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I'd like to begin by thanking all my contributors, for excellent essays and good grace as we worked together. A number of the contributors also made astute suggestions regarding essay topics and the overall shape of the Companion. I am very grateful for their input, and the Companion is immeasurably stronger as a result of what they had to say.

As I discuss in the introductory essay, the work of this Companion benefitted from the June 2014 Religion and Literature Symposium that we held at the University of Toronto. The symposium provided an opportunity for many of those involved with the project to share their work with each other, and the event as a whole was a delight to be part of and host. I entered the symposium with high expectations, and these were surpassed during our three days of formal and informal conversation. Our time together was facilitated by financial assistance from Deidre Lynch and also the award of an SIG grant from the Department of English at the University of Toronto. I am grateful, too, for the other support offered by my department. In addition to letting us use a meeting room, the interest of academic colleagues (especially Paul Stevens, Joshua Gang, and Smaro Kamboureli) and the generous administrative support provided by Clare Orchard, Cathy Chong, Cristina Henrique, and others, was greatly appreciated. I would also like to pay tribute to the many smart and personable graduate students from my department who joined in with the symposium and helped ensure that everything ran smoothly. Their interest in the work of the symposium was inspiring, and our time together was made all the richer by their active and insightful involvement.

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My wife, Jo, and son, Samuel, have also played an essential role in this volume. They are the most important people in my life, and they deserve more thanks and praise than I can possibly record here. Their consistent love for me has enabled this project to come to fruition, and although they are unlikely to want to read the pages herein anytime soon, I hope they will sense their hand in the final product as it sits on our bookshelf. I am thankful, too, for the long-standing support of my parents, without which I would not have been in a position to conceive

5

MODERN DEBATES

Christianity and Literature, Literature and Theology, and *Religion and Literature*

Matthias Bauer and Angelika Zirker

In what follows we are going to be concerned with "modern debates" in the three leading journals in the field of Literature and Religion—*Christianity and Literature*, *Literature and Theology*, and *Religion and Literature*—which we regard as representative of the debate in general.[1] We will first present a brief overview of the journals as well as the subject matter treated in them, before outlining six aspects that we see structuring approaches to the field.[2] In the second half of this essay, we will focus on examples of debates by applying our approach to single articles published in each of the journals.

1. The Journals

The oldest of the three journals is *Christianity and Literature* (*CL*), which has been published by the Conference on Christianity and Literature (CCL) for over sixty years.[3] It tries to address questions such as "Where does the study of Christianity and literature stand in relation to other currents within the critical pluralism of today?" and "Is the attempt to distinguish a Christian critique of literature from a critique of literature productive and/or necessary?"[4] Its focus, as the title and these questions suggest, is on matters of *Christianity* and literature, not religion or theology in more general terms.

In a short portrayal on the website of Oxford University Press, *Literature and Theology* (*LT*), founded in 1987, presents itself as "a quarterly peer-review journal [that] provides a critical non-confessional forum for both textual analysis and theoretical speculation, encouraging explorations of how religion is embedded in culture."[5] This journal has a far broader understanding of literary study and theology and asks contributors "to engage with and reshape traditional discourses within the studies of literature and religion, and their cognate fields." Its approach, as its general editor Andrew Hass put it in an article in 2009, is marked by a certain amount of tension "in the theoretics of our journal," a tension that is based on the "placing together of the two labels in the title" and the fact that the definitions of "theology" and "literature" in the overall context of the journal were, at least in its beginning, rather opaque, a problem we will return to in what follows.[6]

The journal *Religion and Literature* (*RL*) "was initially founded by graduate students at Notre Dame" and published as *NDEJ (The Notre Dame English Journal): a Journal of Religion in Literature* from 1977–84 before changing its name.[7] The focus is wider than that of

CL as *RL* is interested in religion and literature, rather than only Christianity and literature; but its approach has a different theoretical orientation than *LT*: the journal asks "that all contributors approach religion as a living tradition—not only or merely as cultural artifact or subset of history."[8] Like *LT*, however, it includes contributions on Islam, Judaism and other world religions, whilst focusing on aspects of the Christian tradition. This is why "Christianity" is not included in our statistics below: it is a common denominator of various topics in the three journals but comparatively rarely addressed as a subject of its own.

The various approaches are reflected in the topics, authors, and periods that are most frequently addressed in the journals. Our short statistical overview, however, also shows that there are some common denominators.

