly, fruit full.
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Call for Papers and Book Reviews

Intégrité:
A Faith and Learning Journal

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Intégrité (pronounced IN tay gri tay) is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal on the integration of Christian faith and higher learning. Founded in the fall of 2002 with the Institutional Renewal Grant from the Rhodes Consultation on the Future of the Church-Related College, it is published both online and in print copy. Interested Christian scholars are encouraged to submit academic articles and book reviews for consideration. Manuscripts should be sent as e-mail attachments (Microsoft Word format) to the editor, John J. Han, at hanjn@mobap.edu.

Articles must be 15-25 pages, and book reviews must be 4-8 pages, both double-spaced. Articles should examine historical, theological, philosophical, cultural, and/or pedagogical issues related to faith-learning integration. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- the current state and/or future of the church-related college
- history of Christian liberal arts education
- Christianity and contemporary culture
- a Christian perspective on multiculturalism and diversity
- service learning
- academic freedom in a Christian context
- implementation of Christian truths in academic disciplines
- Christian education in the non-Western world
- global Christianity.

Articles must engage in faith-learning issues or controversies in a scholarly, critical manner. We generally do not consider manuscripts that are merely factual, devotional, or sermonic. Due dates are March 1 for inclusion in the spring issue and September 1 for the fall issue.

Articles are expected to be research-based but must focus on the author’s original thought. We typically do not consider articles that use more than twenty-five secondary sources; merely present other scholars’ opinions without developing extended, thoughtful analysis; and/or use excessive endnotes. Direct quotations, especially lengthy ones, should be used sparingly.
Considering that most *Intégrité* readers are Christian scholars and educators not necessarily having expertise on multiple disciplines, articles and book reviews must be written in concise, precise, and easy-to-understand style. Writers are recommended to follow what William Strunk, Jr., and E.B. White suggest in *The Elements of Style*: use definite, specific, concrete language; omit needless words; avoid a succession of loose sentences; write in a way that comes naturally; and avoid fancy words.

For citation style, refer to the current edition of *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Articles should include in-text citations in parentheses, a list of endnotes (if applicable), and an alphabetical listing of works cited at the end of the article. Book reviews need only page numbers in parentheses after direct quotations.