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The Value of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutic of Metaphor in Interpreting the Symbolism of Revelation Chapters 12 and 13

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to bring together Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic of metaphor and the reading of the metaphorical imagery ('symbolism') in Revelation 12 and 13, in the context of wider concerns about methodology in interpretation.

Initially, concerns in interpretative methodology are explored by examining some representative approaches to the Book of Revelation. From this, two key issues are identified: general questions of method in the move from text to interpretation; and the specific question of interpreting Revelation's metaphorical language ('symbolism').

The thesis then explores the understanding of metaphor developed by Paul Ricoeur (a major contemporary thinker in this area) in the context of recent developments in the study of metaphor, in the context of Ricoeur's programme of phenomenological hermeneutics, and in the light of significant criticisms from other thinkers.

The thesis then returns to the Book of Revelation. The first part of this analysis (study of historical context) focuses on current debate and methodology. The second half (the study of linguistic context) returns to engage with the issues raised by Ricoeur and his critics.

The final section uses a distinctively Ricoeurian framework to draw the analysis together, and identify the way Revelation 12 and 13 use 'polemical displacement' to offer a vision of the world alternative to the prevailing outlook, in a way analogous to contemporary political cartoon and propaganda.

The thesis engages with a wide range of approaches to Revelation, with recent debate concerning the nature of language and metaphor, and with a range of studies of the much-debated work of Ricoeur.

It makes contributions in a number of areas: a new assessment of the ways in which Revelation has been read; a clear and concise outline of the thought of Ricoeur, often said to be 'opaque'; specific contributions to current discussion of the date of Revelation, its use of written and oral sources, and the subject of Old Testament allusion (including the observation of a significant allusion never noted until now); and a reading of Rev 12 and 13 that is both methodologically rigorous and easily accessible.

Contents

1 Introduction
Diversity and Methodology

i The Question of Diversity

Why do different readers understand biblical texts in different ways? This is a very broad question, and is inherently difficult to examine as so much of what happens in the process of reading and understanding is implicit; readers bring unstated assumptions and widely differing levels of knowledge to a text, read in contrasting social contexts, and draw inferences at differing levels of significance which may be dependent on individual temperament.

But what happens when this question is asked of those who comment more formally on a text—or even of those whose main work is that of commenting on texts? One stage of the question is at least made easier, in that commentators usually make at least some of their assumptions, processes of reasoning, and conclusions explicit, perhaps partly in order to make their conclusions more persuasive. And yet there appears to be almost as much variation in the conclusions reached among commentators than amongst 'ordinary' readers. This might appear surprising, given that the reasons for reaching the respective conclusions are available (to a degree) in the public arena, and given that part of a commentator's role might reasonably be assumed to be to discuss and engage with other commentators. So why is there still such a divergence of views?

There are a number of ways of addressing this question. At a *sociological* level, readers come to a text as members of a community or peer group, and this membership may have great significance in defining the kinds of questions that can be asked of a text, and the kinds of ways in which these questions may be answered. This is true as much for communities defined by intellectual interests as for those defined by confessional stance or geography. A wider sociological view might also observe the individualist ethic of reading that is prevalent in Western societies, and the diversity of understandings that will necessarily arise from this.[1]

At a *psychological* level, readers will come to a text with varying abilities to engage with the 'otherness' of a text and with widely differing personal agendas.

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[1] Of course, it would require a sociological determinism to argue that these social factors control,

Texts are read for all sorts of reasons, and texts that function as the primary moral or devotional resource within a faith community will often be read according to an agenda that is determined by (possibly unstated or unacknowledged) personal needs and expectations. More broadly, many readers have specific ideas of what kind of text they are encountering, and therefore what kind of conclusions they are allowed to come to as they read. They may not be able to make the paradigm shift required to change their reading strategy.[2]

At a *philosophical* level, the question about divergence in understanding could be explained by the fact of the limited understanding of any individual and the imperfect communication that we experience as finite and imperfect creatures. Or it could be accounted for by certain understandings of the nature of truth itself as obscure, unattainable, or incoherent.

At a religious or *confessional* level this question may be answered by reference to divine judgement, divine frustration, or the effect of sin or evil.[3]

But these answers are largely descriptive rather than prescriptive—they may give insight into reasons behind why such differences in understanding occur, but they do not necessarily offer practical ways forward in resolving the issue. I would like to approach the question at the level of *methodology*: how do commentators go about examining a text?[4] What assumptions do they start with, and by what means do they move from those assumptions to conclusions about the text?

My own background is in mathematics, and the most striking thing about formal mathematics is that it is axiomatic. This means that any body of mathematical knowledge (the *theory*) consists of three things: axioms (the presuppositions, the foundations on which the theory is built); rules of inference (the stated rules by which a theorem may be deduced from the axioms or other

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rather than influence, reading strategies.

[2] It could be argued that academic and other communities can function as quasi-confessional groups, and psychological factors may be operative here as elsewhere, albeit to different degrees.

[3] Note how the motif of frustration turning to judgement is present in Is 6.10 (quoted in Mark 4.12 and par where it appears to have become entirely an expression of judgement) and in Is 28.1–13 the motif of the sinfulness of the people leading to confusion concludes with confusion as a sign of judgement, quoted in 1 Cor 14.21.

[4] One strategic advantage to addressing the issue this way is that a significant section of those who comment on biblical texts are, at least in principle, committed to dialogue on questions of method.

theorems); and theorems (any statement deduced by the rules of inference from axioms, or from other theorems that have been so derived).[5] It is the total body of information in the axioms, rules of inference and derived theorems that comprises the theory in question.

It has long been recognised that there is no such thing as presuppositionless theology, and within biblical studies it is clear that there is no such thing as presuppositionless exegesis.[6] But it is my belief that this recognition is often limited to those presuppositions that form the equivalent of axioms within the exegetical 'theory'. The mathematical analogy makes it clear that the rules of inference—the ways of drawing conclusions from data and the starting assumptions—are just as much presuppositions, and they are ones that are much less often discussed.[7]

For example, here are some statements that could be made about the book of Revelation:

(1) 'The same period of time is described in two different ways in Rev 11.2 ('forty-two months') and Rev 11.3 ('1260 days'). This indicates that there were originally two different written sources which were conflated by a later editor.'[8]

(2) 'The themes of suffering, patient endurance, witnessing and martyrdom are prominent throughout Revelation. Therefore the book must have been written to readers who were experiencing actual persecution.'[9]

(3) 'The imagery in the book is dramatic and evocative, and so images should not be thought of as having a one-to-one correspondence with specific

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[5] For an explication of the axiomatic approach applied with a system of formal logic, see for example A G Hamilton (1978) pp 27–28.

[6] This has been noted explicitly in Bultmann's landmark essay 'Is exegesis without presuppositions possible?' (1961). It should be noted that the impossibility of doing without presuppositions is rather different from the idea that any set of presuppositions is as good as any other, so long as they are stated explicitly. It is also the case that this second does not follow from the first.

[7] As anecdotal evidence, I once had a conversation with an eminent scholar who is the author of what some regard as the best short(ish) English-language commentary on Revelation. I asked him what were the criteria by which he judged the images in Revelation to have one particular significance rather than any other, to which he replied, 'That's a very good question.' This is not to suggest that this commentator's choices were at fault—merely to highlight the fact that his reasoning had not been made explicit at the level of method within his commentary.

[8] Compare A Y Collins' assessment (1976), which is discussed in detail in the section in part 4 'Source Criticism.'

[9] See the introduction to H B Swete's commentary, especially pp lxxxii f.

entities in the real world of the time.'[10]

In each case the data cited are not in dispute, but it is far from clear that the conclusion would be unanimously agreed with even by informed and reasonable readers.

ii. Layers of Reasoning

Within mathematical reasoning, it is relatively easy to keep axioms and rules of inference in view even in fairly complex arguments.[11] This is because mathematical theories have a very clear relation to the outside world: they are self-contained theoretical constructs, and application of the conclusions of any theory depends on establishing a relationship between the resulting model and the real world.[12] Within theological reasoning, there is no neat dividing line between assumptions about the nature of the world, and the internal structure of the argument. The total argument is therefore effectively separated into layers; lower layers, where assumptions have been made about the nature of reality, the relation of texts to the world, and so forth, are often hidden during the discussion of arguments in the 'higher' layers, which might deal (in the case of biblical interpretation) with specific exegesis and theories about the meaning of the text. Within the (higher level) argument a commentator presents, the (implicit) rules of inference in this layer are dependent on assumptions made or conclusions reached in a lower layers of reasoning.

For instance, the inference made in comment (1) assumes certain things about whether singly authored texts 'normally' have the kind of repetition and variation seen in Rev 11.2–3; the argument is drawing on a conclusion from a lower layer of discussion about the nature of texts and their authors. The inference in statement (2) depends on a lower level conclusion about how the themes of a document

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[10] Compare Boring's approach, examined below in 2.4.i.b.

[11] But note the fate of Bertrand Russell and A N Whitehead's ultimately fruitless attempt (1997) to express all mathematical knowledge in a first level logical system.

[12] The epistemic status of models in science is used by some as a parallel with the epistemic contribution made by metaphor in ordinary language; see section on Classical Views of Metaphor in part 3 below. Note also that disputes concerning scientific theories fall into two categories: those regarding the integrity of the model within itself; and those regarding the fit of the model to the real world. For an example of the latter in a strictly scientific (rather than social-scientific) context, see the disputed claims of Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischmann to have detected cold nuclear fusion announced in March 1989, reported in Frank Close (1991). For Internet discussion of their claims see, for example,

relate to the expected life experiences of the anticipated reader. The inference in statement (3) depends on an assumption made (or conclusion drawn) about the way symbolic language functions in relation to the reader and the reader's world.

Note that statements that might have been assumptions made or conclusions drawn at a lower level of argument have become part of the rules of inference at the higher level. In other words, they have moved from being *explicit* (if this level of thought has ever been articulated) to being *implicit* (in the articulation of thought that has become the comment on the text).[13] In the context of the comment on the text, they now form an integral part of the way conclusions have been drawn about the meaning of the text from the data of the text. They avoid being made explicit at this new level partly (presumably) because commentators are unaware of their importance, partly because they are assumed to be reasonable, and partly because making every step of reasoning explicit would make commentary on text prohibitively long.[14]

The implicit nature of these rules of inference hampers dialogue between differing understandings of a text, because it is very often precisely the assumptions that form these rules that are disputed by commentators.

It may be argued that such divergence of views is of no importance. However, there is a danger that the current proliferation of publication in Western academic theology (along with other disciplines) will lead to more and more divergent views that fail to engage effectively with one another. This could be seen to be detrimental to theology and biblical studies as an academic discipline. But more importantly for some, who see the Bible as in some sense 'belonging' to the church, this could add to what is already a very confused picture in the church's understanding of texts like Revelation.[15] I will revisit this point in my conclusion.

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http://www.angelfire.com/va/schubb/.

[13] Richard Bauckham (1998a) p 17, argues that exactly this process has taken place in the discussion of the gospel audiences. The social-scientific conclusion that the gospels were written *for* particular communities, and specifically address their concerns, has become axiomatic in the exegetical discussion of the texts. Somewhat ironically, Bauckham (p 19) observes that this undefended axiom has led to a more-or-less allegorical reading of the text itself.

[14] I am not assuming that commentary on texts always assumes the textual form of the genre known as 'Commentary'. On the status and limitations of this genre, see 'Conclusion' below. On the question of length, it is interesting to note that with the growth in our understanding of the culture, context and literature of biblical texts, the number and length of commentaries has grown enormously (see Coggins, 1993).

[15] For the current discussion about whom the Bible 'belongs' to, see Francis Watson (1994) and

iii. Why Revelation? Why Ricoeur?

In order to explore the divergence of interpretation by examining hermeneutical method, I decided to look at a particular passage as a case study. The reason for looking at the book of Revelation was that this appears to present the widest divergence of interpretative conclusions; it almost acts like a prism, separating what might seem to be similar approaches into a rainbow of widely differing conclusions. Authors who are in other respects relatively close on the theological spectrum have understood Revelation in a wide range of ways.

For example, even amongst Christian interpreters who would call themselves 'conservative,' there are those who would take a preterist, historicist or futurist positions.[16] These positions imply a widely differing view of Revelation's intended primary audience—readers contemporary with the author, readers in successive generations, readers living in the 'end times' (which of course are always 'now', the time of the commentator)—a range of views much broader than that in discussion about audiences of other New Testament texts.[17] On other issues too—the nature of Revelation's unusual Greek, the right way to understand Revelation's allusions to the Old Testament, the structure of the text—there remains little consensus, and a great variety of well-argued views.

Within Revelation, the dominant literary feature which marks it out as apocalyptic in genre (if that is not a tautology) is its 'symbolism.'[18] The sheer strangeness of the symbolism makes the modern reader feel this is a veiling, rather than unveiling. The obscurity of the symbolism appears to discourage us from simply reading Revelation in its historical context. The tensive nature of the symbolism leads some commentators to argue against looking for any simple correspondence with first-century referents. But the very multivalence of the symbolism makes many readers look for referents in the modern world. It is the

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Philip Davies (1995). See also the review of Davies in *Expository Times* 109/1 1997 pp 15–16.

[16] For definitions of these terms, and commentators who adhere to these positions, see section 1 (i) below.

[17] For example, probably the most significant current scholarly debate about the intended audience of the gospels is whether each gospel had a distinct community as its audience—see Richard Bauckham (1998a)—but even this distinction is relatively small compared with the range of views held about Revelation, both at a popular and scholarly level.

[18] 'Apocalyptic' is the 'macro-genre', the genre of the whole book. Within this, as has been noted, there is a rapid change of 'micro-genre'—which in turn could be argued as being a feature of the apocalyptic macro-genre. On the problem of identifying apocalyptic as a genre, see John J Collins (ed) (1977) and (1979). On the problematic nature of this genre, see David Aune (1986)

symbolism, and more particularly assumptions about how the symbolism 'works' that produces perhaps the widest divergences of opinion concerning the meaning of Revelation.

Chapters 12 and 13 of Revelation have one of the densest concentrations of imagery, and chapter 12 is acknowledged as being pivotal within the book, and is therefore a good section to take as the subject of a case study.[19] Chapter 13 contains an image—that of the beast whose number is 666—which is perhaps the most notorious for having diverse and spurious interpretations. Together, chapters 12 and 13 form one of the largest parts of (more-or-less) continuous narrative of events, the significance of which I will explore later.

Strictly speaking, the text of Revelation is not 'symbolic' since symbols are non-linguistic entities. The language that describes the world in terms of various symbols is metaphorical. Whatever the text is referring to, there is an implied identification of the image with something external to the world of the text. That predication of identity brings together two unlikes—the image used in the text, and the reality it refers to—and this bringing together opens up a new understanding of the referent and, consequently, the wider world. This is at the heart of Paul Ricoeur's understanding of the way metaphor works.

Ricoeur's study of metaphor is particularly apposite for understanding Revelation for several reasons. In the first place, he looks at length at how metaphor actually works, and thus opens up the possibility for engaging with the interpretation of metaphor at the level of method. Secondly, his study of metaphor has its roots in Ricoeur's own existential programme of understanding humanity's struggle to understand itself, initially through symbols and the explanation of their meaning. And it leads on to his study of narrative (which in some sense is metaphor writ large) as the means by which the reader gains a new understanding of the possibilities of being in the world. This is surely not irrelevant to the book of Revelation, which is increasingly being understood as a text written to re-narrate the identity of an early Christian community in such a

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and Gregory Linton (1991) for two different approaches.

[19] See the introduction to Prigent (1959) for the assessment that chapter 12 is pivotal. Rather more recently, and from an entirely different angle, Alan Garrow (1997, see diagram p 64) argues that Rev 12 is the first part of the content of the scroll, the main 'story' that the author wants to communicate.

way as to define it over against the understanding it might have of itself according to the prevailing narrative of the time.

iv. The Approach

Chapter 2 I will start by looking at the ways in which divergent understandings of Revelation have been classified and compared.[20] In doing this, I hope to set the methodological context, and highlight the nature of the problem.

Chapter 3 Turning aside from general questions of methodology, I will engage with the particular question of method in the interpretation of metaphor, by means of examining the hermeneutic of metaphor offered by Ricoeur.

Ricoeur's hermeneutic, to be understood correctly, needs to be set in the wider context of discussions about metaphor (§ 3.1.iii), especially in the English-speaking philosophical and theological context, as attitudes to metaphor have reflected wider attitudes to language and knowledge, and especially the waxing and waning of the influence of positivist assessments of language. The influence of positivism has had a significant impact on the status of theological language and its place within epistemological debate.

But Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor also needs to be set in the context of his own programme of thinking (§ 3.1.ii). This is partly because Ricoeur's thought is so complex, and his writing allusive, but also because on closer inspection it turns out that metaphor occupies a pivotal place in his own thought about the nature of being in the world, and the project of the self to gain self-understanding.[21]

I will then go on (§ 3.2) to look at some of the key features of Ricoeur's thought, and criticisms of them (§ 3.3). By engaging with Ricoeur's thinking in

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[20] This could have been done by means of a survey of popular views, but this would more likely lead down the route of sociological analysis. I have therefore confined myself to the more formal expressions of commentators on and writers of studies of Revelation.

For an example of a survey and assessment of a particular community's 'popular' hermeneutic of one aspect of Revelation, see A G Mojtabai (1987). The population of Amarillo, Texas, are at home with the nearby nuclear missile base largely due to their pre-millennial theology that assures them they will be raptured to heaven before the tribulation of nuclear war. For an historical study of popular views see Richard Bauckham (1978); for a study of modern pre-millennial movements see Stephen O'Leary (1994).

[21] There is a further avenue to be explored, and that is the place of Ricoeur's hermeneutic of metaphor in the context of the philosophical and hermeneutical traditions with which Ricoeur engages. But to explore this would be to take a further step away from the subject of biblical hermeneutics and from consideration of the text of Revelation.

these various contexts, I hope to make clear the contours of his work particularly as they relate to the question of reading the book of Revelation (§ 3.4).

Chapter 4 Thirdly, I will move back to the text of Revelation, and especially chapters 12 and 13.

As a preliminary to engaging with the text itself, I will look at the discussion concerning the dating of Revelation, and the significance of locating the text in the reign of Domitian. This section does hold on to two concerns thrown up in the study of Ricoeur—the need for some sort of historical contextualization, and the need for communication (intersubjectivity) between commentators—but it also marks a fresh starting point for studying Revelation, by focusing on general questions of methodology raised in the introduction.

I will then look at the issues surrounding the interpretation of the text, in an analytical way, always again with at least one eye on questions of method. In looking at literary context, the issues raised by Ricoeur's hermeneutic come back into sharper focus.

Chapter 5 Finally, I will attempt to make sense of the conclusions in each area of analysis by means of a synthesis that presents an understanding of the text and the impact it might have had on both its original audience and, in the light of that, on contemporary readers. This completes the dialectics of objectivity and subjectivity, of analysis and synthesis, that are a central concern in Ricoeur's thought. It is in this section that the diverse range of concerns introduced in chapters 3 and 4 converge.[22]

Chapter 6 I will then conclude with some reflections on the contribution of Ricoeur's hermeneutic to the process of reading Revelation, and the relation of the text to contemporary reading communities.

Will I be offering a Ricoeurian reading of Revelation? That depends on what a Ricoeurian reading might look like. Leslie Houlden, in his lament over the direction New Testament commentaries are likely to take, appears to understand a Ricoeurian hermeneutic as something focusing (exclusively?) on reader-

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[22] It might be over-ambitious to suggest that there is a parallel here with the structure of Revelation. Bauckham (1993, pp 15-16) shows how Rev 12.1 'seems an uncharacteristically abrupt fresh start', but that the section Rev 12-14 converges with the earlier narrative (begun in chapter 5) in chapter 15.

response concerns.[23] And George Lindbeck sees Ricoeur as firmly in liberal tradition in classing his approach as 'experiential-expressive'.[24]

It is doubtful that Ricoeur's work can be so directly employed in biblical reading as these assessments suggest. But even if it can be, I will argue below that there are some areas of his thought that need rectifying before his methodology can provide effective commentary on the New Testament.

In the first place, I believe that Ricoeur offers some invaluable insights into our understanding of metaphor in particular and interpretation in general, but that he fails to maintain the balance of objectivity and subjectivity that he clearly strives for. This leads him to pay insufficient attention to the place of certain analytical aspects of interpretation (such as the use of historical critical methodology) within the whole process of understanding. Secondly (and possibly as a result of this) his own writings on biblical texts are very general, and do not engage with the detail of the biblical texts, and this leaves his thought still some way from the sort of commentary that could be of value to communities who read the Bible.[25]

I therefore hope to offer a reading of Revelation that is very much shaped by Ricoeur's hermeneutic of metaphor (and, to a lesser extent, of narrative). New awareness of the linguistic realities of metaphor and narrative have been used to great effect in relation to other New Testament texts, and there is a danger that Revelation will be left behind in this. As we enter the new millennium, Revelation is a book that is set to be reclaimed by readers both within and outside the Christian church, and in this it is vital that the historic divisions between reading strategies, centring on the interpretation of symbolism, are not deepened, but rather eliminated.

By offering a lively connection between Ricoeur and Revelation (not, to my knowledge, done before), I hope that this thesis makes a small but significant contribution to that process.

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[23] Houlden and Coggins (1980) p 131.

[24] Lindbeck (1984) p 136 n 5. On Lindbeck's general approach, see Francis Watson (1994) pp 133f.

[25] Thus I have been careful to style this thesis 'The Value of a Ricoeur's Hermeneutic in the Reading of Revelation' rather than 'A Ricoeurian Reading of Revelation.' I intend this study to be both a (critical) evaluation and a use of Ricoeur's insights, rather than simply an appropriation of a Ricoeurian approach in reading Revelation—whatever that may look like.

Schematic Presentation of the Structure of the Thesis

Area of Concern:	General questions of methodology	Particular question of method in interpreting metaphor
Chapter 1: Introduction		
Chapter 2: Ways of Reading		
Chapter 3: Ricoeur's Hermeneutic of Metaphor		
Chapter 4: a) Historical context		
b) Literary context		
Chapter 5: Synthesis of reading		
Chapter 6: Conclusion		
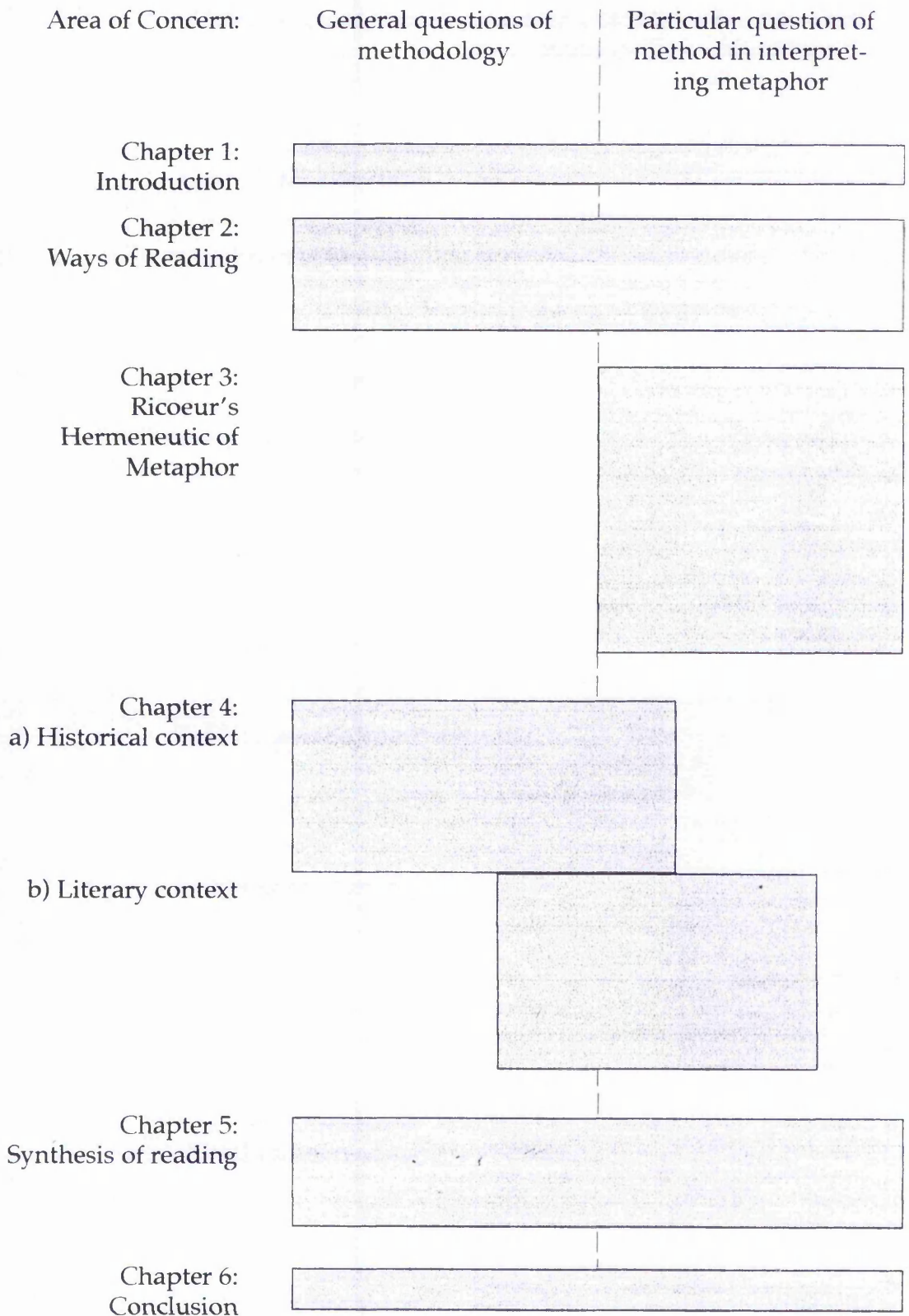
2 Ways of Reading Revelation

1 Describing Approaches to Revelation

The classification or description of hermeneutical approaches to Revelation is a difficult business. This is partly because of the profusion of commentaries or expositions that exist, and also because differing approaches often seem to make use of a range of earlier material[1]. In his survey of the history of exegesis of just one chapter, Prigent notes the conflict introduced here, the dilemma of whether to follow an historical pattern, or classify exegeses according to correspondences in ideas[2].

Prigent also highlights a second problem, and it is one that is an issue in any attempt of one person to describe the thought and ideas of another. '[I]s it not a significant danger that we risk, in constantly evaluating, appreciating, selecting, that we inform our enquiry with a subjective bias derived (more or less unconsciously) from our own theological position and exegetical method?'[3] The issue that Prigent highlights is even more far-reaching than perhaps he suggests here; any system of classification that seeks to locate one's own and others' interpretations of Revelation threatens to claim the status of a meta-narrative that will not stand up to post-modern scrutiny. Having, for the moment, noted this, we will return to it a little later.

i. A Common Classification

Swete, in his extensive introduction to his commentary, sets out a brief but useful history of the interpretation of Revelation[4]. Early interpretations were

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[1] So, Andreas in writing the 'greatest of the Greek commentaries' (Swete, 1917, p ccxi) develops a syncretism of Irenaeus, Origen and Tyconius; Joachim's exegesis is taken up by the Poor Franciscans (Swete, 1917, p ccxii; Prigent, 1959, p 42) and his three-fold division of history, albeit in altered forms, is taken up by, amongst others, the 17th-century commentator Bossuet (Swete, 1917, ccxiv); Bonaventure's 13th century eschatological exegesis is re-discovered by Ribeira and the Jesuits in the 16th (Prigent, 1959, pp 34, 35 n 7, 77ff); even Farrer's distinctive belief in John's dependence on zodiacal imagery was anticipated by Bonaventure (Prigent, 1959, p 35)—to cite just a few examples.

[2] He settles on compromise where the historical thread is followed first, but where major patterns of interpretation shape his analysis from time to time; see Prigent (1959) p 1.

[3] Ibid; my translation.

[4] Swete (1917) pp ccvii–ccxix. Prigent's rather fuller history (1959) is of approaches to Rev 12 only; however, much light is thrown on general approaches by his examination of this crucial chapter.

either chiliastic or spiritual/mystical, understanding Revelation as setting out a timetable for immediate history, or describing the spiritual state of the church or individual believer, respectively[5]. Later developments of the chiliastic view, notably in the twelfth century Joachim of Fiore, wanted to see in Revelation forecasts of an imminent end, the first signs of which were evident in their immediate context; various dispensationalist or fundamentalist approaches seek to do the same sort of thing today[6]. On the other hand, there is still a range of interpretative approaches that seek to make general statements about spiritual realities from Revelation[7]. Between these two approaches, and especially as the centuries passed, it was increasingly attractive to see Revelation as having some historical references, but not to the 'end times' only. Thus, starting with Berengaud in the ninth century, through English and European commentators in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to the present day, Revelation has been seen as describing the whole of history from the time of its writing to now[8]. Since the rise of biblical criticism in the nineteenth century, the historical context of the letter has assumed more importance, and along with it the view that Revelation is concerned primarily with its contemporary world.

It is easy to see, therefore, why it is common to classify interpretations of Revelation according to this four-fold scheme: 'symbolist' (or 'spiritual', or 'mystical', or 'idealist'); 'futurist' ('end-historical', 'eschatological'); 'church-historical'; and 'contemporary historical' ('preterist')[9].

(It should be noted here that setting out interpretative approaches to Revelation is not the same as identifying exegetical tools. Charles' survey of interpretation mixes tools with approaches; philological and literary-critical

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[5] The dispute between these views was apparently of some importance (Chadwick, 1959, p 7); for instance, their chiliastic beliefs formed an important aspect of the debate concerning the Montanists (Chadwick, 1967, p 52). Generally the Antiochenes followed the chiliastic line of interpretation, whilst the Alexandrians followed the spiritual-mystical (Swete (1917) p ccviii).

[6] See Swete (1917) p ccxii; perhaps the best known recent exponent of these views in the West as been Hal Lindsey (1970).

[7] Modern approaches, in the wake of historical critical methods, are unlikely to be completely naïve about the original historical context of the book, but, I shall argue below, many remain silent on the contemporary historical context into which they speak, and work on the basis of expressing interpretations of the particularities of Revelation in general, timeless principles.

[8] Swete (1917) pp ccxi, ccxiv.

[9] This classification is followed by Atkinson (1940) pp 5-7, Boring (1989) pp 47-50, Ladd (1972) pp 10-14, (repeated in Ladd (1975) with a slight adjustment, pp 621-624), Mounce (1977) pp 39-45, Wilcock (1975) p 23 to name but a few. It may be noted that the majority of these are from 'conservative' schools of theology.

methods, for instance, are tools of exegesis, and may play their part in a variety of interpretative schemes[10]. It may be that an interpretative approach holds that one of other of these tools is pre-eminent when it comes to exegesis of the text, but in understanding the interpretation, it will be at least as important to see what is then done with this exegesis.)

ii. A Difficulty: Theology versus Interpretative Method

Despite the attraction of this traditional classification, it has two disadvantages. In the first place, these classifications deal with how an interpretative method relates the text to the world, rather than how the method acts on the text. Thus two approaches that have much in common methodologically in their handling of the text, may say very different things about the relation of the text to the world. If we are concerned with questions of hermeneutical method (and I think that we are), then the traditional categories can be quite unhelpful. Looking at it the other way round, different commentators on the text coming from very different theological positions can often deal with the text in surprisingly similar ways—though since they are working in relation to their differing theological concerns, their conclusions can be quite different.

For example, consider the way that an allegorical exegesis, that of Methodius (d 312) deals with the 1260 days (Rev 12.6) compares with a church historical approach, that of Atkinson (1940).

a. An Allegorical Reading: Methodius

Methodius did not write a commentary on Revelation, but includes some extended reflection on the meaning of Rev 12 in his Platonic dialogue concerning chastity[11]. He adopts an allegorical approach in his interpretation not unlike that

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[10] His list of 'methods of interpretation adopted in this commentary' are: 1. The Contemporary Historical; 2. The Eschatological; 3. The Chiliastic (strictly a subdivision of 2.); 4a. The Philological Method in its earliest form; 5. The Literary-Critical Method, which includes redaction- and source-criticism, and the 'fragmentary hypothesis', that Charles adopts, which supposes that the earlier fragments of texts that the final author use have been implied, so that the joins are visible to the discerning reader such as Charles; 6. the 'Traditional-Historical' Method, perhaps more commonly known as a traditions-history approach; 7. the Religious-Historical Method, closely related to 6; 8. the Philosophical Method; 9. the Psychological Method; and finally 4b. the Philological Method in its later form.

[11] Methodius, Συμποσιον των δεκα παρθενων ἡ περι ἀγνειας, Discourse VIII Chapters IV - XIII; ANF VI 335 - 340.

of Origen, who was a significant influence on Methodius[12]. Prigent sees him as being at the beginning of a 'spiritualizing' tradition, although Methodius himself claims to want to strike a balance; he opposes Origen's approach of entirely passing over the literal meaning of scripture, but still wants to attach significant importance to analogical or allegorical aspects of meaning[13]. In the event, in his works that survive, where he comments on scripture he appears to consistently follow an allegorical interpretation[14].

He understands the woman as standing for the church, the community of believers, and the 1260 days stands for perfect knowledge of the Trinitarian God[15]. 1260 = 1000 + 200 + 60; 1000 is a complete and perfect number, and therefore stands for God the Father; 200 is the sum of two other perfect numbers, 100, and so stands for the Spirit who has perfect knowledge of the Father and the Son; 60 is 6 x 10, and 6 is the number that is composed of parts of itself (6 is the first number that is the sum of its multiplicative factors), and therefore stands for the Son, who left the fullness of divinity to take the form of a human servant, and returned to his divine state without the least compromise[16].

Methodius does not examine the history or current context of the image in the text to find its meaning; instead, the meaning arises from its place within his allegorization. This child cannot be the Messiah, since he was not immediately snatched up to heaven[17], and this opens the door to the allegorization. The meaning of the 1260 days then arises from this scheme, with no reference being made to the significance of 1260 days elsewhere in Revelation, in particular its possible equivalence to the 'time, times and half a time' of Rev 12.14 and 11.2, and thereby its link with Dan 7.25[18].

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[12] Prigent (1959) p 10, thinks it may be correct to see Methodius as opposing the use of literal interpretations of scripture in the believing community.

[13] Methodius, Συμπόσιον, Discourse III Chapter II; ANF VI 317. Quasten, 1953, pp 129 and 133, notes that Methodius was a theological adversary of Origen, but that he also follows to a large degree Origen's allegorization and mystical interpretation of scripture.

[14] Quasten, (1953) 133 and 137 notes the allegorising of Methodius' commentary on the Song of Songs and of his three exegetical works.

[15] Methodius, Συμπόσιον, Discourse VIII Chapter XI; ANF VI 338–339.

[16] See also Prigent's summary of Methodius' interpretation, Prigent (1959) p 11.

[17] Ibid, Ch VII, ANF VI 336

[18] See Caird (1966) p 152, Farrer (1964) p 149, Sweet (1979) p 182, Swete (1917) p 152, Wilcock (1975) p 130, and numerous other commentaries.

b. A Church-Historical Reading: Atkinson

Atkinson's commentary is from a conservative Protestant position, and the exegesis is anti-Catholic throughout[19]. He follows the traditional classification of approaches to Revelation into the four types, of which he rejects the futurist and preterist approaches, sees some value in the symbolist, but is convinced that the church-historical is the only one that understands the prophecies in Revelation aright (5–7).

Atkinson sees the woman as representing the church, but the church in history as opposed to the believing community to whom the Messiah is born. The fact that she has a crown of twelve stars shows that she is in favour with the government, though no reason is given for this explanation (102). Her pain in pregnancy indicates suffering and persecution of the church, but not in relation to the birth of the Messiah (103). Because of this, Atkinson rules out the possibility of the male child shepherding with a rod of iron referring to the Messiah; rather, this figure stands for the victory of the church (104). Atkinson then relates the 1260 days within a scheme by which one day in apocalyptic represents one year in the history of the church (210–216) so that the 1260 days in the wilderness represents the period of ascendancy of the Roman church, until the return of the church from the wilderness that was the Reformation (91, 105).

For Atkinson, the meaning of the 1260 days therefore depends on its place within his scheme of history, rather than the use made of it in the text, its relation to the source of the image in Daniel, or the meaning that it could possibly have to the first readers in their literary or social context. Conformity to Atkinson's scheme overrules considerations of the possible associations or background to the images of the woman, the child or the 1260 days, So, although Atkinson claims his scheme is derived from the text of the Bible at certain points[20], meaning is found from the location of an image in his scheme, rather than the location of the image in the text. Thus, a dislocation occurs in the process of interpretation.

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[19] Atkinson (1940) p 6 defends his suspicion of the futurist position as least partly on the grounds that it originated with Ribeira, a Jesuit. He is perhaps at least as suspicious of preterist interpretation as that, too, originated with a Jesuit.

[20] See, for instance, the use of Num 14.34, Ezk 4.5, 6 and verses in Daniel (though, not surprisingly, not Ps 90.4 or 2 Pet 3.8) to justify the 'one day = one year' scheme

c. Conclusion

Thus these two very different approaches share a significant common feature in their dealing with the text; the meaning of an image is determined by the place that that image has in a particular interpretative scheme rather than from its place in the text as it was inscribed. Thus a dislocation occurs in order for the interpretation to take place. In studying interpretative methodology, these two approaches share something important, even though under the traditional classification of readings, they are very different.

iii. A Second Difficulty: Circularity in Interpretation

The second difficulty with the traditional classification is that it encourages a circularity in interpretation. For in order to decide how to interpret Revelation, the commentator must first establish which of the four alternatives is the most appropriate. And to do this, he or she must examine the text at least in part. Inevitably, this examination is *only* in part, and one section of the book (even perhaps one verse) is treated as providing the hermeneutical key to the whole of the rest of the book.

Two examples from rather different stables might serve to illustrate this: Ladd, a 'moderate futurist' by his own reckoning[21]; and Ford, who aims to take a critical approach, treating the text as contemporary historical. For Ladd, a hermeneutical key lies in the text's claim to be Christian prophecy[22]. Since, he believes, Christian prophecy is about foretelling rather than forth-telling (albeit with a distinct lack of concern for precise chronology[23]), the preterist view that places John firmly in the context of his immediate world is inadequate[24]. Now, an understanding of the nature of Christian prophecy must be the conclusion of other theological and hermeneutical endeavours. But an understanding of the nature of the claim that Revelation makes for itself as prophecy must surely be the conclusion of an examination of the text of Revelation; otherwise a remarkable consistency and transferability of use of terms between Revelation and the rest of Scripture must be assumed. This is an assumption for which there appears to be little evidence in

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[21] See Ladd (1975) p 624.
[22] See Ladd (1972) p 11.
[23] Ladd (1972) p 22.
[24] Ladd (1972) p 11.

the text of Revelation. So what is properly a conclusion about the text becomes a foundational presupposition about it.

Ford's position is perhaps more complex, but no less circular for that. She depends on a number of scattered key verses to form her view that the main part of Revelation is a pre-Christian apocalypse, probably authored by a disciple of John the Baptist. An example of the circularity of her position can be demonstrated in the example of Rev 12.10–11. Since she has already concluded from a cursory survey of the text that the christology of Revelation is weak (12), and so concludes that reference to 'the Anointed One, the lamb and the martyrs... are alien to our present context' (206). She thereby discounts the weight of a piece of evidence that contradicts her theory about the nature of the text. She treats similarly other texts that do not fit in with her interpretative scheme. Again, her view on the nature of the text should have come as a conclusion, rather than feeding back into her hermeneutical method. Her approach is examined in more detail below (§ 2.2)

The result of this 'key text' approach is that the rest of the text is treated in subordination to the key text, in a way that can disguise what that text really says.

Now, this traditional classification need not inevitably lead to such circularity, but it tends to encourage it. The traditional categories are categories concerned with conclusions about the nature of Revelation, rather than being hermeneutical principles in the stricter sense. It is when they are used as interpretative tools that the exegesis becomes circular; what should be a conclusion becomes a premise.

iv. A New Description

In light of the weaknesses of the traditional classification of approaches, I propose a different analysis. I should emphasise that this approach does not claim the status of a meta-narrative, developed from some lofty vantage point from which it is possible to survey and classify the variety of hermeneutical approaches. Rather, it has been developed from a position of wandering amongst these interpreters, and examining what they claim to be doing. Some claim to be able to trace the history of the images that Revelation draws on; others claim to extract the abiding truths and principles enmeshed in the text; still others claim to be able to reconstruct the world in which the text was inscribed and to which it ostensibly refers, and even detect the emphases of opponents of the author

against whom the text is speaking. Together, these approaches imply the existence of a history of images and language behind the text, and a world that perhaps may be seen through the text; how recoverable these worlds are varies in the opinion of different commentators, and it is these differing views that form the basis of differing hermeneutical methods. The following classification tries to identify where, in the relation of the text to these hypothetical worlds, meaning is located by different approaches.

a. Dislocation

Some readings of Revelation remove the text from its immediate literary and textual context, or remove it from any possible contemporary social context, and instead place the text into an unrelated context, and determine its meaning from the text's relation to this new, alien context. These readings dislocate in order to determine meaning.

For instance, in Charles' reading of Revelation, whether the text has any meaning at all is primarily determined by whether Charles himself judges that John has made use of traditional stories and imagery in a way that retains the features of such material intact. So Charles dislocates the text and places it in a framework of traditions history that he himself has constructed. That this is an alien context in which to determine meaning is evidenced by the 'ordinary' way that Charles uses language in his commentary; it appears that we are to understand his own writing in a rather different way from the way he is locating meaning in Revelation—without reference to the traditions history of the ideas he utilises.

Church-historical and some futurist (end-historical) interpretations also dislocate to find meaning; features of the text are removed from their possible cultural and linguistic contexts and related directly to features of the social world of the commentator by means of finding a correspondence of terms[25]. Allegorical interpretations also have a tendency to dislocate; here, meaning is found in the internal connexions of elements within the commentator's allegorical scheme that correspond with features in the text.

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[25] See Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) 11, for the application of this phrase to such interpretations.

b. Alocation[26]

Some readings of Revelation aim to read the text either in its linguistic or in its social context (or both), and then translate the meaning of the texts into apparently 'supra-contextual' principles or abiding truths that the book is enunciating in its own context. In some cases this lack of reference to the interpreter's context is the explicit aim of the interpretation; in others it is more of consequence of the philosophical outlook of the commentator, or a function of the nature of the commentary.

To a great extent, the genre of the biblical commentary in Western theology is marked by an attempt to express exegetical conclusions relatively free of application specific to one particular context. As a result, many traditional commentaries display this tendency to alocation. Any criticism of this tendency is therefore an implicit criticism of the genre of commentary[27]. Alternatively, readings of alocation may be viewed as unfinished tasks, where the completion of the task is the process by which the reader of the commentary uses the alocated comments to locate the meaning of Revelation in his or her own world, turning the interpretation into one of relocation.

c. Location

Some readings of Revelation examine the text from the commentator's own context and value system, without considering the need to translate the contemporary contexts of Revelation to be appropriately meaningful in the contemporary contexts of the commentator. The 'location' for readings of location is the place in which the commentator sits.

d. Relocation

Some readings of Revelation aim to relocate the meaning of the text, as found in its relation to its linguistic or social contexts, into contemporary contexts, in

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[26] I have coined this word following the pattern of 'amoral', 'apolitical' (and to be pronounced similarly, distinct from 'allocation'), to mean 'without location', that is, to identify a tendency in interpretations to ostensibly express meaning away from any particular linguistic or social context. Whether this can ever be done is, of course, open to debate.

[27] Schüssler Fiorenza makes just such a criticism, though it is levelled more at the post-enlightenment mentality of academic environments that produce such commentaries, rather than directly at the genre itself. See Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) pp 15f.

such a way so as to express contemporary meaning through equivalent relationships in the modern world. This equivalence may be judged according to, for instance, perceived political, social, or rhetorical relationships delineated by the text of Revelation.

Such readings believe in the accessibility of the specific contexts of Revelation, and also aim to make the interpreter's own specific context clear, since correspondences must be found between one context and another. To a great extent, where readings of dislocation look for a correspondence in (usually unrelated) terms, readings of relocation are looking for a correspondence in relationships[28].

e. Mixed Readings

Despite the above separation of these approaches to the text, in practice a reading may combine two or more aspects of different methods. For instance, an allegorical reading that is using the text to understand truths about the Christian life will have features of dislocation, since meaning is found within the allegorical scheme. But it will also have features of readings of alocation, since the result of the reading is expressed in supposedly contextless and timeless truths, and perhaps even features of readings of location, if there is no acknowledgement of the distance between the commentator and the original world of inscription of the text.

This is not surprising, in view of the nature of these different categories. The differentiation is not one that is comparing like with like; dislocation looks at the locus of meaning, whereas alocation considers how it is expressed. Differentiation according to the traditional classification does compare like (views of the relation of Revelation to chronological history) with like (other such views), and so any mixture of one category with another is always a compromise. But this new differentiation, whilst not offering mutually exclusive categories, has the advantage of focusing on presuppositions of hermeneutical methodology, rather than the possibly similar outcomes of what may be very varied assumptions about method.

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[28] See Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) p 11, who uses the phrase 'correspondence of relationships' to describe liberation theologies, probably (though unacknowledged here) following Clodovis Boff (1991) pp 23 and 27f.

Because of this possibility of mixing these categories, they should perhaps be regarded as tendencies in interpretation, rather than individual types of approach as such. In classifying a reading as one of dislocation, alocation, location or relocation, I do so by trying to understand which is the dominant tendency.

2 Two Readings of Dislocation

i R H Charles (1920)

a. Statement of Method

Charles' commentary, first published in 1920, is perhaps the most daunting commentary written in English of the modern era. Apart from being a lengthy work, the text is dense both in its style and argument, and contains a liberal dose of Greek and Hebrew quotations and reconstructions. The intensity of the argument is a reflection of the time and energy put in to this work, the product of twenty-five years of work by the author's own admission (ix). The single argument about the existence of an editor, based initially on Charles' analysis of Rev 20.4–22.21 (l–lx) was (he says) confirmed by five years of philological work (l). It is hardly surprising then that the proliferation of details of the numerous trees makes it rather more difficult to discern the main features of the wood— which the author also acknowledges (xvi, n 1).

Charles locates his interpretation within the context of the variety of methods employed through the history of the interpretation of Revelation (clxxxiii– clxxxvii). His method is confessedly eclectic, and he clearly sees value in most of the methods that have been employed at these various times. But two approaches take precedence for him, and one is dependent on the other.

The 'Traditional-Historical' method developed by Günkel takes pride of place. Here, the history of each image used in the text is separated out, since 'it is necessary to distinguish between the original meaning of a borrowed symbol or doctrine and the new turn given to it by our author' (clxxxvi). This process entails two preparatory stages: the discerning of the layers of sources underlying the text, and the establishing of the consistent theological position of the author against which these sources can be compared[29]. (The situation is further complicated by

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[29] This activity of Charles' has something in common with the processes in redaction criticism,

Charles' positing of a subsequent editor, on which see below.) The second of these is left to the good judgement of Charles himself; for the first stage he relies on detailed philological analysis, and in this he is probably unrivalled amongst English-language commentaries. This philological method originates as far back as the sixteenth century 'as a counsel of despair' (clxxxiv), but in its later and more developed form 'its value...has never yet been appreciated' (clxxvii). For Charles, it involves analysis of vocabulary, word order, grammatical and syntactical structure, by means of which he believes he is able to discern where Greek and Hebrew sources are in use, where there are allusions to the Old Testament, and where a later editor has amended the original text of John.

b. The Method Observed

A crucial element of Charles' argument is his belief in the existence of an editor—and a 'profoundly ignorant and stupid one at that' (xvii). His case rests on his perception of the inconsistency and irregularity of Rev 20.4–22.21. He observes, in particular, changes in word order, and perceives the only possible reason for this to be the existence of an editor. Once this is established, he then demonstrates how this resolves problems in other parts of the text: John cannot have proposed such a 'gross Trinity' as that which appears in Rev 1.4, so this must be the work of the editor (lii); similarly χάρις cannot emanate from any angelic being, so the inclusion of the seven spirits of the churches in this greeting must also have been an editorial addition.

This demonstrates two important aspects of Charles' writing. In the first place, when faced with the perceived unevenness of the text, he believes that he can discern the 'true' level of the terrain, which he ascribes to the author John, and peaks and valleys that deviate from this norm, respectively the crass elevations of the editor, and the crude residual language of the pagan or Jewish sources. Thus he includes in his commentary a series of conclusions (which are also axioms) about the nature of the 'true' text: *'our author* [that is, John] *never aims at variety in construction in repeating the same simple fact'* (these general principles are always in

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where the subsequent use of material by, say a gospel writer is separated from the underlying story. However, Charles is here concerned with both John's redaction of traditional mythical material as he incorporates it into the 'original' text, as well as the later redaction of John's text into what we now have in the manuscripts.

italics) (lii). But this confidence about the nature of the true terrain simply arises from failure to consider the alternatives. Suppose the changes in order in 20.4f arose from changed circumstances or time, or from a change of emphasis in the text? Suppose John is making a point by talking of the seven spirits within a Trinitarian formula? Suppose that John does not intend his language to be exact in its precision or its consistency? Unfortunately, Charles' answers to these unarticulated questions are taken as self-evidently correct.

It is not always clear where he locates the true meaning of the text for us, though when specified it does appear to be in the meaning that the dislocated sources were given by John prior to their editorial corruption. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to see why he spends so much time and trouble identifying the history of these sources, when it is only to discard them as meaningless for John and therefore for us too[30]. Only the true measuring rod of what befits John's theology is needed to discern his text. Charles sees no importance in the relation between this Christian meaning and the history of the images, since he perceives John as dislocating the images, which are 'undoubtedly...wrested from their original context' (300). Having seen that John gives these images 'a new turn' (clxxxvi), he has no interest in why he gave *these* particular images *this* particular turn[31].

It is interesting to note, for instance, in his discussion of the identity of the dragon, that the significance of a figure is tied to its traditions-history, rather than its place in the plot, or ostensive reference, in the present text. Thus the Babylonian and Old Testament background to beast imagery is more important than the signal of reference to the beasts in Daniel given by the seven heads and ten horns (317–319). Charles has no explicit criteria by which he can discern which of the many possible sources are most important at any one time.

c. Implications for Rev 12 and 13

The image of the woman does stand for the true Israel, the believing community, but the details surrounding her are irrelevant (315). The birth of the

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[30] See, for instance, his comment on Rev 12.14 –16, a 'meaningless survival', p 332

[31] In contrast, in a more recent example, Aune (1987) makes much of the significance of the way that John re-uses ideas and language from his social context, that of Graeco-Roman magic. In general, an interest in the way that image are (re-)used to symbolise social realities is an interest

child does now stand for the birth of Christ (317). Only his birth and ascension are referred to, as he is taken up to heaven out of the reach of Satan's power (320). The dragon figure derives from Babylonian mythology, and includes OT images of Rahab, Leviathan, Behemoth and the primeval sea. He is Satan, the same as the beast from the sea. The 1260 days refers to the period of the Antichrist's reign (321).

The place of Michael in the text is due to the Jewish myths that are the sources here. It is not clear what the meaning now is, but perhaps the spiritual truth that 'evil is already hurled from its seat of power' (324). The victory song is sung by martyrs in glory about their living brethren, though (slightly incongruously) looking forward to a time when they also have been martyred (328). The author expects martyrdom to be universal.

12.14–16 are 'merely a survival of an earlier time' and are here meaningless. They contradict the author's belief in universal martyrdom immediately expressed above. The 'rest of her seed' stands for the Gentile Christians or the church in general, though in view of the unintelligibility of 14–16, it is not clear what 17 means other than, again, the universal persecution and martyrdom of the church.

d. Conclusion

Charles' careful linguistic analysis undoubtedly provides some most valuable insights into possible solutions of some of the greater difficulties of the language used in Revelation, such as the strange construction in 12.7f, which he traces as a literal translation of pure Hebraism (322). However, his assumption of uniformity of style of Asian Greek has been superseded in recent discussion[32], and introduces more difficulties than necessary.

Charles works from dislocation to dislocation. He sees John as having dislocated the images he uses from their tradition, and so he does the same. Thus a primary framework of meaning of the text for Charles lies in the distinctiveness of the 'genuine' from its predecessor sources and its subsequent edition. Within this framework, meaning arises from this revised text's reference to certain

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in the process of metaphorization.
[32] See for example Stanley Porter (1989), Steven Thompson (1985).

theological or social realities, though this relationship is very much secondary in Charles' arguments. No importance is given to the transformation of images as they move from one context (that of the tradition) to another (that of the text of Revelation). Charles appears to locate the meaning of the text in a place where we do not usually understand meaning to be—in the pre-history of the text rather than the text itself. Having decided that the incomprehending editor has made nonsense of the original he had to work with, Charles has done the same to the editor's finished work—declared large parts of it nonsense. In this, he effectively disqualifies the reading from making sense of Revelation.

ii. J M Ford (1975)

a. Statement of Method

Ford's commentary shares a number of features with Charles', inasmuch as the commentary is embedded within the context of a highly developed thesis of authorship, and contains a plethora of information concerning possible source material for the text. However, there is no section that makes explicit Ford's methodological presuppositions, so these have to be teased out from her arguments and conclusions about the text.

She aims to look at Revelation in the context of comparison of the apocalyptic material in the gospels, Paul and non-canonical Christian apocalypses (4–9). This comparison is based on looking for features and formulas, rather than underlying theological concerns. Her analysis of features and formulas in Revelation leads her to conclude that the majority of the text has weak connexions with Christian belief, and therefore that the text as we have it is a Christian redaction of a pre-Christian text. In discerning the 'true' text of this original work, her application of expectations of logic is similar to Charles, though her actual criteria vary from his somewhat. Like Charles, it is her (rather drastic) thesis of authorship that at all times controls her judgement of the significance of each element of the text.

b. The Method Observed

Ford's comparison of Revelation with other texts is marked by an unusual rigidity. Firstly, her understanding of apocalyptic as including an interest in cosmic history, and the division of history into epochs, leads her to conclude that

'Jesus was not truly apocalyptic' (5). Recent study would suggest that apocalypticism was a more varied and diverse phenomenon than Ford allows here[33].

Like Charles, Ford looks to the use of vocabulary to support her authorial thesis. However, this argument is less important for her, and the analysis is at a very superficial level (43–45). In view of the particularity of the vocabulary that she chooses to examine, it is hardly surprising that Rev 1–3, 20, 21, 22.16b come out as having 'a different character from the rest of the text' (46). Like Charles, the only conclusion she can draw is that they are of different authorship; no other possible explanations are considered.

Similarly, she adopts a rigid expectation of consistency and exactitude from the text; perhaps the clearest example of this is in the discussion of the impossibility of the order of Rev 20.13 and surrounding verses. Here she effectively follows Charles' thesis of the incompetent and rather stupid editor.