The top five topics and authors discussed in the journals are as follows:[9]

Topics			
	CL	*LT*	*RL*
1.	Mysticism	Judaism	Relation of Religion and Literature
2.	Poetry (i.e. creative writing)	Bible	Judaism
3.	Poetics	Hermeneutics	Islam
4.	Bible	Imagery/Metaphors	Mysticism
5.	Redemption	OT, NT, Apocalypse, Ethics, Allegory	Apocalypse

Authors			
	CL	*LT*	*RL*
1.	William Shakespeare	William Shakespeare	Dante Alighieri
2.	C. S. Lewis	Augustine	William Shakespeare
3.	John Milton	John Milton	John Milton
4.	Flannery O'Connor	Emmanuel Levinas	Flannery O'Connor
5.	T. S. Eliot	T. S. Eliot Søren Kierkegaard Paul Ricœur Fyodor Dostoyevsky	T. S. Eliot

With regard to literary periods, it is interesting to see that *LT* has, in the field of European literature, a far stronger focus on antiquity than the other two journals (*CL* 6; *LT* 24; *RL* 5), while most articles on medieval literature appear in *RL* (*RL* 52; *CL* 31; *LT* 28). The eighteenth century and the Romantic era are the least frequently represented periods in all journals. Most articles on the twentieth century (almost double as many as in the other two) appear in *LT*. In the field of American literature, all three journals focus on twentieth-century literature. Most of the articles on American literature are in *CL*, where we also find the greatest focus on contemporary literature. *LT* is lowest in number when it comes to the literature of the nineteenth century. All three journals publish extremely little on the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, which is, however, a general trend in American studies.

What can we conclude from these statistics, acknowledging the limitations of sample size and recognizing changes within each journal during their histories? At the most general level, we can see that the material discussed is more literary than religious. And we can also see that essays are

not thematically restricted, a point already suggested by the conjunction "and" in their titles. More specifically, it seems to us that *CL* mostly offers debates on the nature of texts in the context of Christianity; for example, Shakespeare is read mostly against a Christian background. In *LT* there is a greater emphasis on religion/theology (i.e. more debates about the literary dimensions of religion/religious texts) as well as a more theoretical emphasis (cf. hermeneutics, Levinas, and Ricœur, etc.); we also observe a gradual opening towards other perspectives (e.g. feminism and Islam). *RL* may well have the widest perspective, however, with the focus on medieval studies and Dante suggesting a notion of "catholic" in the sense of a more global approach. *RL* also has most to say on the relationship between literature and different world religions. Yet even in *RL*, there is limited interest in a more comparative approach to the field of religion and literature, a point noted in the pages of that journal by Cleo McNelly Kearns, among others, as she reflects on the field at large.[10]

2. Structuring the Field: Aspects of "Modern Debates"[11]

On reading through the journals for this article, we have been struck by the fact that the purported debates on defining the "field" are mostly characterized by the lack of genuine debate. Why is there so little debate? Does it reflect the problem of difference and identity across standpoints within the field, i.e. that approaches and viewpoints are in themselves too incompatible or too identical, making debate futile in both cases?

By way of response, we would like to offer a tool for structuring the field and acknowledging the different issues scholars and critics are concerned with. There is already such an implicit debate when it comes to naming the field. Should it be religion and literature or religion in literature? Should it be literature and religion or literature and theology? In answer to the first of these two questions, we see a debate as to who is concerned—the literary scholar whose interest is a special field (i.e. religion; comparable to gender, or ecology, or psychoanalysis), or the theologian who wishes to enrich and enliven his/her field by paying attention to literature—and a debate about whether they can meet on common ground. Responses to the second question lead us to the long-standing debates regarding the difference (or antagonism) between religious studies and theology. Do we study the field as a historical or sociological phenomenon, or do we study it from inside a "living tradition," as Monta puts it?[12] Is it possible to evaluate phenomena critically if we do the latter? Is it possible to appreciate phenomena fully if we do the former? Arguments about the merits of reading from inside or outside find a corollary in literary studies, with Kearns (referring to Olivier-Thomas Venard and using a term coined by Ricœur) regretting the "reductions of a prevalent and somewhat mechanical hermeneutic of suspicion."[13] Bringing together literature and religion not only highlights debates between these fields but also makes us see (frequently ignored) debates within them.

Accordingly, it seems important to us to become aware of what scholars are doing when they are concerned with literature and religion. As a result of our readings, especially of the three journals in the field, we suggest structuring the field according to six approaches:

1. Religion as a concern of literature (the texts and/or their authors): e.g. religious themes and motifs, religious allusions, conscious use of religious language, intertextuality, etc.
2. Religion as a dimension introduced by the reader/critic: e.g. a "Christian critique" of literature, or a "religious critique," or a "theological critique"; this may mean a method, an ethos, or a viewpoint from/with which literature is read and studied.
3. Literature (irrespective of its religious concerns) as related to religion: e.g. analogies, or literature as a (sort of) religion; "Why Literature Can Never be Entirely Secular"; literature and religion being both the objects of the same theoretical concerns.[14]

4. Literature as a dimension and ingredient of religion: e.g. stories forming a part of religious practice, narrative theology, the poetry of the Psalter or the Song of Songs.
5. Literature as a perspective introduced by the scholar to the study of religion: e.g. reading the Bible as a literary text, not minding its function as a text constitutive of a religion.
6. Literature as a factor in the field of religion and as part of the debate on religion: e.g. literature providing theological concepts or suggesting change and development, contributing to evaluations of secularization and religious fundamentalism, to the re-evaluation of roles (e.g. gender roles) in a religion.

We recognize, of course, the considerable overlap between these aspects and we acknowledge that the list is by no means exhaustive. It is meant as a heuristic tool.

In order to address the topic of "modern debates," we think it might be most useful to turn to three examples that serve to show *what* scholars and critics are actually concerned with and also how the six aspects mentioned help us discover and understand what is going on when religion and literature are discussed.

3a. Example 1: Michael Edwards, "The Project of a Christian Poetics"

Our first example is an essay by Michael Edwards that was published in *Christianity and Literature* in 1989. It is devoted to "The Project of a Christian Poetics," and addresses, as the title indicates, foundational theoretical concerns. Edwards wonders whether a Christian criticism and a Christian poetics are needed. For him, the former is a criticism "truly distinguished by its practice of the Christian virtues,"[15] and the latter is a poetics that asks "fundamental questions about the meaning of literature" (64–65). One might respond that this is always the task of poetics, but Edwards goes on to inquire after the specifically "Christian" nature of such a theory. With regard to our six aspects, Edwards can be clearly placed within the second one: literature is read and discussed in a specific way. In reflecting on a Christian poetics, Edwards thus implicitly connects with the other critics who approach literature from a perspective informed by religion, Christian or otherwise. When Edwards makes a case for a Christian poetics, his argument is relevant to the broader question of what it means to approach literature from a "religious" point of view. Edwards defines "Christian" very much in terms of ethics, as we have seen in the case of "Christian criticism." Similarly, he points out that a "'Christian novel' … is not a novel with a Christian subject but a novel which endeavors, whatever its subject, to be, I suppose, faithful and true" (64). This helps us refine our second aspect: a religious approach may be marked by a specific set of ideas, or by an ideological preoccupation, but it may also be characterized by a particular ethos. This is a distinction that pertains to the first of our aspects (religion as a concern of literature) as well as the second (and perhaps the fifth).

But what about Edwards's "Christian poetics"? He goes on to outline it in one specific way that may be grasped with recourse to our six aspects: we do not think it inappropriate to describe Edwards's poetics as the attempt to define aspect two by means of aspect three; that is to say, the nature of a "Christian poetics" consists in discovering or establishing basic links and analogies between literary texts and the Christian religion, irrespective of whether those texts intentionally deal with any aspect of Christianity or not. This can be seen when Edwards links literature to the eschatological pattern of Edenic perfection, fall, and redemption: not as subjects in literary texts (which would be our first aspect) but as being witnessed and exemplified by them. As regards the Fall, for example, Edwards says that "[t]his is not simply one of literature's fundamental themes: writing witnesses to corruption in itself." "Witnesses to" is used ambiguously by Edwards, in that it not only means literature reflecting corruption

(even when it is not its theme) but also being fallen itself: "It is obliged to trammel in a language which is also vain, and its very production is burdened with vanity" (67). The problem with this claim is that it is not peculiar to literary language; if anything, one might expect a Christian poetics to see the vanity of ordinary language use transcended in literary art. This is what Edwards himself (implicitly) maintains when he stresses that the re-creation, as part of the eschatological pattern, is to be seen in literature being "a contradiction or counter-diction of our predicament" (68). Appropriately, he mentions Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* (which he might have called a Platonic-Christian poetics) and Sidney's claim that poetry offers a golden world. One might thus describe Edwards's "Christian poetics" as a concept that integrates literature into "all the essential triads of experience" and in particular the triad of "creation, fall and re-creation" (68) that to him is essentially Christian.