The most striking rigidity in her analysis is manifested in her 'formularism': evidence of certain emphases is looked for only in certain formulas. If the formula is absent, then, Ford judges, so is the idea. This has greatest consequences in her consideration of Revelation's Christology; the Lordship of Christ is almost non-existent in the 'main corpus' of Revelation (chapters 4–20) since there is only one occurrence of a formula juxtaposing 'Jesus' and 'Lord'. Ford gives little weight to the theological significance of the Lamb on the throne, largely due to her premise that this is a pre-Christian idea. But unfortunately this premise itself is largely dependent on her observation about Revelation's Christology, so the discussion is quite circular, and leads to an understanding of the book's Christology quite contrary to a wide consensus in the rest of scholarship[34].

Ford also looks for formulas in discerning the nature of Revelation's ecclesiology[35] (20), though there is little justification for why these particular phrases should be present, and it is clear that other New Testament documents would similarly fail these tests. Her comparison with near-contemporary

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[33] See, for instance, the recent discussions in Collins (1977) and (1979) and Richard Sturm (1989).

[34] For a clear delineation of Revelation's high Christology, see Bauckham (1993a) chapter 4 and (1993b) chapter 3.

[35] She is looking for references to early catholicism, in the form of mention of bishops, deacons, and sacraments. Her comment that the hymns of Revelation 'have no Christology' (21) is particularly interesting in light of their widespread use in Christianity right up to the present

documents assumes a necessary similarity with Revelation. Moreover, she is selective about which documents she includes in this comparison. She assumes that Revelation might be expected to have greatest affinity with Christian adaptations of Jewish apocalypses, or non-canonical Christian apocalyptic writings. This assumption seems difficult to justify, in the light of the failure to place Revelation neatly within any other generic groupings of near-contemporary works[36].

c. Implications for Rev 12 and 13

The greatest single effect of Ford's methodology on the text of Rev 12 is effectively to relegate vv 6–13 to the status of near insignificance. Verse 6 is 'suspect because of the sudden changes in tense' (201), and it is 'logical to proceed directly from verse 5 to verse 14' (ibid). The intervening verses should be treated as coming from another source (205)—and therefore, for some reason, as having little value. The main reason for this seems to be the change in subject; indeed, within this Ford suggests further that verses 10 and 11 ought to be omitted, since 'the Anointed One, the Lamb and the martyrs...are alien to our present context' (206). Here, expectations of uniformity in the text weigh heavily. Earlier, in the notes, some further reasons for this radical emendation are given: this section makes no reference to the life, death work and resurrection of Christ, and the Messiah seems passive. This conclusion depends on the omission of verse 11, and so introduces a circular dependence. The possibility of the middle section having an exegetical function is not considered, nor are any other reasons for a redactor's inclusion of this section. It is treated as an 'appendix' (193). It is not surprising, therefore, that the notes on each of verses 1 and 2 are as long as all the notes on verse 6–13 (188–189, 189–190, 193–194 respectively).

Of what remains, Ford's exegesis is not that unusual, except for the wealth of possible influences on the imagery that goes largely unevaluated. The woman is the faithful community (197) but with possible priestly and prophetic aspects emphasised (197–198). Although she cites much evidence to equate the

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day.

[36] See Collins (1984) pp 211f for discussion of Revelation's distinctiveness amongst apocalyptic literature.

birthpangs with messianic expectation, in the end her conclusion is simply that 'she suffers, but will receive help from the Lord' (198).

In discussing the dragon she makes the important observation that 'it is impossible to determine precisely which mythologies have influenced Revelation either in this chapter or the following' (199), which accounts for her own lack of discrimination amongst the possible influences that she cites. Since she has discounted the middle section as having any exegetical value, and since she does not resort either to a structural analysis or a reconstruction of possible social contexts for the author and first readers[37], she continues with a search for parallels in contemporary or comparable literature, and the Old Testament.

The dragon is Satan, though this conclusion is reached independently of considering verse 9. The child is a 'prominent leader' (205) despite the possible messianic reference in verse 5 (to Psalm 2.9), which is not considered to be controlling. Ford believes that the unusual title for the child, ἔτεκεν ἄρσεν, emphasises the leader's manliness, rather than being a straight citation from Is 66.7—the Old Testament allusion again not being considered. The flood threatens to sweep away the individuals of the community, and is perhaps tribulation of some sort, though this is not clear (204). The 'earth' that swallows the water is not identified. The 'time, times and half a time', which is the forty-two months, is not identified precisely (202), since other Old Testament references to such a period are deemed no less significant than Daniel's use of the term (192).

Ford does not amend the text of Rev 13. She takes the beasts from the sea and the land as representing the Roman Empire, and those (locally) who co-operate with her, respectively (218). However, since the text is assumed to be essentially pre-Christian Jewish material, the focus of her interpretation is in delineating the significance of the beasts as Leviathan and Behemoth of Jewish messianic expectation (217ff). There is no comment on the significance of the equation of Rome with these beasts. The Jewish emphasis finally leads her (through a parallelism with IV Ezra, 220) to the unusual personalisation of the reference of the beasts to the individuals Vespasian (following part of Minear's argument about the wound of the first beast) and the 'monstrous behaviour of Josephus and those like him', though she admits the tentative nature of such an identification.

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[37] This is effectively ruled out by Ford's thesis of Baptist/Jewish authorship and her belief that the

d. Conclusion

The intrusion of the demands of Ford's logic becomes a repeated irruption in the text. This discounts significant possibilities in the text's meaning, which Ford then locates in the comparison of Revelation with possible sources and contemporary texts. There is no attempt to locate the text in a social milieu, nor to locate the interpretation in a social context.

Further, the crowding of the commentary with references, and then the failure to distinguish between them in terms of their possible relative importance in influencing Revelation, make it easy for Ford to focus on those that fit in with her thesis, especially the notion that the body of the text is pre-Christian. Unfortunately, this leaves her dissecting the text unnecessarily and ascribing influences somewhat randomly.

iii. Conclusions on Readings of Dislocation

Since these readings are concerned primarily with the 'top half' of the process, what is happening in the text and the history behind these elements, rather than the way in which these things might refer to the reality, they are not at all concerned with the nature of the process of metaphorization. So, Charles makes almost no comment on the political, social, or socio-epistemological consequences of the text, whilst Ford comments on the text's reference to Rome, but ends up with a one-to-one reference to individual characters, and draws no conclusion from this.

original text has been repeatedly disrupted by its later Christian redaction.

3 A Reading of Alocation

i.   E M Boring (1989)

a.   Statement of Method

In his commentary on Revelation, Boring immediately recognises the importance of the allusions to the Old Testament, and use of earlier images in the text. He provides no particular criteria for identifying allusions, but notes their profusion (viii, 27). With regard to the use of (mainly apocalyptic) sources, he rejects the approach of 'a previous generation' of scholarship (Charles et al?) (28) in reconstructing written sources. Instead, he follows the 'present tendency' (ibid) to see the final text as a single composition, in which traditional material is used in a particular way. This implies a transformation and re-interpretation of such material, though Boring does not focus on this process of transformation explicitly.

He also emphasises the need to study the structure of the book, though not in a technical, 'structuralist' way. He points out the place of the series of 'sevens', but qualifies the possibilities of turning this into a schematization of the text (32).

Thirdly, Boring emphasises the importance of locating the text in a particular historical context. 'If we want to understand Revelation, the first principle is to read it in terms of its original hearer-readers and their situation' (7). As he delineates the four main approaches to interpreting Revelation—idealist, church-historical, futurist, and contemporary-historical—he puts himself firmly in the last group. This is not the same as empathetically entering into the situation of the first-century audience, but does require historical reconstruction. Boring is aware of the vulnerability that that lends to any exegesis, since it makes it dependent on the 'hypothetical, relative, "iffiness" of historical study' (8). But this scandal of particularity is that shared by the nature of the cross itself. Boring thus has a theological imperative for making such contingency part of the exegetical and hermeneutical process. 'Biblical interpretation must be historically oriented, because the Bible is oriented to the mighty acts of God in history' (ibid). Clearly Boring is here addressing an audience with a similar agenda to his own; he does not go further to elucidate some of the philosophical or linguistic objections to this particularisation.

b. The Method Observed

With his emphasis on the historical, it is not surprising that Boring gives a significant amount of space to a reconstruction of the situation of the first century Christians (8–23). He covers two main areas of thought: the relation of Christians to the Jews at the end of the first century as the question of Jewish identity was to the fore; and the relation of Christians to the state, and in particular the emperor cult. In doing so, he effectively prepares the ground for the surmising of two possible opponents to John, against whom he is writing: the Jewish opponents, and the compromising Christians who acquiesce to the demands of the state. These are the two competing 'voices' that Schüssler Fiorenza perceives as the enemies in the rhetoric of the text[38], but Boring's conclusions are a result of historical reconstruction, rather than either Schüssler Fiorenza's rhetorical reading, or Aune's social historical approach[39]. These last two are closely related, since they are looking for evidence in the text as to the rhetorical and social situations that might have been present, whereas Boring is basing his conclusions on external evidence. The sets of evidence provided by these two approaches, in his view, concur (18).

Importantly, Boring sees the text as one that was enacted, and was therefore designed to be memorable. As a result of this, he believes that we should not expect it to be 'rigidly logical and consistent' but in fact manifest a 'lack of neatness and predictability' (33). He deduces this from the nature of the pictorial language (57) in marked contrast to Charles and Ford, and it allows him to see the book as a unity. Moreover, he sees the unity of text mirrored in a unity of message: that Christ has overcome (ibid). Thus the Lordship of Christ is central— again, a sharp contrast to the view of Ford.

Boring is less careful about locating his commentary in his own social context, and is therefore wanting to make general, decontextualized statements arising from an understanding of the text. Revelation, he believes, is wanting to make statements about absolutes, and 'absolutes can best be expressed in pictures, especially word pictures…rather than in logical, propositional language' (52). What then is Boring trying to do in his commentary? He aims to provide an 'aid

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[38] Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) pp 132f.
[39] Aune (1981) p 16.

to facilitate encounter with the text' (62), rather than a decoding of it or a substitute for it, and indeed, the commentary is written in such a way as to prevent its use as a 'pick and mix' answer book (vii). Further, Boring hints that he believes the situation of Christians today in the West to have much that correlates with the situation of John's readers (60). However, his conclusions from the text are often in the form of general principles (for instance, on the way God's power is manifest, the character of the church, the faithfulness of God, 153; the defeat of evil, 159), though not by any means, always (so, we have the challenge to 'look for ways in which propaganda is used to idolize political power', 163). Of course, to re-particularise what John says about his world in terms of Boring's world would be to run the risks of being parochial and quickly dated[40]. Now, Boring does make reference to the way that John uses the traditional material in his own context, by means of 'literally recast[ing] it' (151). Unfortunately, however, he does not really help us to know how we might undertake this process of particularisation in our own context, and it is difficult to see that the commentary, as a genre, is the best way to equip modern readers to engage with the text of Revelation afresh[41].

There is thus some uncertainty about how to 're-mythologize' John's mythopoeic language[42] without attempting to 'de-mythologize' it, reducing it to propositional language in which it loses its power[43]. Boring also seems uncertain about 'de-mythologizing' the Satan language in Revelation. What is the nature of the reality portrayed by Revelation's Satan language? On the one hand, to take this as referring to a supernatural entity with some kind of ontological reality is perhaps a 'prosaic literalism' that encourages as (harmfully) to 'dwell in the story-world of another culture' (166). On the other hand, Satan language and imagery may be useful as a way of thinking about the 'super-personal power of evil',

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[40] And perhaps even dangerous. After all, it is fundamentalist interpreters who have re-particularised the message of Revelation perhaps more than anyone, and so should be applauded by Boring in their avoidance of generalities. But I am sure that it is some of these very particularisations that he has in mind in condemning the 'bizarre and dangerous interpretations' that Revelation has spawned (4).

[41] Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) pp 27–28 and Schaberg (1992) p 223, provide two striking examples of such re-particularisation in ways that emulate the approach of Revelation. How, and how well, these correspond to Revelation, is another matter.

[42] The description of Aune (1981) p 16 in accounting for the variety of Revelation's interpretations; as mythopoeic, it has an inherent polyvalence, an observation that Boring would certainly support. See next paragraph.

[43] See Schüssler Fiorenza (1985) p 23 on avoiding propositional language in order to retain Revelation's power in its communication.

allowing us to focus on the real enemy, rather than on human enemies that are themselves victims of this evil power[44]. But what is it we are to focus on? There is more than a suggestion here that Boring wants to have his ontological cake and eat it[45].

Boring seems in some ways to be undecided about the valency of the reference of Revelations symbols. As a methodological principle, he believes that, although John does not just use picture language but also propositional language (51), Revelation's images are in fact 'tensive, evocative, and polyvalent' (54). Code language 'represents one concept... by another' and 'this is different from John's *symbolic* language' (ibid). However, in his comment on the text, the woman in Rev 12 is polyvalent ('not Mary, nor Israel, nor the church but less and more than all of these', (152) whilst the woman's child is the Messiah (153)—presumably, being a Christian text, this refers to the one person of Christ. In Revelation, '[a]s in Daniel "beast" means "historical empire"' (155), which suggests a clear, one-to-one reference in both places, yet it is 'not merely "Rome" in an objective, reductionistic sense' (156). If Boring is trying to allow us to hear Revelation as would its first hearers, it is far from clear on what grounds we should believe that they made these subtle and shifting distinctions.

c.   Implications for Rev 12 and 13

Boring's style of commentary does not follow a conventional verse-by-verse comment, and so some of the details of the text pass without comment. From the historical particularity of the text he sees many direct references to the contemporary world, but from his understanding of the polyvalence of the symbolism, he insists that certain things point to broader realities. Thus his comment often moves from the particular to the general.

The woman in Rev 12, as mentioned above, represents 'the cosmic woman who brings forth the Messiah' (152), drawing together images of Israel, Zion, Eve, and Mary. The dragon represents the 'trans-individual supra-personal powers of

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[44] Boring (167) notes that he owes this suggestion to Minear. But elsewhere, Minear himself warns of the difficulties and dangers of trying to translate assertions in the world of Revelation to our own world, when the ontological categories of these two worlds do not correlate. See Minear (1966) especially p 91.

[45] See Wink (1992) 'Introduction' (pp 4f) for a possible way forward that might satisfy Boring's criteria.

evil' developed in Paul's thought (155). Again, as the woman brings together a range of ideas, the confluence of images from the Old Testament and extra-canonical mythology suggests that this figure draws together 'all the anti-God forces from Eden on' (ibid).

The child is the Messiah figure from Ps 2, who is Christ, and his being snatched up to heaven summarises his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Boring does not have a problem with this rather cursory summary of Jesus' life and work, since he then sees it as amplified in the war in heaven explained by the hymn as symbolising the victory of the cross. So Satan's fall is not pre-cosmic, but 'now', at the moment of the Christ-event, the cross (158). He is thus treating the interjected account of war in heaven (as reflecting earthly reality), with its hymnic exegesis, as epexegetical of the theological 'hole' left in verse 6—though without making this explicit. The 'rest of [the woman's] seed' in 12.17 stands for the Christian church.

Boring identifies the beast from the sea as the Roman Empire, and the beast from the land as the *commune*, the local infrastructure supporting the emperor cult, but with the qualification that this representation is not to be taken in a 'literal, reductionistic, sense' (156). He sees specific, literal correspondences in both of the images of the mark of the beast (with the Hebrew transliteration of NERON CAESAR), and the financial penalties for Christians in not carrying this mark, but wants to assert that the important thing is to understand the significance of the symbol, rather than its referent (163). Again, Boring's concern is to avoid the practice of 'religious quacks and sensationalisers' (161), by focusing on the 'element of evocative mystery in the symbol' (163), and he hints at the means by which we might emulate John's understanding of his world. The effect of the seal, or mark, is to introduce a 'dualism of decision' (161), eliminating the possibility of a middle way between the cult of Caesar and the worship of God[46].

d. Conclusion

Boring is in some senses half-way between a reading of relocation and a reading of alocation. He wants to re-express the message of Revelation in

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[46] A more recent study, deSilva (1991) develops this idea more fully, based on an analysis of how the rhetoric of the text functions within a reconstructed sociological and historical context. I shall be returning to this at the end of part 5.

contemporary terms, rather than in generalities, but does not identify his own situation explicitly enough to do this satisfactorily. Although looking to understand the transformation that traditional images undergo in the process of metaphorization, he is not systematic in his analysis. His assumption of sympathy in his audience means that he does not face up to the more challenging literary and linguistic questions concerning his definition of the way Revelation's symbols work.

4 A Reading of Location

i. Tina Pippin (1992a)

a. Statement of Method

Tina Pippin's fascinating work on Revelation is less a commentary than an exposé: her reading strategy seeks to 'expose the Apocalypse's ambiguous representation of women' (cover blurb). It is a short work, and deals selectively with the text of Revelation, focusing mainly on its images of women. Two 'dialogue partners' become evident as her study progresses: the historical use of imagery from Revelation within what she perceives to be a patriarchal Christian tradition (as evidenced by the collection of illustrations at the end of the book with their often ironic captions[47] and by explicit comments within the text, as on p 81); and the particular use of Revelation by Christian fundamentalists in America (33 and 45).[48]

Pippin is quite explicit about her presuppositions (16). She eschews any interest in the text's historical context, or its original audience. Instead, she wants to employ a number of approaches. Though she does not like to think of them as ideological or literary tools, that is what they appear to be.

The first is the notion of catharsis, as applied by Adela Yarbro Collins (17f). Catharsis is a state of 'emotional arousal of conflicting emotions' as an aesthetic response to the text (17). Pippin is in no doubt that Revelation is a cathartic text, in

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[47] Page 141 has an image from 1860 that includes a beatific-looking Christ beckoning a submissive bride, who is something of an archetypal image of Victorian virginal passivity. Pippin's comment is heavily ironic: 'And all of heaven rejoices.' The great difficulty with illustrations of Revelation is that they are inherently literalizing of the textual metaphors, a weakness that Pippin follows—see below.

[48] There is a third partner, which is that group of feminist readers of Revelation which is less

that it does arouse strong emotional responses, but she is ambivalent as to whether the catharsis induced by this text is positive ('healing').

Secondly, Pippin sees herself clearly in post-modern context (16). This means for her adopting a reader-response criticism of the most radical kind: the text has become completely without an author, and the reader's perspective is prioritised. 'All we have is the text…and we speak of a space with an absent author' (26). This means that, (uncritically) following Linton (1991) in his use of Roland Barthes, a text must have multiple meanings, and it is up to the reader to foreground the meanings that she chooses (25).[49]

Thirdly, Pippin approaches the text by means of ideology critique, an approach which 'examines the interaction between text and reader and scrutinizes the interpretative moves the reader makes' (27). For Pippin, this ideology critique has three aspects. In the first place, Pippin takes a Marxist view of society, so that struggles are regularly referred to as 'class struggles' even where the notion of 'class' in any formal sense is entirely anachronistic ('the class struggle of the first century,' 30). The second aspect of ideology is an unremitting commitment to a feminist (-materialist) agenda. 'Reading as a woman demands reading for gender codes in the narrative' (23 and 70, a phrase repeated *verbatim*). The final aspect of ideology critique is the use of structuralism. A method such as that of Greimas' actantial analysis, with its emphasis on binary opposition, set as a frame over the text, shows up the 'repressed political subconscious' within the text that might otherwise be missed (33, 38).

Proportionately, Pippin spends more time elucidating her biases and methodology that any other commentator. It is almost as if she simply needs to unleash these, and do no more; they will process the text themselves, without further assistance.

b. The Method Observed

Pippin does not like the Book of Revelation. It is 'weird and grotesque' (11); its cathartic effect is something akin to 'a book-burning or a food riot' (20); it is a text that 'terrorises readers into making a choice' (22); it contains only 'negative and

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radical than her, in particular Adela Yarbro Collins and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (50–53).
[49] For comment on Linton's approach, see section 'An Integrated Analysis' in part 5 below.

male-dominated images of women,' and is a 'phallocentric text that exploits female images as part of male desire' (80 and 84). But her post-modern ideological reading is clearly superior, as it exposes the text for what it truly is, unmasking its 'unconscious.' There is more than a hint of the post-modern reader knowing the text better than it knows itself.

Having detached the text from its historical context, Pippin then has free choice about *who* is the reader, moved in *what* direction by the text. She herself reads as an 'elite female in a system of white privilege' (53) but feels she must read on behalf of women everywhere who suffer from 'gender oppression.' Those down the centuries who have used Revelation to express and bolster their oppression of women are in large measure to blame for this. Authorless and contextless, the text of Revelation is unable to defend itself against such (mis?)readings of the past.

Pippin's comments veritably bristle with references to power. Revelation speaks against those who desire wealth and power (16); post-modern reader-oriented approaches give the reader power over texts (111, note 1); dominance, struggle and binary opposition are repeated themes; Revelation's vision is anti-women because it spells the death of erotic power (86); and Pippin herself is in a (power) struggle against the boundaries of interpretation (25, 88 and elsewhere).

Despite having put the text at centre-stage, Pippin pays surprisingly little interest in the details of the text or the way individual texts function in their literary context. Whilst focusing on the negative female images in Revelation, no attention is paid to the negative male images—such as the serpent and the beasts—and their abuse of power. It is striking that Revelation makes little use of the term ἀνήρ, which occurs only in 21.2, instead preferring to use ἄνθρωπος both for individuals and groups.[50] Pippin also fails to note how male and female images are conflated systematically by the text's symbolism. The image of the passive female in 12.1 is symbolic of the whole messianic community—this helplessness is seen as exemplary for all believers, male and female.[51] Indeed, the

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[50] This contrasts with the canonically proximal Letter of James, where the use of ἀνήρ in an apparently generic sense poses particular problems for inclusive-language translation. See Carson (1998) pp 120, 124.

[51] And in a Jewish context, the messianic community may have been thought of as primarily male.

male messiah born to her is as helpless as she is—he too has to be 'saved by a male god' (76).

The most striking failure of Pippin to engage with the text's symbolism and internal logic is in her discussion of the 144,000. This group in Rev 7, despite being from 'every nation, tribe, people and language,' is not truly inclusive, since it only includes those who are followers of the lamb (55).[52] Moreover, in Rev 14 the 144,000 are clearly male (says Pippin, since they have not defiled themselves with *women*) (50), and eventually they enter the heavenly city who is the bride, a scene that is 'disturbing because the imagery is that of mass intercourse' (80). This is an extraordinary literalizing of an image that can only be understood metaphorically, as Beale and Bauckham note at some length.[53]

This literalizing is, in fact, a feature of Pippin's entire reading of Revelation; Schüssler Fiorenza almost implies this in her criticism of reading for gender that Pippin notes (52). Again, this is ironic, since is it the literalizing of fundamentalist readings of which she is so strongly critical. She labels this approach a variety of 'transcendental interpretation' which 'detaches the text from its historical context' and in so doing 'impoverishes its true complexity' (33–34). 'By standing outside the text, transcendent readers are merely promoting their own ideology…and are not paying close attention to the vision of the text' (34). On these criteria, Pippin is herself offering just such a 'transcendent interpretation.'

c. Implications for Rev 12 and 13

The woman clothed with the sun has no name. She is voiceless, apart from her cries of pain in giving birth (74). She is overlooked, and takes no part in the cosmic battle between God and Satan, which overshadows her rôle in the text (75). Her importance is fundamentally tied to her reproductive capacity (75–76), and as regards sexual identity, the 'pain in childbirth is set against the pleasure of

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[52] It is quite difficult to imagine dispensing with a criterion like this within a text whose primary purpose is to say, 'It matters that you follow the lamb.' The fact that the followers are explicitly shown to include all ethnic and gender groups is not enough for Pippin.

[53] Beale (1999) pp 737–740; Bauckham (1993a) pp 229–232, who notes that since the enumeration of the group is metaphorical, it is natural to read the condition of purity in a metaphorical way to signify doctrinal/ethical purity. D C Olson (1997) links the verse explicitly to the fallen Watchers in 1 Enoch, thus suggesting that the male language is no more than an accurately worded reference to a specific story of the loss of priestly status. Pippin's reading is not sophisticated enough for her to ask: 'what is the ideological consequence of using sexual

orgasm' (75). She is the stereotype of the passive,[54] obedient and long-suffering woman (75)—an image that has never been good for women. She has power, but that power is always under (male) control (64, 84). She is powerless to save herself, and needs to be saved by a male god (77). Ultimately, she is marginalized, as she is left in the desert and does not have a place in the heavenly city (53).

The battle scene in 12.7–9 (as with all images of conflict in Revelation) is an expression of male violence, in contrast to women's non-violent way of relating in the world (98).

The only redeeming feature of this chapter is that the earth (Gaia) comes to the woman's aid—'the spiritual feminine is seen as subduing the material masculine' (79).

The depiction of the beasts in Rev 13 belongs to horror literature (90), and anyway, the reader knows beforehand that the dragon and the beasts do not stand a chance against the lamb (20).

d. Conclusion

Pippin is clear that (in terms of my classification) her reading is one of location; her ideological location is prior to the text and its context. Her reading is one of unmitigated suspicion, without any hermeneutic of retrieval.[55] By centring the reader over against the text, the text has no right of reply. Once the text's historical context is dispensed with, the text itself becomes completely mutable. Pippin is happy not only to de-construct the text, but to re-construct it in the fashion of her own ideology—in fact, re-writing is something Revelation needs (105). Although she affirms the importance of listening and dialogue (37), there is no dialogue with the text—only an ideological monologue. In the end, there is no 'other' in the text; the reader is alone.

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imagery as the vehicle for a metaphor that has a doctrinal/ethical tenor?'

[54] Interestingly, where Pippin sees the portrayal of the woman clothed in the sun as being passive, Ford comments that if she stands for the faithful remnant then she is responsive, not passive (Ford, 1975, p 196).

[55] She explicitly rejects the judgement of Revelation rendered by a 'hermeneutic of acceptance', p 21. See below on the importance of suspicion and retrieval in Ricoeur's hermeneutic.

5 A Reading of Relocation

i. Allan Boesak (1987)

a. Statement of Method

Boesak's commentary is unusual, in that it combines an awareness of scholarly concerns with a preacher's rhetorical flourish; there are not many other commentaries on Revelation that could be described as a gripping read.

Boesak's approach is throughout marked by a personal passion and engagement. His own experience of imprisonment, during which he experienced an 'angelic visitation' (9), functioned both as a motivation to understand Revelation afresh, and as an affective hermeneutical key for his reading. He reads as a 'fellow disciple' and 'fellow pilgrim' (11) in the quite specific sense of someone who is suffering politically-motivated persecution because he resisted the temptation to compromise his faith. Thus, Boesak is able to 'discover the heart of that lonely, brave prophet' (14)—there is a meeting of minds across the centuries that is essential to right reading of the book. Revelation is written in language that can only be understood by those who share 'a common experience and a common faith' (15). This is not the same as 'knowing the mind of the author better than himself' through the text; rather, it is an immediate sympathetic identification, somewhat akin to that expressed elsewhere in Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality.[56]

Alongside the subjective personal correspondences, Boesak sees specific socio-political correspondences between his situation and that of John of Patmos. Revelation has a clear, even predominant, political aspect to it (11, 32). Its original readers and readers in contemporary South Africa share in a struggle for the faith against the dominance of a state that sees its own preservation as paramount (21 and 37). Both groups alike have suffered at the hands of the state, and this suffering has included martyrdom (23, 25). Boesak's readers are like John's readers—they are the 'little people of God' who 'see and understand the events of history from the underside' (25). This truth cuts across academic speculation as to the precise nature of their suffering, and effectively relegates all discussion about whether particular emperors were persecutors to the margins. What matters is the

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[56] On which, see further below under 'Allusion—Observations' in part 4, and also under 'Conclusion.'

experience of living under oppression (19). As a result, Rev 1.9 ('I, John, your fellow-sufferer in the tribulation and kingdom and patient endurance') is the key verse.

Boesak sits relatively lightly to academic discussion. Although he appears to recognise its value, and has been informed by it himself, he is also clear that the real message of Revelation can be 'paralysed' by 'those sterile escape mechanisms and dead-end arguments about numbers and symbols and signs' (38). Revelation is a book to be lived. Thus Boesak's primary concern is making the message available in a way which will empower the church he leads. John was writing first and foremost as a pastor (26) and Boesak writes with the same concern.

Of the methods of interpretation that have been used in reading Revelation, Boesak places his approach within the 'contemporary-historical' school (28).[57] 'John writes about the political situation in Asia Minor in his day...the book cannot be understood out of the political context of the time' (28). But Boesak is also clear that as prophecy, the meaning of the book is not exhausted by locating it in its historical context. It must be re-located into present-day experience (ibid).

b.   The Method Observed

The importance of parallel personal experience and socio-political correspondences means that Boesak largely operates with a hermeneutic of acceptance (in Pippin's words). This applies both to Revelation (which is a 'vision of justice and love, of redemption and judgement,' 26) and to his own experiences of struggle. His experience of angelic visitation is taken at its face value. The struggle in South Africa is depicted without very much hint of ambiguity, even concerning those advocating violence (102). The text of Revelation is a (straightforward?) product of divine revelation (20), and the Roman Empire was unambiguously evil, as is the South African state (21). They share an 'undisguised hatred...for Christians' (34). Comments of the early church fathers are taken as trustworthy (24, 32). Revelation's language of suffering and martyrdom is to be taken seriously (33). Any tension within the canon in attitudes to the state is dissolved; earlier NT texts (Romans, Hebrews and 1 Peter) are essentially

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[57] Though unfortunately he mistakes his categories, separating 'preterist' from 'contemporary-historical' and omitting any reference to 'symbolist/spiritual.'

inadequate, since they were not written in situations of such suffering (ibid). Even historical critical methodology (kept in its right place, presumably) is read with this hermeneutic of acceptance. We can be confident who the tyrant depicted in the text really is, 'once the time of writing is established and the political-historical context is given its real weight' (18).

Boesak takes a fairly conventional view of this context. Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian, who was a 'second Nero,' and demanded to be worshipped as Lord and God (24). There is little connexion between the Gospel of John and Revelation (26). It was addressed to Jewish Christians, who would be familiar with the apocalyptic genre and would not find the imagery strange or opaque, and it makes extensive use of OT language and imagery (19). The explicit struggle of the church against an oppressive regime is paradigmatic for the text (32).

Boesak's language is often rhetorical and marked by the preacher's flourish. The text appears to be motivational as much as didactic. The use of rhetorical questions is not uncommon (see, for example, p 88) and assertion frequently takes priority over reasoned debate (for instance, on pp 101, 105). Within this, he also re-uses words and phrases from the text of Revelation: 'the tidal wave of blind rage that the persecutor spews forth' (16, alluding to Rev 12.12 and 15). He is almost using Revelation as a 'language arsenal' in his diatribe against the South African state, in a (likely unconscious) imitation of the way Revelation uses its sources[58]—its 'time is up' (90, echoing Rev 12.12).

More generally, Boesak sees the parallel of Revelation with his situation as extending to other situations of oppression. He notes the suppression of apocalyptic literature in both the ancient Roman Empire and in modern-day Korea (17). 'In Hitler the beast had once again taken shape—not for the first time but *once again*' (39, italics original). In fact, Revelation offer a 'blistering critique and devastating judgement of Domitian and *all autocrats like him*' (30, italics mine). There is an assumption of a kind of persistence in the structure of human relations; there will always be tyrants and oppressive regimes, and this text, in speaking God's judgement and hope, offers an archetypal perspective, to be read

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[58] Schüssler Fiorenza (1985) p 135. See section below on 'Allusion' in part 4.

and re-read in new contexts of oppression. 'Prophecy... will be fulfilled at different times and in different ways in the history of the world' (29).

Interestingly, Boesak's reading avoids simplistic triumphalism, and remains true to the ambiguous destiny of the faithful to suffer and triumph.

c. Implications for Rev 12 and 13

The *dramatis personae* in these chapters portray 'specific realities.' The woman is the messianic community (79), defenceless and powerless as the church is in the world (82). Her pregnancy is the sign of God's life-giving activity in what would otherwise be barrenness; this pattern of fruitfulness coming out of barrenness, of security coming from insecurity, is the pattern of experience of God's people in the OT (80–81). The woman's time in the desert explicitly recalls the 42 stages of wandering of the Exodus (82).

The war in heaven is a reminder of God's involvement in cosmic conflict on behalf of his people, not least as shown in the servant songs of Isaiah (84). Michael's name ('Who is like God?') again has reminiscences of the Exodus and Pharaoh's arrogance (85). But the combination of conflict and praise (Rev 12.7–11) highlights the paradox of suffering and triumph. 'It drives the dragon crazy when you sing about his downfall even though you are bleeding' (87). Faithfulness is costly; if you have no wounds, you must think there is nothing worth fighting for (89), unlike all the modern martyrs who have gone before. As for the dragon, so for the oppressive regime: the time is short (90). But ordinary, earthly things (Rev 12.16) come to the aid of God's people even now—unexpected legal judgements and church pronouncements that undermine the credibility of apartheid (92).

The vision of chapter 13 is a prophetic insight; 'Nero and Caligula and Domitian are only *manifestations* of this condition of human history' (94). The image of the beast, taken from the OT, is used to show that as the emperor is idolized, 'all humanity has vanished' from him (95). (Paul's vision in Rom 13 is what the state ought to be; this vision is of what it can become, 96–99). The state becomes demonized as the devil confuses people's thinking, and as the state itself no longer sees itself as God's servant. This has become a 'chilling reality' in South Africa (100), and may even justify violent resistance (Rev 13.10) (102). The 'beast from the land' is probably someone specific, such as the high priest in the temple of Artemis in Ephesus. It corresponds to the collaboration of the church with the

Nazi regime in Germany, and the support of apartheid by the Dutch Reformed Church (104–105). The mark of the beast was branded in indelible ink by South African security forces on the hands of those they had already interrogated and found innocent, to show that they had nothing to fear (103–104).

Boesak's comment on the number of the beast (666) is the only time where he looks for the surplus of meaning to apply to his own times from a lack, rather than a fullness, of meaning in its original context. There is, he says, no convincing explanation of this number in terms of contemporary names (such as 'Nero Caesar' or 'Domitian') (106). Rather, the point is that it is a *human* number; the beast is a corruption of humanity (107).

d. Conclusion

Although Revelation is tethered to its historical context, this tethering is sufficiently loose to allow Boesak to use it in his exhortation to his fellow Christians. His exposition is pragmatic, rather than systematic, and he is happy to leave detailed questions unanswered, and loose ends untied. Although the genre of his writing is somewhat different from Revelation, in many ways he utilises the book's rhetorical strategies of assertion, use of sources, rhetorical questioning and doxology. His style is emotive, rather than paraenetic. The commentary is something of a roller-coaster ride through Revelation and its reading in the context of apartheid.

Two questions remain unanswered. How will this reading change when apartheid is overthrown (as, of course, it was)? And, related to that, how are others to make sense of it who do not live in situations as closely parallel as Boesak sees his own? The questions remain unanswered, since the two horizons of the text and the reader are so seamlessly fused that the work (if something so apparently effortless can be called a 'work') is scarcely visible.

6 Conclusion

The detailed engagement with very differing approaches to reading Revelation points to some strategic questions for its interpretation.

In the first place, it is noticeable how little contact there is between the readings. Where there is common ground, this tends to be in the area of the data that is used within an argument (for example, aspects of the text's contacts with the OT, the nature of the first century world) rather than in the assumptions, structure of argument and methodology employed. Such contact is not inconceivable; Pippin and Boesak might have a fruitful dialogue concerning Revelation and its rôle in contexts of oppression. As it is, the text remains for them respectively an oppressive enemy and a liberating authority. Boesak and Boring might have a dialogue concerning the benefits and dangers inherent in the re-particularisation of the phenomena of the text. Boring and Ford might have a dialogue about the integrity of the text and its relation to meaning. But these dialogues have not taken place; for a variety of reasons, each author inhabits his or her own interpretative world. And many of the differences in their conclusions have arisen 'not from obscurities in the texts, but from the conflicting aims of the interpreters'[59]—even in a relatively obscure text like Revelation.

Secondly, the different readings have markedly different results on both reader and text. With readings of dislocation, the expert dismembers the text and actually removes meaning from the reader. With Pippin, the elevation of the reader makes the text almost disappear—which raises the question as to what the reader is reading. Is there any real engagement or challenge? With Boring, there is a danger that the reader, reading in his or her particular situation, becomes anonymous by virtue of generalisation. The approach that seems to be most fruitful in preserving the place of both reader and text is Boesak's reading of relocation. The text is given a clear historical and socio-political space, and the reader occupies a corresponding place in her contemporary world. But the question then arises: how does *this* reading by *this* reader give space for readers from other contexts? At first sight, other readers must take the place of spectators, engaging not with Revelation, but with Revelation's recontextualization in the South Africa of the apartheid era.

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[59] Robert Morgan (1988) p 8.

Thirdly, all approaches stumble at the crucial point of interpreting the metaphorical imagery in Revelation. The readings of dislocation see meaning as being stripped from words and phrases as they move from one context to another, or overlaid with elements hostile to their origin. Boring sets up a dichotomy of the general and the particular, in which tensive imagery triumphs over 'code'. Pippin's literalizing precludes any discussion of the nature and effect of metaphor. And Boesak finds a generous surplus of meaning within the images, though without any theoretical justification for doing so, at least in relation to language.

The challenge, then, is this. Is it possible to find a reading that preserves the integrity and space of the text, whilst still giving room for readers from different contexts? Can we break the dualism of general and particular—is it possible to engage with the metaphorical imagery in its particularity, without being tied to that particularity? In other words, is there a surplus of meaning to be found over and above the meaning of the text in its historical context? Is it possible to do this in a way that is methodologically sound, yet still offers a reading that is accessible—one that is credible within the rational arena of biblical studies, yet also offers a nourishing of faith for the believing community? And can different approaches be made to engage with one another, not just at the level of facts, but at the level of assumptions and methods—of axioms and rules of inference?

To look for some answers to these questions, I will now focus on Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic of metaphor, with its concern both for text and reader.

I will then go on to examine some aspects of historical context, attempting to engage with a wide range of views at different levels of argument.

Finally, these two aspects will converge as I consider the text of Revelation 12 and 13 as a whole.

3 Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutic of Metaphor
Context, Content, Criticisms and Contribution

1 Ricoeur's Hermeneutic of Metaphor in Context

There is a curious appropriateness in bringing together the work of Paul Ricoeur, and the Book of Revelation. Despite the obvious chasm that exists between the texts in terms of style, content and context, they do share some notable features. Ricoeur's work is generally considered to be difficult[1]; it draws on and builds on a wide range of ideas[2]; and it has provoked the whole range of responses, from unqualified adulation,[3] through a qualified welcome,[4] to outright rejection.[5]

The Book of Revelation is often considered the most difficult book of the New Testament, and perhaps the whole Bible, to understand. Without formal citation, it nevertheless is reckoned to allude to an enormous range of biblical and extra-biblical material, and there is perhaps no other book that has elicited such a wide range of impossibly conflicting assessments, both in terms of its value, and its interpretation.

Vanhoozer comments on the writing of Ricoeur to the effect that its language is strange, its arguments dense, and it at every point depends on works 'whose conceptual apparatus is as opaque as its prose.'[6] It would not take much alteration to make this a most apt statement about the Book of Revelation.

On a more positive note, both Ricoeur and Revelation offer a tantalising promise by virtue of their wide scope. To engage with Ricoeur's thought is to find oneself in conversation with many of the major thinkers of the modern era—Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Hegel, Kant, Schleiermacher, Wittgenstein, not to mention the historic figures of Aristotle, Augustine, Descartes and Plato. There is

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[1] See Vanhoozer (1990) p 4

[2] Noted by Dornisch (1975) p 1.

[3] Dornisch (1975) p 18 is confident that in good time Ricoeur will provide a complete system of interpretation.

[4] Thiselton (1992) pp 344–378 is clear about both the value and limitations of Ricoeur's hermeneutic.

[5] The Yale school of theologians stands out as the most obvious critics of Ricoeur—see Vanhoozer (1990) p 4—though he is not without quite a wide range of critics, who question his propositions at a number of different places. See section 'Criticisms' below.

[6] Vanhoozer (1990) p 4

perhaps not a single significant area of recent thought in philosophy or linguistics which Ricoeur has not touched on to some degree. Similarly, with reading the Book of Revelation one finds oneself amidst the criss-crossing of themes from its own canon—the Old Testament read both in the light of the Christ event and also in the context of first-century Asia Minor. The implicit challenge and reward of both is: master this, and you will gain insight into all these others.

The concerns of Ricoeur's work also suggest the appropriateness of relating it to the interpretation of Revelation. Revelation has been seen as both a profoundly liberating and a profoundly dehumanising text, and it is shot through with an eschatological perspective.[7] Ricoeur's work, as we shall see, is embedded in a concern to recover the fullness of human existence, and his understanding of the nature of truth is distinctively eschatological.[8] Further, apocalyptic in general, and Revelation in particular, has often been the subject of a fundamentalist systematisation that renders the text almost mute in the hands of the interpreter. Ricoeur's emphasis on the de-centring of the interpreting ego in the face of the text is not unique, but is most pertinent in the interpretation of Revelation.

More specifically, four aspects of Ricoeur's understanding of language and its relation to human experience promise to address particular questions that present themselves in the reading of Revelation.

i. In the Context of Questions Arising from Reading Revelation

a. Image and Reference

In the first place, what does the imagery in Revelation refer to? As we have seen, there is considerable debate about whether the imagery refers to specific entities in the writer's first-century context. But even if that is the case, the effect of the text does not stop there. In countless different contexts, at different times, readers have perceived the text as saying something direct to their own situation. It appears as though Revelation is saying something more beyond what it says about the first century through its metaphorization of its first-century world.

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[7] On Revelation being dehumanising, there is a striking contrast of view between Tina Pippin (1992) and Christopher Rowland (1990).

[8] HT pp 53f, where Ricoeur sets the goal of understanding history within the context of an eschatological hope ('I hope that I am within the bounds of truth'). Ihde in his introduction to Ricoeur (1974) also makes this point in relation to the openness of history and the important of hope (xxii–xxiv).

Ricoeur develops the idea, from Jakobson, of the 'split reference' of metaphor.[9] Taken literally, the elements of a metaphor refer straightforwardly to aspects of the world external to the text as determined by the lexicon. In the statement 'Man is a wolf' (to which we will return later), the terms 'man' and 'wolf' have unambiguous referents in particular classes of animals. But in coining the metaphor, Ricoeur argues, the literal sense breaks down—man clearly is not a wolf in the literal sense of the classes of animals referred to. As the literal sense breaks down, a new way of seeing the world opens up for the reader, a world in which 'man' and 'wolf' are seen in a new relation. It is to this world of understanding (claims Ricoeur) that the metaphor refers in a non-literal way.

In the case of Revelation, there is a new way of seeing the world that is opened up by the process of metaphorization that happens as heaven becomes an imperial throne-room,[10] the historic people of God become a star-crowned woman in labour,[11] the Roman Empire becomes a beast acting at the behest of the great serpent Satan, and so on. If Ricoeur's concept of split reference is convincing, it offers a methodologically sound account of how this new way of seeing the world transcends (though, I will argue, never entirely leaves behind) the first-century context of the book.

b. Metaphor and Analysis

Secondly, what is the relation of the language of the Book of Revelation to explanations and analyses of the symbols it contains? On one hand, there are commentators who argue that an 'explanation' of the symbols is an essential pre-requisite to grasping the message of the book.[12] On the other, the dangers of such an approach appear to be perceived as so serious by some commentators that they want to avoid any discussion of what the literal referents might be.[13] The heart of

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[9] See RM chapter 7, pp 216f, and Roman Jakobson (1971).

[10] See the work of David Aune, and especially (1983).

[11] See section 4 below.

[12] For a mild version of this, see Wilcock (1975) and his explanation of the significance of numbers. But note his careful qualification (p 24) that argues that the text is not adequately dealt with by means of logical analysis alone. For an extreme example see Atkinson (1940) and Hal Lindsey's appropriation of elements of apocalyptic symbolism in *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

[13] See the example of Boring, cited above, and, in relation to another apocalyptic text, John Goldingay's commentary on Daniel, where there is no discussion of the empires that might be indicated by the imagery in Dan 2 and 7. Contrast the detailed discussion in John Collins (1993) pp 166f and 292–9.

Ricoeur's observations about the relation of symbol and language is that 'the symbol gives rise to the thought.'[14] In other words, it is the symbolisation of the world that opens ways of possible understanding, which can then be articulated in language, rather than language describing the thought which is then distilled into symbol.

As a consequence of this, analysis of metaphor is always subordinate to the existential possibilities that are opened up by the metaphor. This provides a sharp note of caution to commentators on a text like Revelation, which is highly metaphorical or symbolic, warning that commentary on the text must always be secondary to the text itself. When the commentary dominates the reading, then the text—and the thought that is gives rise to—have been lost. Having said that, I will argue below that the logic of Ricoeur's thinking about metaphor still leaves a significance place for analysis.

c. Potency and Openness

Thirdly, why is it that the language of Revelation (in particular, and apocalyptic in general) appears to be so powerful?[15] Ricoeur emphasises the power of multivalent language.[16] This is expressed most succinctly in the phrase 'the surplus of meaning,' subtitle to Ricoeur's *Interpretation Theory* and sometimes used as the phrase that summarises Ricoeur's contributions to hermeneutics and the understanding of language.[17] I will return, at the end of this section, to the question of what it means for language to be multivalent—is this to do with ambiguity, or is it to do with indefiniteness, and are these the same? For the moment, it is worth noting that as study of language under the influence of empiricism and positivism systematically downgraded the status of metaphor,[18] texts like Revelation continued to exercise their power over the imagination of readers. In Ricoeur's work, the study of metaphorical language returns to meet

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[14] This idea is introduced in SE and developed in Ricoeur (1974) pp 288f.

[15] My distinct impression from following the events surrounding the Gulf War in 1991 was that such apocalyptic-sounding language as 'the mother of battles' and 'rivers of blood' used by Saddam Hussein prior to the conflict had a significant impact on public awareness in the West, and as a result shaped strategic decisions by the Western powers in the conduct of the conflict.

[16] Henceforth I will use the term 'multivalent' in preference to its synonym 'polyvalent' which also occurs in the literature, since the latter is derived from a mixture of Greek (πολύς) and Latin (*valentia*) and it might possibly be said that nothing good will come of it.

[17] As for example, by T M van Leeuwen (1981) and others.

with the experienced power of that language to transform the landscape of the imagination. Thus popular readings of the text have a point of contact with questions of method.

d. Reading and Criticism

Fourthly, is it possible to close the gap between scholarly debates and popular appropriations of the text? This is not a problem limited to the text of Revelation, but is perhaps especially marked in this case. For the last hundred years or so in the study of Revelation, criticism has been moving into ever more inaccessible places, and Revelation (as a text to be read) has suffered acutely at the hands of the source critics.[19] Recent emphases in critical study may begin to close that gap, as more attention is paid to readers' responses to the text as a whole, but it is still true that even the theologically literate need something of a lifeline to help them connect with scholarship.[20]

Ricoeur's hermeneutic sets out a new relationship between reading and criticism by holding out the possibility of a second, post-critical appropriation of the text.[21] Criticism's natural effect is simply to create a desert, and it is only fruitful once a new reading of and engagement with the text is entered upon. This second reading differs from a first, naïve reading in that it is post-critical, but it shares with that first reading an immediacy of vulnerability and openness—it is a second *naïvety*.

Overviews of the work of Paul Ricoeur abound.[22] This is fortunate, since much of Ricoeur's own writing is dense and not easily accessible.[23] His style is opaque;

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[18] On which, see below.

[19] R H Charles' commentary must rank as one of the most innaccessible works of biblical scholarship in the modern era. In contrast, note in Prigent's history of the interpretation of Rev 12 (1959), how many commentators led public opinion through their comments.

[20] 'Lifelines' is the title of an article by Michael Gilbertson (1998) which offers a helpful overview of recent developments in scholarly thinking about Revelation for Christian ministers.

[21] This idea is first expressed in SE and FP, but is fundamental to Ricoeur's emphasis on the nature of understanding being existential and personal, not merely critical and intellectual.

[22] Some brief introductions: Don Ihde in the editor's introduction to Ricoeur (1974) sets out Ricoeur's earlier thought particularly in the context of philosophy and linguistics; Loretta Dornisch (1975) is a laudatory, and probably over-optimistic, preface to *Semeia* 4, which contains some important essays of Ricoeur; Mudge (1980) is a balanced but positive overview, which also forms the introduction to Ricoeur (1980); White (1991) is an appreciation of Ricoeur's positive contribution to the hermeneutical arena, rather than an analysis. More in-

many of his works were originally written in French; and he draws on a wide range of ideas and philosophical vocabulary, so that his arguments are frequently nuanced in such a way as to escape the attention on first reading. Furthermore, his argumentation is dense, and all of these factors make him a difficult writer with which to get to grips.

His dependence on other thinkers—his 'mediating' of them, in Vanhoozer's words[24]—makes it essential to see his work within this broader context. However, I am not here so much concerned with the whole of his hermeneutical theory, as with his particular insights into the nature and importance of metaphor. The inter-relation of this to other areas of his thought—perhaps, even, the centrality of metaphor to his thinking about human existence and language—makes it equally important to place it in the context of his total project.

ii. In the Context of his Other Work

a. Early Concerns

A number of commentators point out that Ricoeur's work starts with a consideration of symbol. But it is, perhaps, more accurate to say that the first stages of his work in *hermeneutics* start with a consideration of symbol. For Ricoeur already had a particular concern about human existence that led him to examine the nature and effect of symbols.

Ricoeur was influenced in his early years by the work of contemporary existentialists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Gabriel Marcel. However, early on he wants to distinguish between those thinkers who

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depth articles include: Gerhart (1975), which is rather less accessible; the fascinating Lowe (1981), reprinted as Lowe (1983); McGaughrey (1988), which looks at Ricoeur's work with a particular interest in symbolism. Larger scale studies of note include: Albano (1976); Bourgeois (1975), which emphasises the hermeneutical aspect of Ricoeur's thought; Dornisch (1973); Gerhart (1979); Ihde (1979) who, in contrast to Bourgeois, emphasises the importance of the phenomenological framework of Ricoeur's thought; Kemp and Rasmussen (1989) is a mixed bag of essays on both Ricoeur's earlier as well as later works (despite the title); Clark (1990) is a more-or-less chronological overview, reasonably accessible, which gives more focus to *Time and Narrative*; Thompson (1991) is an important recent commentator; and Vanhoozer (1990) is an excellent, accessible overview, setting Ricoeur in the context of earlier thinkers, engaging with recent critics, and examining the consequences of Ricoeur's thought for the interpretation of the gospels. Most recently, Charles Reagan (1996) offers a combination of biography, study and interview. Ricoeur himself briefly sets out the context of his own thinking in the Appendix to RM, and again in the Introduction to OAA.

[23] Vanhoozer (1990) p 4.

[24] Vanhoozer (1990) p 5.

affirm the fullness of humanity, and those whom he perceives as wanting to flatten, or reduce, humanity to something less than it really is. Thus it is that he writes against Sartre in *History and Truth* (1965). Indeed, much of HT is taken up wrestling with the need for some sort of over-arching understanding of history, and the preservation of individual identity—the singularity of the unique event and of unique persons—within the flow of historical events.

In his thinking about the irreducibility of human experience, Ricoeur is profoundly influenced by the phenomenology of Husserl. Ricoeur studied Husserl's work whilst a prisoner during the Second World War, and his translation of and commentary upon Husserl's *Ideen* established him as some-thing of an authority[25]. Ricoeur was not uncritical of Husserl, and draws on his earlier work, rather than his later, where Husserl falls back into existentialism.[26] Ricoeur echoes the concerns of his friend and fellow phenomenologist Mircea Eliade, particularly in defending the irreducibility of religious experience.[27]

This concern leads him to oppose all use of theories or systems of thought in the cause of reductionism. For Ricoeur,

> saying 'yes' to the fullness of the human form means pronouncing a resolute 'no' to each of the various forms of reductionism, which would deny or restrict the reality of human freedom.[28]

(It is perhaps worth commenting that Ricoeur's belief in freedom is not an absolute one, but is tempered with a recognition of the importance of the 'given' in the form of tradition and language.[29] It is because of this he takes issue with Sartre.) Reductionism has many guises; there is a behaviourist reductionism, a Freudian one, a Marxist, a structuralist—and in each case the philosophy in question is used to capture the whole of humanity, to make human existence seem smaller than it is. Lowe notes that Ricoeur engages with each of these at some point in his work.[30] But Ricoeur is concerned in each case not to oppose the particular philosophy, but to oppose its use in limiting humanity. He is so vigorous in his attack, that it is possible at times to think he is opposing the

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[25] Ihde (1971) p 9.

[26] Urmson and Ree (1989) p 145.

[27] Eliade's expression of this concern can be found in (1968), and against the context of modern America in (1969).

[28] Lowe (1986) p viii

[29] See Lowe (1986) p 37 for a summary of the purpose of Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature*.

[30] Lowe (1986) p 37

particular '-ism' itself. For example, in reading *Interpretation Theory*, it would be tempting for a moment to forget that Ricoeur is himself a convinced user of structuralist literary criticism—such is the strength of his opposition to structuralist reductionism in the hermeneutical process. Ricoeur's diagnosis of these reductionisms is that they arise when one particular way of viewing or analysing human existence (which in reality is only one part of the picture) tries to claim too much for its own point of view. As different viewpoints over-extend their spheres of influence and explanation, they inevitably overlap, and this is what gives rise to conflicts of interpretation.[31]

Charles Kelbley, in his translator's forward, sums up Ricoeur's work as part of the 'struggle of existentialism and phenomenology against the spirit of abstraction.'[32]

Mary Gerhart characterises Ricoeur's emphasis on the dialectic of *theoria* and *praxis* as part of a search for the significance of human existence.[33] We cannot exist with *theoria* alone, since this will lead to enslavement, our subjection to a dominating ideology that fails to pay attention to our significance as individuals; but neither can we live with *praxis* alone, since we lose our place in history as we are washed away on a tide of relativism.[34]

Not all commentators believe that Ricoeur's basic orientation is phenomenological. Walter Lowe (1983) highlights the conflict between those who believe he is phenomenological in his thinking, but has added a hermeneutical twist (such as Don Ihde) as compared with those who believe that his work is essentially hermeneutical, though all the time expressed in phenomenological language (such as Patrick Bourgeois).[35] This is not merely a semantic distinction, since it raises the question 'Which element serves the purposes of the other?' Lowe argues convincingly, by analogy with the theological conflict between Lutheranism and Calvinism, that Ricoeur's thinking is essentially phe-nomenological, and that he has grafted hermeneutical methodology onto phenomenology, since the latter on its own cannot serve the task that he tackles.

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[31] Gerhart (1975) p 508.

[32] HT p xi

[33] Gerhart (1975) p 497f.

[34] This concern with the relation between *theoria* and *praxis* is explored more fully in section 3.2.ii below.

[35] Lowe (1983) pp 29-30.