Edwards's model is based on an obvious simplification, and it is no coincidence that he cites Northrop Frye's *Great Code* at this point. We can respond to Edwards critically by once more referring to our set of aspects. When Edwards stresses that "the concern of art is surely not order but possibility" (71), he has the re-creative and most eminently Christian side of literature in mind: the fact that art cannot really restrict itself to discovering an existing order, for such an order must belong to "a world out of joint" (70). Thus, a strong sense of aspect two comes into his argument when he stresses that, for him, a Christian literary work of art may expand "into an intuition of how God himself might ... proceed." This is aspect two based on aspect three, the analogy of literary and religious features. But with the stress on possibility, on "Jesus ... the Master of Possibility" (72), Edwards also (without explicitly saying so) does what we have listed as aspect five, namely to apply a literary (poetic) criterion to a religious issue. Possibility, after all, is the most literary of all criteria; according to Aristotle's *Poetics*, "it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen,—what is possible ...."[16] Christian poetics thus turns out to be a poetic theology.[17]

3b. Example 2: Fatemeh Keshavarz, "Sewn Together with the Thread of the Sun: Religion and Literature as a Discipline"

Our second example involves a different approach—both with regard to the religion that is being dealt with, namely Islam, and the theoretical starting point of the argument. The contribution by Fatemeh Keshavarz appeared under the heading "Configuring the Literary and the Religious" in the special issue of *RL* in 2009. She begins her article with a few remarks on interdisciplinary boundaries before addressing the "new energy generated by cross-fertilization"[18] between the disciplines of religion and literature. Her "vantage point" is Persian mystical prose and poetry; however, she thinks "the horizon which opens will be broad enough for the story to be projected onto other literary traditions" (38).

Her starting point, hence, is the assumption of religion and literature as "natural partners" of a given interplay between "Persian spiritual and poetic expression." This is an example of our third aspect. She reads Persian poetry against the background of Sufi thought and thus brings a particular religious approach to the reading of literature, which is in accordance with aspect two. We can see, therefore, how aspects two and three interact here or follow on from one another: the observation of the connection between literature and religion leads to the reading of literature with a religious aspect in mind. In this respect, Keshavarz's approach is the counterpart of Edwards's. At the same time, literary works fulfill "multiple purposes" because of their religious context—the fourth aspect in our schema—they "moralize ..., entertain ..., educate ..., and nurture ... one's creative inner self all at once" (38).

This feature becomes particularly obvious in her reading of poems by Abu Sa'id Abu al-Khayr (d. 1049).[19] She gives the example of a quatrain in which Abu Sa'id declares "all worship equally valid regardless of religious affiliation" (39); he makes religion a "concern of literature." Keshavarz here makes a point of aspect one as well as aspect four: "Abu Sa'id created poetic space for a range of complicated theological debates such as the human predicament in the face of death and disaster, the struggle between free will and predestination, and the like" (40). Poetry, through its brevity, its choice and arrangement of images, will endow religious thought with a striking quality.

In her concluding thoughts on "Extended Sufi Allegories," the dynamic interplay not only of religion and literature but also between our various heuristic categories becomes evident once more. Keshavarz's central example is 'Attar's (d. 1220) *Conference of the Birds*, which provides "excellent opportunities for the interplay of the mystical and the poetic elements" (41). The interplay is due to a poetic frame tale combined with anecdotes that "weave together a tapestry of religious and lyric pathos enhancing each other" (42). In her reading of this text, religion is a concern of literature as much as literature becomes a dimension of religion: the Sacred is seen "in relation to ordinary experiences of the self" (42), our first aspect, and the "poetic energy" (43) of these texts becomes part of a spiritual quest they describe (i.e. aspect four).[20] She concludes: "'Attar, and other Sufi poets, use numerous strategies of empowering the poetic and the spiritual by actualizing the potency of their partnership through creating opportunities for their interface" (43). This means that she comes full circle again with her starting point, namely the intrinsic relatedness of religion and literature (i.e. aspect three), but has proven her point of "cross-fertilization" by illustrating the dynamic interdependency of religion feeding into literature and of literature as a dimension of religious expression (aspects one and four). She achieves this mainly by bringing a religious approach to a literary text, thus also including the second aspect in her reading.

3c. Example 3: Goldie Morgentaler, "The Prayer House of Chava Rosenfarb: Poetry, Religion and the Shadow of the Holocaust"

The third and final example we would like to present is concerned with Judaism and approaches the field of religion through the example of the poetry of the Yiddish-Canadian writer Chava Rosenfarb. The article was published in the special issue of *Literature and Theology* (24.2; 2010) on "Jewish Poets of Montreal," which denotes a special field within Jewish studies and is concerned with the perception of Montreal as a "Jerusalem of the North," i.e. a center of Jewish emigration in the twentieth century.[21]

Morgentaler's approach, accordingly, is a biographical one, and she begins by asking the question: "How does an atheist come to write religious poetry and what is meant by religious poetry when it is written by a non-believer?"[22] This is in some ways a version of our second and first aspects interacting, but based on a negative premise: the assumption is atheism, which is followed by some surprise at the fact that religious elements can be found in the poems. Even though, as it were, the critic expressly approaches the poems from a non-religious perspective (if the assumption of atheism can be called that), the result is the recognition not just of the many religious (especially biblical) references but of the fact that, in Rosenfarb's work, the link to religion is an inevitable one. Morgentaler argues that "religion enters Rosenfarb's poetry in response to two specific thematic strands—the first is related to her experiences during the Holocaust; and the second is her assumption that literature and religion are close cousins, ... that literary culture itself is a form of religion" (161). This clearly relates to the third aspect, which thus seems to be the guiding line of thought in the essay.

Morgentaler's major argument is that Jewish writers, "in particular Yiddish writers," "cannot escape the biblical tradition" (161), i.e. aspect one. The poems that Rosenfarb composed during and after the Holocaust are "connected to the suffering of the Jews during the Holocaust" (162) and do so by means of biblical allusion.[23] The first example of Rosenfarb's poetry that Morgentaler presents, the poem "Praise," however, illustrates how the apparent implication of the praise of God (stylistically inspired by Edward Taylor and Gerard Manley Hopkins) becomes "secularised" (163). The praise is of those days when nothing happened. This is almost a reversal of aspect one, but is still presented by Morgentaler in the context of biblical allusion. Yet what happens in the poem is a counter-movement to biblical allusion. The point of this is that, in the face of the Holocaust, there is no God to be praised for saving his people but every day of survival deserves the praise hitherto reserved for God.

Morgentaler goes on to concede that biblical motifs are a rarity in the earlier poetry of Rosenfarb; her major example, however, "Isaac's Dream," is an earlier poem that, as the title suggests, alludes to a biblical text.[24] The poem appropriates a biblical story and theme "in order to speak about current events or personal happenings" (167). Isaac's sacrifice is used by Rosenfarb to address the "fate of the Jewish people," which is aspect one, but also goes further: in Morgentaler's view, Rosenfarb's poem fleshes out the "inadequacy of the Jewish religion," and the "criticism of the Bible" becomes "a criticism of literature itself" (167). Aspect three is here used in a reversed manner as the analogy of literature and religion serves to express their respective "inadequacy … to provide comfort" (167): what is possible in the Bible—Isaac is saved—is not possible in the real life of the speaker. The "Dream" mentioned in the title becomes a "nightmare" and thus is used "ironically" (when considered in the light of prophetic biblical dreams); and since "it is the Holocaust with its unimaginable barbarity that *should be* the nightmare," the "story of Isaac's sacrifice with its focus on redemption" becomes "insignificant and illusory" (168). Even though Morgentaler's reading of the poem need not go uncontested, it is an excellent example of criticism addressing the greatest possible tensions in the relationship of religion and literature.[25] In Morgentaler's view, the poem "collapses the distinction between religion and literature" (168). Our third aspect is here brought to an extreme.

Morgentaler closes with the story "Edgia's Revenge" and the trilogy *The Tree of Life*, and both confirm this pattern in Rosenfarb's writing: cynicism is juxtaposed with the belief in and clinging to writing: "culture clearly has a religious dimension" (170). This, again, goes beyond our third aspect and is related to what we summarize under aspects four and six: literature, however, is not just an ingredient of religion and an influence on religious debates, but becomes its substitute. Rosenfarb acknowledges that everyone needs to believe in something, because, otherwise, one is "exiled from one's fellow sufferers" (173). Literature, the integration of biblical allusion (even if only *ex negativo*) into her text, is a way to "be reconciled to the very Being in whom she does not believe" (172). This paradox unites aspects one, three, and six.

Morgentaler, in her reading of Rosenfarb, actually makes us see what might be the end of the debate on literature and religion: the collapse of both into one. But this is not very likely, as her article also shows that there is a vast difference between the veneration of literature (or even the arts and culture in general) as a religion and the uncovering of religion as a story belonging to the imagination, for the product of the imagination is, or at least may be, about something other than itself.

4. Conclusion

The comparison of Edwards's, Keshavarz's, and Morgentaler's essays shows us that they are not only counterparts as regards their chosen approach, they also span the field of discussion on religion and literature in representing West and East, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. This

implies, or so it seems, an inevitably post-Enlightenment perspective in the first case: the close relation of literature and religion is only to be recaptured through what we have called our second aspect, the deliberate choice of a critical perspective that is grounded in the critic's ethos and convictions. The critic of Sufi poetry, by contrast, can treat an eleventh-century poet as if he had written today, because both then and now the separation of the religious and the literary is not really an issue. Religion and literature form a whole (just as, in a Western perspective, they could still form a whole for a poet such as George Herbert), and this is a matter of course. The link between the two is not to be established through scholarly and critical effort but is a given; nevertheless, a critical attitude may develop from the study of such texts that will throw a light on texts outside such apparently unbroken traditions. In the case of Morgentaler's reading of Yiddish poetry, we have seen that literature, paradoxically, may replace the religion that is felt to be too literary and inadequate in the face of suffering. Again, however, much of this may be the outlook of the critic who chooses a secular premise only to be surprised by the religious dimension of the literary text. We suggest that this double perspective—ties and analogies giving rise to a critical approach, and critical approaches establishing ties and analogies—lies at the heart of modern debates on religion and literature.