Lowe argues that the movements in Ricoeur's thought arise from the fact that Ricoeur is approaching his subject as response and counter-response to different questions arising at different times.[36] Very often questions he tackles at one stage have arisen out of work he has done earlier, and corrects possible misunderstandings from that earlier work. Thus, whilst clarifying and refining his position, he may appear to be going in a different directions at different times.[37] Lowe agrees with Ihde that Ricoeur starts with a 'weighted focus' of the rôle of the existent subject. This is the focus of his phenomenological phase of thought. He then moves to a 'counter focus' in the hermeneutical phase of his work, introducing the concept of distanciation, and the need for a critical detour in understanding. The final phase of his work is 'a limit idea reflecting an eschatologically postponed synthesis'—though Lowe frankly admits that it is this phase that is most difficult to understand.

The correspondences with the Lutheran/Calvinist theological dichotomy centre around whether or not the finite is capable of manifesting the infinite: *finitum (non) capax infinitum*.[38] Early on, Ricoeur rejects Sartre's dualism of existential freedom and the given, in the same way as Lutheranism rejected the Calvinist dualism of finite and infinite. In its place, Ricoeur follows Husserl in attempting to formulate a presuppositionless philosophy, seeing the possibility of the infinite within the finite in the transcendental ego. Realising the limits of this, Ricoeur then takes a hermeneutical turn (*The Symbolism of Evil*) where criticism undermines the notion of *finitum capax* from the point of view of the subject. A critical hermeneutical phase is the only way of avoiding the subjectivism inherent in transcendental phenomenology—though whether Ricoeur succeeds in avoiding such subjectivism remains to be seen.

But the turn to language puts him in the way of another form of the *finitum capax*, the possibility of fullness of language in Romanticist hermeneutic's idea of an infinitely multivalent mythic-symbolic text. Ricoeur rejects this, too, (*Freud and Philosophy* and *Interpretation Theory*) through the appropriation of a form of structural analysis, psychological or literary as necessary. Thus it is that

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[36] Interestingly, Ricoeur does this explicitly and on a small scale in his discussion of the relationship between history and truth in Ricoeur (1965) pp 41f.

[37] Hence, perhaps, the question of Ronald Alexander's: 'Paul Ricoeur: What direction is he taking?' (1975).

[38] See Vanhoozer (1990) p 77.

throughout his work, Ricoeur is moving between these two poles. As Vanhoozer comments, 'this is how his thought has always progressed: through conflict, imaginative mediation and appropriation,'[39] and it is this feature which allows critics at times to mistake the direction he is taking in the long term. So Alexander comments that 'the whole of his philosophy seems to focus time and time again on the capacity of the finite containing the infinite,'[40] whilst in contrast Lowe notes that 'the *finitum non capax* [is] a necessary and irreducible *element* within his thought.'[41]

The central point of Lowe's argument—that Ricoeur never really departs from phenomenology, though adding considerable qualifications—is particularly convincing, since time and again Ricoeur returns to the theme of the dignity of the perceiving subject, whilst struggling with the problems inherent in this view.[42] Furthermore, many of the criticisms of Ricoeur relate to the constraints of his thinking that arise from its phenomenological basis.

b. Fault and Symbol

Ricoeur, then, is at first interested in exploring the mysteries of authentic existence, in a way that does not reduce this existence to a theory.[43] He is clear that authentic existence is not simply a matter of free choice, but to do with the relation between that which is given and, within it, that which is chosen—the voluntary and the involuntary. Here Ricoeur is exploring the significance of the 'givenness' of our physical nature, our corporeality.

But the question of will itself is complex, since we do not do what we want to do—there is a rift (a fault, in this sense) in human nature, and this is the theme of *Fallible Man*. As a result of fault, intention is therefore both 'direct' and 'indirect.' That is to say, we desire to do certain things, and these desires result in the appropriate actions, they are direct; but we also have desires that, for some reason, we do not act out, that are indirect.

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[39] Vanhoozer (1990) p 278.

[40] Alexander (1975) p 61.

[41] Lowe (1986) p 41.

[42] And Lowe's own conclusion is that this struggle ultimately leads Ricoeur to 'fall victim to internal inconsistency' (1992, p 134).

[43] Lowe (1986) p xi point out that it was Marcel's influence on Ricoeur that initially pointed him in this direction.

It is at this point that symbolism becomes important, and in particular, the symbolism of evil. For symbol, too, has a double intentionality. Whilst a symbol (such as 'stain') refers to a specific situation or instance, it also, at the same time, refers to the state of the individual above and beyond that instance. The 'ambiguous state of mankind [which] no logic can co-ordinate' is expressed in the symbol.[44] Humankind cannot explain fault rationally, but needs symbol to express its full significance.

Ricoeur signifies the puzzle here in the title he gave to the two volumes, *Symbolism of Evil* and *Fallible Man: Finitude and Guilt*. His concern is to look at the connexion between them but also the differences. Why is it that we have direct ways of speaking about our finitude, but not about our guilt? Ricoeur's dissatisfaction with existentialism and, to a lesser extent, with phenomenology was that these disciplines were unable to make this distinction. Both approached the perceiving subject with direct language which could only account for a part of the reality of the human condition.[45] At a deeper level, this confidence in direct language is a consequence of an over-confidence in the ability of the perceiving subject, the *cogito*, accurately to perceive its own place in the world, a problem that Ricoeur traces back to Descartes.[46]

But symbols (and the myths that attach to them) are in fact indispensable in the human quest to understand the self. In the desire to understand its place in the world, and explain the paradoxes of the human condition, symbols and myths cannot simply be replaced with propositional and direct language. This kind of account does not satisfy the desire for self-understanding. What is needed instead is an indirect approach, one that both gives a place to myth and symbol, but also interprets them, so that they can be appropriated more fully. But to begin to interpret immediately implies the need to engage with issues in interpretation, and so this become a 'roundabout' route, a detour through hermeneutics, to discover what these symbols and myths might mean.

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[44] HT p xxi
[45] RM p 316.
[46] OAA p 5.

c. Importance of Language

Ricoeur sees language as fundamental to human existence, and sets this out in the most general terms in the introduction to HT (p xii). Man (sic) is both word and action; he has a bivalent nature, and it is this that is the route of the division between *theoria* and *praxis*, which is, as we shall see, a significant feature of Ricoeur's thinking. In seeing language as so fundamental, Ricoeur is no doubt influenced by Heidegger's emphasis on linguisticality, even if he wants to move beyond Heidegger's existentialism.

But the importance of language is also central to Ricoeur's concern to discover the self. In the first place, language is a given, and something that the self must simply accept and work within. The affirmation of structuralism that language is an objective system that can be studied in isolation from individual utterances offers a welcome corrective to the over-emphasis on subjectivity brought by existentialism.[47] The interconnectedness of consciousness provided by language dethrones the interpreting ego from its dominance over its world.

Secondly, as noted above, language becomes crucial to the study of selfhood when the importance of symbols is recognised. Hermeneutics is not of importance if language about the self is direct—that is, if direct language can adequately explain the paradoxes of human experience and satisfy the desire for self-understanding. But how can we ascertain the meaning of the indirect language of symbol and myth? Ricoeur's critique of Freud is that, as a 'master of suspicion,' he interprets the symbols of existence (mediated through dreams to the conscious) but in doing so reduces them to something less than their full significance. So despite taking these symbols seriously, Freud is still not adequately accounting for the fullness of human experience. Ricoeur is, then, wanting to find an account of language that retained the fullness of language—he needs to complement the hermeneutic of suspicion with a hermeneutic of 'retrieval', but this can only be done by using language that is not reductive. '[Ricoeur's] hermeneutical theory can best be appreciated as providing the crucial insight that the philosophical threshold to speech is itself accessible only through language.'[48]

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[47] RM p 319.
[48] Gerhart (1975) p 499.

In order to discover such language, Ricoeur turns to metaphor, since is it metaphor that shares with symbol the double intentionality of both the direct and the indirect.[49] And to study metaphor, he first turns to the classical master of metaphor, Aristotle, not least because of Aristotle's interest in *mimesis*. For if symbol is indispensable to self's struggle to make sense of its place in the world, and if metaphor is the feature of language essential to understanding symbol, then a major question of metaphor will be the way it describes the world. Interestingly, Ricoeur continues to return to Aristotle in even his most recent work, when the immediate question of metaphor has been left some way behind.[50]

d. Metaphor and Narrative

The movement in Ricoeur's thought from symbol to metaphor is continued with his further move on to considering the significance and functioning of narrative. There is a clear sense of continuity, in that Ricoeur is still engaged in the hermeneutical process of exploring how language opens up possible worlds of existence—both metaphor and narrativity enable language to be creative despite its nature as code, and despite the pressures at work to 'flatten' language.[51] But there is also a clear sense of development. In examining metaphor, Ricoeur is clear that he is not being atomistic, in that metaphor properly concerns not simply the use of words, but the function of sentences.[52] Yet, in turning to narrative, Ricoeur is broadening his considerations to look at the sentence within the context of a whole work.[53] Furthermore, the primary focus for the discussion of metaphor is that of language—the objective system of discourse—whereas in the discussion of narrative attention turns more fully to the perceiving subject. The refiguration that metaphor brings about relates largely to opening up perceptions of the world, whereas the refiguration of narrative

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[49] John B Thompson (1991) p 51, Thiselton (1992) p 347.

[50] See, for instance, the discussion of Aristotle's concepts of *dunamis* and *energeia* in the context of reflection on ontology towards the end of OAA, pp 306–317.

[51] Richard Kearney (1984) p 19.

[52] See RM Study 4, pp 101–133.

[53] In the Preface to TN, Ricoeur classifies metaphor and narrative together as the two means of semantic innovation that work at 'the level of discourse,' that is, at 'the level of acts of language equal to or greater than the sentence' (p ix).

focuses more clearly on the subject's place in and relation to the world, and in particular the phenomenon of human time.[54]

Metaphor and narrative appear, in some senses, to be mutually inclusive. Metaphor (and metaphoric predication) forms an essential element within the construction of narrative, and so in a sense narrative is simply the extension of the metaphoric process across the larger text.[55] But the end result of narrative is also metaphoric, in that, along with models in scientific discourse, and utopias in political discourse, the narrative representation 'effectuate[s] a metaphorization of the real, a creation of new meaning.'[56]

In another sense, metaphor and narrative are complementary or (to use a mathematical analogy) orthogonal. Metaphor introduces innovation in the perception of the (possibly static) world—there is not necessarily any temporal dimension. On the other hand, through the device of emplotment, narrative essentially refigures chronological time into 'human time.' 'The world unfolded by every narrative work is a temporal world.'[57] Together, then, with the refiguration of the spatial and temporal world respectively, metaphor and narrative potentially offer a complete refiguration of the world in which the perceiving self finds itself.

Ricoeur's theory of metaphor therefore stands at a crucial point in his own thinking. On the one hand, as he considers the nature of human existence by means of a phenomenology of the will, he must consider the symbolism of evil in order to come to terms with humankind's ambiguous status in the world. And metaphor is that irreducible feature of language that corresponds to and gives access to the meaning of symbolism. On the other hand, the identity of the self in history is given through the imaginative construction of narrative, and this creative leap is, in fact, a metaphorical process. The creation of metaphor in language thus stands at the furthest point of the 'long path' or 'detour' through

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[54] Ricoeur sets out the close relation between metaphor and narrative in the Preface to TN Vol 1. Like SE and FM, the works RM and TN were 'conceived as a pair.'

[55] The seeds of this relationship are perhaps found in Ricoeur's use of Beardsley's thinking about metaphor, where metaphor serves as a test-case (Beardsley (1958) 134) and is in effect 'a poem in miniature' (Ricoeur RM 94).

[56] Kearney (1984) p 24.

[57] Ricoeur TN p 3.

hermeneutics by which the self gains self-understanding by understanding the world around.[58]

iii. In the Context of Contemporary Discussion of Metaphor

a. Classical Views of Metaphor

Up until the nineteenth century—and even into the twentieth—the notion of metaphor had been dominated by the influence of Aristotle.[59] Ricoeur calls him the one 'who actually defined metaphor for the entire subsequent history of Western thought.'[60] He did this, however, on the basis of taking the *word*, rather than the sentence, as the basic semantic unit, an assumption from which Ricoeur departs at the very earliest stage. Although Aristotle was concerned with both rhetoric and poetics,[61] many subsequent commentators have interpreted his understanding of metaphor in the context of rhetoric alone, and assumed a sharp divide between rhetoric and philosophy, with unfortunate epistemological consequences.

Aristotle defined metaphor as consisting of the transference of a noun from one (primary) location, to another.[62] Metaphor 'consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to another.'[63] This definition leads to a number of corollaries, though in the main these have been drawn out by later commentators, rather than by Aristotle himself. In the first place, since the metaphor is a borrowing, then its meaning is *improper* in comparison with its primary use. The movement is a temporary one, undertaken in order to fill a catachresis in language—a gap or failure in language to be able to express a certain meaning—that otherwise could not be filled (in the case, primarily, of poetics), or in order to add an element that will be persuasive to the audience concerned (in the case of rhetoric). Metaphor,

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[58] Mudge (1980).

[59] 'After Aristotle there followed over twenty-three hundred years of elaboration on his remarks. From a philosophical point of view, at least, virtually every major treatment up to the twentieth century is prefigured in Aristotle's account.' Johnson (1981) p 8. 'There can be no doubt that the account of metaphor given by Aristotle...influenced...almost all subsequent discussions of metaphor.' Soskice (1985) p 3.

[60] RM p 3.

[61] Poetics, that is, in the classical sense of creatively imitating human life.

[62] RM pp 16-17.

[63] Aristotle *Poetics* 1457b. His description of metaphor occupies chapter 21.

then, is inherently 'improper', or deviant, in that it deviates from proper, lexical, meaning.

Aristotle held metaphor in the highest regard; to master speech, one must be the master of metaphor.[64] And, as Soskice points out, classical discussion of metaphor formed part of the first systematic reflections on language.[65] These reflections included debate about the origin and development of words, and etymology came to form a large part of this debate. But neither Aristotle nor his contemporaries paid attention to the diachronic nature of language in the modern sense, that is, the way that language usage and meaning changes and develops over time. Aristotle (and Quintilian after him) was also less concerned with philosophical questions as with more practical instruction in the use of metaphor. His theory, with its four categories of species/species, species/genus, genus/species and genus/genus is therefore more descriptive of the occurrence of metaphor than analytical of the process by which metaphor 'works.'[66]

Max Black has labelled the Aristotelian view a 'substitution' view of metaphor, and comments that such a theory ultimately comes to imply that there is fault inherent in the use of metaphorical language.[67] Black is ambiguous in his attribution, and at one point comments that the fault lies more with the followers of Aristotle than with Aristotle himself,[68] and Roger Lundin points out that it is an open question how far Aristotle bears direct responsibility for such a view.[69] Ricoeur himself seems to take a positive view of Aristotle, and rightly ascribes ideas developed out of his theory to a later period.[70]

Plato made an influential attack on the whole discipline of rhetoric, but he seems to be more concerned about those who use verbal trickery, rather than the

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[64] Aristotle *Poetics* 1459a.

[65] Soskice (1985) p 2. It is worth noting here that Soskice is primarily concerned with the cognitive dimension of metaphor, and her own thinking moves in the direction of the relation between metaphor and scientific models.

[66] It also includes a wider category of tropes that we would normally include as 'metaphor', since the middle two strictly fall under the category of synecdoche.

[67] Black (1962) pp 31-32. Black is interested in the interactive nature of metaphor, and its potential for creativity in opening new ways of perception. He is less concerned with the formal connection with models.

[68] Black (1979) p 22. Unfortunately, Andrew Ortony is less circumspect earlier in the same volume, on p 3.

[69] Lundin (1983) p 20.

[70] RM p 17.

legitimate use of rhetoric within philosophy.[71] Rhetoric in the Roman period was more interested in considerations of style than philosophy, and these two aspects continued to be separated throughout the middle ages.[72]

Lundin highlights the way in which the rise of scientific method and the ascendancy of empiricist thinking in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries completed this separation and thus definitively undermined the status of metaphor.[73] Metaphor was denigrated as, on the one hand, denying a 'proper' description of the world, and so confusing people, and, on the other, as being a tool of deception. Here we see the association of metaphor with 'deceptive' rhetoric. Perhaps the most eloquent and influential attack came from John Locke, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:

> [I]f we would speak of things as they are, we must allow all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgement, and so indeed are perfect cheats, and therefore...are wholly to be avoided.[74]

Ironically, the detractors of metaphor could not deny its appeal. Hume, whilst arguing that the beauties of poetry 'are founded on falsehood and fiction, on hyperboles, metaphors and an abuse or perversion of terms from their natural meaning', admits that to remove these features entirely would produce a work 'which, by universal experience, has been found the most uninspired and dis-agreeable.'[75] One advocate of the abolition of metaphorical language in favour of a more 'scientific' diction decried the 'mists and uncertainties of our knowledge' created by metaphor, and called for writers to use a 'close, natural, naked way of speaking'![76]

The argument against metaphor became further fixed and systematised as a result of Kant's separation of knowledge into the 'useful' and the 'aesthetic.' Kant 'jealousy reserved the title of "knowledge" for "pure natural science" alone, and denied to art any significance as knowledge.'[77] Metaphor's flimsy epistemological

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[71] Plato *Gorgias* 454e 8.

[72] See Soskice (1985) p 12.

[73] Lundin (1983) p 20.

[74] John Locke (1894) vol II p 147.

[75] (Mis)quoted by Lundin (1983) p 21.

[76] Thomas Sprat, cited by Lundin (1983) p 20, notes.

[77] Lundin (1983) p (21). See also Lundin et al (1985) pp 8f.

claims (as they were perceived at the time) put it firmly in the area of the aesthetic, and the subsequent dominance of positivist epistemology confirmed metaphor as having no epistemic claims. Romanticism, whilst apparently asserting the importance of the aesthetic, and so possibly providing a place for metaphor along with other elements of the 'poetic', actually accepted the 'profound, unresolved dualism' of Kantian thought.[78] The epistemological subordination of literature to science finds its clearest expression in the comment of Frye:

> In literature, questions of fact or truth are subordinated to the primary literary aim of producing a structure of words for their own sake...In literature, what entertains us is prior to what instructs, or, as we may say, the reality-principle is subordinate to the pleasure principle.[79]

This whole approach leads us to a paradox with regard to the status of metaphor and other non-scientific language. On the one hand, metaphor seems to be an indispensable part of language; there is little we can say of interest and worth without resorting to metaphor at some level. On the other hand, metaphor is still seen as 'improper', as deviant language, in contrast to literal or scientific usage. This paradox is resolved to a degree by the deconstructionists, who push the fact of the pervasiveness of metaphor to a logical extreme. If metaphor is improper language, and yet also indispensable to all kinds of language, then all language is essentially improper, in an epistemological sense. The problem with this argument is that the conclusion that metaphor is improper is based on the distinction between proper and improper language that is itself destroyed by the assertion that all language is in some sense metaphorical. In analysing the logical structure of this argument, we can see that the double premise of metaphor as improper and indispensable leads to a conclusion that contradicts the ground of this premise—the bifurcation of language into the proper and the improper in the first place. In the disciplines of mathematics and logic, this argument is known as 'proof by contradiction'; to prove something is false, assume it true, and show that a consequence of its truth is that it is, in fact, not true. It is as though the deconstructionists are building a sand-castle by using the sand underneath the castle to build on top. Very soon it lacks a foundation!

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[78] Gadamer (1975) p 74. (cited by Lundin (1983) p 21)
[79] Northrop Frye (1957) pp 74-75

The inadequacy of this argument is brought into sharper focus by the work of Mary Hesse, Mary Gerhart and Allan Russell, E R MacCormac and others.[80] Hesse demonstrates that models in science to a large degree share the same structure as metaphor, in that they function heuristically as instruments of re-description.[81] Gerhart and Russell focus on the similarities within the processes of the development of scientific and religious thought, and MacCormac goes so far as to develop a 'fuzzy logic' for the evaluation of metaphor as an instrument of cognition.[82] McGaughrey comments succinctly that, since classification has at its root a metaphoric act of original thought, 'the metaphoric act that transgresses categorial order [that is, the order bestowed by categorisation] also begets it.'[83] And Soskice links this very clearly to the cognitive content of metaphor.

> [I]n almost all aspects of abstract thought...the very frames within which we work are given by metaphors which function in structuring not only what sort of answers we get, but what kind of questions we ask.[84]

Lundin comments on the irony of such a development of understanding amongst philosophers of science in the light of the development of thought in literary criticism:

> What the left, literary hand of humanistic studies has been all too willing to snatch from metaphor—its cognitive content and epistemological power— the right hand of science and philosophy has seemed eager to place back within figuration's grasp.[85]

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[80] Note also Soskice's comment (1985) p 109 that Ian Ramsey popularised the notion of the relationship between the process of development in scientific thinking and the process of construing metaphor. This thesis has been developed extensively not only by Gerhart and Russell (1985) but also by MacCormac (see especially his work of 1976) and many others. It is worth mentioning at this point that the term 're-description' applies in the widest sense of re-describing the world, seeing it in a new way, rather than simply giving a new name to something within that world already perceived in existing terms. This distinction will become important later when we look at some criticisms of Ricoeur's theory.

[81] Hesse (1963) and Hesse (1983); Ricoeur (1975) p 85.

[82] See Gerhart and Russell (1985) and MacCormac (1985).

[83] McGaughrey (1988) p 421. This echoes Ricoeur's phrasing in RM p 22, as cited by Vanhoozer (1990) p 80 n 36.

[84] Soskice (1985) p 63.

[85] Lundin (1983) p 19.

b. Developments in the Modern Era: Richards, Wheelwright, Beardsley and Black

As early as 1936, I A Richards made significant new observations about the nature of metaphor. Ricoeur calls him 'truly pioneering', since his work 'marks the overthrow of the traditional problematic.'[86] Interestingly, Richards' comments on metaphor are set in the context of a new understanding of rhetoric which contrasts with the negative eighteenth century views mentioned above.[87]

Richards observed that 'metaphor is the omnipresent principle of language'[88] some time before this idea became rather better known through the work of Derrida and Frye.[89] In asserting this, he was beginning to undermine the traditional differentiation between metaphorical and proper language. He dismissed the notion that words can have a fixed, 'proper' meaning as a hangover from sorcery, the residue of a 'magical theory of names.'[90] Instead, he argued that the meaning of words is context dependent.

The implication of this for the understanding of metaphor is that, if a word changes its semantic context, then it can change its meaning. In order to clarify this, he introduced the notions of *vehicle* and *tenor*, taken up by Wheelwright, Black, Ricoeur and others. The *vehicle* is the imagery or concrete situation described, and the *tenor* is the ulterior significance that this 'suggests to the responsive imagination.'[91] For example, if I describe someone as 'eating like a horse', then 'horse' is the vehicle, and the idea that this person has a very large appetite is the tenor. It is perhaps worth noting here that this phrase looks (grammatically) as though it were a simile, but it is (linguistically) a metaphor. I am not drawing any real comparison between my friend and a horse, which I would be doing in a simile.[92] Although Richards does not go as far as to propose

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[86] Ricoeur (1975) p 49.

[87] Richards (1936) chapter 5; see comment in RM p 76.

[88] Richards (1936) pp 89f.

[89] as Lundin notes—with perhaps more than a touch of sarcasm—in (1983) p 25.

[90] Richards (1936) p 71.

[91] in the words of Wheelwright (1962) p 55.

[92] 'In [certain] cases, metaphor and simile, while textually different, are functionally the same.' Soskice (1985), p 59. Since we are interested in function rather than semantic definitions, I would differ from Soskice only in including statements that contain the word 'like', but to all other ends are metaphorical, within the term 'metaphor'. Caird (1980) p 144 makes the simple distinction that similes are explicit and literal, whilst metaphors are implicit and non-literal—though he is also aware (p 133) of the difficulty of defining what we mean by 'literal.'

that metaphors predicate new meaning as such, he goes a long way towards this, and prepares the way for later writers to do so.[93]

Because of the contextual nature of meaning, in metaphor words may be brought together whose normal contexts are in conflict. This idea of the 'large scale rivalries of context'[94] becomes in Ricoeur's hermeneutic of metaphor the 'semantic impertinence' which gives rise to new meaning. Richards' description of 'movements among meaning'[95] adumbrates another important concept in Ricoeur's theory, that of the necessity of diachronic analysis in understanding metaphor as the point of emergence of meaning in language.

Philip Wheelwright, writing thirty years later, moves the discussion on in a number of areas. He, too, opposes as semantic positivism the idea that truth lies with precision, so that precise, closed, 'steno-language' is the only kind of valid language.[96] Indeed, he goes so far as to invert the positivist preference for the scientific, by denigrating abstractions as 'living on borrowed semantic capital.' In contrast, 'poetic language...does contribute [to the significance of the novelty of an outlook]; it partly creates and partly discloses certain hitherto unknown, unguessed aspects of What Is.'[97] But his chief concern is with the 'aliveness' of language, its essential vitality that is lost with the reduction to closed, logical forms. Whilst aware of the need to avoid complete subjectivity, he is also concerned to avoid a false objectivity.[98]

Max Black's essay 'Metaphor' took the discussion in some important new directions. Whereas Richards and Wheelwright were concerned more with metaphor as part of language, Black touches on crucial questions of metaphor in relation to epistemology.[99] He also clarifies aspects of the working of metaphor, developing Richards' vehicle/tenor formulation. As Ricoeur puts it, 'Richards

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[93] It ought to be noted that, in the light of subsequent thinking about metaphor (not only by Ricoeur but also by those who link metaphor's cognitive claims with models in science) the straighforward distinction between vehicle and tenor is actually simplistic. Having said that, it seems to me to be a necessary simplification, at least for an interim period, in order to allow discussion about what is going on in metaphoric predication.

[94] Richards (1936) p 40.

[95] Richards (1936) p 48.

[96] Wheelwright (1962) chapter 2 'Communication'.

[97] Wheelwright (1962) pp 51f.

[98] Wheelwright (1962) p 18.

[99] Whilst it is true that the title of Wheelwright's book *Metaphor and Reality* might suggest that he is concerned with epistemology, he is in fact concerned with demonstrating that metaphor is tensive, and alive, and therefore connects with life experiences in a way that 'scientific'

made the breakthrough; after him, Black and others occupy and organize the terrain.'[100]

Black clarifies the functioning of metaphor in the first place by differentiating between the metaphorical statement and the individual words in it, one of which is taken metaphorically (the *focus*), and the others not (the *frame*). In the sentence 'The chairman *ploughed* through the discussion,' the word 'ploughed' is taken metaphorically, whilst the others are not.[101] This is the focus, whilst the rest of the sentence is the frame. In thus analysing the metaphorical statement, Black both clarifies the working of the vehicle and tenor, and provides criteria for distinguishing metaphorical from other non-literal language uses.

Black goes on to develop his interaction theory of metaphor, firstly by differentiating it from classical substitution or comparison views, and then by detailing the way the metaphor works. The focus provides a screen, or filter, by carrying with it a 'system of associated commonplaces'[102] which then organizes our thinking about the frame.[103] He uses the example of the statement 'Man is a wolf.' The commonplaces we associate with wolves we now use to organize our thinking about man. In this way the metaphor makes a cognitive contribution, in that it provides us with an insight which makes us look at something in a new way that cannot be exhaustively substituted by literal equivalents.[104]

Ricoeur highlights as a weakness Black's equivocation about whether there is anything genuinely new introduced by metaphor—is metaphor making a genuine cognitive contribution?[105] But Black has developed his thinking, and effectively answers in the affirmative in his later writing. To illustrate his point, he asks the question: 'Did genes exist before their existence was recognised by biologists?' In

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language fails to do.

[100] RM p 84. See also IT 49: 'It is the work of Richards that is truly pioneering because it marks the overthrow of the traditional problematic', that is, of seeing metaphor as simply ornamentation that has no cognitive claim or value.

[101] Black (1962) p 27, cited in RM p 84.

[102] Perhaps corresponding to Richards' contexts in rivalry.

[103] Black (1962) pp 39-41.

[104] Soskice is overly pedantic in her criticism of Black's examples (see Soskice (1985) pp 19-20). She is quite right to point out the limitations of only considering examples that consist of grammatical predication (of the form 'x is a y') rather than examples where the focus word within the metaphorical statement is a part of speech other than a noun ('the rosy-fingered dawn', 'the writhing script'). But it seems clear to me from Black's 'focus/frame' development of Richards' 'vehicle/tenor' analysis that he avoids the misconception of which Soskice accuses him.

[105] RM p 88.

one sense the obvious answer is 'yes', since their existence is not dependent on their being perceived. But in another sense the answer is 'no', in that identifying them as 'genes' involved associating these particular elements of the cell nucleus with a certain range of ideas. And this association takes place within the human history of the development of a scientific theory; that is, it happens at a particular time in a particular way. In this way

> [s]ome metaphors are what we might call 'cognitive instruments',
> indispensable for perceiving connexions that, once perceived, are then
> truly present.[106]

The identification of genes is then the creative, metaphorical act of categorisation, or classification, in this case, of the contents of the cell nucleus. And this classification enables us to see the object in question in a new way, with a new understanding, which was not previously possible.

Beardsley's verbal opposition theory of metaphor was published at about the same time as Black's first writings, though Ricoeur sees it as addressing some gaps in Black's theory.[107] Beardsley's approach is firmly rooted in literary criticism, and so he is concerned primarily with semantics. Like Black, he is concerned with metaphorical statements, rather than words. In addressing the phenomenon of signification, he introduces the distinction between primary signification (what a statement 'states') and secondary signification (what a statement 'suggests').[108] Instead of thinking of the metaphor as a screen or filter, he more broadly considers the way that the range of possible connotations of a word are limited by its literary context within a statement. This limitation is quite narrow and specific in certain kinds of literature (the technical and scientific), but 'in other contexts, [the] connotations are liberated; these are most notably the contexts in which language becomes figurative, and especially metaphorical.'[109]

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[106] Black 'More about Metaphor' in Ortony (ed) (1979) p 39.

[107] Beardsley (1958), though this was supplemented and developed somewhat in Beardsley (1962) and Beardsley (1967).

[108] This distinction, and the way Beardsley uses it in conjunction with a word's 'range of connotations' (Beardsley (1958) p 125) has resonances with Jakobson's dual contexts of 'similarity' and 'contiguity' (1971, 244; see next section), though of course Jakobson is concerned more with semiotics, and Beardsley with semantics.

[109] Beardsley (1958) p 125.

Beardsley is more definite than Black in asserting the genuine creativity that is possible within (metaphorical) language[110], but the key difference is in Beardsley's argument that this creativity is effective through a logical absurdity which liberates the connotations of words, and directs the reader away from primary to secondary significations.[111] The question remains open as to how to determine exactly which connotations are opened up and which closed down—a problem which will reappear in criticisms of Ricoeur's own hermeneutic.

c. Ricoeur's Contribution

Ricoeur's major contribution to the discussion of metaphor has been to take these observations and bring them together into a coherent hermeneutical framework, thus demonstrating their credibility in the face of classical arguments.

In the first place, Ricoeur himself questions many of the later interpretations of Aristotle, and claims that Aristotle's own understanding of metaphor was more subtle and developed. Since Aristotle perceived metaphor as involving some kind of movement,[112] it was at best a half-truth to describe his theory as one of substitution, since interaction also played a part.[113]

The crucial element of Ricoeur's thinking is the introduction of diachronic analysis, analysis of changes in language over time and with use, in considering the process of the creation of a metaphor. At once, this puts the discussion about 'proper' meaning of words into perspective; words mean different things not only in different literary and social contexts, but also at different times. This means that there can be no rigid assertion of *the* proper meaning. This is not to say that meanings in language are completely fluid, but simply to say that they are not completely static.[114] The meaning of a word may well evolve over time, and associations that are at one time metaphorical and novel, even appearing to be

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[110] 'The essential thing that a literary creator does is to invent or discover an object...around which he collects a set of relations that can be perceived as connected through their intersection in that subject.' Beardsley (1958) p 128.

[111] Beardsley (1958) p 138.

[112] Hence the suffix *-phor*, meaning movement

[113] Although there is, as Thiselton (1992) p 353 points out, some dispute about Aristotle's own clarity and consistency.

[114] It is going to far to conclude with Saussure (1974, p 68) that phonemes, as signs, relate entirely arbitrarily to what they signify, though his point about the 'radical mutability of language' (Soskice (1985) p 71) is well-received in context. Against complete arbitrariness, see Richards' intriguing discussion of phonemes and morphemes in Richards (1936) pp 59f.

'deviant', with time become an accepted part of 'normal' speech. In the nineteenth century, the idea of the 'inflation' of the economy was a metaphor coined to describe the (thought to be unjustified) increase in prices of goods and commodities within that economy. Nowadays, it is commonplace to talk of inflation, and it has little if any metaphorical connotation.[115]

Ricoeur takes Black's interaction and Beardsley's theory of verbal opposition and moves them one stage further. If a metaphor provides a new insight, then where does this insight come from? From an imaginative, creative association of the different elements, which is predicative in nature, if metaphor is, as Black says, providing us with a cognitive element that is not reducible to equivalent literal statements. In formulating a metaphor linking 'man' and 'wolf', I am making an assertion about the nature of the two of them. Ricoeur also adds to Black's theory in noting that the effect of metaphor is two-way; in saying that 'man is a wolf', we not only see 'man' through the screen or filter of 'wolf', but also our view of 'wolf' is altered. Man is seen to share some characteristics of the wolf, and the wolf becomes an embodiment of certain characteristics of man.

In reply to the comment that there is something deviant about metaphor, Ricoeur agrees, but argues that it is precisely through this deviance, this 'semantic impertinence', that predication takes place.[116] Indeed, it is only through recognising that there is a semantic impertinence that we even notice that what we are reading is metaphorical, not literal. There is, in fact, a logical inconsistency at the heart of metaphor, since we are asserting both 'it is not' and 'it is like' in the 'it is' of the metaphorical statement.

It is perhaps Black's formulation of 'focus' and 'frame' which makes it congenial for Ricoeur to draw on Jakobson to develop his notion of 'split reference.'[117] It is this that reinforces the essentially referential and cognitive aspect of metaphor, beyond being a semantic innovation. Jakobson had noted, in the context of studying speech disabilities, two dimensions to speech, which he

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[115] It may be noted that the development of economic and sociological disciplines have been two areas in the twentieth century where language has grown, largely by metaphoric extension, in order to provide a whole new vocabulary of reality. These examples further illustrate Black's biological example given above.

[116] This is term that Ricoeur uses self-consciously as a gentler term to replace Beardsley's phrase 'logical absurdity' (IT, p 50).

[117] Though note how the door has been opened to this idea through Beardsley's concept of secondary signification.

called the 'similarity' and the 'contiguity' dimensions respectively. The similarity dimension has to do with the relation that a word in a sentence has with other possible alternatives that could have been selected from the 'code' of the language; it is a relation between words that is essentially internal to the linguistic code. The contiguity dimension has to do with the relation of a word to other words in the sentence, and he way these words are combined will be shaped by the context, by the sentence's relation to the world external to language. Thus, says Jakobson, every word has two references: to the code (internally) and to the context (externally).[118] The similarity dimension is the one that is crucial for metaphor, since metaphor is dependent on establish similarity between disparate terms. The contiguity dimension is concerned with metonymy, which Jakobson sees as the other half of a semiotic bipolarity in language—and all other signifying systems.[119] Ricoeur rejects this belief in an all-pervasive bipolarity as too limiting,[120] though it is interesting to note how Jakobson's two poles in language correspond to the themes of objectivity (the code) and subjectivity (the situation or context) which are ever-present in Ricoeur's thought. Within Ricoeur's explication of metaphor, it is the semantic impertinence that splits open these two dimensions of reference. The contiguity dimension is unchanged, in that the terms involved in the metaphor continue to have the same (literal) relation to the world beyond language. But the similarity dimension is changed, in that the relation between the terms has switched from being one of disconnectedness (as some level) to kinship under the force of the 'is' of the metaphoric predication. The reference within the code is then the reference to a world, a set of relations, that have been refigured by the semantic impertinence of the metaphor.

But the semantic impertinence itself is only short-lived, since we soon get used to it and accept it as part of normal language use. The code of language is restructured, and what was novel becomes normal. This brings us back to the idea of metaphor as process. In coining a metaphor, we predicate something new through association which then becomes part of what can be known through language. In this way the world which language can describe expands through the process of coining metaphor, in much the same way as the world that science

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[118] Jakobson (1971) p 244.
[119] Jakobson (1971) p 256.
[120] RM p 175.

can describe expands through the formulation and testing of hypotheses and models.

> We may speak with Gadamer of the fundamental metaphoricity of thought to the extent that the figure of speech that we call 'metaphor' allows us a glance at the general procedure by which we produce concepts.[121]

Thus Ricoeur's theory addresses the inadequacies of the classical position, whilst still taking account of the realities of language which it highlights. He carries forward the observations of earlier critics of the classical position to become part of a general theory of hermeneutics, and offers distinctive insights into the importance of metaphor in language and thought.

It has been methodologically appropriate to outline the contours of Ricoeur's thinking by looking at his relation with other issues, as this somewhat indirect route is the one he himself advocates for the self's understanding of itself. There is much that can be said about Ricoeur's thought in its relation to major trends in philosophy (as opposed to linguistics). A central issue here is the relation of Ricoeur's thinking to Kantian epistemology, where the basic bifurcation of knowledge into the useful and the aesthetic is subsumed into the dialectic of perceiving subject and object. This area has been explored well by Vanhoozer (1990), especially chapter 3. We now turn to a rather more direct engagement with some significant themes in Ricoeur's thought.

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[121] Ricoeur (1975) p 84.

2 Significant Themes in Ricoeur's Hermeneutic of Metaphor

i The Criticism of Criticism

From the very beginning of his thinking about hermeneutics, Ricoeur expresses an ambivalence towards critical methodology. On the one hand, he recognises the importance of criticism in doing away with naïve readings, but on the other, he emphasises, perhaps more than any other influential figure in hermeneutics, the inadequacy of criticism alone in the process of reading. This strikes a common-sense chord, as expressed by Dornisch: 'How can being critical lead you to know less, rather than more?'[122] And this ambivalence is sufficiently important a part of Ricoeur's thought for Anthony Thiselton to suggest that it is the thing above all others that characterises the hermeneutics of Ricoeur.[123]

The roots of this concern grow directly from Ricoeur's interest with maintaining the fullness of human being. Having looked at the problem of the human will, he is clear that the notions of fault and evil cannot be explained without recourse to the fullness of symbol, and the subsequent fullness of (metaphorical and narrative) language. But we cannot appropriate these directly, since we are then vulnerable to a naïve, overly-subjective understanding of them. This is the point at which criticism is vital. Criticism is 'suspicious' of such understanding, and wants to sift it in a more objective way. Thus, says Ricoeur, Freud (along with Nietzsche and Marx—'the three masters of suspicion') clears the way for better understanding.[124] The metaphor Ricoeur uses is that of destroying the idols of human imagination; this is an essential step in the task of authentic human being.

But it is only one half. If the idols have been destroyed, then this is only to enable the symbols to live.[125] In other words, the hermeneutics of suspicion must be followed by the hermeneutics of retrieval; once certain understandings have been done away with by the process of criticism, then the hermeneutical task is

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[122] Dornisch (1975) p 6.

[123] He does so by entitling his chapter on Ricoeur 'The Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Retrieval', one formulation of Ricoeur's criticism of criticism, in Thiselton (1992) pp 344-378. See also the article by Erin White (1991) 'Between Suspicion and Hope: Paul Ricoeur's Vital Hermeneutic', which also emphasises this element of Ricoeur.

[124] FP p 33, cited in Thiselton (1992) p 348.

[125] This immediately raises the question: 'How can you tell the difference?', on which question see section 3.iii below.

not complete until other understandings have been appropriated—or made available for appropriation—by some other means. This 'other means' is the taking of the 'wager of faith'[126] and results in a 'second naïveté.'[127] Pre-critical naïveté comes to the text committed to one particular understanding of that text. Criticism evaluates it objectively, and can weigh up conflicting interpretations as being more or less likely. But a text is not fully understood until the reader makes an existential commitment to one way of reading the text, that is, a commitment to a world opened up by the text. Criticism cannot 'prove' an understanding; the reader must take a wager of faith, which will only be vindicated eschatologically. It is in this sense that Ricoeur's hermeneutic is one of hope; the wager is that 'I hope that I am within the bounds of truth.'[128] The resulting naïveté is naïve only in the sense that the subject no longer stands at a distance from or over the text, but is committed to a particular understanding of it. But it is a second naïveté, different from the first since is has undergone the critical detour of self-reflection. It is neither irrational faith, nor rational detachment, but a rational faith that, with its critical eyes open, nonetheless commits itself—a 'faith that has undergone criticism, post-critical faith...a rational faith, for it interprets...'[129] The reality of this commitment is in contrast to the aridity found in criticism alone: 'Beyond the desert of criticism, we wish to be called again.'[130]

In one sense, Ricoeur is not saying anything new in this. As he himself comments, this process is nothing other than the hermeneutical circle of believing something, reflecting critically on that belief, and coming to a new position of belief.[131] However, Ricoeur does add something in formalising the need for this new wager—the hermeneutical task is incomplete without it—and this is one aspect of his emphasis on the dialectic between explanation and understanding.[132] Such an approach provides a helpful critique of much biblical interpretation, which has at times in the last hundred years majored on 'explaining' a text (often simply dissecting it with whatever critical tools happen to be in vogue) rather than leading the reader to a greater understanding. The classic case of this in

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126 See Dornisch (1975) p 14.
127 FP p 28, also cited in Thiselton (1992) p 348.
128 HT p 53.
129 FP p 28, cited by Thiselton (1992) p 348.
130 SE p 349.
131 FP p 28.

relation to Revelation is perhaps R H Charles' monumental critical work, which dissects the text minutely, but fails ever to put it back together again.[133] Ricoeur has, himself, not written much by way of biblical interpretation. But in one of the areas he has written, the Book of Job, Dornisch notes that whilst Ricoeur uses a wide variety of explanatory tools, this is simply to serve the wider purpose of making understanding available—that is, allowing the biblical texts to perform their refigurational function.[134]

As Thiselton and others comment, there is a sharp contrast here between Ricoeur and Gadamer.[135] Whereas Gadamer sets truth over against method, Ricoeur wants to hold them in dialectic tension, and insists that both are necessary.

Ricoeur's distinctive contribution, then, is adding the *practical* insistence on fullness and appropriation in interpretation in contrast with the critics, but retaining a *theoretical* element in contrast with others, who already share his insistence on fullness of meaning. This is important for Ricoeur's epistemology, in that he wants to avoid both the poles of false objectivity and complete subjectivity.

In relation to the conflict between criticisms (or, more widely, the conflict of interpretations), Ricoeur draws on Freud's concepts of over-determination and false consciousness. Since symbols (and with them, all forms of potentially multivalent language) can be interpreted from any one of a number of different disciplines, those different disciplines make conflicting claims about the 'meaning' of the symbol. But this is because the practitioners of these disciplines have not engaged in a process of critical reflection, in which they are dispossessed of the immediate consciousness with which their discipline provides them, and taken the critical detour before returning to appropriate the meaning of these symbols at the moment of the second naïveté.

Ricoeur expounds a similar theme in his discussion of the relationship between history and truth. The conflicting accounts of history due to the subjectivity of individual historians is resolved by means of an

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[132] The other aspect being the mediation between *theoria* and *praxis*, on which see below.
[133] See part 2 above.
[134] Dornisch (1981) p 9.
[135] See Thiselton (1992) p 348.

'intersubjectivity.'[136] Since this requires communication between historians, 'communication is the structure of true knowledge.'[137] Yet again, the resolution of conflict in the interpretation of history is not an element of criticism, but something that goes beyond criticism to involve personal commitment, the wager of faith. 'Historical understanding...acquires meaning when it becomes the motivating principle of philosophical searching which is actually ventured and engaged in.'[138]

Thiselton concludes his discussion of Ricoeur's hermeneutic on just this point.

> What remains central for Ricoeur is the double function of hermeneutics: the hermeneutics of suspicion which unmasks human wish-fulfilments and shatters idols, and the hermeneutics of retrieval which listens to symbols and to symbolic narrative discourse. Where criticism operates, this is only to arrives at post-critical creativity on the yonder side of the critical desert.[139]

ii. Mediation between *Theoria* and *Praxis*

Ricoeur's criticism of criticism is the result of his belief in the dialectic between explanation and understanding as it affects the *structure* (or *process*) of interpretation. His belief in the mediation between *theoria* and *praxis*, on the other hand, makes clear his concern for the *results* of interpretation for the individual. And it is in examining this that it becomes more clear what Ricoeur means by 'understanding.'

Ricoeur believes that the nature of the task of interpretation is inextricably linked to the nature of human existence. When we interpret texts—and in particular when we interpret historical texts—we are dealing with something that is, above all, a product of human life.[140] And for Ricoeur, humanity is 'both word and work', that is, is involved in both speech and action. Further, it is not possible to separate the one from the other, as (according to Ricoeur) Marx does.[141] Ricoeur instead seeks an integration of the two, the 'word which reflects efficaciously and acts thoughtfully.'[142]

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[136] HT p 37.
[137] HT p 51
[138] Ibid.
[139] Thiselton (1992) p 372.
[140] HT p 28.
[141] HT p 4.
[142] HT p 5.

These two aspects of humanity are then reflected in the two aspects of interpretation: explication (criticism, *theoria*, corresponding to the 'word'), and existential appropriation (in the second naïveté, corresponding to the 'work', or act, the *praxis*). As human existence cannot, ultimately, be abstracted, or divided, so too 'it is impossible to establish a lasting and deep opposition between *theoria* and *praxis*.'[143]

The result of this fusion means that the goal of interpretation—or perhaps the process of interpretation itself, rightly understood—is the articulation of existential meaning for the self.[144] The constitution of the self is contemporaneous with the constitution of meaning[145]—or, in Ricoeur's own words cited frequently by Mudge (1980), 'the self of self-understanding is the product of understanding itself.'[146] By this, Ricoeur means that it is only in understanding the world opened up by the text that the perceiving subject gains insight into his/her relation to the world, and it is this contextualized understanding that comprises true self-understanding. Ricoeur is concerned here to maintain a balance between subject and object; the subject is self-conscious, and not retreating into a false objectivity that places the subject in dominance over the text, as if the reader had control. On the other hand, the subject is not a narcissistic ego pursuing self-understanding in relation to the self alone, in isolation, for true self-understanding only comes in the act of opening the self to the other in the form of the text, and the world opened up by it.

Vanhoozer characterizes both the openness and fullness of human experience as a 'passion for the possible'.[147] But possible *praxis* is only opened up by language that offers a surplus of meaning—metaphorical language—that in turn opens up a 'surplus of truth.'[148]

The integration in this way of these two activities—interpretation of text and understanding of self—links Ricoeur's concern with the mediation of *theoria* and *praxis* with his concern with the dialectic of the general and the particular within

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[143] Ibid.

[144] Gerhart (1975) p 507.

[145] Dornisch (1975) pp 6f.

[146] Ricoeur in his preface to Ihde (1971) p xv; see also J B Thompson (1991) p 55 and HT p 51.

[147] Vanhoozer then links this passion for the possible, by a pun, to the theological possibilities for human existence opened up by Christ's death, which is then seen as a passion (for him) for (the sake of) the possible (for us). Vanhoozer (1990) p 56 and chapter 9.

[148] Vanhoozer (1990) chapter 4.

history, and especially within the history of thought. To emphasise *theoria* at the expense of *praxis* is tantamount to subordinating the particular and unique in history to over-arching theories of development. But doing the converse, emphasising *praxis* at the expense of *theoria*, is tantamount to ignoring the things that link thought, and then we are left with a random succession of events with no link and no meaning, a 'veritable vertigo of variation.'[149] Ricoeur does appear to be more concerned about the former problem than the latter, since he makes most effort to emphasise the uniqueness of individual philosophers, rather than their connectedness. He goes so far as to describe Plato and his work as 'unplaceable—ἄτοπος' within the history of philosophy, in order to emphasise his uniqueness.

This might seem to be upsetting the balance that Ricoeur himself advocates, and exposes him to a criticism concerning the importance of context which I will explore further below. But the balance itself needs to be preserved, once again, in the interest of preserving the fullness and significance of human experience. If *theoria* (the general, the unity of truth) is over-emphasised, then the human individual becomes an insignificant player in the greater scheme of history, and his or her actions will be seen as nothing more than the working out of principles of history. And yet if *praxis* (the particular, the 'unplaceable' aspect of the individual) is over-emphasised, then the individual has no purchase, as it were, on history, and is then washed away on a tide of relativism.[150] We need both the general and the particular in order to have significance; we need to understand both the unity and the variety of historical truth. Ricoeur is, of course, here touching on a theme at the heart of Christian theology. The notion of a universal God revealing himself by means of incarnation as a particular individual in human history asks profound philosophical questions about the relation between the universal and the particular, though they are questions which we cannot explore here.

Ricoeur's critique of structuralism may be seen as a manifestation of this concern. The virtual system of language that forms the subject of structuralist analysis is the pole of *theoria*, whilst the individual acts of discourse (undervalued by structuralism according to Ricoeur) form the pole of *praxis*. Thus Ricoeur's

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[149] HT p 42.

concern for mediation between the two in this instance leads him to the concern for diachronic as well as synchronic analysis of language.

iii. The Necessity of Diachronic Analysis

Ricoeur makes his most distinctive contribution to the theory of metaphor in asserting the central importance of diachronic aspects of language, those aspects of language and language use that change over time.

He adopts the Saussurian distinction between *langue* and *parole*; *langue* being the (virtual) system of language within which speech takes place, and *parole* the actual utterances, the speech that takes place.[151] Ricoeur agrees with the structuralists in their analysis of *langue*, but he sharply criticises them for failing to pay equal attention to *parole*. After all, how is it possible to analyse the structure of language, a virtual construct of abstraction, without examining the only thing we actually have—speech itself? This structure 'does not, in fact, exist. It has only a virtual existence. Only the message gives actuality to the language...only the discrete...acts of discourse actualise the code.'[152]

Ricoeur observes that something happens at the moment of an act of speaking: there arises a separation, or distanciation, between the utterer and the utterance. This distanciation is, in fact, three-fold, the most important element of which is the distanciation that occurs between utterer's meaning and utterance meaning.[153] Once a sentence is spoken, then there is a sense in which the utterance is free from the utterer, and has a life of its own. This is especially so in the case where this utterance is then inscribed, and becomes a text. Unlike the speaker and hearer of an utterance, reader and writer are cut off from one another, and there is no dialogue of communication.[154] Not only are reader and writer both eclipsed and distanced from one another, but the text becomes autonomous from the author, and emancipated from the 'circumstantial milieu of discourse.'[155] Texts have always suffered this distanciation, but we have become acutely aware of it in

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[150] See Mary Gerhart's comments mentioned above, from Gerhart (1975) p 497f.

[151] For an explication of this distinction, see Ferdinand de Saussure (1960).

[152] FP p 9.

[153] 'Utterance meaning' is Ricoeur's own phrase. Alongside distanciation of sense, there is distanciation of *reference* and of *world* (Ricoeur, 1981, pp 131–144). Thompson seems to think that distanciation according to Ricoeur is, in fact, four-fold. See Thompson (1991) p 52.

[154] Ricoeur (1981) p 147.

modern times, says Ricoeur, as we have reflected on the experience of being at a distance from ancient texts, chronologically, culturally and linguistically.[156] This has allowed us to realise that this distanciation, though perhaps less obvious in contemporary texts, is nevertheless all-pervasive.

The effect of this distanciation is two-fold, with regard to meaning. In the first place, it removes from the reader accessibility to the author's intention, and this is the reason that Ricoeur is opposed to the psychological (or 'technical') aspect of Romanticist hermeneutics. Conversely, distanciation also opens up meaning, in that an indeterminacy arises that makes the meaning of the inscribed text ambivalent, or, rather, multivalent. This gives greater range to the possible meanings of the text, and, in the absence of the possibility of dialogue with the author, makes the task of interpretation necessary. 'Hermeneutics begins where dialogue [between the speaker/author and the hearer/reader] ends.'[157]

Whilst distanciation is a pervasive feature of discourse, it is particularly crucial in understanding metaphor, since metaphor, according to Ricoeur, has a further element of time-dependence built in, in the form of the transient 'semantic impertinence' that metaphor entails. A metaphor is coined when two elements, not previously associated, are put together. Taken literally, these two things may make nonsense semantically, but their association suggests new meaning that had not previously been associated with either. Ricoeur cites the example of Shakespeare's extended metaphor on the lips of Ulysses of time as an ungrateful beggar who consumes good deeds and leaves us nothing to show for them.[158] To propose that 'time is a beggar' is literal nonsense, since 'time' is an abstract concept, and 'beggar' a non-specific reference to a certain kind of individual. But, through this non-sense, this 'impertinence', new meaning emerges; we now see time in a way that we did not before, and, through this association, we also perceive the significance of the beggar anew.

For Ricoeur, it is crucial that this semantic impertinence is short-lived. In the first place, it arises through the innovation of the metaphor; metaphor is language at the emergence of meaning. If this was not genuinely novel, in that it breached

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[155] Ricoeur (1981) pp 139 and 148.
[156] Ricoeur (1974) p 387.
[157] IT p 32.
[158] *Troilus and Cressida* Act III scene iii lines 145f.

the rules governing semantic meaning at the moment that the metaphor was coined, then we would not recognise it as metaphor, since it would fall within accepted lexical usage for the words involved at that moment.[159] Secondly, metaphor not only arises at a specific time, it also dies over time. For once metaphors are coined, they lose their impact through use; the novel metaphorical use of the words concerned gradually becomes accepted, and so the 'metaphorical' meaning collapses back into becoming part of the accepted lexical meaning. In this way the metaphorical meaning of words is in tension with and opposition to lexical meaning; as the metaphorical meaning dies, it returns to the lexical and becomes part of the lexical meaning. The lexical meaning is then expanded by the process of the metaphor being coined and then dying.

The production of metaphor is thus the way that language expands the world it can describe, and also the way in which language finds new ways to describe that world. The metaphor dies precisely as a reflection of the degree to which the cognitive contribution it has made to our thinking becomes an accepted and integrated part of the way we view the world. For example, take the coining of the phrase 'Iron Curtain' by Winston Churchill in 1946 to describe the barrier between Eastern and Western Europe.[160] In using this metaphor, Churchill was proposing that the Communist countries of Eastern Europe, and their relation to the West, be seen in a particular way. But in the years immediately preceding the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1992 the phrase had lost all of its metaphorical significance, and had passed into regular lexical, albeit figurative, usage. But in the process of the coining of the metaphor and its transition to lexical usage, the world is seen in a different way, and the lexicon has been re-written.

If metaphor has this symbiotic relation with lexical meaning, then explaining (in Ricoeur's sense) the metaphor requires knowledge of the state of lexical meaning of the words involved. So we must engage in some kind of diachronic analysis, some sort of examination of the state that language is in at a given moment, perhaps by means of historical critical analysis. It may be necessary, but is this possible within Ricoeur's theory?

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[159] 'The dictionary contains no metaphors; they exist only in discourse.' RM p 97.

[160] 'An iron curtain has descended across the Continent.' From an address at Westminster College, Fulton, USA 5 March 1946. *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (1985) p 150 notes that Churchill was not, in fact, the first to use this phrase, but he was, undoubtedly, the one who popularised it.

Interestingly, opinions are divided. Lewis Mudge sees Ricoeur's belief in the importance of testimony as potentially giving absolute importance to historical events.[161] But Loretta Dornisch rejoices that his thought does away with historical critical analysis altogether.[162] Ricoeur does seem to be less interested in historical questions than in literary and structuralist ones, and is clearly opposed to certain uses of historical critical analysis wherever it threatens to limit the possibilities of a text. On the other hand, Ricoeur is in some sympathy with the concerns of E D Hirsch. Hirsch wants to re-assert the importance of criteria for validity in interpretation, and this resonates with Ricoeur's concerns for a critical stage in interpretation, without which there can be no claim for objectivity. But Hirsch's criteria centre round the intention of the author in writing the text. He argues this on linguistic, rather than neo-Romanticist psychological grounds. But it is clear that any kind of recourse to the author implies the use of historical critical analysis of some sort.

Perhaps the key to finding a possible place for historical critical methodology in Ricoeur's theory lies in the detail of his understanding of distanciation.

In the interpretation of biblical (and other ancient) texts, we are confronted by two kinds of distanciation, according to Ricoeur. The first, and less obvious, is the distanciation inherent in the utterance and its inscription. This is the one to which Ricoeur particularly draws our attention, and which he declares is irremediable; we cannot undo this, but need to be aware of it as part of our awareness of the reality of language and as the reason why ambiguities in meaning occur. But there is another kind of distanciation, and that is the temporal and cultural and contextual distanciation that results from the fact that the text is so far from us in place and time. This second distanciation initially disguised the first kind, but has now drawn our attention to it. And Ricoeur himself raises no fundamental objection to trying to minimise the effect of this distanciation through critical research. Ricoeur does dispute the idea that to interpret metaphor is to recreate the intention of the author. But this has to do with Ricoeur's concept of the process of interpretation, and the inaccessibility of the mind of the author that arises as a result of the first sort of distanciation. It has no bearing on the question:

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[161] Mudge (1980) p 41.

[162] See Dornisch (1975). Not untypically, Thiselton takes a measured position in noting that Ricoeur makes space for historical criticism—but not quite enough (1992, p 368).

what would have been the semantic impertinence of this metaphor for the original audience, as far as we can discern it? The connexion with authorial intention is purely on the grounds of an assumed intelligibility—that the text was an act of communication, so that the first audience would assume that the author intended to convey something, and that the author used language which drew on a set of lexical meanings shared with that intended audience.

There remains a lack of clarity in Ricoeur's thought at one important point: what, in practice, is involved in the first stage of the interpretation of metaphor and metaphorical imagery in his hermeneutic? As I mentioned above, the result of interpretation (of any kind of text) is the appropriation of the possibilities of existence opened anew by the world of the text. This is the second stage, that of understanding. But it is not clear exactly what precedes this, in the prior stage of explanation. This is where Ricoeur leaves the question somewhat unresolved.

Another way to pose the question is to ask: for whom does the metaphor provide the moment of semantic impertinence? In Ricoeur's discussion of metaphor and its workings, there is the tacit assumption that the metaphorical statement appears equally impertinent to both writer and reader. This may be approximately true for writers and readers who are contemporaneous, but is clearly not the case when crossing linguistic, cultural and temporal divides. Ricoeur fails to clarify this, despite the fact that the crossing of these divides is an inherent possibility in reading. After all, this is the central effect of distanciation to which Ricoeur has drawn our attention. The question is especially pertinent when considering the interpretation of biblical texts which are far removed, in this sense, from the modern reader. We therefore have to decide whether the metaphorical moment is at the moment of reading, or of writing. If it is at the moment of reading, then such an explanation of a metaphorical text could hardly escape the accusation of being subjective. Such basic matters as the existence of the metaphor would depend entirely on the reader's perception of semantic impertinence in relation to what he or she assumed to be grammatically normative, and so the reader would be master over the text in a way which Ricoeur denounces time and again. If the moment of semantic impertinence belongs instead to the world of the writer and the first audience (even if that audience is putative) then we must take the historical context of the text very

seriously in this critical phase. As we shall see below, this is an aspect of interpretation that Ricoeur fails adequately to address.

3 Criticisms of Ricoeur's Hermeneutic

On occasion it can appear that arguments concerning Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory centre around what exactly he means, as much as around the implications of his work.[163] Once these questions are addressed, my own reading of Ricoeur, and of commentators on him, suggests that there are three foci for the major criticisms of his theory: *context*, *reference*, and *validation*. These are all related to questions of epistemology, and often those who disagree with Ricoeur also differ in the basis of their epistemological outlook. I believe that this is no coincidence, but stems from the pervasive nature of Ricoeur's phenomenology. Since it is the basis of his approach, it is no surprise that it comes to the surface at these crucial points.

In looking at criticisms of Ricoeur, I will often draw on the detailed arguments of several individuals. This is because these individuals offer an analysis that is at once specific and pertinent.

i. The Importance of Context

Criticisms of Ricoeur that accuse him of underestimating the importance of context in his hermeneutical theory fall into two camps: the semantic and the epistemological. The semantic challenge is largely championed by those drawing on the observations of speech-act theory, whilst epistemological challenges are more varied, and to some extent overlap with concerns regarding the nature of the reference of a text.[164]

Speech-act theory, developed by J L Austin, John Searle, and François Recanati amongst others, examines the effect of an utterance or text on the hearer or reader; the thrust of the theory is that speech does not just say something, it does

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[163] For instance, see the discussion of his epistemology in Soskice (1987). It is debatable whether Ricoeur and Soskice are setting out very differing views of metaphor; see the discussion on reference below. Another example would be the discussion of history and truth in HT; it is not at all clear exactly what he means by 'history.' At one moment he seems to be referring to the train of events that occurred in the past; at another, he appears to be referring to written accounts of those events.

[164] In particular, there is a degree of overlap in Soskice's realist challenge, of which more below.

something too.[165] Austin distinguishes between *locutionary, illocutionary* and *perlocutionary* speech acts. Searle develops this further, by adding overlapping sub-categories to Austin's definition of illocutionary acts. Recanati, too, differs from Austin, though along with Searle he accepts Austin's basic distinctions. Austin defines *locutionary* acts as 'roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference'. He defines *illocutionary* acts as those of 'informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force'. And he defines *perlocutionary* acts as those that 'we bring about or achieve *by* saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring.'[166] For the purposes of the critique of Ricoeur, the crucial distinction is that between illocutionary and perlocutionary. In the former, the act takes place *in and at the moment of* speech, whereas with the latter, the act takes place *as a result of* speech. For example, when I say 'I promise...', then the promise is made in the saying of it; this is an illocutionary speech-act, and it is understood by convention that the act of promising has taken place in the very speaking. On the other hand, if I say 'The house is on fire!' then this may act as a warning and result in certain actions that follow in consequence; it is perlocutionary.[167]

Two things are apparent from this simple example. The first is that the effect of an illocutionary speech-act is comprehensible from the meaning of the utterance; it is entirely known from semantic analysis. However, the effect of a perlocutionary speech-act (and thus the 'meaning' of the utterance, in a wider sense, though one that still falls short of what might be called 'implication') is only known by considering the context in which the utterance was made. Recanati expresses this in terms of the 'supposed intentions of the speaker,'[168] though it is not necessary at this stage to be drawn into a discussion about psychologism or the nature of authorial intention.

It is not much further on from this to realise that for many statements that are, grammatically speaking, simple propositions, we need to know something about the context of the utterance or text to make sense of it. Why was this proposition

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[165] For an introduction to each of these, see for instance J L Austin (1962), J R Searle (1969) and F Recanati (1987). On the transferability of such a theory of utterances to biblical texts, see Thiselton (1992) pp 17-18.

[166] Austin (1962) p 108.

[167] Thiselton (1992) pp 292-3 also highlights the difference here between *institutional* operativeness and *causal* power, which provided the basis for the work of Donald Evans (1963).

worth making in the first place? What are its implications in relation to the prevailing *status quo*? Recanati argues that a predication or simple assertion can have the force of an illocutionary act of assertion, but we can never know the degree to which this is the case without looking at the original context:

> However explicit an utterance is, knowledge of its meaning is never sufficient to determine its illocutionary force in this sense, because the question of seriousness is never settled at the level of [semantic] meaning, but requires considering the context...if one seeks an understanding of the real pragmatic activity of the actors, as opposed to the character they play on the stage, one had better look behind the scenes.[169]

According to Recanati's speech-act theory, Ricoeur's approach makes texts like a play whose spell is broken when we start to ask critical questions about its function and truth.[170]

In his analysis of the status of fictional discourse, Searle argues that the difference between fiction and non-fiction is at the level of tacit commitments made by the writer. In illocutionary speech-acts, these tacit commitments are made clear; if the writer says 'I promise...' we can generally tell whether this is a genuine promise to the reader or not, simply by things that are given in the text. The argument is settled by considering semantic elements within the text. However, these commitments are concealed in the case of perlocutionary speech-acts; intra-textual data alone cannot account for the textual effect.[171] Searle's point here is do to with meaning, but also to do with epistemology, since he is considering the truth-claims made by such statements.

Ricoeur is opposed to any form of historicism, and dismisses calls for a look 'behind the scenes' (as Recanati puts it) as a detour of Romanticist hermeneutics. But it is worth asking whether Ricoeur's metaphor of 'looking behind the scenes' means the same as Recanati's. (It is somewhat ironic that the failure to meet a criticism arises from a conflict of interpretation of this dramatic metaphor.) Ricoeur is particularly opposed to the kind of psychological reconstruction that is implied in Schleiermacher's claim to be able to know the intention of the author better than the author himself.[172] He is bothered about looking behind the mental

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[168] Recanati (1987) p 27.

[169] Recanati (1987) pp 265-266.

[170] Thiselton (1992) p 365.

[171] See Searle (1979) pp 58-75.

[172] Ricoeur (1981) p 46; see Schleiermacher *Hermeneutik* (1959) p 56. Thiselton (1992) p 206 notes

scenes, and trying to look at the world through the eyes of the author. Recanati is much more concerned about looking behind the contextual scenes; he is asking questions about the inferred intention of an author within the particular context in which the author wrote (or the speaker spoke). This inference is based not on psychology, but on analysis of extra-linguistic context.

Nicholas Wolterstorff, in his discussion of divine discourse, makes extensive use of speech-act theory. He claims to follow Davidson and others in seeing the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical as a question of use rather than meaning.[173] Sentences do not have several meanings depending on how they are understood, but one meaning (which may include several possibilities) which is understood literally or metaphorically depending on how the sentence is used. This is not a convincing dissent from Ricoeur's approach; it is hard to see what distinction there is in practice between *one* meaning being understood in *different* ways in different contexts, and *different* meanings coming to the fore in those contexts. Wolterstorff's dependence on Davidson here is perhaps unfortunate, since Davidson's own approach is marked by a rather wooden engagement with proponents of an interaction theory of metaphor, and results in a position that fails to make sense of the place of metaphor within the development of language.[174] The debate about metaphorical 'meaning' versus metaphorical 'use' appears to depend on the limits of the word 'meaning'. If 'meaning' is limited to the grammatical and semantic content of the statement as an instantiation of a linguistic system, then clearly a statement has one 'meaning', but the significance

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that whilst Schleiermacher shares with Romanticist hermeneutics an interest in the writer's thoughts as the context for understanding the text, this is not his sole concern. He goes beyond Romanticism in having an interest in the grammatical and historical context. For a defence of Schleiermacher as misunderstood, see Richard L Corliss (1993).

[173] Wolterstorff (1995) p 193.

[174] Davidson opens his discussion with the assertion that 'there are no unsuccessful metaphors, just as there are no unfunny jokes' (1984, p 245), a rather strange statement which has echoes of Ricoeur's refusal to evaluate metaphor at the analytical level. He (mis)understands talk of metaphorical truth as implying there is a different kind of truth, rather than a different way truth is expressed (p 247); he sees the metaphorical use of terms as extending membership of a class, rather than selectively applying aspects of the class to something outside the class ('Tolstoy is a moralising infant', p 248), and so fails to appreciate the semantic impertinence of metaphor; and he does not allow that a statement loses its metaphorical character over time ('a word once taken for a metaphor remains a metaphor on the hundredth hearing', p 252). At the root of the problem is Davidson's assumption that metaphor is a feature of *words*, rather than *statements*, an assumption that Ricoeur shows to be faulty at the beginning of his approach. David Cooper (1986) adopts Davidson's approach, but in a still less nuanced and creative way than Davidson himself.

of that meaning may vary as readers make sense of it in different contexts.[175] But if 'meaning' includes the way that readers make sense, then this first idea is already taken for granted, and we may talk of the literal or metaphorical meanings of a statements. Here, as elsewhere, a clarification of terminology is needed to enable proper conversation to take place.

However, Wolterstorff does bring speech-act theory fruitfully to bear on Ricoeur's approach. His critique of Ricoeur's account of text interpretation starts with an exploration of what exactly Ricoeur might mean in his use of the terms *sense* and *reference*, looks at the difference Ricoeur sees between discourse and writing, and questions the scope of Ricoeur's conclusion that the poetic opens up a possible world.[176] Throughout, he recognises Ricoeur's concern to steer a course between Romanticism ('which says that the goal of interpretation is to enter the mental life of the author') and structuralism ('which says that we are to treat the sense of the text as a self-contained entity').[177]

On the relation between discourse and writing, Wolterstorff diffuses the sharp distinction that Ricoeur postulates by looking at the varieties of possible situations in which both discourse and reading/writing take place. He qualifies Ricoeur's radical formulation of distanciation by noting that it holds true as a contrast between the extremes of 'interaction in a dialogic utterance situation' and 'interpreting writing in a distanciated situation.'[178]

On the question of sense, Wolterstorff distinguishes between three aspects of a text as a speech action: its *illocutionary* stance (is this text asserting something, promising something, warning of something?); its *noematic* content (from the Greek νόημα meaning mind or thought); and its *designative* content. When people at different times and in different countries assert that 'The queen is dead,' their

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[175] In this case, 'meaning' comes close to what Wolterstorff calls the 'noematic content'—see below.

[176] Wolterstorff (1995) pp 130–152. Whilst much of his critique of Ricoeur is illuminating, I am not sure that his criticism of Ricoeur's ontology of language, in which he wants to replace the 'virtual' and 'actualized' existence of words with 'word-types' and 'word-tokens', achieves very much. Earlier in this volume (pp 58f) he has engaged Ricoeur on his understanding of divine revelation.

[177] Wolterstorff (1995) p 152.

[178] Wolterstorff (1995) p 142. In a monologic discourse situation (such as an address or lecture) and a dialogic writing situation (two people exchanging notes) Wolterstorff argues that much of the contrast Ricoeur draws between discourse and writing dissolves—though I am not sure he pays quite enough attention to the distinction between utterer's meaning and utterance meaning that Ricoeur does carry over from Romanticist hermeneutics.

statements (if taken literally) share the same noematic content, but they may be speaking about quite different people—the designative content differs. But when three people say 'I have a cold,' 'You have a cold,' and 'He has a cold' they may be asserting the same thing—that a particular person has a cold, the designative content—even though the noematic content is different in each case.[179] Wolterstorff rightly sees that Ricoeur uses the term 'sense' to refer to the noematic content of a text only.[180] But he also notes that Ricoeur does not doubt that the discernment of illocutionary stance is a legitimate goal of interpretation at a distance. And he argues that it must surely be legitimate to discover the designative content—'discovering what property the discourser predicated as belonging to what entity at what time.'[181] Now the noematic content of a sentence can be determined from the text alone. But to discern the illocutionary stance and designative content, we must 'exit the sense of the text and uncover the relevant non-linguistic context of the discourse,'[182] something Ricoeur is unwilling to do.

In proposing his strategy of 'authorial-discourse interpretation' in preference to Ricoeur's text-discourse interpretation, Wolterstorff is perhaps doing nothing more than highlighting the distinction between information and communication. In the former, there is no assumption of intention on anyone's part, whereas in the latter, the pragmatics of reading involve the assumption that there is some intention (however imperfectly fulfilled, however psychologically inaccessible) on the part of a third party to communicate.[183] This distinction is basic to any psychology of speech and understanding.[184] It is somewhat ironic that Ricoeur, with his emphasis on communication and engagement with the 'other', is in danger of reducing all texts to information.

Mary Gerhart points out that Ricoeur himself acknowledges that an interaction theory of metaphor implies the need for consideration of extra-linguistic context: 'a word receives a metaphorical meaning in specific contexts

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[179] Wolterstorff (1995) pp 138–139.

[180] This supposition is supported by Ricoeur's comment (IT, p 27) that in writing, 'what we inscribe is the *noema* of the act of speaking, the *meaning* of the speech event, not the event as event' (italics mine).

[181] Wolterstorff (1995) pp 139 and 150.

[182] Wolterstorff (1995) p 150.

[183] Note that everyday terminology confuses this distinction, in that texts and discourse which are commonly labelled as information (timetables, newspapers, news broadcasts) are in fact the result of intentional acts of communication.

[184] See, for example, Lee and Gupta (1995) p 50.

within which they are [*sic*] opposed to other words taken literally.'[185] Ricoeur's theory certainly falls into the category 'interactive'; he explicitly develops his theory by building on the interactive theories of Black and Richards.[186]

One of the consequences of speech-act analysis is to lessen the difference between propositional and non-propositional statements at the level of personal involvement. Searle goes so far as to make this explicit when he states that '[i]n performing an illocutionary act one characteristically performs propositional acts and utterance acts.'[187] This is in marked contrast to the approach of the existential hermeneutics of Bultmann, who draws a sharp contrast between statements of fact and statements of commitment in the New Testament. This distinction, at the heart of Bultmann's differentiation between 'history' and 'faith', perhaps arises from his dependence on the neo-Kantian bifurcation of 'fact' and 'value', though as Thiselton points out, there are many other factors involved too.[188] Ricoeur's concern with integration in hermeneutics, and especially the basis of his argument for the mediation between *theoria* and *praxis*, point him in the direction of the speech-act theorists. He insists that it is not possible to maintain a lasting separation between the 'objective' and detached, and the 'subjective' and committed—precisely the point the speech-act theorists are making with regards to the meaning of a statement. Further, we saw earlier how Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor addressed a vital question in relation to the epistemological status of statements of personal commitment as opposed to statements of 'fact.' But the phenomenological and existential basis to his thought points him back in the opposite direction. Paradoxically, he sees himself, not only in sympathy with Bultmann, but even doing some of the work needed to provide a proper foundation for Bultmann's own project.[189] Is he here being inconsistent,

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[185] Gerhart (1975) p 518, citing *Metaphor and the Central Problem of Hermeneutics*, reprinted in Ricoeur (1981) pp 165-181.

[186] See section 3.1.iii.b above. It is interesting to note that, in his overview of developments in the relation between hermeneutics and ethics, Roger Lundin brackets together the rejection of context and the rejection of tradition as two forms of rejection of the past (1985, p 15) which in turn stems from the Cartesian dispensing with presuppositions. Ricoeur, being rooted in phenomenology's attempt to establish a presuppositionless philosophy, thus has more in common with Descartes than he would like.

[187] Searle (1969) p 24.

[188] Thiselton (1992) p 276.

[189] See *Preface to Bultmann*, pp 381–401 in Ricoeur (1974).

or is this a 'metaphorical tension' in his thought that points us towards a dialectical resolution?[190]

I believe that this brings us once again to the detail of Ricoeur's notion of distanciation. Ricoeur (I believe quite rightly) highlights the inaccessibility of the mind of the author because of one sort of distanciation. But the effect of historical and cultural distanciation is simply to obscure vital information about the meaning of the utterance. Ricoeur has identified distanciation as the aspect of discourse that gives rise to multivalent possibilities of meaning for the reader. But if some of these possibilities have arisen due to our (remediable) ignorance, then they will be possibilities only because we are not aware that they are mistaken interpretations. In this instance, our interpretation will fail Ricoeur's criteria for objectivity. Ricoeur's own insistence on the critical phase of interpretation requires that we undertake historical critical analysis in order to minimise these errors, then leaving for the reader the multivalent possibilities arising from the text—which is now rightly explained (in Ricoeur's sense). I would suggest that opposition to this kind of criticism does not form a systematic part of Ricoeur's theory, but is perhaps attached (as a prejudice?) in reaction to reductionist abuses of it.

Thiselton summarises Ricoeur's inconsistency in this area:

> In theory, Ricoeur's emphasis on 'explanation' and on a hermeneutic of suspicion takes account of the problem. But in practice his theories of history and of language reduce and subordinate the role of this critical dimension in his narrative theory.[191]

As an example of this, we need only go back to his discussion of history and truth. Here the concern for the distinctiveness of the individual seems to undo the tension Ricoeur wants to maintain, leaving us with the proposal that Plato is 'unplaceable', and that ultimately every philosophy is 'incommeasurable' with every other.[192]

Ricoeur has got away without answering the challenge of context, since to date his interest in biblical hermeneutics has focused on texts that are poetical by genre, and not polemical (at least in the sectarian sense). However, Recanati's

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[190] See Vanhoozer (1991) p 278 who summarises Ricoeur's work as making progress 'through conflict, imaginative mediation and appropriation.'

[191] Thiselton (1992) p 365.

[192] Ricoeur (1965) pp 48 and 52.

question is, perhaps, most crucial concerning a text like Revelation. There is a growing consensus that Revelation is out and out polemical: polemical in its relations with Judaism, polemical in its attitude to rival prophetic groups,[193] polemical in its attitude to Greek and Roman religion,[194] and ultimately polemical in its attitude to the majority view about social reality.[195] And it is polemical texts that are most obviously distorted by removal from their social contexts. When the power relationship between two groups is reversed, then the meaning of the text becomes inverted: the cry of justice of the oppressed easily becomes the tool of oppression.[196] In Ricoeur's terms, without some investigation of historical context (which must draw at least to some extent on historical critical methodology), the distanciation of utterer from utterance threatens to destroy the integrity of the hermeneutical process whenever the second naïveté is appropriated by those in a social situation diametrically opposed to that of those who first experienced the event of the metaphor.

There is an interesting parallel with the criticism of Ricoeur by speech-act theory with Ricoeur's own criticism of structuralism. He denounces the kind of use of structuralism that 'turns language in on itself', treating it as a virtual system that is isolated from human existence, and from the specificity of human utterances. He wants to ensure that the language system is treated in a way that connects it, opens it up to human existence in its particularity. In a similar way, speech-act theory challenges Ricoeur to allow language to be open to the specific contexts of both language and human existence.[197]

ii. The Object of Reference

Ricoeur consciously adopts Frege's distinction between sense and reference in his own theory.[198] However, Frege goes on to assert that literature, in contrast to science, has no proper reference, and Ricoeur is opposed to this as part of his

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[193] See Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) pp 132f.

[194] See Aune (1987).

[195] See L Thompson (1990), D A DeSilva (1991) and (1993).

[196] See E Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) p 139 on how this can come about in the interpretation of Revelation. Jonathan Baker (1995) pp 18–19 notes how such a social transformation of a group from vanquished to victor requires a transformation of attitude and a new reading of the past.

[197] It should be noted that Ricoeur is himself quite familiar with speech-act theory, having taught it himself (Reagan, 1996, p 132) and using it at significant points within his own work (for instance, in Ricoeur (1981) pp 134f and IT pp 14f.)

programme to give metaphor cognitive content. 'My whole aim is to do away with the restriction of reference to scientific statements.'[199] Ricoeur has here a problem, and it is the problem brought about by his insistence of the pervasiveness of the radical distanciation that is a feature of texts. For we have no access to the mind of the author, so we cannot ask what the author thought he or she was referring to. We may also have little access to the situation of the original discourse, so any contextual inference is similarly ruled out.

Janet Martin Soskice declares some sharp differences between her own and Ricoeur's understanding of what metaphor is and how it works. Yet on closer inspection her theory does seem to have much in common with Ricoeur's. Although her basic definition of metaphor emphasises the recognition of similarity inherent in the structure of metaphor, its distinctive feature is seeing these similarities in what had previously been regarded as dissimilar.[200] She also demonstrates her agreement with Ricoeur's distinction between utterer's meaning and utterance meaning in her criticism of the theory of Donald Davidson.[201] Both she and Ricoeur see metaphor as irreducible; both argue that metaphorical language can carry genuine cognitive content; both emphasise the importance of diachronic analysis in understanding metaphor; both notice the importance of the metaphorical process in the develop of scientific theory. Soskice differs from Ricoeur in insisting that meaning and reference can only be discussed in relation to both the speaker's intention and the complete context of the utterance. In relation to speaker's intention, she agrees with E D Hirsch, though it is a moot point whether this is necessarily succumbing to a Romanticist hermeneutic as Ricoeur might suggest. In relation to the question of context, she echoes part of the argument of speech-act theory expounded above.

Soskice argues in turn that Beardsley's definition of metaphor is inadequate, that Black has misunderstood (rather than developed) the ideas of Wheelwright, and therefore that Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor (dependent as it is on all three) is unreliable—along with all 'formal' approaches.[202] She makes a number of useful observations, but altogether her argument is less convincing than it first

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[198] See Ricoeur's comment in RM p 217, citing Frege (1952). See also Vanhoozer (1990) p 67.
[199] RM p 221
[200] Soskice (1985) pp 15 and 26.
[201] Soskice (1985) p 30.

appears. I will examine her argument with Beardsley in some detail, since it is here that we can see both the merits and the weaknesses of her approach most clearly. It is worth considering her criticism in some depth, since she offers a comprehensive account of metaphor that purports to differ significantly from Ricoeur, and that has been perceived to be 'more cognitively robust.'[203]

At certain points, her criticisms of Ricoeur, Black and Beardsley seem to be rather pedantic. For instance, where she accuses Ricoeur of replacing the 'hegemony of the word with the hegemony of the sentence', she is missing the point that Ricoeur is emphasising the need to look beyond individual words in understanding metaphor. In any case he seems to talk interchangeably of the metaphorical sentence and the metaphorical statement.[204] But it is worth noting that Ricoeur is quite inconsistent at some important points, and it is as much this inconsistency that leads to misunderstanding. An early example of this occurs where Ricoeur is first discussing the relation of metaphor to symbolism. 'The literal meaning of "defilement" is "stain"...' he states, and Klemm points out that what he should have said is 'the literal meaning of "stain" is "discoloured."'[205] Such terminological inexactitudes are bound to lead to confusion.

a. The Nature of Metaphor

Soskice's first criticism of Beardsley is that his definition of metaphor is inadequate. She argues that metaphor is not always marked by opposition, as Beardsley claims, that we do not recognise metaphor because of literal absurdity, and that Beardsley's definition cannot tell metaphor from nonsense.

I believe that Soskice does make an important point early on. Her first counter-examples to Beardsley ('Those are cold coals to blow on', 'rubber cliffs') either include demonstratives, or lack a literary context which we need to make sense of the phrase.[206] In the case of demonstratives, her argument is clearly justified; we need the extra-linguistic information that tells us what the demonstrative points to in order to understand the sense of the statement, and in particular, whether or not it is metaphorical. Unless we know this, there is no

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[202] Her critique is found in (1985) pp 32-38.
[203] Vanhoozer (1990) pp 74–76.
[204] Soskice (1985) p 21.
[205] SE p 15 and Klemm (1983) p 65.

opposition in the metaphorical statement. This is the point behind the example, quoted by Soskice, Beardsley and Ricoeur, of Churchill's description of Mussolini as 'That utensil!'[207] But once the assumed predication implied by the demonstrative is added, Beardsley's theory comes back into play.[208] Both Beardsley and Ricoeur need to take account of the (implied) reference of a demonstrative for their theories to make sense, even at a semantic level, of these kinds of examples. But once they do, Soskice's criticism falls away.

Beardsley argues that it is absurdity or incompatibility within a sentence that makes us look away from the central (literal) meaning to secondary ones and so understand it as metaphorical, and Ricoeur adopts this idea whole-heartedly. Soskice argues that Beardsley puts the cart before the horse, as it is really the other way around; we recognise a statement as metaphorical, and only then focus on the secondary meanings. '[I]t is the fact that we impose a metaphorical construal which focuses our attention on the marginal meanings of the terms.'[209] But Soskice is getting herself into a logical tangle; Beardsley is not saying anything about the logical order of the events (conflict, shift to secondary meanings, construal of the statement as metaphorical) so much as pointing out what happens in practice as we recognise a metaphor.

Soskice further criticises Beardsley's theory on the grounds that he cannot distinguish between metaphor and nonsense. To demonstrate this, she picks two examples of randomly juxtaposed words, which satisfy Beardsley's criteria as metaphor, but which she takes to be nonsense: 'Man is a stone'; and 'Mirrors are trees.' Unfortunately, both these 'nonsenses' can form perfectly good metaphors. The first, in a slightly altered form, is used by Shakespeare ('You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!').[210] And it is quite possible to imagine some such metaphor as: 'The health of trees mirrors the ecological health of the planet.'[211] The key here is not to distinguish metaphor from nonsense, but to

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[206] Soskice (1985) p 36.

[207] RM p 252.

[208] Instances where the metaphoric predication is assumed rather than stated are labelled 'hypocatastasis' by Beale (1999, p 57)—though I have not yet come across a dictionary that includes this term.

[209] Soskice (1985) p 35.

[210] *Julius Caesar* I.i.36.

[211] It is hard to resist the force of Ricoeur's comment in the light of Beardsley that 'There are probably no words so incompatible that some poet could not build a bridge between them; the power to create new contextual meanings seems to be truly limitless' RM, 95.

distinguish between good (or true) metaphor, and bad (or false) metaphor. Beardsley is arguing a point of linguistics—what is the structure of metaphor?—whilst Soskice is thinking in terms of logic—does it make sense? 'Mirrors are trees' may not make any sense, but linguistically it has the structure of a (rather crude and unsatisfactory) metaphorical statement, in the same way that 'Two plus two equals five' does not make any sense (insofar as it is plainly untrue in any consistent mathematical theory), but is in the form of a mathematical predication.[212] This part of the discussion *in nuce* demonstrates some of the difficulty of talking about metaphor. Since the 'semantic impertinence' at the heart of metaphor is equivalent to grammatical nonsense, non-metaphor (absurdity) and untrue metaphor are closely related. Perhaps it is only when we see metaphor as saying something valid that we recognise it as metaphor (rather than nonsense) at all.

b. Metaphor and Meaning

Soskice's second main criticism of Beardsley is that he gives no indication of how to distinguish which secondary meanings, or connotations, of the metaphorical words come to the foreground once the primary meanings have been abandoned as a result of opposition within the statement. This is a perfectly valid criticism of Beardsley's theory, if it suggests that it is incomplete at this point. The same criticism is equally pertinent with regard to Ricoeur's own theory. But in levelling this as a criticism of Beardsley's explanation of the *functioning* of metaphor, Soskice seems to be making the logical equivalent of a category error. Because Beardsley does not go on to provide a systematic method of interpretation, this does not mean necessarily that his basic theory of metaphor is at fault, or that this is a reason for 'rejecting formal theories of metaphorical construal based on verbal opposition.'[213] It may be incomplete; but that is different from not being well-founded. Soskice proposes in place of Beardsley's hierarchy of associations that we see metaphor as pointing towards a model, and the meaning of the metaphor is related to the meaning of elements of the model to

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[212] Wolterstorff (1995) is careful to talk of 'well-formed statements' which are perhaps the grammatical equivalent of 'well-formed formulas' in mathematics and predicate logic (Hamilton, 1978, p 28).

[213] Soskice (1985) p 37.

which it introduces us. However, she gives no indication as to which elements of the model contribute to the meaning of the metaphor, and which play no part; it is no more precise than Beardsley's approach.

This touches on a wider question of what kind of methods are appropriate in the task of interpretation. In attempting to explain metaphors should we look for a method by which we can systematically deduce exactly which associations are coming into play? Or should a looser, more inductive logic be our primary tool? Ricoeur agrees with Hirsch that all interpretation begins with a guess, and this view finds support in theories of language which find connexions between ordinary language use and the use of language in science and scientific discovery. Hypotheses are formulated with a guess; they become theory through a process of validation. If the same holds true for our attempts to interpret metaphor, then Soskice's requirement of Beardsley and Ricoeur to be more systematic simply becomes inappropriate.

One conclusion that can be drawn from all this is that, for modern commentators as for Aristotle, attempts to classify metaphor too rigorously produce more heat than light. Whilst they may help us to appreciate the breadth of possible language-use, they do not assist in the philosophical task of understanding what metaphor is all about.

c. Metaphor and Reference

Ricoeur's theory of metaphor shares with Beardsley Soskice's general criticism of 'formal' approaches. But Soskice has particular criticisms of Ricoeur alone.

Starting from his understanding of the semantic impertinence of metaphor, and his adoption of Frege, Ricoeur talks of the literal and metaphorical sense of a statement. On the basis of this, he goes on to adopt Jakobson's notion of split reference to distinguish between literal and metaphorical reference. He supports this by talking of first- and second-level denotation; in metaphor, as with literature, the first level of reference is suspended in order that the second level of reference may be displayed. This involves him in distinguishing a kind of truth he calls 'metaphorical truth.' Soskice here accuses him of having a 'dual notion' of truth, since he talks of something being 'literally false but metaphorically true.'[214]

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[214] J M Soskice (1985) pp 84-91.

There is, she argues, only one kind of truth, not a separate category called 'metaphorical truth' which is some sort of poor relation to truth as normally conceived. This sort of idea has been central to past (and present) denigration of metaphor as improper language. She goes on to develop this criticism into a criticism of Ricoeur's whole notion of reference. Ricoeur's duality of truth leads to a 'considerable edifice of dualities'; literal and metaphorical sense, literal and metaphorical reference, and literal and metaphorical truth.[215] She finds fault with the first of these dualities on the grounds that the literal sense of the metaphorical utterance is in fact an absurdity; the corresponding reference of such a statement is therefore not the literal reference but 'no reference at all.'[216]

The argument between the two is somewhat clouded by a difference of approach. Ricoeur is discussing metaphor in the context of his general hermeneutical theory; Soskice is concerned with a more exact approach within a specific philosophical framework. When Ricoeur talks of 'metaphorical truth', what he appears to means is 'the truth of a statement when understood as a metaphorical utterance rather than a literal one.' I do not find in his writing the proposition of a duality of truth as Soskice would have us believe. Soskice is correct is suggesting that the absurdity that results when an utterance, intended to be taken as metaphorical, is taken literally, is usually trivial. But Ricoeur is not bothered by this, since he is studying the semantic and linguistic features of metaphor, and is following Beardsley and Black in noting the semantic phenomenon of the clash, which leads to a literal absurdity, that is, an absurdity when the utterance is taken as a literal statement. Ricoeur's approach further differs from Soskice's in that he is interested in comparing what happens at the large scale, with a work of fiction, and what happens at the small scale in metaphor, and is linking the two. He is suggesting that fiction is a sort of large-scale metaphor, and metaphor is a sort of small-scale fiction. In this analogy, the absurdity of the literal sense of metaphor is trivial in itself, but a useful part of his wider argument.

Further, Ricoeur clearly believes that a speaker is not making two assertions in his or her metaphorical statement, but only one. As he points out (through the example of Churchill's calling Mussolini 'That utensil!') a statement can be either

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[215] Soskice (1985) p 88.

literally true or metaphorically true, depending on whether the reader understands it as a literal or metaphorical statement.[217] There is a sense in which the ambiguity of truth is no more than a reflection of the ambiguity of the dialectic of 'is/is not' at the heart of the metaphor, and it may be more accurate to understand Ricoeur as seeing reference as split, rather than suspended altogether; it is part of the transient impertinence of metaphor that one half of the split reference is temporarily suspended.

Soskice goes on to lump Ricoeur's view as a variation on the 'two-subjects' view, which she claims (in her criticism of Black) to be nothing more than a variation of the comparison view of metaphor (discredited by Ricoeur himself amongst numerous others). Ricoeur's theory (Soskice argues) thus leaves no room for metaphor's cognitive content. She appears led to this by examining the work, not of Ricoeur, but of Sallie McFague, a writer influenced by Ricoeur.[218]

There is here a further confusion—one of terminology. Soskice talks of the 'meaning' of an utterance where Ricoeur talks only of 'sense.' He reserves the word 'meaning' for the result of the whole process of interpretation. But this points to their greatest difference in method. Ricoeur, following Frege's formulation, wants to consider sense and reference somewhat independently of one another, whilst Soskice argues that they cannot be considered apart, for reasons similar to those of the speech-act theorists. This in itself need not be problematic, and need not undermine Ricoeur's theory. But Ricoeur's pre-occupation with the superseding of literal reference makes him pass over the question of the actual reference of metaphorical statements to extra-linguistic reality.

At this point, Soskice's criticism bites. As we have seen, many metaphorical utterances are demonstrative in nature: 'That utensil!', 'That wolf is here again', 'Are you dining with that old battle-axe?'[219] The metaphorical predication of 'is/is not' then occurs not at the level of sense (in Frege's terms) but at the level of reference. As we have seen, it is only the implied reference of the statement that tells you that the proper sense of these utterances is not literal.

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[216] Soskice (1985) p 89.
[217] Ricoeur RM p 252.
[218] Soskice (1985) p 89.
[219] The last two examples are ones that Soskice (1985) uses on p 135.

Ricoeur's notion of distanciation leads him to believe that the reference of metaphor is a reference 'at a higher level' than the first order reference of science and literal statements (or rather, statements that are to be properly understood in a literal sense). Gerhart notices that according to Ricoeur, interpretation provides two kinds of reference: 'world-reference' and 'self-reference.' Although these might seem to echo the notion of first- and second-level reference mentioned above, these are in fact something quite different. Gerhart locates both 'world-' and 'self-reference' within the stage of understanding in Ricoeur's two-stage schema of explanation and understanding. What Ricoeur is in fact doing is postponing debate about the nature of reference to the stage of understanding or appropriation, and leaving it unanswered at the critical stage of explanation, and this is perhaps what makes his discussion seem confusing. The two kinds of reference are not, then, to do with explaining what the text is referring to, but to do with appropriating what the possibilities opened up by the metaphor are referring to—a possible world, and a possible way of being in the world.

The reference of demonstratives that needs to be clarified in order to see a statement as metaphorical is thus neither 'self-reference' or 'world-reference' in Ricoeur's terms; it is a kind of reference to everyday extra-linguistic things. Ricoeur's failure to deal with this sort of reference leaves a hole in his theory, and also leaves him open to Soskice's charge of idealism. His postponement of the 'true' nature of reference to the second stage of the hermeneutical process becomes clearer as his thought develops. Vanhoozer points out that in *The Rule of Metaphor* Ricoeur speaks of reference in terms of redescription; the metaphor redescribes the world in order to open up new possible ways of seeing it. But by the time of writing *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur has abandoned all talk of 'reference', and instead talks of 'refiguration.' This is a crucial shift, since the focus is no longer on the thing perceived, but on the subject perceiving, and the interpretative schema by which the subject perceives. It appears that Ricoeur is here moving away from a true mediation of object and subject, and adopting a subject-centred position which owes most to a fully-fledged phenomenology. the mention of reference does re-appear in *Oneself as Another* (which post-dates Vanhoozer's assessment) where the question of reference returns, though by now

Ricoeur has moved some way from the particulars of language use and focuses on the question of self-identity.[220]

This may be a point at which he then becomes trapped in the 'immanent solipsism of transcendental phenomenology.'[221] Even in earlier work, he is reluctant to allow talk of reference to anything beyond human experience, which is what causes Soskice to claim that Ricoeur believes, along with the idealists, that theological models are 'fictive constructs without any pretension to depict a reality independent of the human condition.'[222] Ricoeur acknowledges that the whole question of reference is inextricably linked to fundamental questions of epistemology; in opening his exploration of questions about the way language refers to reality, the world, and truth, he comments (rather wistfully?):

Do we actually know what 'reality', 'world' and 'truth' signify?[223]

Vanhoozer concludes that Ricoeur finally evades Soskice's (over-rigid?) categories, and that Soskice herself does not take full account of the difficulties in interpreting, for instance, the parables.[224] But he also agrees that her challenge does not go away easily; she is asking hard questions of Ricoeur about what exactly he means when he talks of reference. Vanhoozer's conclusion is that Ricoeur is allowing the radical nature of the metaphorical 'is/is not' to lead to a new, ambiguous definition of 'being as.' But in doing so, it is not at all clear that Ricoeur stops himself from sliding down the slippery slope of idealism, as Soskice says. Although not fatally wounded in the encounter with Soskice's criticisms, Ricoeur's theory receives a severe maul, and requires some attention to repair the damage.

One of the consequences of the postponement of reference to the second stage of interpretation is that Ricoeur fails to do the necessary critical work in examining the possible referents of metaphorical texts in what we might call the world 'behind the text.' This is the other half of his failure adequately to engage with the question of context. Childs comments that Ricoeur treats biblical

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[220] Interestingly, he engages again with speech-act theory, but with a view to the question of the 'I' of illocutionary utterances such as 'I promise...' rather than the reference (in the usual sense) of such statements (OAA pp 41f).

[221] Thompson (1991) p 39.

[222] Soskice (1985) p 146; Vanhoozer (1990) p 75.

[223] RM p 221

[224] Vanhoozer (1990) pp 75-76.

metaphors as though they were hanging in the air. Whereas the historicists are interested in nothing but the world behind the text, Ricoeur falls into the opposite trap of having no interest at all in the world behind the text.

> Such an approach fails to take seriously the function of canon in grounding the biblical metaphors within the context of historic Israel.[225]

Once more, it seems that Ricoeur is just unable to sustain the balance, or tension, between two poles that he is concerned about. Soskice suggests this is the case at an early stage in Ricoeur's argument, as in her view he fails to fully explain how metaphor can say something genuinely new, and in so failing, he fails to satisfy his own criteria for hermeneutical methodology.[226] With the question of the nature of reference Ricoeur also seems to fail to live up to his own criteria; in this case he fails to attribute sufficient significance to the givenness of the events of the history of Israel. In his conclusion, Vanhoozer comments that Ricoeur's concern to correlate self-understanding with textual exegesis makes new room for biblical exegesis—but not for theology. According to Ricoeur, theology goes too far if it believes that what counts in biblical narrative is its reference to God's acts in history.[227] Many biblical scholars would argue that a biblical hermeneutic cannot be adequate—or even useful—unless it acknowledges the basic function of biblical narratives precisely as testimony to these acts.

iii. The Criteria for Validation

From the very beginning of his work on hermeneutics, Ricoeur is concerned with questions of validation. As we have seen, one of the distinctives of his theory is a desire to hold together the objective and the subjective, the critical and the post-critical, the reflective and the personal. In formulating his task as the abolition of idols and the restitution of symbols, Ricoeur is setting the discrimination between interpretations (in the broadest sense) high on his agenda. Now, discriminating between interpretations is, in effect, pursued by asking questions about criteria that interpretative strategies should satisfy before they may properly be called 'valid.' Ricoeur is therefore bringing to the fore questions

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[225] Childs (1979) p 77.
[226] Soskice (1985) pp 84-90, from Vanhoozer (1990) p 84 n 91.
[227] Vanhoozer (1990) p 276 and p 289 n 1.

of validation in interpretation. And the key question in Ricoeur's theory is 'At what stage do we turn to such criteria?'

In keeping with his concern to explore the question of validity, Ricoeur exhibits some sympathy with those who keep the notion very explicit. He claims to share many of the concerns of E D Hirsch, and draws on Hirsch's argument extensively when considering the question of validation in the fourth part of *Interpretation Theory*. With Hirsch he agrees that there are no rules for guessing, and that guessing is the first stage of any process of interpretation.[228] He further agrees that the process of validation is more akin to judgements of probability than to the verification of scientific facts.[229] This is all in keeping with Ricoeur's concern not to let go of objectivity, whilst still paying attention to the subjective element in interpretation.

Where he parts company with Hirsch (rather predictably) is on the question of authorial intention. For Hirsch, 'all valid interpretation, of every sort, is founded on the re-cognition of what the author meant.'[230] For Ricoeur, this is an impossibility, since 'the intention of the author is lost as a psychical event.'[231] This is, once more, a facet of Ricoeur's belief in the radical pervasiveness of distanciation. He then goes on to make two rather curious statements.

First, he comments that 'the intention of writing has no other expression than the verbal meaning of the text itself.'[232] This is susceptible to the criticisms of speech-act theory as outlined above. The fact of writing and its situation, as far as we can determine it, may throw considerable light on the author's intention, or at least give us good grounds for inferring such an intention.

Secondly, Ricoeur then asserts that information about the author and his/her situation 'is in no way normative as regards the task of interpretation.'[233] Having agreed with Hirsch about the necessity of validation, and substantially agreed with him as to the essential features of such an exercise, he is diametrically opposed to Hirsch when it comes to the foundations of method. Hirsch has

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[228] IT p 75f. Hirsch (1967) p 204. See also Ricoeur's comments in RM p 23.
[229] IT p 78.
[230] Hirsch (1967) p 126.
[231] IT p 100 n 5.
[232] ibid
[233] ibid

written at some length on what he considers to be the essentials of methodology in validation;[234] what does Ricoeur offer in its place?

Once again, Ricoeur postpones what should form part of the critical phase of interpretation (that is, the phase of explanation) to the post-critical part of understanding. As Gerhart points out, Ricoeur is strongly influenced by the early Husserl in his attempts to replace an epistemology of interpretation with an ontology of comprehension.[235] That is, instead of considering criteria for establishing the truth of statements, we should be considering responsible living as the fruit of right understanding. It will then be in discerning responsible living that we discern whether an interpretation is 'valid.' But in Ricoeur's programme, he clearly wants to retain the critical phase, and not separate questions of method from questions of ontology, in contrast to Gadamer.[236] Ricoeur's theory requires that, in order to be able to claim objectivity for our interpretation, there must be a process of validation within the critical stage of interpretation. Although (Ricoeur argues) this alone will not be enough, since the ultimate goal of interpretation is personal appropriation, his concern for objectivity requires that the interpretative process has this critical 'sieve', so that authentic understanding is based on objective explanation. However, in practice,

> Ricoeur is only slightly more specific than Gadamer in stating his convictions and criteria for truth...[he] makes a theoretical acknowledgement of such givens [as creation, revelation and tradition], but his work gives little indication of what they might be for him in practice.[237]

The postponement of testing for validity to the stage of understanding has something in common with Lundin's call for ethical criteria for discriminating between good and bad interpretations, and both these approaches share with Gadamer a concern for responsibility in hermeneutics. But Ricoeur fails to match the post-critical aspect of this with the critical, and the result is that he appears to think that 'metaphor can do no wrong.'[238] Whilst Ricoeur is right enough to say that valid explanation alone is not enough to ensure the objective element in interpretation, it is hard to see how it is possible to do without it.

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[234] E D Hirsch (1967) and (1976).

[235] Gerhart (1975) p 513.

[236] See Thiselton (1992) p 348 on Ricoeur's departure from Gadamer at this point; also J B Thompson (1991) p 60 on his holding together of these two areas of question.

[237] Lundin (1983) p 31.

Thiselton notes that whilst Ricoeur considers, at a *metacritical* level, what such criteria for validation in the critical phase might look like, he never posits actual criteria, that is, he never goes back and considers the question at a *critical* level.[239] As we have seen in other areas, it is characteristic of Ricoeur to posit a theory, but not to work this out at a more practical level by using concrete examples. A clue to the reason for this reluctance is perhaps given by Ricoeur's comment that different philosophies are in some sense incommeasurable.[240] Does he really believe that criteria for validation can or should be found?

Ricoeur suggests that the metaphorical process provides a necessary heuristic in the search for truth by means of an improper, transient synthesis of two things that are properly incompatible. I would like to suggest that in an analogous but converse way, the separation between *theoria* and *praxis* is a necessary heuristic that is also transient, but needs to persist for a short period of time for proper questions to be asked of critical methodology. Although Ricoeur does allow space for this in his discussion of the critical step in interpretation, his insistence on the importance of existential appropriation, of encountering the world of possibilities opened up by a text, perhaps pushes through the resolution of the dialectic between *theoria* and *praxis* too quickly. This is in contrast to other areas of Ricoeur's thinking, where he insists on resisting too quick a resolution of the dialectics involved in the relation of subject and object, subjectivity and objectivity. Where Ricoeur wants effectively to abolish the difference, we might want to retain it as an interim measure, indeed, as one which, as with all such dialectics, is only really abolished in the eschaton.[241]

It is this interim state which provides this space, a pause in the proceedings, in which questions can be asked about the legitimacy or authenticity of the kind of world that appears to be opened up by a text.[242] It may even be here that more

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[238] Vanhoozer (1990) p 72.

[239] Thiselton (1992) p 360.

[240] HT p 48.

[241] On the importance of the eschatological postponement of the resolution of dialectics, see HT pp 12f.

[242] The need for this kind of questioning has become clear in recent areas of thought where metaphors that had their origins within scientific thinking have been extended into quasi-scientific theories of complex systems.

Richard Dawkins (1989, p 192) coins the term 'meme' as a metaphorical extension of the concept of genes applied to culture. A meme is a 'hereditary' unit of culture within the stream of cultural 'evolution,' a conceptualization critiqued at some length by John Bowker (1995,

fundamental questions can be asked about the nature of the metaphors involved; curiously enough even such basic questions as 'Is this a good metaphor?' are passed over by Ricoeur.[243] Not that I am seeking to prioritise *theoria* over *praxis* in response to Ricoeur's tendency to do the opposite. Rather, criticisms of Ricoeur show that a proper defence of the rôle of *theoria* is essential to the discovery of right *praxis*.

> Whoso means to rescue and preserve the subjective element shall lose it: but whoso gives it up for the sake of the objective, shall save it.[244]

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especially pp 68f.)

James Lovelock (1989) postulates his 'Gaia' theory of the earth and its biosphere as a living organism out of the indefiniteness of the term 'life' (see pp 16–17) and the simple omission of the 'is not' from the metaphorical predication 'the Earth is [like] a living organism.' This literalizing of metaphor has been rejected even by some within the Gaia movement: 'I reject Jim's statement "The Earth is alive"; this metaphor, stated this way, alienates…scientists…' (Lynn Margoulis, who helped formulate the original Gaia hypothesis, in P Bunyard and E Goldsmith (eds) *Gaia: the Thesis, the Mechanisms and the Implications*, cited in Rupert Sheldrake (1990) p 129.

In both these cases (of culture as biology and the Earth as organism) theories which make radical (and sharply contested) claims at the level of *praxis* are poorly established at the level of *theoria*.

[243] See Vanhoozer (1990) p 65.

[244] Karl Barth, quoted by Lowe (1983) p 29. Cf Mark 8.35.

4 The Contribution of Ricoeur's Hermeneutic to Interpreting Revelation

The consequences of Ricoeur's hermeneutic may be felt at two levels: the critical, and the metacritical. At the critical level, Ricoeur opens up a particular understanding of the function of metaphor and narrative, and this understanding offers a new approach to reading the symbolism of Revelation. The criticisms of Ricoeur noted above demand that some methodological correctives be added before his theory is applied to the biblical text. At a metacritical level, Ricoeur's understanding of the task of hermeneutics suggest that an adequate reading of a text like Revelation should have certain features.

i Metaphor and Critical Methodology

Ricoeur's most obvious contribution to the act of reading is his description of the way that metaphor is constructed—the anatomy of metaphor. Since the effect of metaphor arises from the semantic clash or impertinence, the critical process of explication of metaphor must involve analysis of the elements involved, and the nature of the semantic impertinence, as a way into understanding the nature of the world opened up by the metaphoric predication. Immediately, we confront the ambiguity in Ricoeur regarding criticism, and especially historical critical methodology. It is here that we need to prise open what Ricoeur has to some extent closed down in moving too quickly from *theoria* to *praxis*. The logic of much of what Ricoeur says emphasises the need for a well-developed critical process within hermeneutics, but Ricoeur himself seems reluctant to make room for it.[245] The dialectic of explanation and understanding is the key thing that distinguishes him from (for example) Gadamer, and might distance himself from phenomenology,[246] and yet it is this area that needs to be developed more fully. This is clear for several reasons arising out of Ricoeur's own emphases and the criticisms of him.

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[245] Thiselton (1992) p 365 notes this ambiguity and reluctance in relation to the criticisms of speech-act theory.

[246] Thiselton (1992) p 344.

a. Semantic Impertinence and Lexical Change

We have seen the importance that Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor attaches to the moment of semantic impertinence, and the consequent importance of examining diachronic as well as synchronic aspects of language. So if the lexicon is developing, not least because of the innovations resulting from the coining of metaphors, then part of the process of determining the sense of text will be locating the text in a historical context. It may reasonably be argued that the meanings of words in the ancient world changed more slowly than today.[247] But there are still clear examples of historical events affecting the meanings of words.

The most obvious one in connexion with Revelation is use of the term 'Babylon' (see section 4.1.ii.d below). The word originally referred to a specific city and empire, and the use of the name in the Deuteronomistic histories is entirely free from any figurative or synecdochal elaboration. In Ps 137.8 the name is used as synecdoche ('Babylon the devastator'), and there are a few figurative, personified uses of the names in the later prophets.[248] But following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in AD 70, the term is used metaphorically to describe Rome and its power, perhaps following a rabbinic tradition of such metaphorical use of names. In 1 Peter 5.13 its use to designate Rome (its literal reference) also offers a counterpart to the διασπορά of the opening verse of the letter, and so suggests a place of alienation (the metaphorical reference).[249] Within Revelation, it is the association of 'Babylon' with the seven hills in 17.9 that provides the clearest literary connexion between 'Babylon' and Rome. But it is the recognition that Revelation's historical context is one in which the Babylon-Rome connexion is already established that confirms the meaning of the term.[250]

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[247] Change in the meaning of words is clearly accelerated by such factors as ease of communication, especially by means of written texts, the growth of new areas of knowledge and technology, the development of philosophical disciplines of reflection, and the globalisation of culture.

[248] Is 47.1, Jer 50.13, 23, 42 and Jer 51 are the personified uses, and Is 48.14 and Jer 50.45 are synecdoche. In surveying the occurrences of the word in the OT, it is remarkable to note how rarely it is used in any other than a literal (non-figurative) way.

[249] See J Ramsay Michaels (1988) p 311.

[250] Note that this is not a circular argument regarding dating (Babylon = Rome, therefore Revelation is post-70, therefore Babylon = Rome). Rather, it is a recognition, following a tentative identification from 17.9, that Revelation belongs to that period occupied by other

More widely, if we are to understand the process of metaphorization, we must establish as clearly as possible the significance of the elements that are brought together in the metaphor. If (as I shall argue below, building on the work of Adela Yarbro Collins and others) a particular form of combat myth helped to shape the tenor of an extended metaphor in chapter 12, then the more we can discern about the myth as it might have been known in late first-century Asia Minor, the more clearly we will understand the import of the metaphor for Revelation's first readers.

b. The Need for Validation

Again, parts of Ricoeur's thought appear to require a methodology of validation that properly belongs to explanation rather than understanding. In the first place, how do we distinguish between the idols that need to be cast down, and the symbols that need to be re-animated, if we do not do this at a critical level? In the second place, how is it possible for conflicting interpretations to engage in dialogue with one another, if there is no contact at the foundational level of explanation? It is not clear that the variety of possible ways of being in the world that might arise from different interpretations of texts like Revelation have any meaningful common ground on which to meet one another. Ricoeur's call for intersubjectivity (communication) requires that there is at least a discussion about method and validation at this earlier stage.

c. Perlocutionary Effects and Context

The key implication of speech-act theory for Ricoeur is that we must move beyond the intra-linguistic world of the text to the extra-linguistic world in which the text originated. This becomes most clear in considering the nature of perlocutionary speech-acts; it is only in knowing the context that the force of certain statements becomes clear—or even why the statements should be made in the first place.