Notes

1 We are aware of the fact that these are not the only journals in the field. We might have included, for example, *Renascence*, published by Marquette University, which is described "as an expression of its Jesuit mission of the search for truth and the exaltation of human dignity" (see "About," www.marquette.edu/renascence/about.shtml); or *Religion and the Arts* (Boston College) whose aim is to "explore religious experience and expression in the verbal, visual and performing arts, in the context of contemporary theory and culture" (see www.bc.edu/content/bc/publications/relarts/about.html). And there are also special issues on aspects of Religion and Literature in journals not usually focused on literature or religion (or theology). Examples include: "Literary History and the Religious Turn" in *ELN* (44.1; 2006); "Following the Traces of God in Art: Aesthetic Theology as Foundational Theology" in *CrossCurrents* (63.1; 2013); "Faith and Fiction" in *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* (42.2; 2003); "Writing Religion" in *The Journal of Religion* (92.4; 2012); and several special issues in *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* ("Writing Jews in Contemporary Britain," 47.2, 2014; "Literature Written in Ladino," 43.2, 2010; "Yiddish Literature, Poetry and Song" 42.2, 2009). The focus of this chapter is on three journals that specialize in literature (not the arts in general) and that have been dedicated wholly to the field of religion and literature.

2 We are well aware that this question demands and presupposes some idea as to what we mean by "literature" and "religion." Rather than confine ourselves to narrow or heavily contested definitions, however, we employ these terms as we find them being used by the authors of the articles in the three journals. Most of them refer to literature as textually based expressions of the imagination: poetry, fiction, and drama (as well as film). Unsurprisingly, religion is mostly used as a reference to the world religions, to their founding texts and to themes, ideas, practices, etc. connected with these religions.

3 We would like to thank Charles Huttar and Paul Contino for providing us with a short history of the journal. They write:

> It began humbly, in 1950, when a teacher at a small Christian college began sending occasional mimeographed newsletters to friends doing similar work. After meeting informally at the Modern Language Association convention, the group, by 1956, had organized into a society which has now grown to over a thousand—an international membership representing a variety of academic institutions and religious traditions. Each year, CCL meets at MLA, hosts regional conferences throughout the U.S., and offers annual awards to encourage young scholars, and to recognize the creative and scholarly achievement of many, including, most recently, Marilynne Robinson, Rowan Williams, and Robert Alter. The hallmark of CCL is its award-winning journal, *Christianity and Literature*. The journal is peer-reviewed, and regularly contains four articles, about a dozen book reviews, a half dozen poems, and occasional interviews and symposia. (Charles Huttar and Paul Contino, e-mail message to the authors, March 31, 2014.)

4 These are two of five questions articulated by Robert Snyder in 1989. The first question is extended by: "Does it evince any revealing parallels or ties to other movements?" The remaining three questions are: 3. "What is 'Christian literary criticism'? What are its normative tents, rationale, and methodology? What are its exemplary practitioners? What are its strengths and limitations, its insight and blindness?" 4. "Is the appeal to transcendence in any form, including that which invokes the authority of text and canon, fundamental to Christian criticism?" 5. "How do we adjudicate, especially from a Christian perspective, among the demands of various ideological programs for literary studies and the 'liberal' values of civilized, tolerant, and 'open' scholarly discussion bequeathed by tradition?"

5 See "About the Journal," *Literature and Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/litthe/about.html).

6 Andrew Hass, "Intending Metaphors: Living and Working 'Religion and Literature,'" *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 178–86 (181). He goes on:

> The earliest tension would have arisen from the mild audacity of the first editors (largely British theologians interested in what literature had to contribute to theology in the UK) in presuming literature actually *had* something to contribute, something significant enough on which to found an entire journal. This tension quickly gave way to another: in recognizing literature had something more to contribute than just another location at which to find theology being worked out, or than helping to theorize the nature of texts and reading, the question of what exactly was meant by the term "theology" arose. Much as the category of "religion" is now under tremendous critical scrutiny within widening pockets of the academy, where deep suspicions are raised about the essentialization of the notion we have traditionally called religion, so too the coupling of literature with theology began to exercise the notion of theology. … Theology was put on the back foot. But in theology rethinking itself, the tension was soon caught in a reciprocal loop: literature in turn began to rethink itself. (181)

7 Susannah Monta writes about one of the particularities of the journal: "The journal quickly developed into a peer-reviewed, faculty-run journal, with graduate students working in support positions—this continues: there are graduate student assistant book review editors and a graduate student managing editor." (Susannah Monta, e-mail message to the authors, February 24, 2014).