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literature where the identification is made quite explicitly, which must be post-70. See discussion on Babylon as Rome under 'Dating' below. There is a body of literature that argues for an identification of 'Babylon' with Jerusalem, but this view is hard to reconcile with the usage of the term in Revelation, especially with Rev 17.18 '...the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.' Numerous aspects of the use of the term within Revelation rule out a literal identification with an ancient Babylon (on the Euphrates or in Egypt).

In the case of Revelation 12 and 13, our knowledge of the relation of Christians to the state at the time of the text's inscription throws specific light on the impact that the metaphorization of Roman power might have had on its readers. The accepted view in English-language commentary on Revelation at the beginning of this century (as exemplified by H B Swete) was that persecution of Christians by the state was fairly widespread and systematic at the time that Revelation was written. The view of Leonard Thompson and others that the threat was more perceived than real (argued on the historical ground that there was no systematic persecution, not on textual grounds of the type of language employed) decisively changes the rhetorical effect of Revelation and makes it a different kind of protest against imperial power.

In re-inserting a substantial critical element, including historical criticism, in the 'explanation' phase, I am perhaps introducing another kind of detour in what is already a detour in the quest for locating the self in the world. But this detour is neither dispensable nor an end in itself. To establish the effect of the text on the original readership is not interpretation. But it is an essential step in interpretation.

ii. The Shape of Interpretation

Ricoeur's concerns also imply several things at a metacritical level for the shape of the task of interpretation.

a. Relating Critical Disciplines to One Another

He observes that conflicts in interpretation are often caused by the over-determination of what should be seen as limited disciplines. This is an especially pertinent comment in the light of the tendency of theology and biblical hermeneutics to borrow methodology from other disciplines. In examining texts, biblical studies has adopted structuralism, reader-response approaches and narrative criticism from the wider literary disciplines, alongside approaches developed within biblical studies such as source criticism, form criticism and

redaction criticism.[251] But in addition aspects of social-scientific approaches, ideology criticism, rhetorical criticism and deconstruction have all made their presence felt in recent years.[252]

Each of these approaches claims to say something significant about each text. But when the conclusions of one method differ from conclusions reached using another, we have just the sort of conflict of interpretation that Ricoeur warns us about. In fact, it is frequently the over-determination of one particular method that leads to readings of dislocation, as defined in section 2. The classic example of this is, of course, R H Charles and his use of source criticism, but it could equally well be said of, for instance, Tina Pippin's ideological reading. Ricoeur's emphasis on intersubjectivity and on the place of listening in hermeneutics challenges us to see the disciplines as interdependent rather than as rivals, but also as having limits as to how much these disciplines determine textual meaning and significance. This interdependence and limitation becomes evident in looking at rival interpretations of specific texts in Revelation such as 11.2–3 (see section below on source criticism).

b. Communicating with Other Commentators

Ricoeur's concern for intersubjectivity and communication has implications not only for the relations between methods but also for the relations between commentators. The diversity of approaches to Revelation means that it is tempting for commentators to make their own contribution without fully engaging with the way in which other commentators have already tackled similar issues. If Ricoeur is right in believing that 'each person moves toward self-clarification by unfolding his perception of the world in communication with others' then dialogue must have priority over innovation in new readings of Revelation.[253]

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[251] For a recent example of the use of narrative criticism and structuralism applied to the gospels, see Mark Stibbe (1992) and (1993).

[252] Leonard Thompson's approach (1990) makes significant use of social theories of knowledge; Philip Esler asserts the necessity of social-scientific approaches to NT interpretation generally in his review of Bauckham (ed) (1998a) in *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1998). Tina Pippin's reading of Revelation (1992a and 1992b) is a vigorous example of ideology criticism. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's reading of Revelation (see 1993 p 20f) utilises rhetorical criticism. For an example of a deconstruction of the text of Revelation, see Robert M Price (1998).

[253] Two recent innovative views of Revelation's dating and structure respectively are Stephen

c. Situating the Reader

We have seen that from the start Ricoeur's concern is with the understanding of the self. From the launching point of *The Symbolism of Evil* through the hermeneutical detour of looking at metaphor and narrative, his project comes full circle in his most recent work *Oneself as Another*. His aim is to discover a way of being that is not displaced by text or method (as in deconstruction, where the self is pushed to the margins and the text becomes authorless), a way of being that is not reduced by ideology, but also a way of being that does not place the self as the perceiving centre exercising a (self-deluded) dominion over the perceived world (as in the direct approach of Cartesian epistemology). It is through the hermeneutical detour, by which the self returns to itself 'as another', as a being located in the world that is understood both critically but with commitment (the wager of faith in a particular interpretation of the self and the world) that this is achieved.

The challenge of this for the reader of Revelation is to discover a reading that neither subjects the text to the power of the reader (as with radical source criticism or ideology criticism), nor allows the text to be used ideologically over against the reader (as with systematizing and schematizing readings). Such as reading will allow the text to locate the readers (both contemporary with the text and contemporary with the interpreter) in the world that the text opens up, without either elevating them to the centre of the reading process as the perceiving *cogito*, or relegating them to the margins as insignificant. It will be a reading that enables the reader to engage with the text in a place of post-critical naïveté.

d. Committing to a Reading

The importance of moving beyond the desert of criticism to the place of second, post-critical naïveté, and (on a larger scale) the ultimate goal of reading being the locating of the self in the world together imply that a proper reading of Revelation cannot be a detached one. If self-understanding is the fruit of

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Smalley (1994) and Alan Garrow (1997). But Smalley fails to engage with some basic elements of the dating argument, and Garrow's innovation in identifying liturgical markers lacks sufficient methodological justification (see the review by Gilbertson (1998b)). It should be noted, however, that Garrow's work scores well on communication in other respects, especially

understanding, then something important is wagered in the commitment to one particular understanding, rather than any other. If this chosen understanding is found to be false, then there is a possibility that the self-understanding that has resulted will need to be open to revision.

This kind of commitment in interpretation feels rather alien in a Western academic context, but it is a reminder that much that passes for interpretation is in fact only explanation. The task has not been completed until action can result from the reading. This in turn implies that an understanding of the text must make explicit reference to the context of the interpreter. What is unclear in all this is what happens when an interpreter does not accept the presuppositions and value-judgements implied by the text being interpreted—in other words when the world opened up by the text is not a world that the interpreter wants to embrace, or perhaps even thinks is possible? Ricoeur does not help here, as his weakness in the area of validation (or, in Soskice's view, his idealism) means that he does not offer a real resolution of the conflict that may arise from fundamental clashes of world view.[254] I shall return to this question in my Conclusion.

In keeping with Ricoeur's own formulation of the hermeneutical task, my examination of the text of Revelation 12 and 13 will be divided into the critical stage of explanation—the analytical detour—followed by a more synthetic stage of understanding. It is to this first stage of explanation that we now turn.

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in the accessibility offered by the use of tables and diagrams.

[254] It is interesting to note Ricoeur's eirenic engagement with those whose theories are quite antipathetic to his own—for example, his use of Recanati in OAA p 41f.

4 The Analytical Detour—Explanation

As discussed in the final section of the last chapter, my reading of Revelation 12 and 13 will be split into the two phases of explanation and understanding.[1] These two phases bear some relation to traditional categories of 'exegesis' and 'hermeneutics,' though with some qualifications. The first phase, of explanation, will include some work that would normally be seen as preliminary to exegesis, and the second phase, of understanding, will go beyond the limits of comment on interpretation of the text, to consideration of some of the metacritical issues mentioned above.

In this initial phase of explanation, analysis will predominate, and there will be an emphasis on objectivity, in keeping with Ricoeur's notion of the various dialectics involved in the process of interpretation.[2] I will therefore be making frequent reference to questions of method, including the need for appropriately consistent use of criteria.

1 Historical Context

i. The Place of Historical Contextual Analysis

I have already argued that Ricoeur's analysis of metaphor—as creating a semantic impertinence—implies the need for a degree of diachronic analysis of language. In reading Revelation 12 and 13, we need to understand the meaning and significance for the first hearers of the elements that are brought together in the process of metaphorization that produced the imagery in the text. We may then understand the refiguration that the text brings about for them.

Ricoeur makes his most impassioned plea for consideration of metaphor as a semantic event in the context of his critique of structuralism.[3] Pierre Prigent takes the particular case of structural analysis of Revelation to demonstrate that historical considerations are always present, even for those who claim otherwise.[4] He demonstrates the value of structuralist analysis, and the potential problems involved in historical exegesis—does it throw 'artificial coloured light' on the text

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[1] The terms are used by Ricoeur in IT chapter 4, (1991) chapter 5 and elsewhere.
[2] See above, section 3.2.
[3] IT pp 1-11 and 45-70.

arising from the bias of the person doing the analysis? But he goes on to show the inadequacy of trying to understand, for example, Revelation 12 without drawing on both historical and theological considerations.[5]

Whilst there has been increasing support for paying close attention to Revelation's historical context, the importance of this element of reading is still not universally recognised.[6] Affirming the importance of historical study also raises the problematic issue of the particularity of Revelation. This particularity, distinctive within the canon of the New Testament, is a striking feature of the text, and perhaps is part of the appeal of Revelation.[7] But such particularity *is* problematic, since it points up the provisional nature of our understanding of Revelation (threatening the neatness of our solutions to exegetical problems), as well as threatening to undermine the availability of understanding in a world where the distribution of knowledge is uneven.[8] These are matters of concern to the academic and church communities respectively, and I will come back to this in my Conclusion.

Apart from the reasons relating to Ricoeur's hermeneutic of metaphor, which might apply to a degree to any text, there are three other reasons for including historical critical work in our analysis of the text of Revelation. The first is the recognition that the rhetorical nature of Revelation is central to its character as a text; the second is the demands that the text itself has made on commentators; the third has to do with the general questions of methodology that I outlined in my Introduction.

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[4] Prigent (1980).

[5] Ibid pp 7-9.

[6] At a popular level, this is evidenced by the continued appeal of futurist and church historical approaches. At an academic level, historical critical methodology is sometimes seen as being in opposition to literary, theological or reader-oriented approaches. In the extreme it is seen as an outdated attempt to impose a rationalist Enlightenment perspective on ancient texts.

[7] As Boring (1989) notes, p 7.

[8] I would like to argue that, in the *past*, novel interpretive strategies for understanding Revelation have been devised, at least in part, because the lack of historical information has simply made the text unintelligible, and there has been a reluctance to say 'I do not understand this text.' In the *present* hermeneutical debates, the suspicion about historically-conditioned exegesis is more philosophically based—how dependent are texts on their original context?—or ethically based—what about those who read the text without the benefit of modern Western historical knowledge? For those concerned about reading Revelation in the Christian churches, there is also a practical concern about making the text inaccessible through demanding too much prior knowledge on the part of lay readers.

a.   Revelation as Rhetoric

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has in recent years championed the notion of
Revelation as essentially rhetorical.[9] By this she means that Revelation is not
straight-forwardly descriptive or predictive, but is taking a particular line in the
context of an animated debate with the author's opponents. Without reverting to
a neo-romanticist notion of discerning the author's intention, she nevertheless has
highlighted the implication this has for our reading: we need to understand the
historical context of the book if we are to understand the rhetoric. As well as
considering the book's structure, we must take into account 'the rhetorical
situation [i.e. the implied relation of Revelation to its opponents] that is inscribed
in the text and rooted in a particular socio-historical matrix,' since 'rhetoric as
discourse is inseparable from the socio-historical realities of its production.'[10] This
kind of discussion immediately raises questions of power, partly because the text
is the product of a situation of oppression, and partly because it is possible to
repress meaning in the text by adherence to a mistaken belief in value-free
exegesis.[11]

Every strategy of reading assumes some 'socio-historical matrix.' Therefore a
strategy of reading that does not investigate the social and historical context of
Revelation may erroneously assume a relationship between the implied parties in
the rhetorical struggle which will distort the meaning of the text. In Schüssler
Fiorenza's terminology, we will not be able to distinguish between the actual and
the textual rhetorical-historical situations.[12] As we have noted above (section
3.3.i), without consideration of historical context, the meaning of Revelation can
be inverted and the text used to reinforce the power relationships of oppression
that in context it originally opposed.[13]

b.   Nature of the Text and Commentary on it

There has been a strong and persistent emphasis on analysing the book's
historical context in commentaries on Revelation in the twentieth century—

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[9] See also the work of J T Kirby (1988), J A du Rand (1992) and S D O'Leary (1994).

[10] Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) pp 20 and 22.

[11] Ibid pp 3, 15-18 and 122.

[12] Ibid p 118. Schüssler Fiorenza thus notes the 'refigurational' aspect of rhetorical discourse, and
in other places too she echoes the language of Ricoeur.

sometimes this is argued for; at other times it is simply assumed to be necessary. Perhaps the best example is Swete's more-than-200-page introduction, largely devoted to historical matters. Recent commentators continue to assume the importance of 'put[ting] ourselves in the place of those Asiatic Christians' in a manner reminiscent of Schleiermacher,[14] or to emphasise that 'the more we can learn of [the first hearers] the better our understanding of the apocalyptic drama in its original impact'—without very much discussion about how this relates to its impact on us.[15]

However, there are particular parts of Revelation that appear to have especial dependence on details of historical context. Colin Hemer argues at length for the importance of local references in the letters to the seven churches (chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation).[16] Perhaps one of the clearest examples of historical context illuminating exegesis is that of the work of Michael Green and M J S Rudwick, who showed that an understanding of the water supply at Laodicea decisively alters the exegesis of Rev 3.15–16.[17] Prigent has argued that an anti-gnostic polemic is more important than local references in the interpretation of the letters, but Charles Scobie has demonstrated the strength of Hemer's position.[18] Steven Scherrer has highlighted some striking parallels between contemporary records of features of the imperial cult, and the description of the worship of the beast in Revelation 13.[19] David Aune has demonstrated the wider influence of Roman imperial court ceremonial on the text of Revelation.[20] I will be looking at these latter two in more detail in the section on the imperial cult below.

In his brief theological/political commentary on Revelation, Christopher Rowland is quite reticent about the importance of historical contextualization; what matters (at least to the preacher) is what happens *here and now* as the reader

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[13] Ibid p 139.

[14] Caird (1966) p 3; Schleiermacher (1959) p 56; see also section 3.3.i above.

[15] Sweet (1979) p 13.

[16] C Hemer (1986).

[17] Rudwick and Green (1957). This example raises most pointedly the major concern about dependence on historical research for exegesis raised above. The aqueduct that the authors saw at the site of Laodicea which inspired their study is no longer as clearly visible, having been eroded by natural forces and farming. For many centuries prior to this, the site would have been inaccessible.

[18] Charles Scobie (1993). For a recent criticism of the approaches of Hemer and Ramsay, see Steven Friesen (1995).

[19] S Scherrer (1984); see also his Harvard PhD dissertation (1979).

[20] D Aune (1983).

seeks to make sense of the text amidst the struggles and complexities of his or her present situation.[21] But he quotes with approval the comment of Boesak that '[John's] book cannot be understood outside of the political context of his time.'[22] And in fact at numerous points Rowland's argument does depend on (at least a general) reading of the book in its historical context.[23] We might well follow Boesak in acknowledging that the relevance of Revelation's message to unlimited particular situations throughout world history is precisely related to its relevance to the specific social, political and historical situation of its first readers.

So Ricoeur's understanding of metaphoric symbolisation, the acknowledgement of Revelation as rhetorical, and the details of the text all point to the importance of studying the book's historical context. As Swete first observed over ninety years ago: 'The visions…cannot on reasonable grounds be dissociated from their historical setting.'[24]

c. Questions of Methodology

Although my study and critique of Ricoeur's hermeneutic of metaphor have pushed me a certain distance in the direction of historical analysis, and some particular concerns about the nature of the text of Revelation have emphasised its importance, there is one more set of concerns independent of my assessment of Ricoeur which extend the detour.

For not a few recent commentators, the particular issue of date forms an important part of their exegetical or hermeneutical strategy.[25] However, despite

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[21] Rowland (1993) p 2.

[22] Boesak (1987) p 28 cited in Rowland (1993) p 29.

[23] For example, his comment on p 140, 'Revelation's hostility to what appeared to be a stable political order…' makes an assumption about the historical context. Those who more self-consciously read in historical context might want to qualify Rowland's comment (p 115) that Rev 13 'brings out most clearly the *demonic* character of the state' and limit it to certain kinds of state system doing certain kinds of things.

[24] Swete (1917) p ccxvii–ccxviii (The first edition of Swete's commentary was published in 1906.)

[25] For Leonard Thompson the nub of his argument hinges on a Domitianic (rather than Neronic) dating (1990, p 171f). For A J P Garrow, his creative dating of the book to the reign of Titus makes his reading especially pertinent (1997, p 79). For Stephen Smalley, dating Revelation to the reign of Vespasian (1994, p 48) allows him to reconstruct in some detail the development of a 'Johannine community' centred around John the apostle, and draw concomitant theological conclusions about both Revelation and the rest of the Johannine corpus. On the existence (or not) of such differentiated reading communities, see Bauckham (1998a) pp 9–48. Interestingly, Aune's ambivalent conclusion about dating (1997, pp lxix–lxx) sits well with his theory of redaction, though this is arrived at by a separate methodology: 'internal evidence for *both* dates [late 60s and mid-90s] occurs within this complex and layered composition' (p cxxi).

the importance of dating, there are often significant points at which the structure and method of many of these arguments is flawed—as I hope to show below. Moreover, many fail to engage effectively with alternative views of other commentators—there is at times a marked lack of communication. This combination of strategic importance, methodological difficulties, and lack of communication might make the cynical reader think that there are some exegetical vested interests at work. So my concerns about methodology (which I expressed in a general way in my introduction, but which were left behind to some degree in the study of Ricoeur) and Ricoeur's own emphasis on communication, make examination of historical questions, and particularly the question of date, a very useful study in methodology as a preliminary to exegesis of the text proper. I therefore plan to engage with these questions in a more detailed way than would otherwise be required from my reading of Ricoeur alone.

I now wish to turn to three particular areas of historical interest: dating of Revelation; the nature of the imperial cult and the impact it might have on the text; and the state of Jewish-Christian relations. Having engaged with the debate about context, I will then move on to look at literary questions, where my assessment of Ricoeur has more direct bearing. Ricoeur's approach returns to centre stage again in section 5, where I hope to draw together the different elements in the analysis into a synthesis of reading. I will then also offer some qualifications as to the importance of defining historical context with close precision. As always, the ultimate question concerning all analysis is: 'How (much) will this help in actually reading the text?'

ii. Dating

Commentaries on Revelation invariably devote (often considerable) space to the question of the date of the book's authorship or final redaction. I do not pretend that what follows answers all the questions surrounding discussion of Revelation's date, but I want to set out some comments by way of clearing the ground, and examine what factors must be addressed and what issues considered in any convincing dating argument. I hope too to indicate why a Domitianic date continues to be reasonable, and show that some apparently 'knock-down'

arguments against it (such as those of Wilson, 1993) are not as satisfactory as they first appear to be.

It should be noted in passing that the exact date of authorship rarely affects detailed exegesis of specific texts, with two notable exceptions: the measuring of the temple (Rev 11); and the king list (Rev 17). In these two cases exegetical assumptions go hand-in-hand with arguments about dating, and, as we shall see, often prove to be circular—in a vicious, rather than virtuous, way.

There are eight main elements to arguments about dating: the existence (or otherwise) of persecution of the church at the time of writing; the interpretation of the king list in Rev 17; the interpretation of the measuring of the temple in Rev 11; the use of the term 'Babylon' to refer to Rome; the significance of the *Nero Redivivus* myth; the nature of the church communities in Revelation in relation to the Pauline communities; the establishment of Christian communities at Smyrna and Thyatira; and the testimony of Irenaeus. There are, doubtless, many other smaller details in the text that might reinforce a particular dating.[26] But, for the most part, these depend on being interpreted in a certain way before they can count as evidence—they are embedded within a particular hermeneutical strategy. In contrast, the eight major factors listed can be dealt with more or less independently of any one reading strategy, and so can provide a clearer basis for a dating argument.

a. Persecution

The 'traditional' view, following comments of Eusebius, is that Domitian persecuted the church with a ferocity second only to Nero.[27] Although the more common nineteenth century view was of a date soon after Nero, the influence of Charles, Swete and Beckwith at the beginning of the century made the Domitianic

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[26] Aune (1997) p lxiv, notes that the phrase οἱ δώδεκα ἀπόστολοι (21.14) occurs elsewhere in the NT only at Mt 10.2 (though Luke-Acts is the only writing in the NT that uses ἀπόστολοι to signify the twelve as distinct from other apostles). Since (says Aune) the earliest credible date for Matthew is AD 80 [contra France (1985) pp 28–30, citing the argument of R H Gundry], Revelation is most likely post-80. Aune does not make it clear why he believes that the two occurences of the phrase must have appeared in this order—why could the phrase in Revelation not have been written before its use in Matthew? He also notes (p lxiii) that many commentators believe that Rev 6.6 refers to the edict of Domitian in 92 restricting provincial viticulture, but correctly concludes (p lxx) that the text is not sufficiently clear to warrant this identification.

[27] Eusebius *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.17-20.

date the majority view amongst English language commentators.[28] Despite the occasional reference to Domitianic persecution amongst contemporary commentators, there is now an increasing consensus that there was no 'official' systematic persecution of Christians by Domitian.[29] But to what extent does this undermine the case for a Domitianic date?

One key problem in the discussion is the question of what constitutes 'persecution' for us as analysts of history. Some commentators have seen persecution as consisting of widespread and systematic execution of Christians, probably on the charge of simply being Christians.[30] Gerald Downing, in his brief dismissal of the significance of the *fiscus judaicus*, appears to equate persecution with the existence of specifically anti-Christian statute.[31] Thus he feels able to discuss the ban on *collegia* and the apparently meek Christian submission to this (by giving up meeting together), without discerning that the Christian community might feel this as some sort of persecution.[32] It is clear from other New Testament writings that meeting together was important for the Pauline and later Christian communities. There is also a persistent concern to respect the imperial authorities, sometimes in close juxtaposition with injunctions to continue meeting.[33] In the light of this, it is hard to imagine the Christians not feeling at least a sharp tension in their allegiances to God and state under such circumstances.

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[28] Wilson (1993) pp 587-594 gives an excellent summary of the position of both English and German commentators, and also demonstrates the influence of Lightfoot's work in persuading early twentieth century commentators of the Domitianic persecution, even though Lightfoot himself believed Revelation was Neronic.

[29] It is now generally agreed that the comments of Christian writers in antiquity, to the effect that Domitian was the second great persecutor, are without foundation. See, for example, Yarbro Collins (1981) pp 38f, G E M de St Croix (1963 and 1964) and L Thompson (1990) pp 171f. Wilson (1993) pp 589f scrutinises Lightfoot's evidence and concludes that it is thin. Mary Smallwood (1956) pp 7-8 demonstrates that the evidence that Flavius Clemens and Domitilla (two of Lightfoot's key examples of persecution) were Christians is flimsy. For an example of exceptional persistence of belief in Domitianic persecution see Paul Trudinger (1987) p 43.

[30] See, for example, Ramsay (1904) pp 90-113

[31] 'The *fiscus judaicus* is a red herring, since non-payment was not a capital offence.' Downing (1988) p 106.

[32] Ibid p 110.

[33] See, for instance, Paul's discussion of the state authorities in Rom 13, and its surrounding injunctions concerning community life. See also 1 Peter 2, in which the first part of the chapter focusses on the corporate identity of the Christian community as the new priesthood and people of God, and the second part deals with submission to (secular and other) authorities. Interestingly, Ramsay Michaels (1988) links the two explicitly: their identity before God differentiates them from Roman society (p 113), and submission is their 'battle plan' (p 120) for engaging with the enemy.

Paul Minear wisely (and modestly) comments that 'our life as Professors is too remote from prison to allow us to understand John.'[34] Allan Boesak makes a similar point, but from the other side of the divide. Having been in prison himself, and experienced what he understood to be an angelic visitation there, he believes that he has experienced what the author and first readers of Revelation have experienced, and this becomes a hermeneutical key for his reading.[35] He puts the discussion about persecution into perspective:

> What mattered is that they suffered…We read history not in terms of the relative difference between oppressors but in terms of the reality of suffering and oppression, the joys and hopes of the little people of God. We see and understand the events of history from the underside.[36]

It is perhaps worth noting that historians of the future would probably not count what the Christians of South Africa experienced as 'persecution' in Ramsay's or Downing's terms.[37]

This then leads to the complementary question of what constitutes 'persecution' for the author of Revelation. It is true that Revelation is shot through with the motif of martyrdom, with Jesus, the lamb who was slain, as the ideal martyr.[38] But this is not so far from other New Testament language of Jesus as the model suffering servant—suffering because of his faithfulness to God which all Christians are called to share.[39] In relating the date of Revelation to supposed persecution, it is methodological nonsense to look for the worst possible situation in first or early second century Asia and assign Revelation to it—John did not thus choose when to write![40] The question is rather, are there reasons enough to make it plausible that Revelation was written during this time? Leonard Thompson and Adela Yarbro Collins have argued that the crisis in which Revelation was written may have been as much perceived as real.[41] I will argue

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[34] Minear (1966) p 92.

[35] Boesak (1987), Foreword.

[36] Ibid p 25.

[37] Other contemporary examples include the Church in the Eastern Bloc under Communism, and in China in the present day. The testimony of these communities is that they have experienced persecution; the formal conclusion of future academic historians may be otherwise.

[38] Mitchell Reddish (1988), argues that the primary signification of Christ is as martyr, rather than as sacrificial lamb, who therefore serves as a model of faithful witness.

[39] See, for instance, Rom 8.17, Phil 3.10, 1 Pet 2.20f.

[40] Downing appears unwittingly to be using this sort of approach when he comments of Pliny's prosecution of Christians under Trajan: 'If Revelation and 1 Peter in particular are occasioned by some crisis in Asia Minor then this is it' (1988) p 113.

[41] L Thompson (1990) especially pp 25f and 171f builds on the work of Yarbro Collins (1984) and

below that changes introduced by Domitian in the *fiscus judaicus* and in the significance of the imperial cult were sufficiently important to have generated a sense of impending crisis amongst the Christian community—a sense that was shared by others at the time. There is no need to insist on finding evidence for a systematic, officially registered, or widespread execution of Christians before allowing a Domitianic date for Revelation.

b.   The King List in Rev 17. 9–12

This is the first of the two factors that are closely related to exegetical method. The use of the so-called 'king list' as an indication of date is entirely dependent on the exegetical assumptions made about it, and these two things must be considered together.

Commentators fall into two categories: those who disregard the list or think that its symbolic nature rules out its use in the dating argument;[42] and those who use it to enumerate the emperors and deduce which emperor was reigning when Revelation was written. [43] The latter group is further divided into those who omit some emperors to end up with, perhaps, Vespasian, Titus or Domitian,[44] and those who enumerate all the emperors from Julius Caesar or Augustus, and end up with Nero or Galba.[45]

Neither of the two methods of enumeration is without difficulty.

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also Schüssler Fiorenza (1981, revised in 1993). I would not want to go as far as Thompson in separating *reality* of crisis from *perception* of crisis, but he makes some important points about how we define 'persecution.'

A separate but related question is that of John's use of apocalyptic language and imagery. J A T Robinson raises this implicitly when he comments that 'the Apocalypse, unless the product of a perfervid and psychotic imagination, was written out of an intense experience of the Christian suffering at the hands of the imperial authorities...if something quite traumatic had not already occurred...the vindictive reaction, portraying a blood-bath of universal proportions (14.20) is scarcely credible.' (1976, p 230f). Robinson is here assuming much about psychology, apocalyptic as a literary genre, and its relation to reality. Sweet replies soberly 'Can we be sure that John's [imagination] was *not* vindictive or psychotic by our standards?' (1979, p 26). A fuller answer to Robinson is found in a proper understanding of the imagery as refigurational; see section 2 of this chapter below. On the relation of Revelation's imagery to other apocalyptic traditions, see Richard Bauckham (1993a) chapter 2.

[42] So, for example, Swete (1917) (who ignores the list in his discussion of date) and Beasley-Murray (1974) p 38, who notes that the primary symbolism of the seven heads of the beast in chapter 17 is of the seven hills of Rome.

[43] So, for example, Rowland (1982) p 404, Wilson (1993) pp 601-2, Smalley (1994) pp 46-47.

[44] Such as Smalley.

[45] Such as Rowland and Wilson.

Options in making sense of the king list

1. Disregard the list or take it as symbolic
2. Enumerate the kings to find the one reigning
   a) Omit some emperors to arrive at a later date
   b) Include all emperors to arrive at an earlier date

For the first group of enumerators (those omitting some emperors), there are substantial problems of method involved. Albert Bell highlights the fact that in every listing of emperors in antiquity, all emperors are included.[46] It could be argued that there is no reason why Revelation should follow contemporary methods of enumeration—but we could, then, equally go on to ask whether Revelation is enumerating at all. This 'partial enumeration' also gives rise to problems with the text. Smalley seems to realise that the dating of the book to Vespasian's reign is just a bit too convenient. The prophecy of the one who 'must remain only a little while' (Rev 17.10) corresponds to the short (two-year) reign of Titus, and that of the eighth who 'belongs to the seven' (17.11) corresponds to Domitian, seen as a new Nero. Since (apparently) it is stretching credibility to assume such accuracy, and since the usual *vaticinium ex eventu* of pseudonymous apocalypses is presumably absent, Smalley postulates an earlier text, which was then edited to provide the prophecy that matched reality.[47] Thus an enumeration that has no precedent implies a redaction for which there is no literary or textual evidence.

The second method of enumeration (including all kings in order), has the merit of being the most straightforward approach, and naturally leads to a pre-70 date. The most obvious problem with it is that Revelation's prophecy of the 'kings' to come is wrong, and would quickly have been seen to be wrong by its first readers—neither Otho nor Vitellius appear to have much in common with the eighth king in Rev 17.[48] But there is also the wider question of whether we

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[46] Albert Bell (1979) p 99. Also Wilson (1993) p 602.

[47] Smalley (1994) pp 47-49 and 135-6. Smalley has another agenda at work, whereby the earlier date of an original allows him to retain the idea of apostolic authorship and so close links with John's gospel and letters (pp 134f.)

[48] How important this is depends on one's view of prophecy, and the significance of this in

should assume that John is, in fact, enumerating at all. Can it really have been so important to tell his readers who was the reigning emperor?[49] On the other hand, the first approach (that the enumeration is purely symbolic) does not entirely explain why the author makes the connexion of the heads with the kings, given that these are already overloaded with symbolism.[50]

As a third possible variation on enumeration, Alan Garrow proposes to enumerate all the emperors, but *start* from Nero.[51] He thus arrives at a date during the reign of Titus (79–81).[52] But to justify starting the enumeration with Nero, he pushes the inconsistencies of Revelation's logic to its conclusion and decides that 'the beast, as described in Chapter 17, is…a single head that revives to become an eighth emperor.'[53] So, despite the re-use of Danielic imagery, the beast in chapter 13 is not Roman imperial power (albeit shown in its true character by Nero) but the person of Nero himself. Although this is a neat solution, the idea that 'the beast is its head' sits uneasily with the wider focus the text has on imperial power (not least on the economic perspectives which come under judgement in chapter 18) and on the imperial cult, which was hardly limited to Nero.[54]

I do not think that there is at present a satisfactory explanation for this conundrum. In the light of our present ignorance, I believe that the king list provides no decisive evidence for dating, one way or the other.[55]

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discussions about the canonicity of Revelation (and whether the king-list made sense to subsequent readers). Wilson (1993) does not see this as a problem.

[49] Contra Bell (1979) p 97: 'It is important to [John] that his readers know at once and without ambiguity whom he means.' I am not so sure. It *was* important for John to make clear what he was saying about the person he is referring to, but it is not clear that he is at pains to clarify who this is.

[50] As Rowland (1982) p 405 notes. Sweet's interpretation, that the current emperor is the penultimate claiming ultimacy, does not add much to the earlier device in chapter 13 (also requiring wisdom) of 666—though it does accord with this, and thus forms part of Yarbro Collins' recapitulation (see note 60 below).

[51] It almost goes without saying that there is no contemporary secular precedent for starting a king-list part-way through, in the same way that there is no precedent for listing only some of the emperors.

[52] Garrow (1997) pp 76–79.

[53] Garrow (1997) p 85.

[54] Interestingly, Garrow sets out the consequences for his dating as: a) the appearance of a 'false Nero' in 80; b) the relatively recent persecution of Christians under Nero; c) the stability of the empire under Titus; d) the growth of friction between Christians and Jews. It is hard to see how any of these decisively affect exegesis in comparison with a later dating to, say, the reign of Domitian.

[55] There is perhaps a need of greater acknowledgement within commentaries of times when we simply do not know the answer to such questions.

c. Measuring the Temple in Rev 11

This is the second case where exegetical assumptions and discussion of dating are closely intertwined. This passage has been cited as demonstrating that the temple is still standing, which inevitably leads to a Neronic date (or just after) for Revelation.[56] Smalley even goes so far as to deduce that the siege of Jerusalem is underway, since the outer courts of the temple are trampled by the gentiles whilst the inner temple is not (Rev 11.1–2).[57] These approaches fail adequately to take account of Revelation's use and re-use of biblical imagery. The primary allusion in 11.1 is surely to the measuring of the temple in Ezekiel 40 and following,[58] though the language also has a striking parallel in Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple as recorded in Luke 21.24 ('they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled').[59] This occurred precisely when the temple was in ruins during the first years of the exile, and so it is not unlikely that Revelation's use of this motif comes from a similar situation. The period of trampling (42 months) is an eschatological term signifying the period in between the inauguration of God's kingdom and its consummation, and is therefore not to be equated only with the period of the destruction of the temple, however important this event may be in the eschatological time-table of the first-century Christians.[60] It is also worth

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[56] Wilson astonishingly states that 'Clearly this passage presupposes that the temple is still standing,' (1993, p 604). He must have wondered why no-one had ever noticed such an obvious clue to dating in the last one hundred years.

[57] Smalley (1994) p 48.

[58] I use the term 'allusion' as a short-hand and catch-all; see below (section 4.2.iii) for a full discussion of this term. Smalley notes the use of the Old Testament, but unfortunately misses the allusion to Ezekiel (p 55 note 82). On Revelation's use of Ezekiel, and in particular of its temple-imagery, see J-P Ruiz (1989).

[59] Note the use in both passages of πατέω for the trampling by the gentiles (in the passive in Luke and the active in Revelation). Note also the use in both Luke 21.24 and Rev 13.10 of αἰχμαλωτίζω (or its cognate αἰχμαλωσία) and μάχαιρα. This suggests a similar use in both texts of imagery from Jeremiah 15.2/43.11 to characterize the period as a new exile/judgement following the destruction of the temple.

[60] Yarbro Collins (1981) p 36 points out that before the advent of source criticism this chapter was used to defend a Neronic date. But this was also before the recent plethora of studies of the use of the OT in Revelation, and as we shall see below, Yarbro Collins' use of source criticism in chapter 11 is faulty. On the use of the term '42 months' in chapter 11 see Bauckham (1993a) p 420. On the presence of the eschatological motif of the allusive and veiled becoming open and clear within the structure of Revelation, see Yarbro Collins (1976) pp 32f and 231f.

observing that at the end of the chapter there is explicit reference to the temple 'in heaven' (11.19).[61]

Perhaps it is not possible to go as far as to say that this passage demonstrates that the temple is *not* standing, but it certainly *does not* demonstrate that the temple *is* standing.

d. The Use of 'Babylon' to Refer to Rome

Boring believes that this is the most importance piece of evidence in the dating of Revelation.[62] It is therefore surprising that a number of commentators omit it from their discussion.[63] No serious commentators dispute that the term is a (not very) veiled reference to Rome.[64] The term is used in 4 Ezra, 2 Apocalypse of Baruch, the Sibylline Oracles and 1 Peter, also to designate Rome.[65] In a number of these places, the term is clearly used as a reference to the fact that Rome destroyed the temple. The Old Testament offers a number of different possible enemies of Israel with which Rome could be identified, and the choice of Babylon tends to confirm the importance of the destruction of the temple in this identification.[66] (In contemporary rabbinic literature, the favourite term for Rome

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[61] This may be seen as the reality of which the earthly is a copy, but this is not immediately clear. It is worth remembering that the heaven/earth divide of reality is not always clear and consistent in Revelation, as shown by Minear's study of ontology (1966).

[62] Boring (1989) p 10.

[63] This includes Smalley (1994), Wilson (1993) and Robinson (1976), contrasted with Charles (1920) Swete (1917), Yarbro Collins (1981), Schüssler Fiorenza (1993), Downing (1988). I am not yet aware of a commentator who argues for a pre-70 date for Revelation and addresses this issue without assuming that 'Babylon' stands for Jerusalem—a difficult view to sustain in the light of Rev 17.18.

Kelly, in his commentary on 1 Peter, does discuss the use of the term in 1 Pet 5.13, and also holds to a pre-70 date, since he defends Petrine authorship. He decides that its appropriateness is due to the characterization of Rome as a 'proud, immoral, godless city which dominated [the] world,' after the style of Babylon, and as a place of exile for Christians (pp 218-9). But this ignores the evidence of the use of the term in apocalyptic literature (which Kelly does mention) and also the fact that 1 Peter is actually addressed to 'the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia' (1 Pet 1.1 NRSV). He also offers the alternative that, here in 1 Peter, the term 'Babylon' is a general one that does not refer specifically to Rome. See further section 3.4.i.a above 'Semantic Impertinence.'

[64] The one exception is Ford (1975) p 54, who equates Babylon with Jerusalem, against the flow of evidence from the text. This also conflicts with her theory that Revelation shows no animosity towards the Jews.

[65] 4 Ezra 3.1-2; 2 Apoc Bar 10.1-3; 11.1; 67.7; Sib Or 5.143, 159; 1 Pet 5.13. The Sibylline Oracles 5 are dated to the period 80-135 by John Collins (1983).

[66] Yarbro Collins (1981) p 35. She also comments that this term had become popular by the end of the first century.

is 'Edom'.[67]) This makes it highly likely that the term became current only after the temple's destruction in 70.[68]

This designation accords well with the correspondences that Yarbro Collins notes between the fall of the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14, and Rev 12.7–9. In Is 14.12, the king is called 'Morning Star,' and this term is connected with the identity of Satan in another first century apocalyptic work, 2 Enoch. The identification of Roman power with the beast in Rev 13, together with the designation of Rome as Babylon, completes a circle of identification.

e. The 'Nero Redivivus' Myth

The *Nero redivivus* myth—the belief that Nero was either going to be resurrected, or had never really died, and would lead armies from the East to sack Rome and destroy the empire—is implicitly referred to throughout Revelation.[69] The most explicit references come in chapters 13 and 17, with the description of the beast, one of whose heads 'seemed to have received a death-blow, but its mortal wound had been healed,' (13.3)[70] and the assertion that the eighth king 'belongs to the seven' (17.11). More generally, Yarbro Collins argues that the myth is taken up at various points throughout Revelation as a particular expression of the apocalyptic idea of an eschatological adversary to the Messiah.[71]

Some scholars have suggested that the importance of the myth implies a late date for Revelation, perhaps under Domitian or even Trajan.[72] But it is clear that

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[67] Yarbro Collins (1981) p 35.

[68] It is perhaps just conceivable that the term was coined during the siege of Jerusalem, and could therefore fit with Smalley's theory, but this does seem unlikely. Unfortunately, Smalley does not discuss it.

[69] Although this has been recognised in the past—Minear (1954, p 94) goes as far as saying there is a consensus on the matter—Bauckham argues for it particularly strongly in (1993a) chapter 11

[70] Minear disputes this translation of $\pi\lambda\eta\gamma\eta$, arguing that (i) in the rest of Revelation the most natural translation is 'plague'; (ii) that the wound was only visible to the saints; and (iii) that the $\pi\lambda\eta\gamma\eta$ consisted of the death-blow to the dragon (Satan) of Christ's death and resurrection (1958). Against this (i) Bauckham notes (1993a p 433) that the $\pi\lambda\eta\gamma\eta$ could quite naturally be understood as a wound inflicted by a sword (though he concedes the element of divine judgement implied); (ii) there is no suggestion in the text that only the saints can see the wound, and besides this contradicts Minear's own argument that the apparent healing of the wound caused the peoples to worship the beast; and (iii) though the Lamb has the power to dispense the plagues as a result of his victory, nowhere is the victory itself described as a $\pi\lambda\eta\gamma\eta$.

[71] Yarbro Collins (1976) chapter 4.

[72] See, for instance, Schüssler Fiorenza (1985) p 20 and (1993) p 17, and Beasley-Murray (1974) p 38. Smalley (1994) includes this in his assessment of the arguments for a late date, p 41, and exposes its weaknesses, p 44.

the beginnings of such a myth were fairly well established in Asia soon after Nero's death; Tacitus says that Achaia and Asia were 'terrified by a false rumour of Nero's arrival' during Vespasian's reign.[73] Several pretenders appeared as Nero *redivivus* as early as 69, and as late as 88, during Domitian's reign.[74] Both Yarbro Collins and Bauckham examine the various forms that the myth took, and whilst these are important for questions of exegesis, they do not affect the argument concerning dating.[75] Given both the early appearance of the myth, and its long endurance, we can conclude with Smalley that 'the presence in Revelation of the *Nero redivivus* concept does not...tell us a great deal about the date of the document.'[76]

f.   The Nature of the Church Communities

Traditionally, the nature of the churches in Revelation has been seen as quite different from what we can see of the churches of Paul's letters. On first reading, the differences appear substantial—the church at Ephesus has abandoned its first love and fallen from its original works (2.4–5), at Sardis faith appears dead (3.1), and at Ephesus and Pergamum the 'Nicolaitans,' unknown to Paul, threaten—and this could be seen to support a comparatively late (Domitianic) date.[77] But in recent years, much work has been done on understanding apocalyptic as a literary form, and the relation between apocalyptic literature and the social setting of groups who valued such literature is recognised as being more difficult to penetrate.[78]

Some recent commentators have argued that the differences between Paul and the author of Revelation have been overstated. Schüssler Fiorenza believes that

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[73] Tacitus *Histories* 2.8.

[74] Bauckham (1993a) pp 413 lists three pretenders, in 69, 80 and 88. Yarbro Collins (1976) suggests that the last two may be one, identifying the figures in the accounts of Tacitus and Suetonius. The main primary sources are Tacitus *Histories* 2.8-9, Dio Cassius 63, and Suetonius *Nero* 57. Tacitus' account suggests that there may have been other pretenders in the intervening years.

[75] Yarbro Collins (1976) pp 59f; Bauckham (1993a) pp 407–423,

[76] Smalley (1994) p 45—except, of course, it gives a *terminus a quo* for dating, of Nero's death, to go with the *terminus ad quem* of Domitian's death (Swete, 1917, p ci).

[77] So argues Swete (1917) p ci.

[78] One casualty of this development has been the 'conventicle' theory of apocalyptic communities—that they were small and isolated with little cultural contact with the outside world—on which see W D Davies (1962). By contrast, John Collins (1984) pp 29f and L Thompson (1990) pp 25f for more developed recent views, and Rowland (1990) p 81 for a firm rejection of the conventicle theory.

the theological context of Revelation is Pauline or immediately post-Pauline, and that prophecy and prophetic leadership are more important in the churches of Revelation than episcopacy or the presbyterate.[79] Aune, whilst not totally agreeing with Schüssler Fiorenza's reconstruction, nevertheless concurs with this latter observation.[80] He tries to reconcile this with apparently contrasting views of the church in other literature, most notably that of Ignatius with its emphasis on monarchical episcopacy. Aune concludes that the main reason for the difference is explained by the authors' different concerns—John is not concerned with questions of order.[81]

All this indicates something of the complexities involved in drawing conclusions about the state of the churches from the text. But one observation emerges from the discussion, and it throws some light on the relation of Revelation's readers to the Pauline communities: Paul and John appear to relate to their respective communities in much the same way.[82] In fact, although John assumes a higher social status in some respects as he addresses his audience, his main claim to be heard is established by developing a 'sympathetic rapport' with his readers/hearers, and he is generally coy about his own status.[83] This way of relating has the effect of democratising the church in a manner that is strikingly reminiscent of the Pauline communities, according to Robert Banks' analysis.[84]

Such democratisation goes hand-in-hand with Revelation's assumption of the renewal of the gift of prophecy in the eschatological end time, and this points to further contacts with Paul. Whilst Paul uses the cognates ἀποκάλυψις and ἀποκαλύπτω to describe the revelation of the mystery of salvation in Christ, his own reception of this, and eschatological judgement, a full third of his uses relate to the prophetic ministry in the churches.[85]

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[79] Schüssler Fiorenza in Lambrecht (1980) pp 120f.

[80] Aune (1981) pp 23f.

[81] Aune (1981) p 25.

[82] Aune (1981) p 26.

[83] Aune (1981) p 17-19. Possibly as a result, Aune does not refer to this kind of argument in his 1997 commentary.

[84] Robert Banks (1980) chapter 13, where he notes how the distinctions between priests and laity, officials and ordinary members, and between holy men and common people are swallowed up as all are 'one in Christ.'

[85] The mystery of salvation: Rom 1.17, 18, 16.25, Gal 3.23, Eph 3.5?; Paul's reception of this: Gal 1.12,16, Eph 3.3; eschatological judgement: Rom 2.5, 8, 18, 19, 1 Cor 1.7, 3.13, 2 Thess 1.7, 2.3, 6, 8; prophetic ministry in the church: 1 Cor 14.6, 30, 2 Cor 12.1, 7, Gal 2.2, Eph 3.5? Paul also uses the terms with reference to his readers' understanding of God's will and reception of the

These contacts with the Pauline communities give only general clues to dating Revelation. Whilst they do not preclude a Domitianic date (which would only be 40 or so years after Paul's writings), they do make a very late date such as Trajan's reign much less likely.

g. The Churches at Smyrna and Thyatira

There is some literary evidence to show that the churches at Smyrna and Thyatira were only established later in the first century.[86] Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, writing early in the second century, says that the church there did not exist in Paul's time.[87] If correct, this would almost certainly imply a post-70 date for Revelation.

Epiphanius notes the assertion of the Alogoi, a heretical group in Asia Minor around 170, that the church at Thyatira did not exist during the lifetime of John the Apostle, who certainly lived beyond 70. The Alogoi were opposed to the 'charismatic' Montanists. They wanted to show that Revelation was not apostolic, since this would weigh heavily against its being judged canonical. If Revelation was not accepted into the canon, this would in turn undermine the Montanist's use of Revelation to justify their millenarianism. The Alogoi's assertion of the late date of the establishment of the church at Thyatira comes in the context of this heated debate. Despite the vested interest involved, their assertion does not appear to have been disputed, and Revelation was accepted into the canon despite a lack of consensus as to its apostolic authorship in the early church.[88]

This evidence points fairly decisively to a later date for Revelation.

h. The Testimony of Irenaeus

I have put the testimony of Irenaeus at the end of the list, since commentators invariably evaluate Irenaeus' evidence in the light of some (or all) of the other

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mystery: 1 Cor 2.10 and Phil 3.15. Rowland (1982) goes as far as to say that the terms were 'fundamental to Paul's self-understanding.'

[86] Aune (1997, p lviii) following Hemer (1986, p 66) notes Polycarp's comments regarding Smyrna. But S G Sinclair (1992) p 54f, is the only commentator I have come across to make use of the information regarding Thyatira in his discussion of dating.

[87] Polycarp *Philippians* 11.

[88] Smalley (1994) p 36 notes how leading figures in the Eastern church followed Dionysius in rejecting apostolic authorship and instead ascribing the work to one 'John the Elder,' whose tomb can still be seen alongside the other John in Ephesus.

factors mentioned above. If they believe that these other factors warrant an early date, they take it as over-ruling Irenaeus; otherwise, they argue that there is not sufficient evidence to over-rule such an early witness.

Irenaeus states that Revelation was written 'no long time ago, but almost in our own day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.'[89] He also states that the author was 'John the disciple of our Lord' or simply 'John,' and in this he appears to be following the belief of Justin Martyr.[90] But if Irenaeus was mistaken in his ascription of authorship, does this not also suggest that he was unreliable in his dating?[91] Not necessarily.

It was clear from the earliest discussions that apostolic authorship and a late date were difficult to reconcile. It is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that Irenaeus has good reason for each of these assertions. The good reason for apostolic authorship was to settle the question of canonicity—especially since Irenaeus cites Revelation frequently in his work—and to follow the line taken by Justin Martyr. What was the good reason for a Domitianic date? It cannot have been the notion that Domitian was a persecutor, since Irenaeus does not mention this.[92] Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp, and would therefore have had access to first-hand knowledge from the area. This first-hand knowledge may well have provided Irenaeus with a good reason to date Revelation to Domitian's reign.

It may be argued that Irenaeus' ignorance of the interpretation of the isopsephism in Rev 13.18 mitigates against his reliability.[93] But a glance at the history of interpretation of Revelation shows how rapidly much of the

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[89] Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.30.3.

[90] Justin Martyr *Dialogue with Trypho* 81.4.

[91] So suggests Sweet (1979) p 21, and argues Wilson (1993) p 598. This supposes, of course, that Irenaeus *is* mistaken in his ascription of authorship, which Smalley and others might dispute (1994) pp 40 and 49f.

[92] As Yarbro Collins (1981) p 34 notes.

[93] Irenaeus settles on the solution Λατεῖνος, taking it to mean the Roman Empire, and also offers Εὐάνθας and Τειτάν as possibilities. For an analysis of the respective sums, see J-P Prévost (1991) p 38. Unfortunately, Prévost is not familiar with the 'consensus' solution below. More recently, Garrow (1997) uses a similar argument to dismiss Irenaeus' evidence. He states that these three statements cannot all be true: the name corresponding to 666 is decipherable (Rev 13.18); Revelation was written in 95; Irenaeus' witnesses, presumably present in 95, did not know the interpretation of 666. But it is not beyond dispute that these three statements are incompatible, and it might be tempting to argue that the first of the three is most likely to be untrue, at least when taken at face value!

understanding of Revelation, now accepted widely, was lost to commentators in the second and third centuries.[94]

To summarise: the issues of persecution, the use of the *Nero redivivus* myth, and the nature of the church communities in relation to the Pauline communities allow both early and late dates. Rev 11 can only provide decisive evidence for an early date if unwarranted exegetical assumptions are made. Rev 17 either points to a date under Nero or Galba, or says nothing at all, again depending on exegetical methodology and presuppositions. The use of 'Babylon' to refer to Rome, and the ages of the churches in Smyrna and Thyatira—the only pieces of unambiguous external evidence—point clearly to a later date. Other factors make a date under Trajan neither necessary nor likely. The weight of evidence thus allows us to accept the only early testimony to a specific date for Revelation—that of Irenaeus.

It might also be said that if commentators considered all the evidence, rather than restricting themselves to that which fits their own theories, we might reach a scholarly consensus on this question sooner rather than later.

iii. The Imperial Cult

Having established plausible grounds for accepting a Domitianic date for Revelation, I now want to examine the significance of the imperial cult in its interpretation. I will first look at the contacts that Revelation has with what we know of the imperial cult and its ceremonial, then look briefly at the importance of the imperial cult in first century Asia Minor, before examining the evidence for significant changes in the cult under Domitian.

It should be noted that the first two areas of discussion are not affected by the arguments on date; even if Revelation is not Domitianic, most of what is said will still hold true. If in the third area there is found to be evidence of changes under Domitian which could have led to a sense of crisis and a belief in impending

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[94] See, for instance, Prigent (1959). It is a sobering fact that the 'solution' to the puzzle of 666 now most widely accepted—נרון קסר—was first suggested as recently as 1831. (Bauckham, 1993a, p 387, where, unfortunately, the first citation of this Hebrew transliteration is misspelled!) It is also sobering to note how little this 'solution' is known outside academic circles, despite comparatively widespread interest in the problem.

persecution, then this will lend weight to the argument above for a Domitianic date.

a. Revelation's Contacts with the Imperial Cult

I have already noted that the text of Revelation makes numerous references to its contemporary historical and social situation. In particular, Revelation has some specific contacts with the imperial cult in its depiction of the worship of God.[95]

The throne-room scene in Rev 4–5 is not there specified as taking place in a temple. However, the term is used later in Revelation and seems to refer back to this scene. In 7.15 those in white robes are 'before the throne of God, and worship him day and night in his temple.' In 11.19, God's temple in heaven is opened, as a door had been in 4.1, and the same sights and sounds accompany the two openings—flashings of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder (4.5 and 11.19). In 16.17 the voice that comes from the throne comes out of the temple.[96] The depiction of the temple owes something to Old Testament images, most obviously the throne of Ez 1.26 and 10.1, the ark of the covenant (11.19) and the tent of witness (15.5) from Num 17.7 and 8.[97] But other, more prominent, features correspond to aspects of the imperial role and cult. These broadly correspond to four aspects of the imperial cult: the passivity of the emperor; the forms of obeisance to the emperor; the significance of imperial temples; and the basis of imperial authority.

The portrayal of God in Revelation is essentially passive. He is not described, and is not presented as speaking until the very end of Revelation—and then only briefly (21.5–8). His role appears largely to be one of dispensing justice, punishing past breaches of divine law and rewarding the righteous. This passive, justice-dispensing role corresponds closely with the function of the emperor, both when at Rome and when travelling with his entourage.[98] This role is passive in the sense

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[95] Aune (1983). I am indebted to Aune for a large part of the framework of what follows.

[96] See also references to the temple in 14.15, 17, 15.5, 6, 8, 16.1

[97] English translations (with the exception of the REB) obscure the connexion here. Σκηνή τοῦ μαρτυρίου in 15.5 is variously translated as 'tent of witness' (NRSV) or 'tabernacle of testimony' (NIV, AV). In Num 17.7, 8 אהל מועד (MT) is rendered σκηνή τοῦ μαρτυρίου (LXX), but is called the tent/tabernacle of testimony, witness, or 'of the covenant' (NRSV). In none of these three English translations is the phrase translated in the same way in Num 17 and Rev 15.

[98] For a description of the role of the emperor, see Fergus Millar (1977) pp 3-12 and 208. The

that the emperor passes judgement on cases brought to him, in contrast to the Old Testament portrayal of God as pro-actively intervening in situations in order to bring about his just rule. In modern terms, the picture of God in Revelation is much more akin to a (slightly aloof) judge who has cases brought to him, rather than an advocate actively seeking a desired outcome for a case.

The forms of obeisance to the emperor also find their way in. The presence of the elders in the throne-room, their number, appearance and casting down of crowns have no Old Testament precedent. But they do have parallels in Hellenistic rites. White is the appropriate ritual apparel for worship to a Greek audience.[99] Presentation of crowns (usually of laurel or myrtle, but sometimes of gold) was a Greek practice of worship to gods, but was also offered to Alexander the Great.[100] The number twenty-four has cosmic significance within the Old Testament and Revelation as well as in paganism, but may also relate to the lictors who accompanied both consuls and emperors on their travels.[101] In general, the crowded throne room was reminiscent of the emperor surrounded by the *amici* and *consilium* who acted as advisers.[102] Further, the forms of the hymns in the throne-room do not appear to be based on existing Christian liturgies, nor Old Testament forms of worship (though they used imagery from both), but have much in common with the acclamations given to the emperor.[103]

Following the fall of Nero, greater importance was attached to the idea of *consensus omnium* as providing a constitutional basis for the legitimacy of the imperial office. Thus the accession of the emperor was necessarily underpinned by popular consent to his taking office—in show, if not in reality.[104] This was also an important feature of the arrival of the emperor at a subject city, where he would expect to be greeted by the leading citizens as representative of the

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correspondence between Pliny and Trajan demonstrates how the judgements of the emperor came to be regarded as legal precedents.

[99] Plato *Leges* 12.956a; Cicero *De Leg* 2.18. It is interesting to note also that, according to Suetonius, Domitian reserved white apparel for his servants alone (*Dom* 12). In the OT, although white has associations with holiness (by inference—see Is 1.18), worship was usually associated with colours, especially blue, crimson, purple and gold. See Ex 28.

[100] Arrian *Anab Alex* 7.23. For a study of the practice of presentation of crowns see Theodor Klauser 'Aurum Coronarium' (1974).

[101] Aune, ibid, p 13 intriguingly notes that Domitian doubled the number from twelve to twenty-four.

[102] Millar, ibid.

[103] Aune (1983) pp 14-18. Yarbro Collins concurs with this view in (1976) p 150 and (1981) p 40; both cite the work of K-P Jörns (1971).

people's submission to and acclamation of him as ruler. But this had to be (at least notionally) voluntary:

> The widespread assumption among the Romans [was] that imperial honours, to be both acceptable and legitimate, had to be conferred by others, not claimed by the emperor himself.[105]

Aune notices the use of the Old Testament idiom 'small and great' in Revelation to signify the breadth of humanity who recognise the rule of God, as a polemical anti-statement of divine *consensus omnium*. But he does not notice the additional irony in Rev 13, that the worship of the beast and his image is far from voluntary (verse 12 and 16), and is therefore illegitimate even on its own terms.

In the ancient near east, the depictions of the gods were effectively projections of contemporary understandings of kingship into the heavenly realm.[106] But the perceived relationship flowed both ways, and so cosmic symbolism began to have a prominent place in the structures of kingship. Thus 'the Hellenistic kings incorporated cosmic and astral imagery as visible symbols of their divine rule.'[107] The Roman imperial cult was profoundly influenced by the traditions of Hellenistic kingship, and manifested similar cosmic imagery.[108] The incorporation of cosmic imagery from the Old Testament and from paganism into a framework shaped by the imperial cult then functions polemically, as religious anti-imperial 'propaganda.'

> Thus there arises a polemical parallelism between the cult of the emperor and the cult of Christ, which makes itself felt where ancient words derived by Christianity from the treasury of the Septuagint and the Gospels happen to coincide with solemn concepts of the Imperial cult which sounded the same or similar.[109]

This has a close parallel in the way that Revelation takes over language from Graeco-Roman magic—terms such as 'the keys to death and Hades,' 'I am coming quickly,' and 'I am the Alpha and the Omega'—and uses it of Christ so that 'the

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[104] See Klaus Oehler (1961) pp 111-113.

[105] Aune (1983) p 20.

[106] M P Charlesworth (1935) notes some of the practices of the near east, and how they came to be adopted in the Roman imperial cult.

[107] Aune (1983) p 11.

[108] Aune (1983) gives examples of this. See Suetonius' account in *Nero* 31.2 of Nero's Golden House.

[109] A Deissmann (1910) p 346.

validity of the religious and magical assumptions behind [such language] are implicitly denied.'[110]

Chapter 13 has 'been long recognised' as a 'thinly veiled polemic—using language from Daniel 7—against the Roman Imperial cult.'[111] Steven Scherrer has shown how the signs and wonders performed by the beast from the land in 13.13–15 correspond with reported activities associated with the cult. Mechanisms for making fire, lightning and thunder, and apparently-talking statues are all recorded.[112] Their incidence in literature is no guarantee of historical reliability in every case, but it does at the least demonstrate what was popularly believed, and therefore confirms the object of Revelation's reference.

All the evidence leads us to conclude that the polarisation between the lamb and the beast, the exclusivity of the alternatives of loyalty to Christ and loyalty to the emperor, lies at the heart of Revelation, and in particular, of chapter 13.[113]

b.   The Cult in Asia Minor

There are a number of thorough studies of the cult in Asia Minor available, and it is not appropriate to summarise all their conclusions here.[114] However, the consequences of these surveys for our understanding of the situation of Christians in Asia Minor are not always appreciated. I want here briefly to summarise the key points concerning the cult and Revelation: that the cult was of especial significance in Asia Minor; that it was not 'merely' political in nature; and that Christians in Asia Minor would have therefore felt considerable pressure on any move further to enforce conformity to cultic worship.

The major political function of the cult was to maintain the unity of the empire. This stemmed from the origins of the cult with Augustus, who was lauded as the saviour of the empire from the chaos of civil war. The theme of order versus chaos, manifested as the forces of the empire versus the threat of invasion from tribes outside the empire's boundaries, continued to form a part of

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[110] Aune (1987a) p 481.

[111] Scherrer (1984) p 599, where he also cites those commentators who support this view. I would add, following Bauckham (1993a) pp 425f, '—using Daniel 7 and an apocalyptic tradition also found in Ascension of Is 2.'

[112] Scherrer (1984) pp 604f and 601f respectively.

[113] deSilva (1991) 186-7. See Aune (1983) p 20 for a list of titles that are applied both to Christ in Christian worship and the emperor in the imperial cult.

the ideology of the cult. The issues of unity and order appeared to have been felt especially keenly in Asia. On the one hand, the cities of Asia continued to be independent city states under Roman rule. In the Hellenistic tradition, they set considerable store by the freedoms they thus enjoyed. This had benefits for the emperor, since it meant that there was no need to use up valuable resources by stationing legions in the area. But it made the loyalty of the cities to the emperor even more crucial, since Asia was the strategic buffer between the rest of the empire and the tribes to the East, and the threat from the Parthians was clearly prominent in the minds of Asian rulers in the second half of the first century.

The cult was also important to the local rulers. In order to maintain their loyalty, Roman policy had been to reinforce the patterns of local rule. Thus loyalty expressed through participation in the cult was not only to the emperor, but to his designated rulers in the local tribes. This was heightened by the fact of Rome's distance from Asia; it was not until the second century that an emperor first visited the region. Despite this, and possibly because of the perceived benefits of Roman rule to the cities, the cult was deeply ingrained in Asian culture. The first temple dedicated to Roma was established as early as 195 BC in Smyrna, some seventy years before Asia became a province.[115] And Asia had already switched to observing the Augustinian calendar during Augustus' lifetime.[116]

Despite the obvious political benefits of the cult, it is not realistic to argue that it was primarily a political issue, rather than a religious one. The debate here centres, to a large degree, on the use of categories in understanding the cult. S R F Price is surely correct to argue against 'Christianizing assumptions' which distort historical analysis of the cult.[117] The most persistent and distorting of these, according to Price, is the drawing up of two separate categories of the 'religious' and the 'political,' and attempting to analyse the cult according to this categorisation.[118] The cult should rather be taken as an integrated whole, affecting all of life. In advocating this he, like numerous others, recognises the value of

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[114] One of most thorough recent studies is S R F Price (1984).

[115] Barnett (1991) p 59. Charlesworth (1935) p 21.

[116] Barnett (1991) p 60.

[117] Price (1984) pp 11f.

[118] It is debatable whether this is truly a 'Christianizing' assumption, or whether it owes more to a Western post-Enlightenment rationalism.

anthropological approaches to understanding religion and ideology, and in particular the work of Clifford Geertz.[119]

But phenomenology in general, and anthropology in particular, is not value-free. The decision to analyse in such an 'objective' way *is* a decision, made by historians, to follow a particular interpretative strategy, and it is one which others in a different situation would not necessarily agree with. Price may want to avoid 'ethnocentric judgements on the Roman imperial cult,' but members of the early Christian communities (including Origen, whom Price implicitly criticises) did not enjoy the luxury of such a choice.[120] Price rightly calls for unprejudiced *analysis*, and notes the way in which the political context of the analyst has skewed interpretation of the cult, up to and including the present day.[121] But once the task of *evaluation* begins—especially when concerned with the moral and ontological implications of the language and practice of the imperial cult—categorisation will play a vital part. Origen's concern, and that of Revelation's anti-cultic polemic, is to say that the attribution of certain rights and powers, the ascription of certain titles, the offering of certain degrees of loyalty, rightly belong only to God, and not to anyone in the political sphere.

It is worth noting in passing that the impact of Christianity, in bringing such critical evaluation to the institution of the cult, has had the effect of lending a certain moral seriousness to the discussion. Charlesworth comments on the early development of cultic practices that 'So long as a citizen joined in the cults of his city, words usually counted for nothing.'[122] It is difficult to imagine the early Christian communities, with their heritage of the importance of the word of testimony (brought from their adopted Jewish background) as accepting this word/action dichotomy very easily.[123]

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[119] C Geertz (1973). Also cited by DeSilva (1991) and van Henten (1994). Here is further contact with the work of Ricoeur, who values the phenomenological approach such as that of his friend and colleague Mircea Eliade. Price goes on to comment that 'Language is not a window onto the real world but is, rather, the stuff of thought itself' (1984, p 11). This echoes Ricoeur's comment on symbolism—'The symbol gives rise to the thought'—and heads in the same direction as Ricoeur's defence of the central rôle of metaphoric language in the process of thinking about the world.

[120] Price (1984) pp 19 and 15.

[121] Ibid pp 17-19.

[122] Charlesworth (1935) p 6.

[123] Note for instance the dual meaning of דבר in the MT as both 'word' and 'deed'; Paul's emphasis on the word of testimony in Romans 10.8-10; and the emphasis already noted in Revelation on the theme of witness.

c. Domitian's Alteration of the Cult

We have noted above that the evidence for a formal and systematic persecution of Christians (understood in the traditional sense) by Domitian is rather insubstantial. However, there is evidence that Domitian altered the nature of the cult—not perhaps in its fundamental basis, but enough for the change to be perceived as of great significance by those most affected.

It has been argued that Domitian did not promote emperor worship 'with any particular fervour.'[124] But other commentators take up Suetonius' comment, that Domitian demanded to be addressed as *dominus et deus*, as signalling the fact that he was the first emperor to be worshipped in his own lifetime.[125] The exact significance of this appellation takes us back to discussions about the use of terms in the emperor cult; Suetonius appears happy to describe it as mere 'arrogance,' whilst Aune comments that it 'is less a new direction in imperial ideology as it is a tasteless violation of propriety.'[126] If true, it certainly marks a departure from the reticence of earlier emperors to claim divine honours in their own lifetime.[127]

There is, in fact, no inscriptional evidence to support Suetonius' claim as it stands. There appears to be some evidence that these titles were used, but it is fairly thin.[128] However, Charlesworth identifies two practices that signal a departure from earlier practice in the cult, and must have originated with Domitian. In the first place, it is clear that by the time of Trajan, the title *dominus* (the usual term of address of a slave to his master, not used before Domitian) arouses no discomfort and seems to have been the usual term of address. Pliny uses it in his correspondence, whilst also scorning Domitian's claim to divinity.[129] Trajan's successor Hadrian is acclaimed as *dominus* or *dominus noster* in several inscriptions.[130] When did this title originate? As early as 89 Martial refers to an

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[124] Warden (1991) p 207.

[125] Suetonius *Domitian* 13; Boring (1989) p 18; Caird (1966) p 6.

[126] Aune (1983) p 20.

[127] As made clear by Charlesworth (1935) pp 28f (despite his anachronistic differentiation between the political and religious significance of the cult): Augustus demonstrates his reticence in a papyrus from AD 19, as does Tiberius according to Tacitus *Annals* 4.37-38. See also Aune (1983) p 16 and Barnett (1991) p 62.

[128] Charlesworth (1935) p 35 cites the following: IGGR I 862; Ditt Syll (3) 822; Suppl Epig Graec VI 46; Dessau ILS 3346; CIL VI 23454.

[129] Pliny *Paneg* 2 and 52.

[130] Noted by Perret 'La titulaire impériale d'Hadrien'; cited by Charlesworth (1935) p 35. It should be noted that the escalation of titles used by emperors in self-description continued into and through the third and fourth centuries.

edictum domini deique nostri,[131] and this mode of address is echoed elsewhere in his work and that of Quintilian—though whether it is said in satire or seriousness may be open to debate.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that Pliny has no trouble devising a test for Christians in his correspondence with Trajan, even though he has never personally been present at an examination of Christians.[132] Charlesworth suggests that this test had in fact been used earlier, under Domitian. This fits well with Dio's comment that several people were executed under Domitian on the charge of *atheotes*,[133] and with the implications of the change in the *fiscus judaicus* (on which see below). It also accords with Domitian's novel inclusion of his own name alongside Jupiter and earlier emperors in oaths. Oaths had previously been sworn in the name of Jupiter, Divus Augustus and 'the other gods,' but now Domitian added his own 'genius,' and this appears to have been adopted.[134]

All this makes it reasonable to infer that Domitian initiated a step-change in the terminology used, both within and outside the official cult, to refer to the emperor. This change made the claim to divinity explicit and unambiguous for the first time, and had an impact on the cult that continued into the reigns of the emperors that followed. The nature of the cult may not have changed fundamentally, but it may well have become more formalised; the dilemma of Christians facing the claims of imperial loyalty would have then been felt all the more acutely.[135]

Price has calculated the rate of building of temples for the imperial cult in Asia Minor, and Domitian's reign did not see a great increase in their number.[136] But this may not be of the greatest significance; Domitian embarked on an extensive building programme in Rome, and with this and other measures (such as giving

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[131] Martial *Epigrams* 9.56.3.

[132] Pliny *Epistle to Trajan* 96.

[133] Dio 67.14.1–3.

[134] Charlesworth (1935) p 33 cites the magistrate's oath in Dessau ILS 6088 and 6089, and a private soldier's oath from Egypt in 94 in the name of 'Jupiter Optimus Maximus' and 'Genius sacratissimi imperatoris Domitiani,' ILS 9059.

[135] The notion that Domitian's claim to such titles constituted a violation of divine prerogative (from a Christian point of view) is a value judgement. It does not preclude historical and even psychological explanations of the reasons for Domitian's actions, such as the thesis of personal insecurity compounded by the turn of events put forward by Pat Southern (1997).

[136] Price (1984) p 59. This is cited as evidence by Warden (1991) p 207, although he agrees with Price's later comment on the greater significance of the establishment of the cult of Domitian at Ephesus.

an increase in army pay) he exhausted his resources.[137] But he did establish a temple in Ephesus, and inscriptional evidence shows that representatives from cities throughout the province participated in the cult here.[138] One of the most striking features of this temple was the size of the statue of Domitian: it would have stood a full 8 metres tall, two-thirds again the size of cult statues of other emperors.[139] And this is no accident of design. Great importance was attached to images and statues, both as part of the cult, and within the complex system of exchange between ruler and subject city.[140] The size of this statue may be a reflection of Domitian's own attitude, or of the desire of the province to make a particular statement of loyalty or gratitude.[141]

The site of the temple is particularly prominent within the city. Earlier temples already effected the integration of the cult with the other institutions of the city.[142] But Domitian's temple, at the entrance to the *agora*, made this all the more emphatic.

> It is in principle quite likely that the establishment of the cult of Domitian at Ephesus, which involved the whole of the province...led to unusually great pressure on the Christians for conformity.[143]

iv. Jewish-Christian Relations

The state of relations between Jews and Christians is important to our understanding of Revelation at two levels: the textual-theological; and the historical.

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[137] Suetonius *Domitian* 5 and 12.

[138] Price (1984) 198.

[139] Price (1984) p 187. He estimates that it would have been 5m high if the figure was seated. We only have the head, part of the torso and a forearm from which to judge. These remains have been transferred from their previous site at Izmyr to the museum at Ephesus, where their arrangement alongside other statues makes the difference in size strikingly apparent. For more detail of the statue, including the debate about its identity, see Steven Friesen (1993a).

[140] Price (1984) pp 188f and especially 196.

[141] Price (1984) p 174 notes that the vast majority of images in Ephesus were erected on local initiative rather than by imperial edict, according to inscriptions at the sites. On the significance of the system of exchange, see Price (1984) ch 3.

[142] For a detailed plan of the upper part of the city see Price (1984) p 139. Edwin Judge (1991) suggests that the position of the temple and statue of Domitian would have lent it a unique impact in controlling access to trading, and hence throws light on Rev 13.17.

[143] Price (1984) p 198.

a. Textual-theological Concerns

At the textual-theological level, assumptions about the relationship between Christianity and Judaism have frequently distorted the understanding and interpretation of Revelation. In the early church, discussions about the canonicity of the book were closely related to the debate about the relation of the Jewish canon to the Christian canon. In both these debates, questions of interpretation were never far from the surface.[144] Thus, for example, Origen rejects 'chiliastic' interpretations (those advocating belief in a literal thousand years) as 'Jewish'— and therefore presumably wrong.[145] The mistaken assessment of the difference between Judaism and New Testament Christianity in the German liberal Protestant tradition has affected the interpretation of Revelation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As recently as the 1950s, Bultmann can (rather dismissively) assert that Revelation is a 'weakly Christianized Judaism.'[146] Ford provides a recent example of this same approach, where as part of the preamble to her commentary, she notes how Paul's faith becomes less apocalyptic as it matures, and how Jesus' teaching does not fall within the category 'apocalyptic,' since he fails to satisfy her rather rigid criteria for apocalypticism—for example, he shows no particular interest in the schematization of history.[147]

In contrast, Käsemann's claim that 'apocalypticism is the mother of Christian theology' is now widely held to be substantially true, if somewhat overstated.[148] This has not only reinstated the significance of the study of apocalyptic within New Testament studies, but has allowed the recognition of the Jewishness of Revelation, as well as its close relation to the rest of the New Testament.[149]

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[144] See paragraph on the churches at Smyrna and Thyatira under 'Dating' above.

[145] *De Principiae* ii.11.12, cited in Swete (1917) p ccviii.

[146] R Bultmann (1955) p 175. Rowland evaluates Bultmann's demythologising of Revelation as 'the perversion of the millenial hope at the height of the Nazi tyranny and the most diabolical manifestation in the unimaginable horror of the Holocaust.' (1993, p iv)

[147] Ford (1975) p 5.

[148] Käsemann (1969) p 102. Cited in Collins (1984) p 206.

[149] Sweet (1979) comments on Revelation's Jewishness following an assessment of Jewish-Christian relations (pp 28f). Swete (1917) p clvi, provides an interesting analysis of the relation of Revelation to the gospels by listing what he believes to be echoes of Jesus' teaching that occur in Revelation.

b. Historical Concerns

At the historical level, the state of Jewish-Christian relations in Asia Minor is an important aspect of the social historical setting for the book. The reference to Jews who are a 'synagogue of Satan' in 2.9 has been generally taken to indicate that the Jews or a Judaizing group form one of the 'rivals' to John prophetic school against which the rhetoric of Revelation is directed.[150] The significance of the issue in the interpretation of Rev 12 has not previously been recognised.

The attitude of Jews to Christians fluctuated over time in Asia Minor. At Polycarp's martyrdom in 156 the Jews of Smyrna reputedly showed particular antagonism towards the Christians.[151] But a century later, in 250, the Jews of the same city were offering persecuted Christians sanctuary in their synagogues.[152] In the first century, in Asia Minor as elsewhere, differences that were originally theological in nature—concerning whether Jesus was the Jewish Messiah— quickly manifested themselves as social division. By the time the Christians come to attention of the Romans as a group, there is a sufficient social divide for the Romans apparently to be unaware of the links between them.[153]

What might have been an internal affair—between the Christians and the Jews—now became a wider issue through force of circumstance. In the struggle to establish social identity, the two issues of religious identity and relations with Rome become intertwined. During the Jewish War of 66–70, for example, gentile Christians would have been unwilling to identify with the Jews, for fear of recrimination from the Roman authorities.[154] Under Domitian, the matter became more acute. Domitian both put the Jews under pressure, and forced the question of Jewish/Christian identity through the extension of the Jewish tax, the *fiscus judaicus*.

There are several strands of evidence that indicate the pressure that the Jewish community felt under Domitian.[155] The execution of Flavius Clemens and the expulsion of his wife Domitilla, recorded by Suetonius and Dio Cassius, have

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[150] See Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) pp 132f.

[151] *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 13. This accords with the note of hostility in the letter to the church at Smyrna in Rev 2.9 noted above.

[152] Martyrdom of Pionius 13. (Judge, 1994, p 367)

[153] Judge (1994) p 366.

[154] Sweet (1979) p 28.

[155] For a recent overview of Domitian, including his relations with the Jewish community (though

been cited as examples of Christian martyrdom ever since Eusebius.[156] But it is much more likely that they were Jews, or that they were on the fringe of Judaism and adopting Jewish customs and lifestyle.[157] This appears to be the interpretation that Dio himself puts on the charge of atheism laid against them, and the evidence for their Christian faith is flimsy, despite the existence of a Christian cemetery named after Domitilla.[158] There also appears to have been a resolution by the senate that all Jews were to quit the empire within 36 days. This prompted Gamaliel II, son of the teacher of St Paul, and recognised by Rome as *nasi* or patriarch of the Jews in Jamnia, to travel to Rome in the winter of 95 with three helpers to petition the senate.[159] He may have been successful, since the order does not seem to have been carried out. It has been argued that Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, completed in 93, also anticipated a serious threat to the Jews, and that its completion was intended to provide an apologetic for Jewish life as part of the effort to stave off persecution.[160] Mary Smallwood concludes her review of the evidence by commenting:

> It may well be that it was only the murder of Domitian which saved the Jews themselves from actual attack.[161]

Domitian forced the question of Jewish/Christian identity (unwittingly) by his changes to the *fiscus Judaicus*. The tax had been instituted by Vespasian following the destruction of the temple in 70, as a punishment for the Jews. Instead of paying the temple tax for the maintenance of the sacrifices, Jews had to pay a tax to the authorities who had destroyed the temple, and what is more, the money was used to construct and maintain the temple of Capitoline Jupiter in Rome. This

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not touching on the details of Jewish-Christian relations) see Pat Southern (1997).

[156] Eusebius *Hist Eccl* 3.18.3-4. In the last century, Lightfoot conjectured that Clement of Rome grew up in F Clemens household and was named after him, and that Clement of Alexandria was descended from Clemens (pt 1, 1.61). Numerous other scholars in the nineteenth century identified Clemens with Clement, bishop of Rome. See Wilson (1994) p 591.

[157] So argue Smallwood (1956) pp 7f and Wilson (1994) pp 591f.

[158] Smallwood (1956) p 9.

[159] This tradition is referred to a number of times in the Mishnah (see H Danby's translation (1933) pp 81, 115, 126). Charlesworth (1935) p 33 also cites Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* Ed 2, IV (1886) pp 117–122. For information on Gamaliel II see Paul Johnson (1987) pp 146 and 150. It is interesting to note that it was under Gamaliel's rule as *nasi* that the Twelfth Benediction in the *Amidah* (service of daily prayer), the benediction against heretics, was recast to apply to Christians, perhaps signalling the final expulsion of all Christians from the synagogue.

[160] S J Case (1925).

[161] Smallwood (1956) p 10.

may have been a significant factor in some rabbis condoning evasion of the tax.[162] Ironically, over time the tax came to be seen as a privilege, since it guaranteed recognition of Judaism as *religio licita*. Rome was happy to recognise indigenous religions, and absorb them within the Roman panoply. But Judaism had stubbornly resisted such integration, and was unique in its status in the empire. Christianity, as a new religion, shared the stubborn monotheism of the Jews, and did not have the ethnic or local basis of the indigenous religions.

> New religions were acceptable to Rome if they were rooted in an ethnic tradition and religious localisation. The Christians had no such tradition, national identity or religious centre, besides those of the Jews…The break between church and synagogue brought insecurity and religious isolation with cultural, social and political excommunication.[163]

This pressure on the Christian community would have first been felt in the 60s, and grown as the split with Judaism became more complete. But Domitian's change in the *fiscus Judaicus* would have made the issue public and brought it into the limelight. Suetonius tells us that he extended it to those who 'kept their Jewish origins a secret' and 'those who lived as Jews without professing Judaism.'[164] The former group would include anyone who had been circumcised (as Suetonius makes clear from his example of a public investigation); the latter would presumably include those seen to adopt the Jewish practices of reading the Scriptures, observing a special day in the week, meeting privately for worship, and refusing to participate in the cult.

What attitude should the Christian community take to the tax? This question must have been especially pertinent for Jewish converts to Christianity, of whom the author of Revelation may have been one.[165] On the one hand, agreeing to pay the tax would have offered protection from any test of loyalty to the emperor, something which Pliny's evidence suggests could have been becoming more widespread. Without historical or indigenous roots, Christianity could well have been seen as a religion of conversion, and Domitian especially disliked conversion as it epitomized an attitude of disloyalty.[166] On the other hand, the (by now majority) gentile Christians are unlikely to have felt an ethnic identification with

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[162] Smallwood (1956) p 3.
[163] du Rand (1992) p 78.
[164] Suetonius *Domitian* 12.
[165] At least on the traditional assumption that the author was John the Apostle.
[166] Smallwood (1956) p 5.

the Jewish community, even if their Jewish Christian brethren did, especially in the light of growing hostility between the two groups. And it was far from clear that the protection afforded by recognition as part of Judaism would hold out for long; the Jews were not exactly favourites in the eyes of Rome. Besides all this, the Christian communities appear to have been very mixed in their socio-economic make-up,[167] and the poorer members of the community might have been hard-pressed to pay the amount required. Moreover, if Roman imperial power was intimately connected with the primeval opponent of God and his purposes (in Rev 12) then the stakes were even higher, and the Christians would have been even more reluctant than the Jews to pay the tax.

So the higher profile given to the tax by Domitian (most likely using it as nothing more than a means of raising revenue, in contrast to Vespasian[168]) would have put Christians firmly on the horns of an unwelcome dilemma. When Domitian's revisions were revoked they would no doubt have shared the general satisfaction expressed by the inscription on the coin issued by Nerva: FISCI IVDAICI CALVMNIA SVBLATA.[169]

v. Conclusion

What has been the value of this study of historical context? At the level of critical discussion, I believe that I have demonstrated the plausibility of a Domitianic date for Revelation, and the significance of both the imperial cult and Jewish-Christian relations for reading Revelation. The first of these offers insight into Revelation's polemical attitude to the cult; the second provides important information about context, not least for answering the question: 'Is Revelation anti-Semitic?' It should be noted immediately that this study of historical context has not been done with the aim of providing a reconstruction within which to theologically evaluate the text. Rather, it offers a tentative context within which to explore the text itself. The significance of this context in throwing light on the

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[167] This is a particular theme in Luke-Acts; note, for example, the leadership of the land-owner Barnabas (Acts 4.36–37) and wealthy merchant Lydia (Acts 16.14), alongside disputes about provision for widows in Acts 6. For an outline of the theme of rich and poor in Luke, see Howard Marshall (1988) pp 141–144. In 1 Cor, several theological issues cluster around the divisions between the wealthier and the poorer members of the community (see, for example, 1 Cor 8 and 11 concerning eating idol meats and celebrating the Lord's supper respectively).

[168] Smallwood (1956) p 4.

[169] Smallwood (1956) p 4. Note that the tax itself continued to be levied under Trajan.

meaning of the text will be more fully brought out in the final section that brings the different strand of analysis together.

But at the metacritical level, I hope this study has also made a contribution to reflection on methods of interpretation. On the question of dating and the social context of Revelation, sweeping assertions continue to be made: 'The Domitianic date is fundamentally problematic'; 'the *fiscus judaicus* was not a significant issue for Christians'; 'the king list in Rev 17 aims to tell readers who the present emperor is'; and so forth. These assertions are effectively challenged by bringing conflicting views together, and asking questions not merely about the data employed, but also about axioms and rules of inference that are being utilised.

2 Literary Context

Having considered the major issues in locating Revelation in its historical context, we now turn to matters concerning the text itself, and its relation to other texts and narratives.

i. Authorial Intention

It is not unusual for commentators on Revelation to justify a statement supporting their interpretation by resorting to the supposed intention of the author. Thus Austin Farrer argues for the importance of Psalm 2 in the text, since 'John surely intended us to see this'; Beasley-Murray cites the touchstone for how to understand the genre mix of Revelation as 'the way in which John wished it to be understood'; and Aus sets out biblical allusions in the text according to what the author could or could not have intended.[170] In contrast, few commentators consider whether authorial intention can provide legitimate grounds on which to defend a certain reading strategy.[171] This is despite the importance—even centrality—that this subject has assumed in recent hermeneutical debate, and perhaps is a symptom of the gap between biblical studies and hermeneutics.

There are three main approaches to the use of authorial intention in the process of interpretation: what I call the 'strong affirmation'; negation; and the 'weak affirmation.'

The strong affirmation of authorial intention states that what the author intended is both *accessible* by means of the text, and is also *controlling* in interpretation—we can discern what an author intended, and we must, since this is the primary criterion for validity in interpretation. E D Hirsch defends such a strong affirmation, and this position is the one implicit in much evangelical biblical commentary and interpretation.[172]

Against this, Ricoeur insists that distanciation, which occurs when an utterance is inscribed, makes the author's intention quite inaccessible. C S Lewis,

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[170] Farrer (1964) p 58; Beasley-Murray (1966) p 12; Aus (1976) p 255.

[171] Sweet (1976) pp 42f is an exception, with his brief discussion of the mind of the author (in relation to Jungian psychology)—though this is hardly enough to establish a methodological basis for interpretation.

[172] Hirsch (1967); see also his (1976). For a classic formulation of an evangelical approach to biblical interpretation see John Stott (1977), 206f, especially p 225: 'We need to keep asking ourselves: what did the author intend to convey?'

reflecting on his experiences as an author, gives some lovely practical examples of how the assumption of accessibility goes awry.[173] There are also a number of factors suggesting that authorial intention cannot be the only control in interpretation.

In the first place, an author may 'let slip' something that he or she did not intend to; since Freud, it is clear that texts may communicate something about their authors of which the authors themselves are not yet aware.[174] Secondly, to the extent to which texts communicate, they may communicate imperfectly—the author may simply make a mistake. If a text says something semantically different from that which the author intended it to say, then authorial intention cannot control the interpretation of the text. If I write and say 'I will meet you next Sunday' whilst having in my mind the Sunday after next, I cannot blame you for poor interpretation when we do not make the rendezvous. The distance between text and author means that we cannot dialogue with the text as we can with the author in order to clarify meaning. Thirdly, and most significantly, in canonical religious writings it may be assumed by the reading community that there are forces at work other than the intention of the author. This is especially so with writings that claim to be prophetic (without assuming anything particular about the exact nature of prophecy), and texts like Revelation that periodically take the form of vision reports. Do we even know that John fully understood the meaning of his 'visions'?

The second approach is negation—the denial of the legitimacy of any reference to the intention of the author. This is the recent approach taken by radical forms of 'reader-response' criticism, and could be inferred from some of Ricoeur's writings as his preferred approach.[175] Here, the only bench for appeal in the contest between interpretations is the nature of the text itself. But things are

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[173] He notes a number of occasions of erroneous interpretation of his own work, based on what a critic assumed about his intentions, and concludes, with respect to biblical criticism, that 'the "assured results of modern scholarship"...are only assured...only because the men who knew the facts are dead and can't blow the gaffe.' C S Lewis (1975) p 117. This is not proof that authorial intention is impossible to get at, but serves to challenge the certainty that often accompanies speculation about what an author may or may not have intended.

[174] Umberto Eco (1992) gives some personal examples of where readers have pointed out allusions in his own writings that he had not been aware of at the time of writing, which he nevertheless agrees are allusions.

[175] I believe that this is a mistaken interpretation of Ricoeur's anti-Romanticist polemic, and that Ricoeur is simply not clear on this point.

not so straightforward. If a text is not to dissolve into a more-or-less arbitrary string of signs that can have any semantic significance attached to them, we have to take seriously the lexical context in which the inscription took place.[176] And to define the lexical context as being the general use and meaning of words in more-or-less the correct period, is surely to be arbitrarily vague. Words may have additional shared significance and meaning for author and intended audience, especially if the author is a member of a distinctive social grouping.[177] In theory, we cannot be sure of the semantic meaning of words in a text if we stop anywhere short of seeking to establish what the words mean for the author—that is, what the author intended by those words.[178]

Moreover, writings appear to be intended to communicate—they usually appear to be the means by which a writer aims to make his or her intention understood by an implied audience. And many readers assume this to be the case—a fact which authors are usually aware of. Eco expresses this in terms of 'model readers' and 'model authors':

> A text is a device conceived in order to produce its model reader...The initiative of the model reader consists in figuring out a model author that...in the end, coincides with the intention of the text.[179]

In other words, readers normally assume that authors are trying to communicate some idea, and that they are doing it reasonably well, and authors usually write knowing that this is what readers do. And this process of working in good faith is usually a very effective strategy of interpretation. As Umberto Eco comments, this is nothing other than the process of following the 'hermeneutical circle.'[180] When it appears that a text is not attempting to communicate the intention of the author, we normally infer that this is the author's intention—to cloak his or her other intentions by means of deliberate obscurity.

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[176] Eco (1992) p 68, makes this comment in relation to reading Wordsworth. I justify this at greater length above in arguing for the importance of historical critical methodology within the hermeneutics of Ricoeur, as the only means of identifying the nature of the semantic impertinence of metaphor.

[177] An obvious example of this is the need to distinguish between the usage of terms in the New Testament and their usage in classical Greek literature. More generally, an author may be writing for an audience that has a shared heritage of earlier texts to which the text being written relates in a specific way.

[178] In practice, of course, we are happy to make a reasonable approximation, and go from there—but it is important to remember that it is only an *approximation*.

[179] Eco (1992) p 64.

[180] Ibid.

Revelation presents a particular case of this. It is certainly possible that 'John' intended only to transmit the content of a vision *verbatim*, and intended to communicate nothing further himself.[181] If this were the case, any mention of authorial intention would be misplaced. But the evidence of the text suggests that the situation is otherwise. Bauckham comments, on the question of the use of the Old Testament in Revelation, that the book is marked by 'a pattern of disciplined and deliberate allusion to specific Old Testament texts.'[182] Bauckham's work consistently demonstrates the value of assuming that it is reasonable to talk of the intention of the author, and perhaps have some considerable understanding of it, without having to appeal to it—beyond the text—in order to justify a particular interpretative strategy. It is this that I call the 'weak affirmation' of authorial intention, and it is the approach I shall be adopting. We do not have independent access to the author's mind—the only way to test our understanding is to 'check it upon the text as a coherent whole'[183]—but it is legitimate, as part of our reading strategy, to infer that the text is intended by the author to achieve something. The text may even invite the reader to understand something specific about the author's intention.[184]

This approach may appear to some to be too pragmatic. But I believe this only indicates its appropriateness, since reading is, after all, a pragmatic enterprise.

ii. Mythological Influences

Chapter 12 of Revelation contains a number of striking (and puzzling) features that have led commentators to ask whether the text has been shaped by one or more non-biblical narrative sources. There is an abrupt change of style at 12.1,

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[181] Though to argue this would be to ignore the fact that all reported events are interpreted in the very act of reporting. At some level or other, John has to make sense of (interpret, though not necessarily fully understand) the visions in order to record them. Ricoeur makes the same point regarding both myths and dream-reports—they are already 'once-interpreted'; to interpret them is to make them 'twice-interpreted.'

[182] Bauckham (1993a) pp x-xi. This is not to suggest that Revelation in any way systematically interprets the OT texts alluded to. Bauckham is clear that Rev 13 draws on Daniel quite freely, and to serve its own purpose (pp 423f).

[183] Eco (1992) p 65.

[184] Eco (1992) p 66 gives the trivial example of 'I am happy,' where this is the case; here, the author intends the reader to know that it is the author (and not someone else) who is happy. In Revelation, John's pastoral relationship with his assumed first readers is a significant part of the text. Eco also provides examples of where a reader has 'over-interpreted' by failing to pay sufficient attention to the notion of authorial intention (p 67f).

where the vision introduction formula (καί) εἶδον (used in the preceding chapters and resumed in chapter 13) gives way to the passive (σημεῖον) ὤφθη.[185] Within chapter 12, there are abrupt changes of genre and consequent disruptions of the narrative plot (verses 6 to 7, 9 to 10, and 12 to 13). The fact that a large part of the chapter is in narrative form is also distinctive within the book. Theologically, the description of the messianic male child being snatched to heaven (12.5) seems inexplicably brief if composed freely by a Christian author.[186] Whilst many of the figures can be accounted for as derived from Old Testament and related sources, some important parts of the action (such as the dragon's pursuit of the woman) cannot.[187] Finally, the return to the original plot line in verse 13 appears clumsy and repetitive.[188]

The first serious attempt to explain these features by recourse to the idea of pagan mythology behind the text was that of Hermann Günkel.[189] He posited the existence of an 'international myth' concerning the battle between forces of order and of chaos, which he conflated from a number of extant sources, and proposed that this formed a written source that had been included within the text through a process of redaction. The main weakness in his argument is simply that there is no evidence that the form of myth proposed ever existed—it was a scholarly construct. But Günkel had, at the least, demonstrated the connexions between Rev 12 and the various combat myths of the ancient near East.

It has now become clear that there were a number of different forms of the 'combat myth' that were widely known in the Mediterranean world in the first century. They may have been historically related, since they share a number of features.[190] But there is no evidence that they were ever conflated into one, universally current, form. Adela Yarbro Collins has examined the different forms of the myth, and made significant, detailed connexions with Revelation 12.[191]

In the first place she has demonstrated the *structural* connexions between the various forms of the combat myth and Revelation 12. Joseph Fontenrose

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[185] 7.2, 8.2, 9.1, 10.1, then resumed in 13.1, 13.11, 14.6.

[186] See, for example, Sweet (1979) p 197.

[187] Yarbro Collins (1976) p 58.

[188] Yarbro Collins (1976) p 103 sees this as an indicator of the use of sources. See also Aune (1997) p cxix.

[189] H Günkel (1895).

[190] See Joseph Fontenrose (1959).

demonstrated the elements that the different forms of the myth had in common, but Yarbro Collins has gone on to examine which of the versions has closest connexions with Revelation 12. Focusing on the role of the woman, she shows that the closest parallels are the myth of Leto, and a variant of the myth of Isis.[192] The elements of the respective myths and Rev 12 are as follows:[193]

Leto—Python—Apollo	*Isis—Seth-Typhon—Horus*	*Woman—Dragon—male child (Rev 12)*
1. Struggle for the sanctuary at Delphi	1. Struggle for kingship	
2. Leto pregnant by Zeus	2. Isis pregnant by Osiris	2. Woman about to give birth (2)
3. Python pursues Leto and tries to kill her	5. Birth of Horus	3. Dragon intends to devour the child (v 4)
4. The north wind rescues Leto, who is then helped by Poseidon	3. Seth-Typhon pursues Isis and Horus	5. Birth of the child (v 5a)
5. Birth of Apollo and Artemis	4. Ra and Thoth help Isis	7. Kingship of the child (5b)
6. Apollo overcomes Python	6. Horus overcomes Seth-Typhon	6. Michael defeats the dragon (7–9)
7.	7. Kingship of Horus	4. Woman is helped by God (v 4), the great eagle (v 14) and the earth (v 16)
8. Apollo establishes the Pythian Games		3. Dragon pursues the rest of the woman's offspring.

Whilst there are strong correspondences, there is also clearly some re-ordering of events, as shown in the diagram overleaf. In Revelation, the birth of the child takes place after the dragon's threat (as in the Leto myth) but before the woman is rescued (as with Isis). Note that in Revelation there is also an element of threat after the birth, but to the woman's other offspring, not to the woman herself. The kingship of the child is also proleptic; whilst the *fruits* of victory (establishing the games by Apollo, and kingship for Horus) in the two myths quite naturally follow on from the *attainment* of victory, in Revelation it appears that the

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[191] Yarbro Collins (1976) chapter II.

[192] The myth of Leto in this form is found in chapter 140 of a Latin translation of Greek myths attributed to Hyginus (second century AD) and can be found in Rose (1963) pp 102–103. The variant of the myth of Isis that is closest structurally to Revelation 12 is found on the Metternich Stele, and in the *Hymn of Amen Mose*. Both can be found in translation in Budge (1934) pp 491–503 and 422–423. In the other main extant version, Isis is an active avenger rather than threatened mother; see Herodotus 2.156.

[193] This table is taken from van Henten's adaption of Yarbro Collins' analysis of the myths, with her own analysis of Rev 12 adapted slightly by me.

Structural Comparison of Leto and Isis Myths with Revelation 12

Leto—Python—Apollo

1. Struggle for the sanctuary at Delphi
2. Leto pregnant by Zeus
3. Python pursues Leto and tries to kill her
4. The north wind rescues Leto, who is then helped by Poseidon
5. Birth of Apollo and Artemis
6. Apollo overcomes Python
8. Apollo establishes the Pythian Games

Isis—Seth-Typhon—Horus

1. Struggle for kingship
2. Isis pregnant by Osiris
5. Birth of Horus
3. Seth-Typhon pursues Isis and Horus
4. Ra and Thoth help Isis
6. Horus overcomes Seth-Typhon
7. Kingship of Horus

Woman—Dragon—male child (Rev 12)

2. A woman about to give birth (2)
3. Dragon intends to devour the child (v 4)
5. Birth of the child (v 5a)
7. Kingship of the child (5b)
6. Michael defeats the dragon (7–9)
4. Woman is helped by God (v 4), the great eagle (v 14) and the earth (v 16)
3. Dragon pursues the rest of the woman's offspring.

exaltation of the child precedes the account of victory over the dragon. However, note that the account of victory is formally an excursus from the main line of the plot. Within the narrative of vv 1–6 and 13–18, the victory itself is not made explicit.

In the second place, Yarbro Collins has demonstrated *historical* connexions between the myths and Revelation. She argues that the Leto-Apollo myth is more likely to have influenced Revelation, since it was older, and there is a wide range of evidence to show that the myth was well-known in first century Asia Minor.[194] There is a wealth of monumental evidence, and in the early second century coins were minted showing Leto fleeing from Python, while Apollo and Artemis shoot their arrows after him. The greatest temple of Artemis was in Ephesus, which was twice awarded the honour of being temple warden (νεωκόρος), and the city was a strong contender for the title of birthplace of Apollo.[195] Apollo also had a political significance for the imperial cult in Asia Minor, which I will examine further below (section 5.2.iv). Although Yarbro Collins plays down the importance of the Isis myth in favour of Leto, there is also evidence that the cult of Isis was widespread in Asia Minor.[196] Whilst Artemis was associated with astral imagery of moon and stars, the association was much more comprehensive with the players in the Isis myth.[197] This suggests that both were important, even if the Leto myth was pre-eminent, in shaping the form and elements of imagery in Revelation 12.

In the third place, Yarbro Collins has demonstrated the significance of the combat myth in Rev 12 within the theology and purpose of the whole of Revelation. She argues that the combat myth is present throughout Revelation. In the earlier chapters the threat of an opponent to the people of God is veiled (for example, in 9.1–11 and 13–19, and in the foreshadowing of the beast from the sea in the beast from the abyss, 11.7) and becomes explicit in chapter 12. But here, while the conflict is realized, the victory is still foreshadowed, and only becomes

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[194] Yarbro Collins (1976) pp 67 and 71; evidence collected in the appendix.

[195] Yarbro Collins (1976) p 245. See also Stephen Friesen (1993b).

[196] See Yarbro Collins (1976) Appendix, pp 254f.

[197] See Yarbro Collins (1976) pp 71-72 for the connexion of Artemis with moon and stars. See van Henten (1994) p 501 for the wider association with the characters in the Isis myth.

explicit in chapters 17 and 19 as the triumph of the lamb over the eschatological adversary is realized.[198]

In demonstrating structural and historical connexions between Revelation 12 and these two myths, and showing how their re-use coheres with the structure and message of the whole book, Yarbro Collins has constructed a powerful case for accepting their importance—a case which has not seriously been contested. However, she goes on to examine their significance in chapter 12 by means of source criticism, which she adapts from Charles, even though she is critical of aspects of his use of it. I will argue below (in section 4.2.v) that her criticisms of Charles are equally applicable to her own approach. Jan Willem van Henten explores the significance of the connexion along different lines, looking at the role the myths have played in imperial propaganda.[199] This leads to conclusions similar to the understanding of chapter 13 developed independently by D A deSilva, and I will be taking up both ideas in section on 'Synthesis' below. The best way of understanding the significance of Revelation 12's re-use of pagan mythology is by seeing how the combat myth is combined with biblical imagery in a process of metaphorization of the imperial structures of power. This metaphorization, which inverts the message of the combat myth, leads to a refiguration of the world (in Ricoeur's terms) for its first readers.

It is worth noting here John J Collins' reflection on the significance of comparisons of the biblical text with other religious or mythological entities or events. 'The parallels are of significance for the sense of the of the text rather than for the reference'[200]—that is, these parallels are not suggesting that the first readers understood the dragon as Python, or the male child as Apollo, but rather that familiarity with the parallel and its relation to Rev 12 gives insight into how they might understand their situation as portrayed in the text. Collins continues: 'This distinction is elementary but is sometimes missed by those who polemicize against religio-historical parallels.'[201]

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[198] Yarbro Collins (1976) p 167.
[199] J W van Henten (1994).
[200] Collins (1993) p 281
[201] Ibid

iii. Scriptural Allusion

It is not doubted that, whilst Revelation does not formally cite or quote the Old Testament, it is saturated with allusive references to it. Thus Charles and Swete (following Lightfoot) are able to make extensive lists of allusions, some years prior to any concern to classify such lists and objectify the method behind their creation.[202] Recent interest in the relation between the Old Testament and the New, and in particular the way the New 'uses' the Old, have naturally spilt over into studies on Revelation. Thus works have appeared on the use of particular Old Testament books—in particular Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel—as well as general works on the Old Testament in Revelation.[203] Not unnaturally, this has led on to the related question of how, exactly, we can discern whether or not there is an allusion to the Old Testament within the text. To see that this is a pressing question, one only has to look at the 'allusions' mentioned by different commentators. In the passages on the seven trumpets (Rev 8.7–9.21 and 11.15–18) ten different commentators between them propose allusions to 288 Old Testament passages—and agree on only one![204]

a. The Interpretation of Allusion and Citation

The relation of the New Testament to the Old was less of a problem in pre-critical study. Where the apparent meaning of an Old Testament text was in conflict with the use of that text in the New, then the New Testament was seen as fulfilling the Old, providing the fuller meaning, the *sensus plenior*. Undergirding this was the belief in common, divine authorship of both texts, and in a consequent coherence in their theologies. Critical study, with its focus on the human authors and their variegated historical and literary contexts, could not rest easy with such an approach. Since it was difficult to make methodological sense of the variety of ways the New Testament writers 'interpreted' the Old, in modern hermeneutical terms at least, it was easy to conclude that such interpretation was

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[202] Charles (1904) pp lxii–lxxxvi; Swete (1917) pp cxxxv–cxlviii.

[203] J Fekkes (1988); J M Vogelgesang (1985); Jean-Pierre Ruiz (1989); G K Beale (1984). See also numerous articles on the Old Testament in Revelation by Aune, Beale, Moyise and others.

[204] Jon Paulien (1988b) p 37. The commentators were Charles, Dittmar, Hühn, Kraft, Ford, Mounce, Prigent, Westcott and Hort, and the tables given in Nestle 26 and UBS 3 Greek New Testaments. They all agree that Rev 9.5 alludes to Job 3.21.

arbitrary, and designed to serve the later writers' own apologetic ends. Barnabas Lindars is representative of this view:

> The place of the Old Testament in the formation of New Testament theology is that of servant, ready to run to the aid of the gospel wherever it is required, bolstering up arguments, and filling out meaning through evocative allusions, but never acting as the master or leading the way, nor even guiding the process behind the scenes.[205]

In other words, both the new logic and the new context of the words cited override and obliterate the old. Schüssler Fiorenza appears to adopt this view when she comments that in Revelation John 'does not interpret the OT but uses its words, images, phrases and patterns as a language arsenal in order to make his own theological statement.'[206]

But more recent work has shown this to be an inadequate account of how citation and allusions function. T M Greene, J Hollander, and others have shown (from a literary perspective) that the relationship between the text cit*ed* and the text cit*ing* is much more complex and dynamic; in the mind of the reader, the context and connotations of the original are not entirely left behind, but are brought to bear (positively or negatively) in the reading of the citation or allusion.[207] This notion of 'intertextuality' has been used with great effectiveness by Richard Hays, in his explication of the way that Paul uses Scripture; 'connotations bleed over' from the Old Testament into Paul's own writing.[208] Intertextuality has also been used to positive effect as a discipline in the study of Revelation, and has been shown to be of significance in arbitrating between conflicting readings where OT allusion plays a part.[209] Bauckham goes as far as to say that Revelation 'is a book designed to be read in constant intertextual relationship with the Old Testament.'[210]

It should be noted that intertextuality, as an approach, does not provide a method for interpretation, so much as flagging up the importance of considering the relation between the new context and the old in interpreting allusion and

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[205] Barnabas Lindars (1976) p 66.

[206] Schüssler Fiorenza (1985) p 135.

[207] Thomas M Greene (1982); J Hollander (1981)

[208] Richard B Hays (1989) p 142.

[209] See Steve Moyise's discussion of Rev 1 (1994) and parts of chapter 1, 5, and 21 in (1995); Aune (1991).

[210] Bauckham (1993a) pp x-xi.

citation. In each case, only study of the texts in question can show the way in which the contexts interrelate.

b.   The Detection of Allusion in Revelation

The issue that is distinctive to the study of Revelation in this area is how to discern the presence or otherwise of allusion. By far the majority of Paul's use of Scripture is explicit citation; none of John's is.

There have been several recent attempts to objectify the process of discerning allusions.[211] In his study of the way Daniel is used in Jewish apocalyptic literature and Revelation, Greg Beale classifies allusions fairly simply as 'clear allusions,' 'probable allusions (with more varied wording)' and 'possible allusion or echo.'[212] It is perhaps surprising that the setting out of these categories and a few related methodological points is limited to a single footnote, though Beale does return to questions of methodology (and rather briefly authorial intention) in his conclusion.[213]

Jon Paulien starts with a more developed explicit approach to method. He distinguishes between *echoes* and *direct allusions*. In discerning direct allusions, he uses three criteria internal to the text (verbal parallels, thematic parallels, and structural parallels), together with any external evidence, in order to discern how probable an allusion is—certain, probable, possible, or not an allusion. Paulien's approach has the virtue of bringing some critical objectivity to the discussion, and raising questions of method within the process of commentary. But he falls down on two important points.

Firstly, his differentiation between *echo* and *allusion* depends entirely on whether it was intentional on the part of the author.[214] Since he provides no clear criteria for discerning whether something was in the author's mind or not, it could be argued that this does not get us very far. Further, Paulien assumes that

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[211] In relation to Revelation, approaches of note include Beale (1984), Paulien (1988a) and L P Trudinger (1963), the latter being noteworthy because of its date. Withe regard to the relation between Paul's letters and the teaching of Jesus, M B Thompson (1991) is (almost?) alone in tackling the issue with a sound methodological basis for detecing echo and allusion.

[212] Beale (1984) p 43 n 62.

[213] Beale does include a short further reflection on the problem of detecting allusions, and the subject of authorial intention in his conclusion (1984).

[214] Paulien (1988) pp 40 and 48: 'Where the author was consciously referring to previous literature, we call the parallel a "direct allusion"…Many of the allusions cited by major commentators are

where an allusion *is* deliberate, we should necessarily then consider the original context of the allusion in interpreting it in the new context, even though an author could deliberately take something quite out of context.[215] And he assumes that where a text is taken to be referred to unconsciously (on the part of the author) this tells us less about the significance of the connexion. This is unfortunate, given that the allusions in Revelation may indeed be the product of 'a memory so charged with OT words and thoughts that they arrange themselves...without conscious effort on [the author's] own part.'[216]

Essentially, this argument reveals a naïve approach to the question of authorial intention. I have argued above that it is perfectly acceptable, on literary and methodological grounds, to talk meaningfully of authorial intention, and it is therefore also meaningful to discuss allusion. But it is important in both cases not to assume too much about the relation between intention and meaning, and to remember that any test of interpretation must be against coherence with the text, not against an imputed authorial intention.

The second shortcoming of Paulien's approach is that the classification of allusions is based on the interpreter's confidence, rather than the text's (or even author's) intention. It is surely more pertinent whether an allusion appears of major significance, minor significance, or is incidental to the passage as interpreted. We may be relatively uncertain about an allusion according to Paulien's criteria, and yet be clear that a text is of crucial importance in understanding a passage. For example, the allusion to Ps 2.9 in Rev 12.5 would not figure high up on the scale of probable allusions, according to Paulien's system. For whilst there are four words in common, so that it qualifies well as a 'verbal parallel,' it features not at all as a thematic or structural parallel, which for Paulien are usually the more significant measures.[217] But within the context of the passage, the fact that the allusion comes 'out of the blue,' as it were—there is a marked discontinuity with the surrounding verses—actually points up the importance of the allusion. It serves to identify unambiguously the male child as

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really echoes, and should not be listed as though the author had them in mind.'
[215] Ibid, p 41.
[216] Swete (1917) p cliv
[217] Paulien (1994) p 44: 'Of the three, verbal parallels are often the weakest criterion [*sic*].'

the Messiah figure of Jewish expectation.[218] This is of central importance in understanding the passage. The evaluation of allusion therefore needs two dimensions: an axis of confidence (the reader's perspective); and an axis of significance (the author's/text's perspective).

A more satisfactory classification (if classification is what is needed) follows from the way that allusion actually works for writers and within a text. Writers may allude to an earlier text by means of the occasional word or phrase, or may do this more systematically by developing an allusive theme. Conversely, they may allude to a single phrase or idea, and more-or-less discard the context, or may allude to a repeated theme in the work in question. I would therefore suggest that a broad classification of allusion along these lines: verbal allusion to words; verbal allusion to themes; thematic allusion to words; thematic allusion to themes. We will come across examples of each of these types in Rev 12 and 13. Criteria for identifying allusions are important, but in the process of reading such data cannot be separated from discussion of the theological significance of each case, as Beale (1999) demonstrates.

Paulien has noted that we should take account of the context of allusion in the allusive work (under 'structural' and 'thematic parallels'). But we need to take equal account of how the text alluded to has been understood in the intervening years, and particularly by communities that may have close links with Revelation and its readers. If a possible allusion appears to understand the earlier text in a way that other contemporary works have understood it, then this provides very strong corroboration for the identification of the allusion. This is an extension of Paulien's 'external evidence,' and comes into play in an interesting new identification of an allusion in Rev 12.8, and the relation between Rev 13.2 and Dan 7, as we shall see below.