8 Ibid.

9 We would like to thank our doctoral student Florian Kubsch for providing us with the statistics and for helping us with the research for this article. These statistics are based on all articles from the three journals in the relevant time frame, i.e. since the 1980s (*CL* since 1980, *RL* since 1984, and *LT* since 1987) until 2013. They were entered into a database with the information on author, period, and topic as given in the MLA; e.g. if three authors were mentioned there, all three would also enter our database. We could then easily count the respective topics/authors/periods.

10 Cleo McNelly Kearns, "Religion, Literature, and Theology: Potentials and Problems," *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 62–67.

11 Our approach is descriptive, not prescriptive: it is based on our reading of articles published in the three leading journals in the field. What follows from this reading is the attempt to develop an overview as well as present characteristic ways in which the field of religion and literature is addressed in these journals.

12 On the outside/inside paradigm in religious studies and theology, see Falk Wagner, *Was ist Religion?* (Güterlsloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus Gerd Mohn, 1986).

13 Kearns, "Religion, Literature, and Theology," 64. Thus, the distrust between the fields is based on a double dichotomy; i.e. there is the clash between "serious" theology and its "real beings" on the one hand and the fictitiousness of literature with its "fantasized 'creatures'" on the other (Olivier-Thomas Venard, "'Theology and Literature': What Is It About?," *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 87–95 [87–88]), but there is also, in each field, the contrast between a scientific and an experiential approach. See Hank Lazer, who advocates a "first-hand engagement" with religion and literature, and in the place of their institutionalization suggests an "individual phenomenology" (Hank Lazer, "Engaging Religion and Literature," *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 271–80 [272]). Bouchard formulates four theses "for describing studies in religion and literature" (Larry D. Bouchard, "Religion and Literature: Four Theses and More," *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 12–19 [14]) that comprise both similarity and contrast, and are supplemented by their critique. In his fourth thesis, Bouchard claims that "[w]orks may function as critiques of their religious content or dimensions. Conversely, religious traditions have resources for questioning literary

art and cultural ethos" (16). At the same time, "that works engage in critique does not inoculate them against the blinding effects of their own informing interests" (17). Thus, there is not only the dichotomy between suspicion and engagement, but also between suspicion and blindness. The one-sidedness of an exclusive "hermeneutics of suspicion" is also addressed by Roger Lundin, when he claims (in discussing terms used by Ricœur) that "the 'willingness to suspect'" has:

> ably served the modern effort to unmask the "barbarism" that lies hidden within the works of "civilization," whether those works are religious or literary. … Yet at the same time, there is something badly truncated about any study of religious belief and practice and literary production and reception that fails to treat seriously the "willingness to listen" and the "vow of obedience" as well (Roger Lundin, "Prospects and Retrospects: Religion and Literature in an American Context," *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 289–96 [295]).

See also Susan Felch for the critique of an exclusive "outsider's stance to religious practice and to belief" as well as of regarding "'religion' itself as a collective noun that adequately embraces distinctive and even opposing habits of being practiced by the adherent so various faith traditions" (Susan M. Felch, "Cautionary Tales and Crisscrossing Paths," *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 98–104 [102]). Hass seems to go into the same direction when he demands a theory that is "a *theoria* of a spectatorial kind" which is "a performative act" (Andrew Hass, "The Theoretical Community (Or, Is There a Theory in this Journal)?," *Literature and Theology* 26.3 (2012): 289–304 [302]).

14 Graham Ward, "Why Literature Can Never Be Entirely Secular," *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 21–27.

15 Michael Edwards, "The Project of a Christian Poetics," *Christianity and Literature* 39.1 (1989): 63–76 (64). In particular, it is "unconcerned for self and devoted to understanding."

16 Aristotle, *Poetics*, Part 9, 1451a. For Butcher's translation, see http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html.

17 Edwards articulates his own version of what we have called the fourth aspect when he asks: "if the Bible has an actual poetics of its own" (72). Furthermore, regarding literature as the "counter-diction of our predicament" (68) implicitly also involves aspect six, i.e. literature as having an influence on religion, in this case on how the Christian notion of redemption may be reconfirmed through literature.

18 Fatemeh Keshavarz, "Sewn Together with the Thread of the Sun: Religion and Literature as a Discipline," *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 37–44 (37).