In all this, it is important to remember Ricoeur's comment that much interpretation consists in guess-work and intuition; objectivity comes to bear only in assessing the proposed interpretations.[219] In the same way, we need to rely on

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[218] Even Ford agrees with this identification in her comments on this verse, even though her theory of Baptist authorship makes her stop short of going on to identify this with the historical Jesus.

[219] See section 3.3.ii.b above on 'Metaphor and Meaning.'

our own and others' insights and intuition in discovering allusions; objective methods are surely only valuable when we are assessing conflicting claims.

In order to help in this assessment, I include two simple pieces of analysis. The first is a listing of the text of chapters 12 and 13 alongside the proposed texts alluded to.[220] The second is a chart of all allusions in Revelation to the Old Testament, set out by chapter of Revelation and by book of the Old Testament. The value of this is to give an immediate overview of the pattern of allusion, and to enable assessment of the importance of a particular Old Testament book or verse within Revelation as a whole.[221]

In order to examine allusions in Rev 12 and 13, I took as my starting point the lists of Charles, Swete, and Ford as well as the work of Hendrik, van Henten and Beale. I have worked with Greek texts of the OT for two reasons. In the first place, the whole notion of *verbal* allusion is thrown out when comparing across different languages. In order to match words, we would need to correlate terms used in translation. And the only meaningful data for that would be to return to Greek versions of the OT again. Secondly, despite Charles' thesis that much of Revelation's allusion is to the Hebrew text, translated by the author, there is no clear consensus that this is the case. Beale (1997) has shown that the situation is complex, and there are even occasions where Revelation parallels the LXX in preference to θ'. There do not appear to be any occasions where a parallel with the OT is missed in Rev 12 and 13 by considering the Greek only.

c. Allusions in Revelation 12 and 13

Is 7.14 (Rev 12.1) Both texts include a pregnant woman as a sign; though the text in Isaiah has no christological overtones in its original context, it may well have acquired them for John and his readers due to the hermeneutical influence of the tradition represented by Mt 1.23. The texts share the verbal parallel

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[220] It is surprising how rarely this is done in studies that focus on intertextuality in specific passages. Beale (1984) lists only text in English translation alongside OT references—there is no clear presentation of the texts that are proposed as parallel. Despite Charles' separation of passages that owe more to the Hebrew of the Old Testament and those owing more to a Greek version in his listing of allusions, there are very few instances where a comparison with a Greek version misses anything.

[221] I have taken the UBS 3 listings as they are, though there is no indication of the methodology used, and numerous allusions in chapters 12 and 13 are omitted. Nevertheless, I am putting this forward as a valuable method in the process of assessing allusions. With appropriate criteria

σημεῖον, but παρθένος is not a general synonym for γυνή, and the phrase ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα / ἕξει, whilst appearing to be a strong verbal link, is a common Greek idiom, and thus adds little. (The same point undermines supposed connexions with Mt 1.18 where the identical phrase to Rev 12.2, ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα, occurs.) There is no structural parallel, in that Is 7.14 appears to play no part elsewhere in Revelation, and the original context of the verse is not picked up. Further, the other allusions in the description of the woman are to corporate metaphors, and within the structure of Revelation the anti-type to this woman is the whore of chapter 17, who is also a corporate figure.[222]

The images of sun, moon and stars do have some minor precedents in the Old Testament, but these are not thematically developed, and there is no strong verbal parallel. These are better understood in terms of their general, 'archetypal' resonances, and the astral imagery of the cult with which the chapter has strong connexions.

Is 26.17 and 66.7 (Rev 12.2, 6) The image of the people of God in the agonies of labour, and waiting to be delivered by God, seems to become more developed from 26.17 to 66.7. This image acquired especial significance during the Maccabean period, when it came to have specifically Messianic connotations, the sufferings of God's people thus described being the birthpangs of the new (Messianic) age.[223] A parallel is found at Qumran, in 1QH 3.7–12, which contains some similarities, but also some important differences. There is no need to see a dependence between this and Revelation; rather, 'the most that can be argued is that they both used the same tradition.'[224]

Rissi saw the whole of Is 26.17–27.1 as seminal for Rev 12.[225] The intervening verses (20–21) do have thematic parallels with Revelation—their images of

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for noting allusions, this must surely be an indispensable part of future dicussion.

[222] It could be argued that the astral imagery echoes that associated with Artemis and Isis, and these are individuals. But it is not clear that this should affect our view of the allusion to the OT. But note that single characters frequently have corporate significance in Revelation. For example, the antitype to the beast from the land in chapter 13 is the people of God (within the quasi-trinity of dragon, beast from the sea, and beast from the land—van Henten (1994) p 496) and the beast itself may 'represent' the *Commune Asiae* (Swete, 1917, p lxxx).

[223] See Midrash Rabbah Genesis 85, Leviticus Rabbah 14.9 and Targum Jonathan Is 66.7, and R D Aus (1976) p 256 for comment, and pp 260f for a discussion of the 'messianic woes' that constituted the pains of birth in Jewish understanding.

[224] Hedrik (1971) p 27, contrast Prigent (1957) p 142.

[225] Rissi (1966) p 36-7.

judgement recur in Isaiah and elsewhere, and also occur thematically in Revelation—but that need not imply that these verses have such critical importance for Rev 12.1–2. On the other hand, Hedrik is being too rigorous when he rules out the influence of Is 26.17 on the grounds that the 'woman' gives birth to wind (MT) or salvation (LXX), rather than a Messiah figure.[226] This fails to take into account the subsequent development of the woman-in-labour image.

Is 66.7 has multiple verbal parallels to Rev 12.2, 5 and 6; Zion is a woman in the pains of childbirth and longing to be delivered by God. Note that in some senses Zion/Jerusalem stands for the people who are suffering, but also Zion/Jerusalem 'gives birth' to the new people delivered by God. A corporate understanding of the woman in Rev 12 leads to the same paradox, since she gives birth to the child *and* the 'rest of her offspring' (12.17). In the MT of Is 66.7, she is delivered of a son (וְהִמְלִיטָה hiphil perfect of מלט). Now, מלט shares the ambiguity of the English verb 'to be delivered'—to give birth and to be saved, the meanings of מלט in the hiphil and niphal respectively. The LXX makes this explicit by translating it with two verbs, ἐξέφυγεν καὶ ἔτεκεν ἄρσεν, 'she fled and bore a son,' and thus 'the ground is broken and the seed planted' for the idea of combining Exodus/desert imagery with the deliverance of God's suffering people through the birth of the Messiah.[227] That a Messianic dimension was seen in the verse is made clear in Targum Jonathan Isaiah, where this phrase becomes 'her king shall be revealed.'[228]

Mic 4.10 and 5.3(2) (Rev 12.5, 17) This is a further passage on the theme of Israel as a woman in childbirth, waiting on God to be delivered. Although the verbal parallels are not as close here as in the Isaiah passages, there is a structural parallel between 5.3–4 and Rev 12. In Mic 5.3 'they' will be given up until 'she who is in labour has brought forth.' Hedrik is right to point out that this says nothing specific about Israel as the woman—the thought as it stands is similar to that of Is 7.14, in saying that some woman who is pregnant now will just have

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[226] Hedrik (1971) p 25. His case is not helped by his misquoting the LXX.

[227] The phrase is one coined by Hedrik (p 32) in relation to the idea of a personified Israel giving birth to a Messiah—though unfortunately he fails adequately to discuss Is 66.7, and underestimates the significance of Mic 5, since he neglects to consider it in conjunction with Mic 4.

[228] See R D Aus (1976). Translation of the Targum cited is that by J F Stenning (1949).

given birth when God delivers his people, that is, the waiting time will be short.[229] But he does not notice the earlier reference in Mic 4.10 to Israel's sufferings being likened to those of a woman in labour. This then allows the possibility of a Messianic interpretation of 5.3, the one in labour being Israel/Zion, and the one brought forth being the Messiah.[230] There is then a double structural parallel with Rev 12: he will shepherd his flock (ποιμανεῖ) (Mic 5.4) and be joined by the rest of his brethren (5.3).

Dan 7.3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 21 (Rev 12.3, 8, 17, 13.1, 2, 7) Chapters 12 and 13 appear to allude to Dan 7 in a fairly systematic way. The beast from the sea appears as a collation of the features of the four beasts in Dan 7, in having ten horns, and seven heads (the sum of the number of heads of the four beasts). The dragon in chapter 12 anticipates the beast in chapter 13 by sharing these features. The blasphemies of the arrogant horn on the fourth beast in Daniel, its power to make war on the holy ones, and its strength are all ascribed directly to the beast. The strength of the fourth Danielic beast is ascribed to the dragon.[231]

Dan 8.10 (Rev 12.4) The mixed identification of Daniel's horn and beast and Revelation's beast and dragon is also exemplified here, where the dragon throws down the stars in the same way as Daniel's little horn.

Ps 2.9 (Rev 12.5) A clear verbal parallel exists in 12.5 identifying the male child as the expected Messiah figure. This psalm is frequently alluded to and quoted elsewhere in the New Testament, and 'from the perspective of early Christianity, it was a messianic psalm par excellence.'[232] It is only alluded to at one other place in Revelation (2.27), but imagery of divine kingship, similar to the psalm's, is present throughout (for instance in 1.5, 4.2, 6.17, 19.5).

Dan 10.13 and 20 (Rev 12.7) Rev 12.7 mentions the figure of Michael as the opponent to the opponent of God and his people, in much the same way as Daniel. There is no need, however, to suppose a specific allusion to each text mentioning Michael. Note that 12.7 supplies the only occurrence of τοῦ with the infinitive in Revelation, which strengthens the case for seeing an allusion here.

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[229] Hedrik (1975) p 30.

[230] For a defence of this reading, see James L Mays (1976) p 116.

[231] For a fuller account of the use of Daniel in Revelation 12 and 13, see the relevant chapters in Beale (1984).

[232] Peter Craigie (1983) p 68.

Dan 2.35 and Ps 37(36).36 (Rev 12.8) The slightly unusual phrase οὐ(χ) (ὁ) τόπος εὑρέθη αὐτοῦ occurs only twice in the Old Testament, and τόπος with the passive of εὑρίσκω occurs nowhere else in the New other than at Rev 20.11.

In Daniel, the context is the divine judgement of the metal and clay figure of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which stood for four kingdoms that would be destroyed by the coming kingdom of God. But in Ps 37, the phrase is used of the wicked man; the psalm is an ethical injunction not to fret because of the wicked, but to continue to trust in God. The interpretation of the psalm at Qumran shows how the general statement of reassurance in an ethical context becomes the prediction of God's judgement of an eschatological adversary. In 4Q 171, the beginning of the psalm is interpreted as concerning all the wicked. But as the commentary continues, it focuses increasingly on the eschatological scenario involving the community. By verse 32 of the psalm, the commentary interprets it entirely in terms of the Wicked Priest and his opposition to the Teacher of Righteousness. Unfortunately, the manuscript does not include the interpretation of verse 37, but it is reasonable to suppose that the commentary continues along these lines.

Daniel's and Revelation's allusion to the psalm implicitly assume the same kind of hermeneutic. In Daniel, the judgement is not of a personified adversary, but is brought about by the advent of the Messianic kingdom. In Rev 12.8, the judgement is of the archetypal enemy of God, Satan, and echoes the theme of the eschatological adversary that is found in a number of other places in the book.[233] In contrast, other New Testament allusions to the psalm (Matt 5.5 to verse 11, Matt 6.8 to verse 18, and 1 Pet 5.7 and 1 Thess 5.24 to verse 5) draw on the 'more natural, moral implications of the psalm.'[234]

The connexion of Rev 12 with Ps 37 and its interpretation at Qumran has not been noticed before, to my knowledge. This allusion suggests that attempts to 'track' Satan from heaven to earth are misplaced; the significance of the episode is (proleptic) eschatological judgement, not cosmic geography.[235]

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[233] See Yarbro Collins (1976) chapter III.

[234] Craigie (1983) p 300.

[235] See Yarbro Collins (1976) p 131: 'If the dragon was cast down in act II [verses 7–9] then he must have been in heaven in act I [verses 1–6].' See also Minear's difficulties with cosmic geography in (1953).

Gen 3.13, Job 1.6, Zech 3.1 (Rev 12.9) Rev 12.9 draws together diverse elements of the Old Testament theme of a personified opponent to God. Again, there is no reason to think that the individual verses are being alluded to any more specifically than this.

Rev 12.10 adds the appellation 'accuser,' which picks up the theological idea of Job 1.9–11 without alluding to the specific text. The fall of Satan to the earth in 12.9 has theological similarities to Is 14.12 (as noted above), but there is little or no shared vocabulary between the two passages.

Is 44.23 and 49.13 (Rev 12.12) Of the 52 occurrences of οὐρανὸς in Revelation, this is the only one in the plural. The context of both Isaiah texts is of celebration at God's act of redemption, in the forgiveness of sins and the comforting of his suffering people. Both chapters are alluded to a number of other times in Revelation. The allusion does not appear to have great structural significance within Rev 12, but perhaps contributes to the hieratic, 'Scriptural' feel that the widespread allusion to the LXX creates.[236]

Ex 19.4 (Rev 12.14) The eagles' wings in Ex 19 are identified as a metaphor for the Exodus deliverance. In Rev 12, this Exodus imagery has been hinted at in the flight of the woman in verse 6, and is made explicit in verse 14 with the mention of the desert. This makes any connexion with Is 40.31 much less likely.

Dan 7.25 and 12.7 (Rev 12.14) This clear verbal parallel comes in the context of the other thematic and structural parallels with Daniel, and is duplicated as 1260 days (12.6) and 42 months (13.5).[237]

Ex 15.11 (Rev 13.4) There is a fairly strong verbal parallel here, though perhaps the connexion with the Hebrew name 'Michael,' meaning 'who is like God?' is more significant, even though the phrase itself does not occur in the MT.

The blasphemies uttered by the mouth of the beast from the sea (13.5) have a thematic parallel with the Daniel passages alluded to elsewhere, though there is no verbal parallel with the LXX. The closest is Dan 7.25, which speaks of 'words spoken against' the Most High and his saints.

Jer 15.2 and 43.11 (Rev 13.10) There are considerable textual difficulties with Rev 13.10. But these do not affect the strong verbal parallels with Jer 15.2. There is a close similarity between Jer 15.2 and Jer 43.11 in the MT. Both are expressions of

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[236] See Schüssler Fiorenza (1993) p 29, Yarbro Collins (1976) p 109.

God's judgement, the first on his own people, the second on the people of Egypt by means of the king of Babylon. Jer 43.11 is not included in the LXX; the Greek version of Jeremiah is considerably shorter than the Hebrew.

Excursus: σοφία and νοῦς in Rev 13.18 and 17.9, and the book of Daniel

Beale (1984, p 268–70, and in summary in 1999, p 725) argues that the combination of σοφία and νοῦς in Rev 13.18 and 17.9 are derivative from the combinations of שׂכל and בין in Dan 1.4, 17, 9.22, 11.33 and 12.10. He uses this as supporting evidence to show that John is wanting his readers to see themselves as the 'wise ones' (מַשְׂכִּילִים) of Dan 11.33–35.[238]

However, in LXX σοφία and νοῦς most often translate חָכְמָה and לְבָב/לֵב respectively, and occur together only in 4 Macc 1.15, which is wisdom literature rather than apocalyptic. In Daniel the two Hebrew terms (or their cognates) are translated in LXX and θ' as follows:

	שׂכל		בין	
	LXX	θ'	LXX	θ'
Dan 1.4	ἐπιστήμων	συνίημι	σοφός	φρόνησις
Dan 1.17	σύνεσις	φρόνησις	σύνεσις	σύνεσις
Dan 9.22*	(διάνοια)	(σύνεσις)	(διάνοια)	(σύνεσις)
Dan 11.33	ἐννοούμενοι	συνετός	συνίημι	συνίημι
Dan 12.10	διανοούμενοι	νοήμονες	προσέχω	συνίημι

* The two words in Dan 9.22 MT are translated by one term only in both LXX and θ'.

So there is no verbal correspondence to indicate an allusion in Revelation to the relevant texts in Daniel (though note that ἐννοούμενοι in Dan 11.33 LXX is a cognate of νοῦς). That is not to say that the concept of wisdom or insight being required to understand the content of visions is not present in both. But the lack of verbal correspondences suggests that presence in both is best accounted for by noting this idea as a general theme in apocalyptic.

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[237] On the equivalence of these periods, see Bauckham (1993a) p 420.
[238] This argument is expanded in G K Beale (1980).

12·1 Καὶ <u>σημεῖον</u> μέγα ὤφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, <u>γυνὴ</u> περιβεβλημένη τὸν ἥλιον, καὶ ἡ σελήνη ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς στέφανος ἀστέρων δώδεκα, 12·2 καὶ <u>ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα</u>, καὶ <u>κράζει ὠδίνουσα</u> καὶ <u>βασανιζομένη τεκεῖν</u>. 12·3 καὶ ὤφθη ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἰδοὺ δράκων μέγας πυρρός, ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ <u>καὶ κέρατα δέκα</u> καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ἑπτὰ διαδήματα, 12·4 καὶ ἡ οὐρὰ αὐτοῦ σύρει τὸ τρίτον <u>τῶν ἀστέρων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ</u> καὶ <u>ἔβαλεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν γῆν</u>. καὶ ὁ δράκων ἔστηκεν ἐνώπιον τῆς γυναικὸς τῆς μελλούσης τεκεῖν, ἵνα ὅταν τέκῃ τὸ τέκνον αὐτῆς καταφάγῃ. 12·5 καὶ ἔτεκεν υἱόν, ἄρσεν, ὃς μέλλει <u>ποιμαίνειν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ·</u> καὶ ἡρπάσθη τὸ τέκνον αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ πρὸς τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ. 12·6 καὶ ἡ γυνὴ <u>ἔφυγεν</u> εἰς τὴν ἔρημον, ὅπου ἔχει ἐκεῖ τόπον ἡτοιμασμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα ἐκεῖ τρέφωσιν αὐτὴν ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἑξήκοντα.

12·7 Καὶ ἐγένετο πόλεμος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ <u>Μιχαὴλ</u> καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ <u>τοῦ πολεμῆσαι</u> μετὰ τοῦ δράκοντος. καὶ ὁ δράκων ἐπολέμησεν καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ, 12·8 καὶ οὐκ <u>ἴσχυσεν</u>, <u>οὐδὲ τόπος εὑρέθη αὐτῶν</u> ἔτι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. 12·9 καὶ ἐβλήθη ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, <u>ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος</u>, ὁ καλούμενος <u>Διάβολος</u> καὶ <u>ὁ Σατανᾶς</u>, ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην --- ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐβλήθησαν. 12·10 καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγουσαν,

Ἄρτι ἐγένετο ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δύναμις
καὶ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν
καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ Χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ,
ὅτι ἐβλήθη ὁ κατήγωρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἡμῶν,
ὁ κατηγορῶν αὐτοὺς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν
ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός.
12·11 καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐνίκησαν αὐτὸν διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου
καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν,
καὶ οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν ἄχρι θανάτου.
12·12 διὰ τοῦτο <u>εὐφραίνεσθε, [οἱ] οὐρανοὶ</u>
καὶ οἱ ἐν αὐτοῖς σκηνοῦντες·
οὐαὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν,
ὅτι κατέβη ὁ διάβολος πρὸς ὑμᾶς
ἔχων θυμὸν μέγαν,
εἰδὼς ὅτι ὀλίγον καιρὸν ἔχει.
12·13 Καὶ ὅτε εἶδεν ὁ δράκων ὅτι ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, ἐδίωξεν τὴν γυναῖκα ἥτις ἔτεκεν τὸν ἄρσενα. 12·14 καὶ ἐδόθησαν τῇ γυναικὶ αἱ δύο <u>πτέρυγες τοῦ ἀετοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου</u>, ἵνα πέτηται εἰς τὴν ἔρημον εἰς τὸν τόπον αὐτῆς, ὅπου τρέφεται ἐκεῖ <u>καιρὸν καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἥμισυ καιροῦ</u> ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ ὄφεως. 12·15 καὶ ἔβαλεν ὁ ὄφις ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ὀπίσω τῆς γυναικὸς ὕδωρ ὡς ποταμόν, ἵνα αὐτὴν ποταμοφόρητον ποιήσῃ. 12·16 καὶ ἐβοήθησεν ἡ γῆ τῇ γυναικί, καὶ ἤνοιξεν ἡ γῆ τὸ στόμα αὐτῆς καὶ κατέπιεν τὸν ποταμὸν ὃν ἔβαλεν ὁ δράκων ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ. 12·17 καὶ ὠργίσθη ὁ δράκων ἐπὶ τῇ γυναικί, καὶ ἀπῆλθεν <u>ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ</u> τῶν <u>λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς</u>, τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ· 12·18 καὶ ἐστάθη ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον τῆς θαλάσσης.

Is. 7:14 ... <u>σημεῖον ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει</u> ...

Is. 66:7 πρὶν ἢ τὴν <u>ὠδίνουσαν τεκεῖν</u> πρὶν ἐλθεῖν τὸν πόνον τῶν ὠδίνων ἐξέφυγεν καὶ <u>ἔτεκεν ἄρσεν</u>
Is. 26:17 καὶ ὡς ἡ <u>ὠδίνουσα ἐγγίζει τοῦ τεκεῖν</u> καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ ὠδῖνι αὐτῆς <u>ἐκέκραξεν</u>
Dan. 7:7 θ´ ...<u>καὶ κέρατα δέκα</u> αὐτῷ

Dan. 8:10 θ´ ...<u>ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν</u> ἀπὸ τῆς δυνάμεως <u>τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἄστρων</u>...
[Mic. 4:10 ὤδινε ...θύγατερ Σιων ὡς <u>τίκτουσα</u>...]
[Mic. 5:2 ...ἕως καιροῦ <u>τικτούσης τέξεται</u>...]
Psa. 2:9 <u>ποιμανεῖς αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ</u>

Is. 66:7 πρὶν ἐλθεῖν τὸν πόνον τῶν ὠδίνων <u>ἐξέφυγεν</u> καὶ ἔτεκεν ἄρσεν

Dan. 10:13 ...καὶ ἰδοὺ <u>Μιχαηλ</u>...10.20 θ´ ...<u>τοῦ πολεμῆσαι</u>
Dan 7.7 θ´ ...καὶ ἰδοὺ θηρίον...<u>ἰσχυρὸν</u>
Dan 2.35 θ´ ...καὶ <u>τόπος οὐχ εὑρέθη αὐτοῖς</u>...
Psa. 36:36 ...καὶ <u>οὐχ εὑρέθη ὁ τόπος αὐτοῦ</u>
Gen. 3:13 ...<u>ὁ ὄφις ἠπάτησέν</u> με; Job 1:6 ...καὶ <u>ὁ διάβολος</u> ἦλθεν μετ᾽ αὐτῶν; Zech. 3:1 καὶ <u>ὁ διάβολος</u> εἱστήκει ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ

Is. 44:23 <u>εὐφράνθητε οὐρανοί</u>; Is. 49:13 <u>εὐφραίνεσθε οὐρανοί</u>

Ex. 19:4 ...<u>ἐπὶ πτερύγων ἀετῶν</u>...

Dan. 7:25 ...<u>ἕως καιροῦ καὶ καιρῶν καὶ ἕως ἡμίσους καιροῦ</u>; Dan. 12:7 ...<u>εἰς καιρὸν καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἥμισυ καιροῦ</u>

Dan. 7:8 θ´ ...<u>καὶ ἐποίει πόλεμον πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους</u>...; Dan. 7:21 θ´ ...<u>ἐποίει πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων</u> ...
Mic. 5:2 ...<u>καὶ οἱ ἐπίλοιποι τῶν ἀδελφῶν</u> αὐτῶν ἐπιστρέψουσιν...

13·1 Καὶ εἶδον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον, ἔχον κέρατα δέκα καὶ κεφαλὰς ἑπτά, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κεράτων αὐτοῦ δέκα διαδήματα, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ὀνόμα[τα] βλασφημίας. 13·2 καὶ τὸ θηρίον ὃ εἶδον ἦν ὅμοιον παρδάλει, καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς ἄρκου, καὶ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ὡς στόμα λέοντος. καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ δράκων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην. 13·3 καὶ μίαν ἐκ τῶν κεφαλῶν αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐσφαγμένην εἰς θάνατον, καὶ ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ ἐθεραπεύθη. καὶ ἐθαυμάσθη ὅλη ἡ γῆ ὀπίσω τοῦ θηρίου, 13·4 καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ δράκοντι ὅτι ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῷ θηρίῳ, καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θηρίῳ λέγοντες, Τίς ὅμοιος τῷ θηρίῳ, καὶ τίς δύναται πολεμῆσαι μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ;

13·5 Καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα καὶ βλασφημίας, καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία ποιῆσαι μῆνας τεσσεράκοντα [καὶ] δύο. 13·6 καὶ ἤνοιξεν τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ εἰς βλασφημίας πρὸς τὸν θεόν, βλασφημῆσαι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν αὐτοῦ, τοὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ σκηνοῦντας. 13·7 καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ νικῆσαι αὐτούς. καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία ἐπὶ πᾶσαν φυλὴν καὶ λαὸν καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ ἔθνος. 13·8 καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, οὗ οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου τοῦ ἐσφαγμένου ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.
13·9 Εἴ τις ἔχει οὖς ἀκουσάτω.
13·10   εἴ τις εἰς αἰχμαλωσίαν,
              εἰς αἰχμαλωσίαν ὑπάγει·
          εἴ τις ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀποκτανθῆναι,
              αὐτὸν ἐν μαχαίρῃ ἀποκτανθῆναι.
Ὧδέ ἐστιν ἡ ὑπομονὴ καὶ ἡ πίστις τῶν ἁγίων.

13·11 Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλο θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς, καὶ εἶχεν κέρατα δύο ὅμοια ἀρνίῳ, καὶ ἐλάλει ὡς δράκων. 13·12 καὶ τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ πρώτου θηρίου πᾶσαν ποιεῖ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ. καὶ ποιεῖ τὴν γῆν καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ κατοικοῦντας ἵνα προσκυνήσουσιν τὸ θηρίον τὸ πρῶτον, οὗ ἐθεραπεύθη ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ. 13·13 καὶ ποιεῖ σημεῖα μεγάλα, ἵνα καὶ πῦρ ποιῇ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνειν εἰς τὴν γῆν ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων. 13·14 καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς διὰ τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ποιῆσαι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θηρίου, λέγων τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ποιῆσαι εἰκόνα τῷ θηρίῳ ὃς ἔχει τὴν πληγὴν τῆς μαχαίρης καὶ ἔζησεν. 13·15 καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ δοῦναι πνεῦμα τῇ εἰκόνι τοῦ θηρίου, ἵνα καὶ λαλήσῃ ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ θηρίου καὶ ποιήσῃ [ἵνα] ὅσοι ἐὰν μὴ προσκυνήσωσιν τῇ εἰκόνι τοῦ θηρίου ἀποκτανθῶσιν. 13·16 καὶ ποιεῖ πάντας, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους, καὶ τοὺς πλουσίους καὶ τοὺς πτωχούς, καὶ τοὺς ἐλευθέρους καὶ τοὺς δούλους, ἵνα δῶσιν αὐτοῖς χάραγμα ἐπὶ τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῶν τῆς δεξιᾶς ἢ ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον αὐτῶν, 13·17 καὶ ἵνα μή τις δύνηται ἀγοράσαι ἢ πωλῆσαι εἰ μὴ ὁ ἔχων τὸ χάραγμα, τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θηρίου ἢ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ. 13·18 Ὧδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν· ὁ ἔχων νοῦν ψηφισάτω τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ θηρίου, ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν· καὶ ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτοῦ ἑξακόσιοι ἑξήκοντα ἕξ.

Dan. 7:3 καὶ τέσσαρα θηρία ἀνέβαινον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης...Dan. 7:7 θ´...καὶ κέρατα δέκα αὐτῷ

Dan. 7:6 θ´...καὶ ἰδοὺ ἕτερον θηρίον ὡσεὶ πάρδαλις
Dan. 7:5 καὶ ἰδοὺ μετ᾽ αὐτὴν ἄλλο θηρίον ὁμοίωσιν ἔχον ἄρκου; Dan. 7:4 ...τὸ πρῶτον ὡσεὶ λέαινα

Ex. 15:11 τίς ὅμοιός σοι ἐν θεοῖς κύριε τίς ὅμοιός σοι δεδοξασμένος ἐν ἁγίοις θαυμαστός
Dan. 7:8 θ´ καὶ στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα καὶ ἐποίει πόλεμον πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους ; Dan. 7:20 ...καὶ στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα

Dan. 7:8 θ´...καὶ στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα καὶ ἐποίει πόλεμον πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους ; Dan. 7:21 θ´...ἐποίει πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἴσχυσεν πρὸς αὐτούς

Dan. 12:1 θ´ ὁ λαός σου πᾶς ὁ εὑρεθεὶς γεγραμμένος ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ Psa. 68:29 ...ἐκ βίβλου ζώντων ...μὴ γραφήτωσαν; Is. 53:7 ...ὡς πρόβατον ἐπὶ σφαγήν

Jer. 15:2 ...τάδε λέγει κύριος ὅσοι εἰς θάνατον εἰς θάνατον καὶ ὅσοι εἰς μάχαιραν εἰς μάχαιραν καὶ ὅσοι εἰς λιμόν εἰς λιμόν καὶ ὅσοι εἰς αἰχμαλωσίαν εἰς αἰχμαλωσίαν

Dan. 3:6 θ´ καὶ ὃς ἂν μὴ πεσὼν προσκυνήσῃ αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐμβληθήσεται εἰς τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρὸς τὴν καιομένην

Allusions and Verbal Parallels in the Chapters of the Book of Revelation to the Books of the Old Testament

based on the Table in the Greek New Testament (UBS 3rd edition).

Verse numbers within each chapter of Revelation are in **bold**; chapter and verse in the book of the OT follow in roman. *Italics* indicate the allusion is to the LXX.

	Gen	Ex	Lev-Num	Deut	Judg-1.2 Sam	1 Kg	2 Kg	2 Chr	Neh-Est-Job	Psa	Prov	Is	Jer	Lam	Ez	Dan	Hos	Joel	Amos	Ob-Mic-Nah-Zep	Zech	Mal	Tot
1	**7** 2.8 **2.9 3.22 3.24**	**4** 3.14								**6** 139.21 **5** 89.27 130.8		13.9.2 9.11 15 1.24 4.3.2		13.9.2	**1** 2.28 **2.29** 2.45 **19** 2.28 2.29 2.45				**8** 3.13 4.13		**7** 12.10 12.12 12.14	34
2	**7** 2.8 2.9 3.14									**26** 2.8 **28** 2.9 6.12 **27** 2.8 2.9	**2** 3.12	23 24 12										18
3	**5** 32.32 32.33								Job **7** 12.14	**5** 69.28		14 8.22 19 3.12		12 48.35	**5** 1.21	17 1.28							17
4	**1** 19.20 19.24 19.16											16 49.2 45.14 49.23 60.14		9-10.28 3.1-3	4 8.26 12.9	**7** 7.3 7.7 10.21 12.1	8 4.10		17 3.13 4.13 3.7				47
5	5 49 9-10 10 19.6	8 3.14							Esther **5** 1.1	14 8.22 19 3.12		6 41.4		4 9.4	20 5.23	6 10.8			7 3.7	5 4.2			21
6				10 32.43		16 22.19 15 22.19	10 9.7 16 18.18	10 18.18 15 18.18	**10** 7.9 10		12 13.10		11 9.15	8 5.12	16 10.8	12 2.31 12-32.10 17 2.11				2 1.6 6.3.66 6.2 5.62 6.6	6 4.10		23
7		5 16.12				20 16.31	20 9.22			17 78.24 23 7.9 130.8										1 6.5			16
8	Lev 5 16.12 8 7.20 7.21					10 22.19 15 22.19	10 18.18 15 18.18	Esther 5 1.1	8 141.2				12 3.27	10 1.26-7								35
9	2 19.28 3 10.12 10 9.10 13 30 1-3 7.21	20 32.17		Job 6 3.21	20 115.4-7 135 15-17					6 8.3													40
10	6 14.19 14.22	5 32.40 6 32.40		Neh 6 9.6	6 146.6		11 1.10 25.30					6 10.8	8 2.5	9 2.5	7 3.7						16
11	6 7.17 7.19-20 7.3.14 15 15.18 19 9.24 19.16	1 Sam 6 4.8 2 Sam 5 22.9		Esther 19 7.1	2 7.9.1 5 97.3 15 10.16 22.8		2 6.3.8 5 5.14		11 40.3 37.5 37.10 38 19-20 13		17 3.13 18 3.7		15 14.9 18 1.6									47
12	Job 10 1 9-11			19 1.1	Job 10 1 9-11				5 29			1 2.4 43.2 9.38.22			Micah 2 4,10							17
13	8 32.32 32.33	14 13 2-4		13 18 24-39					8 5.37		10 15.2 43.11		18 3.13 3.13	15 3.13 18 3.13					Zeph 5 3.13			18
14	10 19.24	7 20.11							3 33.3 40.3 96.1 98.1 149.9	3 42.10 5 33.9 8 21.9 10 51.17 51.22	14.9.1 5.32.2 10 146.6 11 1.16 75.6	11 34.10 20 63.3	10 15.2	20 1.15 43.2 10 38.22								31
Tot																							

	Gen	Ex	Lev-Num	Deut	Judg-1,2 Sam	1 Kg	2 Kg	2 Chr	Neh-Est-Job	Psa	Prov	Is	Jer	Lam	Ez	Dan	Hos	Joel	Amos	Ob-Mic-Nah-Zep	Zech	Mal	Tot
15	3 15:1 / 5 38.21 / 8 40.34		Lev: 3 28.21 / 5 28.21	3 32.4						3 92.5 / 7 75.8		7 51.17 51.22 / 8 6.4	3 10.10f / 4 10.6-7 / 7 25.15									4 1.11	26
16	3 7.17H / 4 7.19H / 5 3.14 / 10 10.21 / 18 19.16f / 21 9.24	8 32.32 32.33	Lev: 16 21.9	2 28.35	Judges: 16 5.19	8 8.10-1	16 9.27 23.29	4 5.13-	Esther: 18 1.1	1 69.24 7 19.9 / 6 49.26 / 10 8.22 / 12 11.15 44.27 / 6 79.3		1 66.6 / 6 60.2 / 19 51.17 51.22	1 10.25 / 4 12.50.38- 51.36 / 19 25.15		8 12.1				7 3.13 / 14 4.13 / 4.13	1 Zeph: 3.8	16 12.11		39
17				14 10.17					8 69.28	8 69.28	2 23.17 / 17 66.6				4 28.13								13
18	5 18.20 / 18.21		Lev: 8 21.9	20 33.43					6 137.8 / 20 96.11	2 23.17		15 1.15	8 7.3 / 12 12.1 / 14 7.24 / 47	10 4.30									50
19	6 15.18			2 32.43 / 16 10.17		4 22.19 / 2 9.7		4 18.18	2 19.9 / 4 47.8 22.28 / 93.1 / 97.1 / 99.1 / 7-8 47.7-9		2 13.21 20 44.23 49.13 / 3 34.11 22 24.8 / 4 48.20 47.9 / 52.11 51.9 51.45 / 5 51.9	2 50.38- 50.29 51.8- / 4 50.8 50.34 / 5 51.634 16.9 23 7.34 25.10 / 15 1.15 24.51.49	9 26.16, 27,30-5 / 10 26.17 17 27,27-9 / 11 27.36 18 27.32 / 12-3 27.12 27.13 19 27.30-4 / 15 27.22 21 26.21 / 16 28.13 24 24.7	6 7.14 / 12 10.6 / 16 2.47		15 3.13 / 15 3.13 / 4.13	6 3.13 / 14 4.13 / 4.13		6 14.9 / 11 1.8 / 6.3 6.6		49
20	6 19.6						9 1.10		6 61.6 / 10 30.33 / 20 30.33 / 63.3	6 61.6 / 10 30.33 / 15 30.33	12-3 17.10		8 7.2 / 9 38.2 / 39.6 / 11-27.9-10	4 7.9 / 7.22 / 15 12.1						30
21	8 19.24		Lev: 3 26.11-2		5 22.19		3 6.18 / 5 18.18	5 47.8 / 6 36.9 / 11.6 / 26 72.10-1 / 27 69.28	1 65.17 / 2 52.1 / 4 61.10 19 54.11-2 / 35.10 / 55.19 / 6 6.1 / 48.12 55.1	1 60.1 60.2 / 60.19 / 8 38.22 / 12-3 48.30-5 40.5 / 16-7 48.16 48.17	12-3 17.10	3 37.27		27 12.1			22 3.13 4.13		25 14.7		49
22	2 29 / 14 2.9 / 19 2.9 / 3.22	22 2.29 / 14 3.22 / 19 2.9 3.22	Num: 16 24.17 / 12.32	18 9.4.2 / 12.32					4 17.15 / 12 28.4 / 62.12	5 60.19-20 / 12 40.10 / 62.11 59.18 / 13 48.12 / 16 11.1 11.10 / 17 55.1	12 24.12			1 47.1 / 2 47.12 / 14 47.12 / 19 47.12	5 7.18 / 6 7.27 / 2.28 / 2.29 / 10 12.4			3 3.18			1 14.8 / 3 14.11 / 5 14.7		37
19	53	10	13	3	17	9	14	8	99	5	128	2	92	82	3	14	20	5	31	2			676

Ian Paul
29th August 1995

This example highlights the difference between seeing textual correspondences (which suggest allusion) and wider theological correspondences. The theme of God's people as the מַשְׂכִּילִים in Daniel is replaced in Revelation with the notion of them as faithful witnesses, with Jesus as the exemplary model.[239]

d. Observations

All four types of allusion, mentioned above, occur in these chapters. Rev 12.5, 8 and possibly 12 are verbal allusions to words and phrases. 12.9 and 14a appear to be verbal allusions to themes and ideas in the Old Testament, as does 13.4 with its allusion to the incomparability of God in the Old Testament. The use of the 'time, times and half a time' and its mutations into 1260 days and 42 months is a thematic development of a particular phrase in Daniel. And the image of the woman throughout chapter 12 develops theme found in the Old Testament and in other apocalyptic literature.

Two things are striking about the use of these Old Testament texts in Rev 12 and 13, one that is most pertinent in reading chapter 12, and one that is most pertinent in the reading of chapter 13.

Chapter 12 has five main characters in the narrative body of the chapter (verses 1–6 and 13–18: the woman; the dragon; the male child; Michael; the rest of the woman's seed. Many of the allusions to the Old Testament function in such a way as to identify the characters, rather than describe the action of the plot. For example, the fact that the woman is in the agonies of childbirth serves to identify her with the expectant people of God. The dragon's throwing down of the stars connects him with the horn of Daniel, rather than describing anything within the main plotline. The description of the child as the one to rule with a rod of iron serves to identify him as the Messiah, and does not contribute anything to the action within the story. It seems as though the description of the characters owes most to biblical material, whilst the shape of the story owes more to the mythological influences explored in section (b) above.

The second comment relates mostly to chapter 13. The text here can hardly be described as 'interpreting' Daniel and the other Old Testament texts, since the figures in Daniel are conflated, and their attributes shared between the dragon

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[239] Mitchell Reddish (1988).

and the beast from the sea. It is, rather, the other way around; John is not using the events around him to interpret the Old Testament, but is using Old Testament categories to interpret the world around him. In particular, he is using biblical categories to describe the worship of the beast and its image. I have already mentioned the close links between parts of chapter 13 and aspects of the imperial cult. But these are taken up and described using biblical categories. Thus the worship of the beast (13.4) is described in terms from Exodus; its opposition to God in terms from Daniel; and the people are described (13.7 and 16) in biblical terms that occur throughout the book.

This use of biblical categories is perhaps the reason for Schüssler Fiorenza's comment on Revelation's 'language arsenal.' If the text of Revelation were 'moving backwards' from the present, in order to explain or expound the biblical texts, then we might expect a more careful treatment. But it is not doing this. It is moving forwards, using the biblical images and ideas to metaphorize the world in order to refigure it and thereby expose its reality.

> This is an indication of 'visionary language' rather than a deliberate attempt to write a commentary on these texts…this is not exegesis in any conventional sense.[240]

This is not an unusual phenomenon, in that it has a parallel in what are known as the 'charismatic' traditions, where the language of the Bible is taken up in prayer and conversation.[241] It is interesting to note that this is a group that, like John, sees its activity as closely related to the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit.[242]

One further point is worth noting with regard to methodology. My discovery of an apparent allusion to Ps 37 in Rev 12.8, previously unnoticed, suggests that there is more work to be done in the analytical task of identifying possible allusions.[243] It is interesting to see that in his newly-published commentary Beale does not follow the pattern of Charles and Swete in tabling what he believes are allusions to the OT—even though identifying the role of such allusion is central to

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[240] Rowland (1993) p 6.

[241] Ibid.

[242] There is a developing corpus of systematic reflection on 'charismatic hermeneutics', most notably in the UK by Mark Stibbe. He notes the starting point of much of this (relatively unreflective) easy use of biblical vocabulary in contemporary context is 'a sense of a rich harmony between biblical texts and present experience' (1998, p 183).

[243] I understand from a conversation with Jon Paulien that he is planning to publish a table listing all possible allusions in Revelation to the OT, according to ten scholarly authorities. This may well be useful, though there is a danger that looking for a consensus amongst these authorities

his hermeneutical strategy.[244] It appears that explicit identification of what is assumed to be allusion to the text of the OT remains an important potential set of data for future study, and for dialogue between commentators.

iv. Structure and Genre

Chapters 12 and 13 have a distinctive part within the structure of Revelation as a whole.[245] There is an abrupt change of style at 12.1, giving the impression of a 'fresh start, devoid of literary links with anything that precedes.'[246] If the section has a clear demarcation at its beginning, the same cannot be said of its end. There are numerous literary and thematic links between what occurs in chapters 12–13 and what follows.[247] The mark of the beast, and its counterpoint, the mark of the Father's name, recur in chapter 14.1, 9. The description of the saints, as those who endure, keep the commandments of God and the faith/testimony of Jesus, is conflated in 14.12 from 12.17 and 13. And the vision of the seven angels with seven plagues at 15.1 is introduced in a way strikingly similar to the introduction of the vision of the woman and the dragon at 12.1–2:

$$\text{Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ μέγα καὶ θαυμαστόν}$$

compare

$$\text{Καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ὤφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ...}$$
$$\text{καὶ ὤφθη ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ.}$$

Leonard Thompson has gone as far as to suggest that 12.1–19.11 forms a unit that has a chiastic structure, with the threat of evil and the prolepsis of its defeat in chapter 12, and the manifestation of its defeat in chapter 19, forming the opening and closing 'brackets' respectively.[248] The combination of the fresh start at 12.1 and the many connexions with what follows suggests that a new series of explicit themes is introduced in chapters 12 and 13 that then converges with the existing

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will given a minimal, rather than methodologically sound, position.

[244] Beale (1999) p xix.

[245] Pierre Prigent, in his study of the history of the exegesis of Rev 12 (1959), describes this chapter as 'central.'

[246] Bauckham (1993a) p 15.

[247] Contra Aune (1997) pp cxixf, who, having decided that the chapters are two out of twelve separate units, asserts that the connecting phrases must be editorial glosses. On this see 'Source Criticism' below.

[248] L Thompson (1990) p 353.

structure. The phraseology of 15.1, together with the introduction of the series of seven plagues, make this the point of convergence.[249]

But the new themes occurring explicitly in Rev 12 and 13 have been hinted at earlier in the text. In the interludes or 'intercalations' after the sixth seal and the sixth trumpet (7.1–17 and 10.1–11.13) the themes of the sealing of the martyred saints, opposition from the forces of evil, and the beast are all present in a way that foreshadows their fuller appearance in and after chapter 12. This adumbration is thematic and theological rather than literary, and Yarbro Collins relates this two-stage (partial, and then fuller) revelation to the episodes involving the scrolls. The sealed scroll of chapter 4 presages the veiled revelation of these themes in chapters 6–9, whilst the little scroll of chapter 10, together with the call to 'prophesy again' (10.11) presages the fuller revelation of these themes in the chapters that follow.[250]

The internal structure of the two chapters is less complex. The text of Revelation changes from one genre to another with, at times, bewildering frequency. Thus in the opening eight verses of the book, the genre moves from an apocalyptic vision introduction, to benediction, to epistolatory, to doxology, to apocalyptic, to prophetic/declamatory, before returning to the epistolatory (verses 1–2, 3, 4–5a, 5b–6, 7, 8 and 9f respectively). Rev 12 and 13 are more straightforward. Aune comments that the lack of future tense suggests that it would not have been understood as a 'vision report' form. But this is true of much of Revelation, even though John explicitly comments that he is reporting what he saw in his vision.[251] Rather, the genre of 12.1–6 and 12.13–17 seems to owe more to the myth whose structure it takes over, together with the biblical allusions with which the myth is blended.

There is a clear change of style, if not of genre, at 12.7, and the imagery of both actions and characters is drawn from Jewish and biblical sources. The clearest change in genre is at verse 10, the beginning of the hymn, which lasts until verse 13, when the genre changes back to the story/myth of verse 1–6.

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[249] See Bauckham (1993a) p 16.

[250] Yarbro Collins (1976) pp 26f.

[251] The chief exceptions to this are parts of chapters 11, 17, 20 and 21 where the future tense is found. Note also that the visions of Daniel are largely in the past tense, but were clearly understood as vision reports predicting the future both by commentators contemporary with the writing of Revelation, and within the text of Daniel itself (whenever Daniel is assumed to

The hymns in Revelation have a particular function. In general, what John *hears* is epexegetical of what he *sees*; where he sees something and hears something, what is heard explains and interprets what he sees.[252] Thus, in chapter 5, he *sees* the lamb standing as if it had been slain (verse 6), but he *hears* that this is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (verse 5). Apparent defeat is in reality victory. In chapter 7, he *sees* the great multitude from every nation (verse 9) but *hears* the number of those who are sealed from the out of the tribes of the people of Israel (verse 4 and following). The interpretation of what is seen by what is heard corresponds to the way that 'the outward reality of the church...reinterprets the traditional theological truth of Israel's priority.'[253] And in chapter 13, the second beast has the appearance of a lamb, but speaks like a dragon (verse 11). Despite how it is seen, its true nature is given away by how it is heard.

It has often been noted that there is something of a theological lacuna in chapter 12 at verse 5. How could a Christian text describe the life, death and resurrection of Christ so briefly? This anomaly has been used as part of the justification of seeing a redactional use of pre-Christian sources. The other key part of such an argument has been the abrupt changes in style and genre at verses 7 and 10. But seeing the hymn as epexegetical of what precedes it opens the way to an alternative, and more satisfactory, understanding.[254] If John was constrained by the traditionality of the imagery that he was employing (in his utilisation of the Leto/Isis myth), then the Jewish story of celestial combat is epexegetical of the significance of the male child. It is epexegetical of what has been omitted, rather than what is there; it precisely fills this theological lacuna. But in taking up the Jewish expectation of deliverance (in the form of Michael's fighting on the nation's behalf), John still has to make the explicit connexion with Christ. This is what he does in the hymn,[255] which is epexegetical of both the combat story that immediately precedes, and thus also of the main story of which that one is in turn epexegetical. Thus we have a 'nesting' of the two interruptions, each explaining and interpreting the previous, until we return to the main story again in verse 13.

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have been written).
[252] See Sweet (1979) p 125.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Yarbro Collins (1976) p 138, does see that the hymn interprets and comments on the battle, but, pre-occupied as she is with source criticism, does not follow through the implications of this.
[255] This hymn, in common with others in Revelation, is a 'device to advance the "plot"' (Aune,

Moreover, the explicit mention of Christ in the hymn completes the anticipation that is introduced by the allusion to the 'messianic' Psalm 2 in verse 5.

Since she continues to support a source-critical explanation of the structure of Rev 12, Yarbro Collins discounts verse 13 as a redundant addition on the part of the redactor.[256] But seeing the structure as I have suggested makes better sense of the text. The first part of the story, in verse 6, had left open the question as to why the woman needed to flee after the birth of the child, since the child was the object of the dragon's wrath. (Notice that in both the Leto and the Isis myths cited above, the dragon figure does not continue to pursue the woman unaccompanied by the child.) But the resumption of the story in verse 13 gives the reason: he saw that he had been defeated. How could the dragon have been defeated by the snatching of the child to heaven? Because the child's life, death, and returning to God was of cosmic significance. It fulfilled the Jewish myth (originally primordial) of the fall of Satan, as well as contemporary expectations of the champion of Israel delivering his people. It inaugurated the promised kingdom of God.

Leto/Isis myth	1	6	- - - - - - - - - - - -	13	18
Jewish combat — epex of vv 1–6		7	9		
Hymn — epex of vv 7–9			10	12	
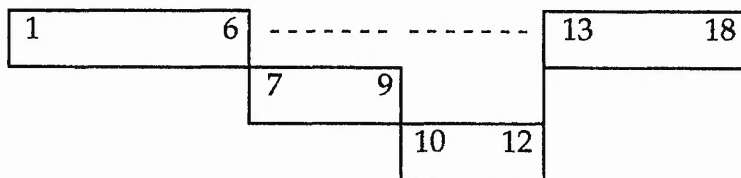
v. Source Criticism

We have seen (in section 1) how Charles took a radical source-critical approach to Revelation in general, and chapter 12 in particular. Although his approach has largely been left to one side, source criticism is still drawn on piecemeal by contemporary commentators. I want to set out briefly what I believe are the weaknesses of this approach, and why it is not appropriate to continue to use it in the analysis of Rev 12.

Critics are usually led to utilise source critical methods by one of three features of a text: a sudden change of genre or theme; apparently redundant repetition of a phrase, usually in slightly different words; incomprehension of the

1987b, p 243).

[256] Yarbro Collins (1976) pp 102, 110.

text as it stands on the part of the critic.[257] None of these three reasons in fact justifies recourse to source criticism.

I have noted how the genre changes rapidly in certain places in Revelation. The changes are such that it is possible to conclude that 'the genre is by its nature incoherent.'[258] There are numerous points where the narrative is disrupted, but for many of these it is immediately clear from the context, and from continuity of vocabulary, that this is simply due to a change in the genre—it is a literary feature, rather than evidence of a redactional 'tacking together' of sources. Thompson points out the aspect of literary style of Revelation that has made it so tempting to see the frequent use of sources.[259] Texts that mostly contain hypotaxis, where sentences containing multiple clauses are written so that the clauses are subordinate to one another, are usually assumed to have unitary authorship. Parataxis, on the other hand, with its juxtaposition of clauses and simple connectives, can easily be seen to be the product of a redactional process. This is ruled out where there is a strong plot line, or where the text displays clear literary unity (such as with Mark's gospel). But in the case of Revelation, the frequent changes of genre mean that there are no such obvious grounds for ruling out the use of sources. But it is clear that the combination of parataxis with multiple genres could simply be a question of literary style. Revelation exhibits a unity at a deeper level, and the burden of proof must lie with those who would postulate the use of earlier written sources.[260]

The second grounds for identifying the use of sources—the apparently redundant repetition of a phrase—also fails to stand up to scrutiny. Yarbro Collins, in her discussion of the structure of Rev 11, comments that 'the repetition of two differently formulated but equivalent time periods is an indication of a literary seam,' and she concludes from this that 11.1–2 and 11.3f were originally separate written sources.[261] But in doing this, she has failed to appreciate the significance of the way that Revelation repeats and varies phrases thematically, in

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[257] The first is assumed by Charles; the first and second are cited as a point of methodology by Yarbro Collins (1976), pp 101f and 195; the third is my own observation.
[258] Sweet (1979) p 35.
[259] L Thompson (1990) Introduction.
[260] See L Thompson (1985) and (1990) for arguments of unity at different levels.
[261] Yarbro Collins (1976) p 195.

order to produce a 'complex network of textual cross-reference.'[262] A few phrases are repeated more-or-less word for word, but many more are not.[263] It is stretching credulity to suggest that these are all occasions of literary seams between sources. In the particular case of the time period variously referred to as 'time, times and half a time,' '1260 days,' and '42 months,' a study of the significance of the numbers involved gives a clearer explanation of why the phrase is varied.[264] All three stand for the apocalyptic end times, following the lamb's attainment of victory, but prior to that victory being consummated and made manifest, and therefore the time of the conflict between the forces of good and the forces of evil. '42 months' designates the time as the beast's and the dragon's, for trampling and rule (11.2, 13.5); '1260 days' designates it as the church's time, for prophesying and protection (11.3 and 12.6); and 'time, times and half a time' is a more neutral phrase that links the other two with Daniel's period of eschatological conflict. In this example, as with the use of source criticism in general, the assumption of sources fails to recognize what is a literary feature, and thus obscures the significance of the text in question.

On the third ground, many of the peculiarities identified as signs of the use of sources have been satisfactorily explained on other grounds since.

Concerning Rev 12, Charles cited four features that he believed pointed to the existence of an underlying written source for the chapter: (a) the use of the genitive with ἐπί in the phrase ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς στέφανος in verse 1; (b) the occurrence of the pleonasm ὅπου... ἐκεῖ in verses 6 and 14; (c) the separation of the noun from its genitive possessive pronoun in οὐδὲ τόπος εὑρέθη αὐτῶν in verse 8; (d) the uniqueness of the use of τοῦ with the infinitive in verse 7.[265]

Against this, Yarbro Collins has shown that (a) and (c) are insubstantial. With regard to (a), this usage is not unique if one of the textual witnesses to Rev 14.4 is accepted; in addition, the expectation of consistent usage is unrealistic, given that

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[262] Bauckham (1993a) p 22.

[263] Bauckham, (1993a) pp 23–26, gives four expressions that are repeated nearly exactly, and list of 27 examples where there is variation in one word, in word order, or in the use of synonyms.

[264] See Bauckham (1993a) pp 384–407 and especially p 402.

[265] Charles (1920) pp clvii and clviii, and clviii note 1. Astonishingly, in the footnote Charles states that in the light of these and two other usages, his comments on pp 300f (a lengthy and detailed demonstration that chapter 12 could not have been based on a written Greek source) must be withdrawn. Either Charles is undoing a substantial part of his own argument in a footnote, or perhaps an ignorant and incompetent redactor has been at work.