19 She writes about him: "He was not an antinomian, nor an isolated voice on the margins of the society, but rather an established spiritual teacher. He was revered and followed during this lifetime. Abu Sa'id produced some of the most memorable mystical quatrains in the Persian tradition" (39).

20 "The story conforms to the most predictable conventions of the genre. But the great success of the work is that in the wildest flights we might share with the birds, everything is connected *with invisible spiritual/poetic threads* that keep us on track" (42; our emphasis). This interplay of spiritual and poetic devices also becomes obvious in the word "simurgh," which refers both to the thirty birds (*si murgh*) as well as the legendary king they seek (Simurgh) (see 42).

21 Eric Ziolkowski, "The Palace, Not the Plans: Some Thoughts on Religion and Literature," *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 125–33 (119). Ziolkowski writes:

> Reflective of the city's famously polyglot—some say Babel-like—culture, where Yiddish, most prominently, but also Polish and Ukrainian, among other Slavic tongues, intermingled with English and French, the Jewish literary culture of Montreal has left a distinct and remarkable legacy, one to which the present issue of *Literature and Theology* pays critical tribute. (119).

22 Goldie Morgentaler, "The Prayer House of Chava Rosenfarb: Poetry, Religion and the Shadow of the Holocaust," *Literature and Theology* 24.2 (2010): 161–74 (161).

23 "The intimate knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and Jewish custom can be seen in a series of poems she wrote on biblical themes. Drawing inspiration from Scripture and retelling biblical stories in order to cast light on personal or topical issues is a common occurrence in Jewish literature" (163).

24 The retelling of biblical stories is, according to Morgentaler, a feature of Rosenfarb's last collection of poetry and is related to "especially women's concerns" (164).

25 One of the points of discussion could be that the story of Isaac's sacrifice (and rescue) is never retold in Rosenfarb's poem (as Morgentaler apparently suggests), but changed into a story of Isaac believing he has to sacrifice the speaker, who, he claims, will be miraculously spared as he was.

Further Reading

Hass, Andrew. "The Theoretical Community (Or, Is There a Theory in this Journal)?" *Literature and Theology* 26.3 (2012): 289–304.
Kearns, Cleo McNelly. "Religion, Literature, and Theology: Potentials and Problems." *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 62–67.
Kort, Wesley A. "What, After All, Is 'Religion and Literature'?" *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 105–11.
Lazer, Hank. "Engaging Religion and Literature." *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 271–80.
Venard, Olivier-Thomas. "'Theology and Literature': What Is It About?" *Religion and Literature* 41.2 (2009): 87–95.
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6

9/11 AND ITS LITERARY-RELIGIOUS AFTERMATHS

Mark Eaton

This chapter will attend first to some of the religious aftermaths of 9/11 and then to some literary ones. The discussion will focus on the United States and attends to literary fiction in particular. "In the last decade," John Duvall writes, "American fiction has articulated important political, aesthetic, and psychological contexts for understanding the wounds of September 11."[1] To that list I would add religious contexts. Critical accounts of literature about 9/11 have tended to focus on the problem of representation—what can literature possibly say in the wake of such a traumatic event?[2] This chapter will focus specifically on how various Anglo-American writers have gravitated to religious themes in trying to represent what happened on 9/11 and afterwards.

After 9/11 many writers analyzed a new geopolitics of religion exposed by the attacks.[3] Some fretted about the possible religious roots of terrorism, or puzzled over what role religion played in the appalling crime. Others invoked the ancient problem of theodicy to explain why 9/11 might have posed a challenge to some people's faith; still others recognized that some victims must have prayed—or perhaps cursed—at the moment of death. In his essay "In the Ruins of the Future: Reflections on Terror and Loss in the Shadow of September" (2001), novelist Don DeLillo points out that multiple, even contradictory religious epistemologies and scripts played out on that day: "how awful to imagine this, God's name on the tongues of killers and victims both."[4] Since 9/11, religions have seemed at once invidious and fraught with peril.

One of the most salient aftermaths of 9/11 was polarization along political and religious lines. Yet such polarization should not divert us from recognizing the most significant religious trends of the twenty-first century, which include an increase in what scholars in religious studies have called "nones," or those who claim no religious affiliation; a shift towards less doctrinal, more experiential forms of faith among those who claim religious affiliations; and a widespread acceptance, though not without resistance, of pluralism as an important value.[5] It is not difficult to imagine what might be causing this legitimation of tolerance for religious others. Perhaps more than ever, many people are abandoning their natal faiths, switching denominations or entire faith traditions, intermarrying religious others, mixing disparate spiritual practices into new syncretistic combinations, and so on. Playing with extremes of religious polarization has proven to be irresistible to many writers, to be sure, but on the whole literature after 9/11 has tracked historical trends towards the more flexible, pliable, and