ἐπὶ is used with both accusative and genitive with θρόνος (5.1 and 7.15, compare 4.2 and 4.4). With regard to (c), Yarbro Collins points out that similar constructions occur in 18.14 and 22.12, and Charles' explaining away of these is unconvincing. What both have failed to notice is the almost identical sentence structure in Dan 2.35 θ, even though Charles does list it as an allusion (1920, p lxxii). At this point Yarbro Collins notes that the remaining 'stylistic data are far from overwhelming.'[266] She does not note (with respect to Charles' fourth argument) that the construction τοῦ with the infinitive in verse 7 is exactly the same as that in Dan 10.20 θ. Further, there are good reasons to think that the other two weakly attested occurrences (in 9.10 and 14.15) are more significant than they first appear. In any case, this kind of construction is not uncommon in Greek influenced by Hebrew and Aramaic usage, and occurs frequently in the New Testament, most notably in Luke–Acts.[267] The remaining element of Charles' argument, the pleonasm in verses 6 and 14, has little weight, given the variability of the text of Revelation. We are left with an extraordinarily thin case for identifying the use of sources.[268]

Aune (1997, pp cx ff) provides an interesting return to source critical theories, which he prefers to describe as 'diachronic composition criticism' (cxviii). Aune notes the presence of twelve units within Revelation that are distinct for a number of stylistic and structural reasons (chapter 7; chapter 10; 11.1–13; chapter 12; chapter 13; chapter 14; chapter 17; chapter 18; 19.11–16; 20.1–10; 20.11–15; and 21.9–22.5),[269] and lists the criteria by which source and redactional interpolations can be identified within the text. Although the explicit nature of this list is to be welcomed, it immediately begs the question as to why these features of the text are indicators of redactional activity as opposed to literary techniques, or even

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[266] Yarbro Collins (1976) p 104.

[267] On these last two points, see S Thompson (1985) pp 60-63.

[268] Add to this Charles' own contradictions: οὐδὲ τόπος εὑρήθη in 12.8 is clearly the author's style, as at 20.11 (p 301); but it is also clearly against the author's style (p clviii). 'The entire chapter [12] exhibits the peculiar idioms and diction of our author—with two slight exceptions...of no weight' (p 303); but six uses 'conflict with his style' and imply that chapter 12 already existed in Greek translation (p clviii). Source criticism, as applied to Revelation, only came about due to a 'crass failure to appreciate the specific literary integrity of the work as it stands' (Bauckham, 1993a, p x).

[269] Aune (1997) p cxix. It is the presence of these units which perhaps leads Garrow (1997) to his 'episodic' interpretation of the book.

simple inconsistency.[270] The result of his analysis gives us three layers of text—the original separate units now found as these twelve sections, a 'first edition' and a 'second edition' which forms our text—which might leave the reader wondering if we have got very much further on from Charles' analysis of the text into four redactional layers. Aune hints at an awareness of the weakness of this approach, when he acknowledges that the only evidence we have for redactional activity must, by definition, be the points at which the editing has not been done very well.[271] The (viciously) circular nature of this kind of argument is easily demonstrated by looking at specific passages. Chapters 12 and 13 are identified as separate units in part because there is *'little if any continuity in the dramatis personae'* between them (p cxix, italics his). What continuity there is (in 13.2 and 13.4) must therefore consist of redactional glosses (p cxxix). So the connexions between chapters 12 and 13 must be glosses, because they are separate units; but we know they are separate units because there are no connexions between them.

I have taken the trouble to examine source critical arguments in some depth, since without doing so, it is easy for different critical approaches to 'talk past each other.' If that happens, then there is a tendency for one approach to become 'fashionable,' another to become 'unfashionable,' rather than for one approach to fall out of favour because of its inherent weaknesses. Ricoeur's call for communication between different schools of thought—for 'intersubjectivity'—is again pertinent here, and is something much needed within Western theological scholarship, all the more so in the context of post-modern thinking.[272]

Having looked at the various critical approaches used to *explain* the text, we now turn to the task of bringing them together, in order to see how we might *understand* it.

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[270] One criterion is the presence of a 'framing repetition' as is found in 12.9, 13, which I have argued above has a sensible literary function. Another is the presence of 'unnecessary repetitions,' though I noted earlier Bauckham's analysis of repetition in (1993a) pp 22–29.

[271] 'If his [the author/editor's] redactional techniques are evident to modern analysis, it is obvious that he was not completely successful in his task' (1997, p cxxviii).

[272] See Francis Watson (1994) Chapter 6 'Persons in Dialogue' and especially p 115.

5 The Synthesis of Reading—Understanding

1 An Integrated Analysis

i. Method

In discussing the relevance of Ricoeur's hermeneutic to reading Revelation, I noted the need to open space in the process of interpretation for a more substantial critical phase than Ricoeur's approach would otherwise allow. In terms of Ricoeur's concerns, this is in effect a postponement of the resolution of the two poles of the dialectic of objectivity and subjectivity. The practical value of this postponement is most obviously seen in relation to the question of validation. Here, Ricoeur appears to move too quickly over the dialectic between *theoria* and *praxis*. He wants to assess conflicting interpretations only at end of the process of understanding—by examining the existential impact of the completed interpretative process—and not make an intermediate assessment of the process of explanation. But I hope that the detailed discussion above has demonstrated the significance of real engagement between conflicting views at this earlier critical stage.

I also hope that I have demonstrated the legitimacy and the importance of bringing criteria to bear to assess the different critical conclusions that are drawn. It is not possible to set out *universal* criteria that can be applied to test conflicting interpretations, any more than it is possible to set out a universally applicable model for the process of reading. But I have attempted to ask questions concerning the structure and coherence of arguments defending critical conclusions about the text, and asked those questions in a way that coheres with the nature of the text—that is, I have tempered my expectations in the light of the nature of the text.

Within this analysis, I have attempted to engage both with the internal logic of argumentation and some of the assumptions that commentators bring to the text. These are respectively to do with *rules of inference* and *axioms* of an argument, as discussed in my Introduction.

Whilst the process of *understanding* a text is necessarily integrative, explanation in the form of critical *analysis* is true to its etymological roots in that it tends to break the text up (ἀνα-λύω, to unloose). The consideration of the

separate aspects of the text—historical context, language, structure, allusions, sources—is artificial, to the extent that what we have, the text, is in fact an integrated whole. The separate consideration of these aspects is necessary, but should only ever be viewed as temporary. It is necessitated by the dialectic of objectivity and subjectivity, which will be resolved only eschatologically, and it is a practical measure, since it is impossible to consider all the dimensions of the text at the same time. But a partial resolution must take place in order to allow the subsequent integration involved in the process of understanding. This affects the critical process in two ways.

Firstly, different elements of the analysis ultimately belong together. Every element dovetails (to a greater or lesser extent) with each other element, and so can never be completely isolated. We have seen this very clearly above. For example, Yarbro Collins' considerations of redaction and sources in Rev 11 have been made in isolation from considerations of literary concerns, and she has failed to reflect the close dovetailing between these two areas. The discussion of dating and the interpretation of Rev 11 and 17 also shows the close relationship between literary and historical concerns.

Secondly, the discussion of each area inevitably leaves loose ends, which can only be tied up by being brought together in a coherent understanding of the text. Thus the theological lacuna we observed in Rev 12.5 (the overly brief report of the significance of the 'male son') is filled only in the light of structural observations concerning the relation of the two epexegetical excursuses to the main story (verses 7–9 and 10–12).

To change the metaphor, each area of analysis is like a piece of a jigsaw. The shape of each piece affects the shape of all the other pieces around it, and all pieces must be brought together effectively in order to produce a complete picture. The separation of critical analysis into compartments of methodological concern can only ever be an interim measure in reading a text. Where commentators and exegetes take one method in isolation, they must do so in the awareness that it needs to be related to the other approaches with which it so closely dovetails.

ii. Content

The need to integrate the various areas of analysis has an impact not only on methodology, but also on the content of interpretation. Since the different aspects of the text—structure, language, imagery, allusions, context—are bound together, it follows that any number of these may have shaped and influenced a given element of the text. For example, a certain phrase may have been used not only because of the suggestiveness of its imagery, but also because of its allusiveness, and because of the way it fits in with the literary structure, and so on. These factors are not mutually exclusive, but are all ever-present, though some may be to the fore at different times, and have a more-or-less 'controlling' importance. Therefore, whilst analysis may be used to assess the relative importance of the different factors, it is often pressing the case too far to try and assign a feature of the text to a single, exclusive factor.

A particular case of this occurs in considering the imagery in Rev 12 and 13. As we have seen above, the text fuses imagery from different sources and influences, and there is, in fact, some overlap of the significance of the images used. The celestial imagery of sun, moon and stars has clear resonances with that used in pagan worship and the imperial cult. But it is not without significance within Semitic literature too, and the overlap of significance is not easy to tease out. The text therefore has a double resonance, and whilst one part of this may have a controlling significance, this should not be used to rule out the presence of the other. In fact, it would be surprising if this were not the case. Whilst many of the images in Revelation are culture-specific (or have particular cultural nuances), many others have significance across cultures of an archetypal nature.[1] These recur in the different cultures with slightly varying significance, but provide something of a common, trans-cultural vocabulary that Revelation draws on. Further, the process of fusing of diverse images does itself produce ambiguity at the points of overlap. This uncertainty is a feature of the way that metaphor works, and is noted as problematic in several of the discussions about the nature of metaphor. It is also something that Revelation shares with modern cartoons, which I will explore in more detail below.

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[1] Philip Wheelwright (1962) pp 98f and 116f delineates five types of symbol, in order of increasing circles of influence, the widest being archetypal symbolism. I shall return to this below, in discussing the durability of Revelation's images.

It is worth noting that the interplay of the different aspects of the text is especially complex in Revelation. Gregory Linton thus describes it as a 'hybrid' text, and one in which the reader can choose to 'foreground' or 'background' the different elements. The reader (according to Linton) thus actively participates in the formation of the meaning of the text by taking these decisions, and this makes the text a 'readerly' one (as opposed to a 'writerly' one, to use Roland Barthes' terminology), and a particularly interesting one to read and interpret.[2] However, it is not clear from Linton's discussion that the reader legitimately has quite such a wide brief in the act of reading. For one thing, the text of Revelation appears to give fairly clear markers as to what aspect is controlling at any one time, and for another, does the reader really have freedom to prioritise one aspect of the text, rather than hold all together—or confess ignorance and confusion?

2 An Integrated Understanding

i. Metaphor, *Epoche* and Apocalyptic Symbolization

Ricoeur wrote a foreword to André Lacocque's commentary on the Book of Daniel, and in reply, Lacocque has outlined a brief exposition of apocalyptic symbolism, in the light of Ricoeur's hermeneutic, and drawing on the work of Collins, Prigent and others.[3] Lacocque is writing with Daniel 7 particularly in mind, though much of what he says carries over to other apocalyptic symbolism.[4]

The key distinctive of apocalyptic symbolism is that it has gone through what Lacocque calls 'an ascetic purification process.'[5] Apocalyptic comes as the last of the major genres of biblical literature: the hymn, the law, the narrative, the oracular, and sapiential, and finally the apocalyptic. Clearly, apocalyptic shares many features of the oracular and the sapiential, but it also has a temporality in common with the hymnic. Ricoeur notes how the hymnic genre has a kind of

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[2] See G Linton (1991), especially pp 168-170 and 185.

[3] A Lacocque (1979) and (1981) respectively.

[4] It has been suggested that the imagery in Daniel and Revelation is essentially different, from a hermeneutical point of view, since Daniel's imagery is interpreted later in the book. But it is disingenuous to suggest that somehow or other Revelation's imagery is superior because of its consequent uncertainty. The consistent contact of Revelation with its contemporary social and political situation demonstrated above confirms the close relationship between the imagery in the two books. Ricoeur comments (in Lacocque, 1979, p xxii) that 'the symbolic expansion appears to be thwarted' by the provision of an interpretation, but concedes that the nature of the symbols, though interpreted, 'leaves a margin of free play.'

'today and everyday' quality about it, in that the truths of the hymn are enacted within the congregation as the hymn is recited. In Ricoeur's terms, the temporality 'belongs to the uttering and not to the utterance.'[6] For instance, in reciting a hymn about God's deliverance of Israel through the Exodus, the congregation are declaring and participating in the reality of the nature of God as redeemer, rather than simply recalling a past event. The hymnic genre achieves this 'thanks to the metaphorical power attached to the meaning of harvesting, conquering, and so on.'[7] Lacocque comments on this:

> In other words—and this is crucial for apocalyptic—there is a synchronic reading and experiencing in the cult which is yielded by a metaphorization or symbolization of the events of history, so that they never lose their actuality for all generations.[8]

But how does this hymnic temporality come about? How is the temporal context of the historical event transferred to the (later) uttering, from the time of the original utterance? In Ricoeur's understanding of the process of inscription, this is a particular effect of the distanciation of such a genre. The utterance becomes distanced from its original uttering (and from the context of that uttering) in such a way as to make subsequent utterings the controlling temporal context. Such a re-contextualization is brought about as a result of the kind of language used. The language of the hymnic genre is able to form a fresh semantic impertinence in association with the new context of worship—that is, the language gives rise to a new metaphor, to fresh symbolization.

Apocalyptic symbolism shares the 'today and every day' nature of the hymnic. But it does so in a way which invites understanding, rather than being illustrative or imitative as with the hymnic—it asserts more radically a view of reality. And since this understanding concerns the world around, there cannot be the same kind of complete dissociation from the original context of uttering as there is in the hymn. However, to attain the same temporality, the images used must still 'go through a sort of *epoche*,' 'a veritable asceticism in order to reach the dignity of types and symbols.'[9] In other words, whilst the imagery clearly relates to the

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[5] Lacocque (1981) p 8.

[6] TN p 38.

[7] Ibid p 44.

[8] Lacocque (1981) p 9.

[9] Lacocque (1981) ibid, and Prigent (1979) p 375. The term *epoche* is a transliteration of the Greek ἐποχή and is used as a quasi-technical term in phenomenology meaning the suspension of

particulars of the world around that the images signify, nevertheless certain details of those particulars are removed, and by means of the symbolism those features that are regarded as central are emphasised. In the case of Daniel 7,

> …the world's empires are typified in monstrous stereotyped figures…and, as those elements are considered synchronically, all nuances are shaven [*sic*] off.[10]

This process is necessitated by apocalyptic's use of traditional images. In order to make the symbolism fit the reality, both the image and the reality to which it refers must be adapted and simplified in order that they should correspond to one another. The apocalyptic image is then the product of the fusion of an adapted image from the traditional 'store-house' of imagery with a simplified and stereotyped version of social and political realities. There is an *epoche*, a distanciation for both the signifier (the image) and the signified (the reality in question). The image is given its new context, its *Sitz im Wort* (replacing its original *Sitz im Leben*), and the reality is caricatured by the association with the symbol. In Rev 12 and 13, the social and political realities of the Empire in first century Asia, the pagan mythological material, and the biblical imagery become fused in this *epoche*, to produce a symbolised reality.

The stereotyping that follows from this *epoche* has its root in the nature of metaphor as understood by Ricoeur. In my earlier discussion of Black and his 'grid' theory of metaphor, I noted that in the association between unlikes in the metaphor, not all qualities of vehicle of the metaphor carry over to that which is being metaphorized in the tenor. So, when we say that 'man is a wolf,' we do not usually think of man as a four-legged hairy canine that roams through the forest. We may, however, understand it to mean that man is aggressive, predatory and wild, and possibly that he 'hunts' in packs. Only some of the characteristics of the wolf are carried over, and only some features of man, the subject of the metaphor, are described. Both vehicle ('wolf') and tenor ('man') are treated selectively. This process of simplification is implicit in the structure of metaphor, for it is the only way that the impertinence of the dissimilarities can be resolved—the only way that the 'is not like' of the metaphor can be resolved with the 'is like.' Vehicle and tenor, whilst having characteristics in common, cannot be wholly equated—

(personal, value-laden) evaluation. Ricoeur uses it in HT p 31 and 49.

[10] Lacocque (1981) p 13.

indeed, the impertinence of the metaphor lies in the fact that they are largely quite unalike. This selectivity and simplification, whilst a feature of all metaphor to a certain extent, is particularly marked in apocalyptic symbolization, due to the cultural and archetypal nature of the imagery.[11]

As noted above (in 3.3.ii) Ricoeur has been criticised for using this 'grid' theory, and an alternative (such as Soskice's relating metaphor to models) may be more satisfactory. But the essential point remains: the process of metaphorization, and with it the process of apocalyptic symbolization, involves the selection and exaggeration of certain features, and the obliteration of certain others, resulting in a universalising of the subject symbolised. And this process has epistemological content, since it offers a new way of perceiving the world. In contemporary context, we call this process 'caricaturing.' Compare this comment on the sculpture caricatures of parliamentarians made by the nineteenth-century sculptor and painter Honoré Daumier:

> By a process of distortion and plastic synthesis, [his] busts reveal the inner truth of their subjects, who are thus transformed into universal types.[12]

Distortion in order to reveal a supposed inner truth, resulting in universal types, is thus shared by the caricature of the cartoonist and the apocalyptic symbolisation of Revelation. Revelation has, in fact, been compared to a political cartoon before, but only in the loosest sense, and without proposing the close parallel of processes in the way I wish to.[13]

ii. Caricature, Cartoon and Polemical Displacement

a. Contemporary Cartoons

How do political cartoons make their point, and what is the secret of their power? (This may seem a trivial question in our relatively polite Western society; there have been times in living memory when political cartooning, in the form of propaganda, was a deadly serious business, and much hung on it.) *Caricaturing* is one way, and we have seen the link this has with apocalyptic symbolism. But

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[11] It is perhaps worth noting that the gospel that uses the most archetypal imagery (bread, water, light, dark), that of John, is the one that appears most clearly to stereotype the social groupings, notably those labelled ὁι ᾿Ιουδαῖοι.

[12] Carline Mathieu (1992) p 46.

[13] Beasley-Murray (1974) p 16, taken up by John Sweet (1979) p 2. See also Garrow's passing comment on the analogy of studying an 'ancient political cartoon strip' in (1997) p 65.

there is a further feature, which has yet more in common with Ricoeur's theory of metaphor. This is the bringing together of unlikes (the creation of a sort of 'semantic impertinence') by the *fusion* (or synthesis) of plot and characters from diverse sources. I offer two examples—one visual, the other verbal.

The visual example is a cartoon drawn by Peter Brookes, the regular cartoonist of *The Times*, which appeared in the paper on 16th June 1995 (reproduced as illustration 1 in the Appendix). The immediate context was of the two news stories concerning the controversial plans of Shell Oil to dump the Brent Spar oil platform in the North Atlantic, and the simultaneous contest for the leadership of the Conservative party that was precipitated by John Major's resignation. The cartoon depicts the leadership contest in the terms of the Brent Spar story, in a way that helpfully sheds light on the nature of Rev 12. I noted above that in Rev 12, the depiction of the *characters* was drawn largely from biblical imagery, whilst the narrative action (the *plot*) came from the Leto/Isis mythology. In this cartoon, the characters of the sketch (Michael Heseltine in the tug, and John Major as the Brent Spar rig) come from one context, the leadership contest, whilst the action of the sketch derives from the Brent Spar story. The characters themselves are identified by some concise markers: Heseltine by his hair, eyebrows, nose and chin as he steers the tug-boat of the Conservative party; and John Major by the glasses and distinctive upper lip that cartoonists seem to have decided are his distinguishing features. In identifying the characters in this way, Brookes is caricaturing them. Even in the case of this simple cartoon, the analytical process of explaining this in the way I have attempted above for Revelation 12 would be quite an involved task, once the reader was at some historical and cultural distance. It would require an investigation of the relevant news stories form which this cartoon might be drawn; how the characters had been caricatured in other cartoons; the significance of transferring the environmental concerns to the new political context—and so on. This example also highlights the problems mentioned above in untangling the sources of imagery: does the front of the Brent Spar sport a hawser of some sort (that owes its origins to the image of the rig), or is it John Major's mouth (a part of the image deriving from the individual caricatured)?

The literary example belongs to the same period, and is from a speech made by Gordon Brown, then shadow chancellor, in the Commons on 12th July 1995, as

part of the debate on the economy. In it, Brown is making a number of points about morale in the Conservative party, with especial reference to the then recent appointment of Michael Heseltine as Deputy Prime Minister without portfolio.

> It is the familiar formula for trouble on the street—the build-up of tensions, noise, pushy and aggressive behaviour, territorial disputes, the long hot summer ahead in Downing Street and aggressive men with not enough to do, men whose future employment prospects are bleak, with no long-term stake in society. Even the constant police presence will not provide reassurance. Appeals from senior community leaders [such as Sir Edward Heath and Lord Archer]…will not be able to restore calm…By the Autumn, he will become a convert to Labour's new solutions for curbing persistently anti-social neighbours.[14]

Brown is cleverly using the language of the disillusioned unemployed provoking summer riots on the streets of Britain to describe the relations in the Conservative party. In doing so, he is exploiting the points of contact between the two (literally) dissimilar situations, and in doing so, he is caricaturing both. Again, the *characters* of the sketch belongs to one setting (the parliamentary Conservative party) whilst the 'action' or *plot* (such as it is) comes from the other. This example shows even more clearly the overlap of imagery. The fact that certain of the images belong naturally to the one situation, and metaphorically to the other, is the key that makes this imagery so effective. Again, it requires a fairly intimate knowledge of the situations to explain the precise sources of the imagery; the pun on the 'police presence' only works if the reader knows of the policeman stationed outside 10 Downing Street.

Similar examples could be produced a thousand-fold; they are the bread and butter of political discourse.[15]

b. Polemical Displacement

Both these examples serve to show that the caricaturing and merging of images in the process of metaphorization are easily recognizable, fairly easy to understand, and yet highly complex to explain and systematize. After all, the 'reading' of political cartoons is widely done, and done effectively. It is not difficult for the contemporary reader to identify the vehicle of the metaphor in Brown's sketch, but there is no single element that settles the case. Rather, the

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[14] Text kindly supplied by Gordon Brown, taken from *Hansard*, 12th July 1995, p 990.
[15] For two recent examples of Peter Brookes', see illustrations 2 and 3 in the Appendix.

effect comes about through the accumulation of phrases that together suggest the scenario. It is also worth noting that the extended metaphor would continue to make some sense without a detailed understanding, since the elements make sense in the new context even without an understanding of the context which they come from. Yet the full refigurational effect is only understood once the source of the imagery is perceived, and the impertinence (semantic and otherwise) is fully grasped.

This process may not be a universal feature of political cartoons, but it does appear to be very widespread. The characters from the original story-line are displaced by others from another context, and this is done to make an assertion about the nature of those other characters. It is this polemical displacement that is behind both the functioning and effectiveness of political cartoons.

Images from Revelation have been used explicitly in this process of cartooning. In illustration 4, the displacement happens the other way around; the four horsemen from chapter 6 of Revelation give meaning to the 'story' of German expansionism in the 1930s. (It could be argued that there is a fusion of plots and characters, rather than simple displacement.) In illustration 5, the whore of Babylon wears a papal crown—a polemical displacement from the period of the Reformation.[16] The effect of this displacement is to introduce an implicit plot, which becomes the real focus of the cartoon. In Black's terms, if the explicit plot is the vehicle of the extended metaphor, then the implicit plot introduced by the displacement of characters is the tenor.

Illn	Explicit plot	Characters	Implicit plot
1	Dumping of the Brent Spar oil rig by Shell UK	Michael Heseltine, John Major	Speculation about Conservative party leadership
(text)	Unrest among the unemployed leading to riots	Members of the government	Instability within the cabinet team
2	Trial of the hypnotist, Paul McKenna, accused of ruining a subject's life	Tony Blair	Dispute concerning the performance of the newly-elected Labour government
3	Ron Davies' 'moment of madness' on Clapham Common, leading to his resignation as minister	Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder, the newly-elected chancellor of Germany	The Labour government's common agenda with continental governments on monetary union

[16] Pippin (1992a) p 136 notes that the crown was actually removed from later editions of the book, such was its political significance.

4	The four horsemen of Rev 6	Nazi troops and leaders	Pre-war German expansionism
5	The whore riding the beast (Rev 17)	Representatives of C16th church groupings	Papal authority as the whore of Babylon
6	Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Dan 3)	C2nd Christians refusing to participate in the imperial cult	The imperial cult as the test of loyalty for Christians

c.   Polemical Displacement in Revelation

The earlier examples of polemical displacement raise the question: is the imagery in Revelation particularly susceptible to this kind of use? If my argument concerning Ricoeur, apocalyptic symbolism and caricature is correct, then the answer is clearly 'yes.' Moreover, this kind of polemical displacement is already present in the text of Revelation, as demonstrated by three examples.

Firstly, David Aune has shown that the phrases 'I have the key to Death and Hades' (1.19), 'I am coming quickly' (five times) and 'I am the Alpha and the Omega' (four times) are all unique to Revelation in early Christian writings, have attested use in Graeco-Roman magic (particularly in the cult of Hekate), and are used in a way 'where the validity of the religious and magical assumptions behind are implicitly denied.'[17] In other words, they form part of an anti-magical polemic brought about by the displacement of pagan gods by the figure of Christ, a polemic that is re-enforced by the affirmation of magic as a vice (9.20) and that magicians will suffer the second death (21.8) and be shut out of the new Jerusalem (22.15).

Secondly, Allen Kerkeslager (1993) has argued convincingly that the figure of the rider on the white horse (in 6.2) stands not for Christ (as some have argued) but for Apollo, representing false religion that deceives the people. It is the insertion of the Apollo figure into a story of deception and destruction that makes the polemical point, and this is re-inforced at other places: in 9.11 there is a pun on the word 'apollyon';[18] and the story of Apollo is visited again in chapter 12.

The idea that Rev 12 functions as a political cartoon is not without precedent. Beasley-Murray comments on the similarity of Revelation to a political cartoon,

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[17] Aune (1987) pp 481f.

[18] Kerkeslager (p 119) mentions a rather pleasing contemporary parallel with this, in a poem about a singing doctor called Niketas. 'When Niketas sings, he is the Apollo of his songs. But when a

but he does not pursue this idea in his hermeneutical methodology.[19] Neither is this understanding of Revelation without near-contemporary parallel. In the story of Nebuchadnezzar's statue in Daniel 3, the three young men who refuse to worship, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were seen as prototypical martyrs in the early (pre-Constantine) church under persecution.[20] There are three paintings in the catacombs at Rome, portraying their ordeal in the fiery furnace, and at least one of these dates from the early second century.[21] But the most striking example of the fusion of biblical tradition with the contemporary experience of prosecution comes from a sarcophagus of the early fourth century (illustration 6). The three men are shown refusing to worship the image—but Nebuchadnezzar has become the Roman Emperor, and the gold statue has become an imperial bust from the cult.[22] In fact, all Christian iconography before Constantine was 'borrowed' from the images of the pagan world. Thus (for example) we might find the image of Christ as Mercury in a mosaic floor. Whether this is always polemical, or whether it is syncretistic, or perhaps merely artistic plagiarism, is a subject of current debate.[23]

Sociologically, caricatures and cartoons divide their subjects into recognisable stereotypes, and tend to group the whole range of possible subjects into these types. Thus each type becomes applicable to a large number of individual subjects. There is a sense in which caricaturing produces a multiply sectarian view of the world, in which people are grouped into those with big noses, those with small chins, and so on. This is most evident in caricature associated with political propaganda.[24] Cartoons will vary in their seriousness, and the stereotyping and degree of sectarianism correspondingly vary, but this

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physician, the Apollo [ie apollyon] of his patients.'

[19] Beasley-Murray (1974) p 16.

[20] This is not surprising, given that they probably had the same function at the time of the final redaction of the book in the second century BC.

[21] Price (1984) p 199 cites J Wilpert *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms* (1903) pl 13, 78/1 and 172/2.

[22] For further details of this sarcophagus and other examples see Price (1984) p 199, citing G Wilpert *I Sarcofagi Christiani Antichi* II Testo (1932) pp 259-263.

[23] See T F Mathews (1993) and its review by Dr Mary Murray in *JTS* 47 (1996) pp 703–705.

[24] A striking example is the portrayal of Jews in Nazi propaganda in the 1930s and 40s. For a clear demonstration of this in the history of caricature, see E H Gombrich (1977) chapter X, and especially pp 288-298. To some extent we have now gone full circle, since the notion of invention (in new artistic techniques) leading to discovery (of a new way to perceive the world) expounded by Gombrich is one of Ricoeur's starting points in his exploration of the power of metaphor.

stereotyping can further serve to broaden the applicability of the image across cultural boundaries.

Rev 12 is equivalent to the most serious kind of cartoon, and also the most widely understood. It achieves this as a result of nature of the imagery. The traditionality of its imagery makes it accessible to the 'rabbim,' the many, in its own time, and the consequent archetypal nature of the symbolism has trans-cultural significance.[25] The 'caricaturing' of the Empire creates the image of the archetypal oppressive regime, and its features are easily identified in totalitarian regimes in different cultures. It also highlights the power and dangers of the imagery. The 'simplification' that results both makes the text very effective and accessible, but also makes it vulnerable to ideological use in a way that does not necessarily accord with its function in its original context.

iii. Apocalypse, Cartoon and Historical Context

The cartoons I have used include details, essential to an understanding of the cartoon, that are very specific in their reference, and which therefore require detailed knowledge of the social and political context in which they were drawn. It might be argued that this is not always the case, and that Revelation 12–13 and other apocalyptic writings do not share this feature with such cartoons.

I would therefore like to look at a cartoon which might be thought of as much less context dependent: Steve Bell's 'International Community' (illustration 7 in the Appendix). I propose two possible interpretation of this image.

Interpretation 1: We live in a world where we know more about suffering in other countries than we can act on. What we see moves us to compassion, though since we are at a distance, there is little realistically we can do about it. But we do what we can: express our compassion as we see the television images. This is to be seen as a virtue, and should be noted as something positive about our society. Better to see and be moved, even if we cannot act, than not see at all.

Interpretation 2: We live in a world where we are content to see images of suffering in our world, and think that it is adequate to be moved only, without taking any tangible action. Since there are ways that we could respond, our lack of action combined with empty expressions of compassion make a nonsense of

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[25] Lacocque (1981), p 10.

claims that we are in any sense an international 'community.' The cartoon ridicules 'armchair' compassion.

The first interpretation is essentially 'media-world'-affirming; the second is 'media-world'-critical.

The factors that would make us want to embrace the second understanding rather than the first are all context-dependent—the image on its own could support either.

The association of the armchair and the living room with comfort, passivity and therefore hypocrisy are contextual; someone reading in another culture, perhaps also at another time (say, 2,000 years from now!) would need to know of these associations to make sense of the image. They would also need to know what a television is and something of the social phenomenon of the medium—that television ownership is primarily a first-world phenomenon, and that the selectivity of images is controlled by Western producers. For a full understanding of the cartoon, the 'reader' would also need to know something of the financial and arms trade links between north and south. This might be seen as very basic historical information—but it *is* historical and social contextual information, and not inherent in the image as self-explanatory.

Steve Bell's point is made by an ironic juxtaposition of the television image as an icon of passivity and indifference, and a bodily gesture of compassion and action. The cartoon only works by the juxtaposition of these dissimilars. The juxtaposition is a juxtaposition of meanings, and the meanings of those images is context-dependent. The dissimilarity that provides the ironic inversion is therefore dependent on context.

As we are culturally close to this image, it is easy to miss this context-dependence. But then (as Ricoeur says) it is only historical distanciation from the ancient texts that has bought to our awareness the distanciation inherent in the move from utterance to text.

However, against this there should be set three qualifications. In the first place, apocalyptic in general, and Revelation in particular, mostly draws on archetypal imagery. This means that those images, and the metaphors to which they contribute, will be more persistent, and that during a time (in the first or second centuries AD) when the general rate of cultural change was much slower than it is in Western society at the end of the second millennium. This is not to say

that there were not cataclysmic events that might have radically affected people's outlook (such as the Neronic persecution, the eruption of Versuvius, perhaps even the edicts of Domitian). But these events will have been perceived in the context of a more slowly changing 'imagistic lexicon' which was deeply rooted in popular perceptions of the world, enduring popular mythology and (in the case of Christians and Jews) the Old Testament Scriptures, re-read for some in the light of the Christ event.

Secondly, how much of the first-century context do we necessarily have to reconstruct to be reasonably confident that we have correctly discerned the central emphases of a metaphorical text in Revelation? Answering this question is a little like asking how good our eyesight has to be before we can make out the features of a person's face, or of a place we are in, so as to make an identification confidently.[26] There is no simple answer. On the one hand, a minimum of information is essential to accurate perception; on the other, there comes a point where even imperfect information is quite enough to discern the main contours of what is being looked at.

In studying metaphor, we are concerned first and foremost with the state of the lexicon—the nature of the linguistic world of the first century, rather than society in general. But it is almost a truism to say that there is no sharp boundary between the meaning and significance of a word, that is, between the 'bare' lexical definition of a term, and the resonances it would evoke as part of a text like Revelation.

But it is quickly clear in any discussion of context that the more detailed a hypothetical reconstruction becomes, the more tentative is must be. Nevertheless, it is illuminating to note how the shift this century from a Neronic dating to a Domitianic dating, combined with the development of a consensus that there was no systematic execution of Christians under Domitian, has served to shift the perception of Revelation from being a text of faith in the face of persecution to being a text of resistance in the face of temptation to compromise.[27]

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[26] I write this as someone who is significantly short-sighted and astigmatic.

[27] Thus much historical critical work on Revelation seems to me to serve to re-animate the text, rather than control more fundamental aspects of hermeneutical methodology. In the analogy of Steve Bell's cartoon, information about changes in television ownership and the growth in hours of viewing might not change understanding of its fundamental message, but would certainly show the cartoon to be very much more pertinent in the 1980s and 1990s than, for

The third qualification that must be put alongside a defence of the role of historical criticism has to do with the process of apocalyptic symbolisation outlined above. Because the process of *epoche* effects an 'asceticism' in the images employed, those images are stripped of some of their historical details. This process of universalising creates images that are trans-historical, even whilst they spring from specific historical referents. Thus apocalyptic imagery has at its heart a certain ambiguity towards its historical context, being rooted in it and yet struggling to transcend it at the same time. And it is this ambiguity which at once makes the imagery in Rev 12 and 13 appear to be universally applicable to every oppressive regime that there has ever been, and so makes the commentator reluctant to tie it to the one situation of its origin. The singularity of that situation is that it was the cauldron in which the archetypal imagery was formed, and by its nature archetypal imagery is imagery that we think of as always having existed—as preceding specific situations, rather than flowing from them.

So any ambiguity concerning the historical context of Revelation is an ambiguity that flows from the nature of the text itself. But there is a essential role for historical criticism, even when it is difficult to say exactly what the required extent of this is. The chief contribution of recent research has been to re-animate the text as the modern reader engages with a sympathetic and disciplined historical imagination.

iv. Revelation 12 as Political Cartoon

We can only know the effect of Revelation's metaphorization and consequent refiguration for its first readers if we know the significance of the imagery, and something of the realities being metaphorized—hence the importance of the earlier analysis.

The most obvious feature of Rev 12 and 13 is the way that the Leto/Isis myth is used to (literally?) demonize the power of the Empire. The mythology had been used fairly extensively as a form of political propaganda, to reinforce the view that the Empire was the source of wealth, prosperity and security, and that the Emperor was therefore key to maintaining order and holding the forces of chaos at bay. Rev 12 takes up the myth, but inverts its message, making the Messiah

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example, in the 1960s.

figure the real bringer of peace and order, and casts the Empire in the role of chaos beast, or at least henchman to the chaos beast. It also displaces Artemis/Isis from her central position, and replaces her with the expectant Messianic community.

For interest, I have included an impression of what Rev 12 might have looked like had it been drawn as a cartoon (illustration 8).

The question of the significance of the adaptation of these myths is less often dealt with than the question of the adaptation itself. But, as with political cartoons, the identification of sources and influences is only half the work.

The myths of both Apollo and, to a lesser extent, Horus, had had an important role in imperial self-perception, and consequently in imperial propaganda. Augustus especially venerated Apollo, made him his patron deity, and presented himself, particularly before 27 BC, as the incarnation of Apollo.[28] Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue* associates the reign of Augustus with the beginning of a new golden age and the reign of Apollo. Similarly, Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* makes a connexion between the good will of Apollo, the power of Rome, and the new-found prosperity of this age of peace. Nero, in his turn, was a great admirer of the legacy of Augustus, and fashioned himself accordingly. Consequently, he too had himself pictured and hailed as 'Apollo.' This is especially striking in the light of the identification by the author of Revelation of the spirit of imperial power with the spirit of Nero (Rev 13.18). The legend of Horus and Seth-Typhon was of importance in Egypt and the East. In Egypt, this myth was used explicitly by the Ptolemaic kings as propaganda against their opponents. And in a similar fashion, Domitian utilised the myth, being depicted as Horus on the obelisk now standing in the Piazza Navonna in Rome. After him, Hadrian continued this tradition by being represented as Horus on coins dating from 134-136.[29]

Van Henten observes that Domitian identified himself with Zeus/Jupiter more than with Apollo, but notes how this identification often involved the use of the combat myth in a similar form to that of the Apollo/Python myth, with Jupiter conquering the chaos monster.

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[28] van Henten (1994) p 505.
[29] ibid pp 506-7.

Rev 12 takes the political significance of the Apollo (combat myth) propaganda, and inverts it. Roman imperial power, identified with the dragon through the use of Danielic images of empire (in verse 3) takes on the role not of the hero Apollo, but the chaos monster Python. The emperor, far from being the harbinger of peace, order and prosperity, is the agent of conflict, chaos and destruction. More than that, the imperial power of destruction is to be identified with nothing less than the primeval and eschatological enemy of the true God, and the true people of God. As such, it faces the eschatological judgement, here presaged in Rev 12.8, and consummated later in Revelation. In contrast, the true bringer of peace and order ('salvation' in the broadest sense) is the male child, the coming Messiah, who is both the warrior for Israel (Michael) and the first-born of the new gentile people of God ('the rest of her seed,' verse 17). As van Henten puts it, 'The adherents of one utopia put the propagandists of the other in the category of the negative alternative, the anomic image of primeval chaos.'[30]

If Rev 12 is *asserting* the inversion of roles through its use of the Leto/Isis myth, then Rev 13 is *demonstrating* its truth. Here, the categories of Daniel 7 are applied to the emperor cult within the framework of an apocalyptic tradition also found in Ascension of Isaiah 4.[31] In place of the person of Nero, it is the Empire itself, with its economics, institutions, and religion, that is the eschatological adversary. The climax of this demonstration is the isopsephism 666, which is intended to demonstrate, not conceal, the identity of the adversary.

Rev 12 and 13 thus constitute a counter-ideology to that of the Empire.[32] The refiguration of the world offered to the Christian community produces a 'cognitive minority' in sociological terms—a group who reject the majority view of reality. This dissension is costly in the most basic terms, as the text of Rev 13 makes clear. It is costly not least because 'opposition to an important part of the socially ordered world view is dangerous.'[33]

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[30] Ibid p 514

[31] Bauckham (1993) pp 425–428.

[32] DeSilva (1991) notes particularly how Rev 13 offers a pointed critique of the imperial cult and its ideology; more generally he shows (1993) how this counter ideology in the form of a 'counter cosmos' pervades the whole of the book.

[33] DeSilva (1991) p 192.

v. Refiguration and Jewish–Christian Relations

The all-but-complete break with the synagogue was a social and theological crisis for the early church. In addition, in the context of experiencing pressure from the Empire, the Christian community faced some outright opposition from the Jewish community. The sharpness of the conflict is evident from the language about 'the Jews' in the gospels, and the explicit reference earlier in Revelation. Revelation itself is sectarian, in that it draws a clear line between those who worship the beast and those who worship God, but this line does not include or exclude the Jews as a social group—rather, it bisects them.[34] For in Rev 12, the expectant people of Israel are fellow-sufferers of oppression with the Christians. The two groups are both on the same side in the conflict against the dragon, and therefore (implicitly) in the conflict with the beasts. This has added significance given that, within Revelation, the sectarian outlook means that war and conflict only take place between God and his enemies, and not between any other third parties.

There is also an open-endedness to Rev 12's imagery. The woman is left in the desert, an 'in-between' place, and is not referred to again later in the book.[35]

vi. Praise and Participation

The understanding of Revelation 12 and 13 set out above sees it as a text that locates, rather than centres on or marginalizes, its first readers. Their struggle is located within the canonical stream of the conflict of the God of Israel with the cosmic forces of evil. But in utilising mythology in the displacement, the specifics of their context are taken up into this universal struggle.

This locating of its readers is effected most explicitly by the role of the hymn in 12.10–12. Although it appears to be spoken by a single voice from heaven, it is in fact very similar in form and content to the short hymnic section in 11.15, which is spoken by 'loud voices in heaven,' and as with other hymn-like material, appears

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[34] It is of note that the kind of language found in Rev 2.9 ('those who say that the are Jews and are not'), which appears to retain respect for the term 'Jew', is the language of intra-group conflict rather than inter-group conflict. Rival social groups most usually see the other group's name as totemic, and despise it as much as the group itself.

[35] Note that the woman on the beast appears in the desert (Rev 17.3)—but it is hardly credible to identify the two characters.

to be inviting participation on the part of the listening audience.[36] The parallel with Greek choruses is not particularly close,[37] but there are some strong parallels with the psalms. There is a general formal similarity in the use of synonymous, antipathetic and synthetic parallelism.[38] But Jan du Rand has demonstrated specific similarities between Rev 12.10–12 and the so-called *Siegeslieder* or victory songs, a form represented by psalms such as 46, 48, 76, 97 and 98.[39] This form consists of a three-fold declaration of the breakthrough of victory, description of the victory in the form of a 'sacred myth,' and exhortative call to rejoicing. Du Rand summarises the contribution of the hymn here as being 'an interpretative commentary on 12.1–9' (though not in the detailed way that I suggest) and as a 'reminde[r] of a transcendental reality in which he or she participates liturgically.'[40] It is of interest to note the general contrast here with Jewish apocalyptic, where 'angelic hymns of praise to God are occasionally mentioned…but, with the exception of the Sanctus, rarely quoted.'[41] In this respect, the hymns in Revelation are distinctively participatory.

Walter Brueggemann's study of the Psalms (1988) offers an insight into the importance of these hymns that is at different times implicitly and explicitly Ricoeurian (p x). He develops Mowinckel's (neglected, pre-Ricoeurian) belief in the psalms being 'world-making.' Praise is not only a response to God's action, but is also 'constitutive of theological reality' (p 4)—a reality in which God is king and is active and victorious in the world. Moreover, the singing of the psalms is 'an assertion of an alternative world' (p 5) to the world portrayed by the patterns of worship and myth that are otherwise available. This alternative world is not one that is perceived to exist only within the confines of the praising community, but is also perceived as being 'externalized,' and seen as 'objectively' true (p 14). Such praise is, then, a 'bold, political act' (p 2), and 'functions characteristically

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[36] Du Rand (1993) characterises the role of these sections precisely as inviting participation, and it is this aspect of the hymn material in particular that has contributed to a number of theses about an intended liturgical setting for the reading of the book (for example, Garrow, 1997, p 35, and Goulder's creative thesis of Revelation and Ezekiel forming an annual lectionary, 1981).

[37] Du Rand (1993) p 315, following the verdict of M A Harris' research of 1988, contra the comment of Garrow (1997) p 41.

[38] To use the categories first suggested by Robert Lowth in 1753, cited by Kidner (1973) pp 2–4. Rev 11.15, 12.12 and 12.11 might be taken as examples of these three kinds of parallelism respectively.

[39] Du Rand (1993) p 323, utilizing Gunkel's form-critical classification.

[40] Du Rand (1993) p 328.

and inevitably in the deployment and legitimation of social power' (p ix). This means that praise of the true God is inevitably polemical, as it asserts not only that the world as it is under God's sovereign rule is the true world, but also that all other 'worlds' are false (p 27). It is doxology against both idolatry (false worship) and ideology (false ideas that order the world).

This understanding of the perceptual importance of the hymn in Rev 12.10–12—as opening up a world, setting out an alternative to the dominant ideology, being polemical in relation to rival outlooks, having social not just psychological consequences—ties in very closely with the alternative view of reality set out by means of the polemical displacement that takes place in the earlier part of the chapter. If the first two sections (verses 1 to 6 and 7 to 9) set out the nature of this alternative world, then the hymn is the means by which the reader enters, identifies with and 'owns' this world.

The central feature of this 'world' is the proleptic experience of God's eschatological victory. That the hymns in Revelation function to actualize this is made clear by an observation of Yarbro Collins. 'It is striking that every vision of salvation which *precedes* the depiction of the final battle (19.11–20.3) involves a liturgical element, while those which *follow* do not (20.4–6, 21.1–22.5)…the liturgy was the locus of the proleptic experience of salvation in the community of the author and his first readers.'[42]

vii. Locating Revelation's Readers

What space does this reading of Revelation give to readers then and now? What sort of world is opened up by the text?

It is a world in continuity with biblical tradition. The first readers, as followers of the lamb, constitute 'the rest of [the woman's] seed' (12.17). They share with her the vulnerability (12.2) and struggle (12.4, 13.7) and protection (12.6, 14) of the faithful messianic people of God. Whatever the ethnic disruptions in identity, there is a clear continuity of theological identity. This paradox of continuity and discontinuity is expressed elsewhere in the NT in the metaphors of adoption (Rom 8) and grafting (Rom 11).

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[41] Aune (1987b) p 243.
[42] Yarbro Collins (1976) p 234.

Secondly, it is a world of counter ideology to the prevailing ideology of surrounding society (12.1–6). Within the narrative of chapters 12 and 13, the inversion of the secular myth to form the narrative of the community is prior to the challenge to remain faithful and receive the seal of the God in preference to the mark of the beast (13.18). The community is equipped with its story and identity before it faces the crisis of decision.

Thirdly, it is a world set in the fold of time that is created by the proleptic enactment of the eschatological victory of God's Messiah over his primeval adversary (12.9, 10).

Fourthly, this period of proleptic victory is the space that is created in fulfilment of specifically Jewish messianic hopes (12.7–8), before it becomes a place of light for the whole world.

Fifthly, it is a world that is made real existentially by participation through praise (12.10–12), as praise is the community's declaration of God as king and his Messiah as victorious, truths that will only be fully expressed at the end.

Sixthly, it is a world that embraces the ambiguity of patient endurance and confidence of victory (13.10).

Seventhly, it is a world that demands allegiance in the social, political and economic spheres as well as the personal (13.16, 17), and the mythology created by the metaphorization of the world is irrevocably sectarian in its call to decide—follow the lamb or follow the beast. [43]

This world is one that is accessible to present-day readers. The fold of time defined by the prolepsis of victory marks a division that is cosmic, not merely local. The archetypal nature of the imagery means that the characteristics of the beast are ones that recur through history when human institutions demand absolute loyalty. And Revelation's place on the edge (so to speak) of the canon seems to invite the reader to metaphorize her own world in the way that the text metaphorizes its world.

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[43] Highwater (1997) explores the 'mythology' of morality, taking homosexuality as (an example of) the metaphor of 'transgression' for the crossing of socially acceptable moral boundaries. He focuses on the resultant sectarian classification of society into 'insiders' and 'outsiders.' In deconstructing the myth and its associated sectarianism, it is an open question as to whether Highwater is effectively returning to the view that 'mere' metaphor can be dispensed with, and replaced by an analytical/propositional alternative.

The genre's ambiguity with respect to particularisation (because of the process of *epoche* that the images go through) invites correspondences to be found. This ambiguity allows the reader to say 'This is it' without saying 'This *alone* is it.' In this way, text and reader continue in genuine dialogue without either becoming the master of the other.

Moreover, the parallel outlined between the text and the process of cartooning makes the way the text functions comprehensible. Concerns about how the text does what it does no longer hinder the text actually doing it; the opaque 'mechanism' of the text, by means of this analogy, becomes transparent. The way the text functions no longer obscures what the text achieves. As an enabling strategy of reading, it also functions as a practical 'apologetic' for Ricoeur's anatomy of metaphor.

Harry Maier expresses powerfully the way that Revelation locates its readers, by drawing on the concept of 'theatricality', in which the cosmic drama is likened to the performance of a play:

> Unmasking and remasking, positioning and displacing the hearers, all of these scenes reveal mimetically the audience to itself as playing out idealized, carnivalesque scenes during which the plot of tribulation and reward unfolds... [T]he audience, encountering itself projected onto these stages in the play of mythical actors, is object both of its own and a divine gaze....[I]ts spectators are entangled in a narrative apocalyptic discourse that is continuously revealing themselves to themselves.[44]

I suspect it would have been John's wish that the text should do this as effectively today as it did for its first readers.

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[44] Maier (1997) p 152.

6 Conclusion

i. Review of the Argument

I began this thesis by raising the question of the diversity of readings of
Revelation, and the relation of this diversity to questions of methodology. I then
went on to look at some different approaches in more detail. I showed how
readings that come to very different conclusions about the meaning and reference
of Revelation can actually have much in common at the level of method and how
the text is actually treated. This suggested that a fruitful area of exploration would
be to look at method in approaching the most controversial aspect of Revelation's
text, its 'symbolism.'

This led to an exploration of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic of metaphor, firstly in
the context of some issues raised in reading Revelation, then in the context of his
own programme, and finally in the context of recent thinking about the nature of
metaphor. (It is this context which has to a large degree shaped thinking about the
nature of theological language, as distinct from scientific language, the deep
separation of these two being in part responsible for the difficulties arising in
critical reading of Revelation's symbolic language.)

I highlighted Ricoeur's concern for the fullness of human experience, and in
relation to this the way his work strives to pay adequate attention to both the
objective and the subjective in interpretation. But the specific criticisms of his
work show that, as it has progressed, his thinking has been unable to maintain the
balance between objectivity and subjectivity that Ricoeur himself has striven for.
In particular, the analytical aspect of the interpretation of metaphor, required by
the logic of his own argument, is ultimately passed over by Ricoeur in his overall
thinking about hermeneutics. Notwithstanding this, I noted the valuable
emphases that Ricoeur brings to the interpretative process, and how these may be
reclaimed in the reading of Revelation once the analytical element was reinstated
along the lines suggested by Ricoeur's description of the anatomy of metaphor.

As preparation for the understanding of the metaphorization present in
Revelation 12 and 13, I undertook an analytical 'detour'. This was in part shaped
by Ricoeur's concern for intersubjectivity, but the detour was extended in order to
engage with contemporary discussion of dating and historical context, and in so
doing to highlight some of the questions of method raised earlier. This meant

doing to highlight some of the questions of method raised earlier. This meant being more concerned (in this analytical phase) with communication than with innovation—that is, prioritising engagement with a wide range of views over offering a novel solution that did not address issues already highlighted elsewhere. With regard to the date of authorship, I provisionally concluded that a Domitianic date for Revelation was not unreasonable, and explored some of the ways in which the text would have a pertinent message in the light of what we can discern about the context of Christian readers living during the reign of Domitian.

In the second part of the 'analytical detour', I returned from the more 'conventional' questions of dating and context, and began to engage with issues related to my study of Ricoeur. I addressed the key literary issues in reading Revelation 12 and 13, including noting the structural influence of contemporary pagan mythology on the early part of Rev 12, and how the nested structure of the rest of the chapter functions epexegetically in relation to this first section. I also analysed the importance of allusion to the Old Testament in identifying the 'players' in the drama, and in passing identified an important allusion in Rev 12.8 (to Ps 36.36 LXX and Dan 2.35) that has not previously been noted. I observed the important role that a systematic survey of allusion could play in future reading of Revelation. Finally, I made some critical observations concerning the methodology of source criticism as it has been (and continues to be) applied to Revelation.

In the final stage of the study, I attempted to draw together the issues raised by analysis in a reading of the chapters, especially chapter 12. The assessment of the text that grew out of applying Ricoeur's understanding of metaphor indicated a 'polemical displacement' of characters in the mythology employed elsewhere to support Roman imperial power. I identified the way that this parallels contemporary exercises in polemical displacement in both discourse and art, in particular in the construction of political cartoons. There is evidence that this kind of polemical displacement formed an important role in the formation of Christian identity in the early centuries of the movement.

The parallel between Rev 12 and 13 and contemporary cartoons implies two things. In the first place, it provides insight into the significance of the text for first readers, and shows that the text potentially offered an important role in locating

them and their struggles for identity within the continuing narrative of the God of Israel's action in the world. In the second place, it offers an accessible way in for ordinary readers to see the kind of world that is opened up by the text, and countermands the tendency of criticism to make texts remote to the general readership. As a consequence, Ricoeur's anatomy of metaphor is given a practical apologetic as a methodologically sound description of language use in ordinary discourse, and of ordinary reading strategies of metaphorical texts.

Of course there remain numerous areas for further study. In the area of analysis, the most promising appears to be the systematic analysis of OT allusions. A related area that has not yet been explored much is the question of whether there are echoes of other parts of the NT in Revelation. A strategic issue to explore will be promoting new avenues for dialogue in the study of Revelation, an issue that will become more urgent as scholarly work in this area expands in the next millennium.

ii. Subjectivity and Objectivity in Biblical Reading

At a time when Western culture is allegedly in transition from modernity (with its emphasis on objectivity) to post-modernity (with its emphasis on subjectivity)[1], it is not surprising that Ricoeur's concern with the dialectic of subject and object is so pertinent in contemporary reading of the Bible.[2] I would like to conclude by indicating five areas where questions raised in the light of Ricoeur's thought are especially relevant.

a. Revelation and the Future

Craig Blomberg, in setting out the challenges for Evangelical hermeneutics, calls for an interpretation of Revelation 'which affirms that Revelation points to genuinely future events, even in some detail'.[3] This raises two questions: what constitutes 'genuinely future'; and if this means 'events in history', how does this sit with Revelation's own treatment of the future?

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[1] See the analysis of the transition into the era of post-modernity in Middleton and Walsh (1995).
[2] And Ricoeur himself might be seen as typifying this cultural transition in the area of hermeneutics.
[3] Blomberg (1994) p 77.

It may be that Revelation's narrative time presents not so much 'the future', as future destiny. This destiny is neither an historical programme (against fundamentalism) nor a myth of eternal present reality, an existential 'way of speaking about the world'. The continuity of this age with the age to come means that there are clues to destiny if we know where to look. But the discontinuity of the two ages means that the *eschaton* does not arrive through a neat set of historical events. If that were the case, then the *eschaton* would be a moment in history; in reality, it is the end of history. The realization of this is the point of differentiation between prophecy and apocalyptic, and so is in some sense part of the 'programme' (if there be such) of apocalypticism.

It may be apt to note that Ricoeur's depiction of the struggle of the self to understand itself through understanding its place in the world is a struggle for self-transcendence—with a difference. Instead of taking the direct route of mastering the world, the human subject must be neither the central autonomous agent (as in the thought of Descartes or Kant) not relegated to the margins (as in the post-structuralism of Derrida), but discover a new relation to the world as it is and as it might be. In the same way, the ambivalent relation of history to eschatological destiny in apocalyptic, and particularly in Revelation, means that the reader sees her role in the present neither simply carried over into the new age, nor put aside, but transformed through the indirect route of patient endurance.

b. The Multivalence of Language

Assessing the role of analysis within the interpretation of the text raises the question of what it means for language to be 'multivalent.' For language to be in some sense 'open' is essential for Ricoeur, as this is what gives rise to the surplus of meaning in language, what gives metaphor its potency, and what makes language the indispensable tool in the human struggle for self-transcendence. In Barthes' terms, it is one of the things that makes metaphorical texts 'readerly' (rather than 'writerly')[4] and so interesting, as the reader then participates in the creation of meaning.[5] Moreover, commentators on Revelation take the fact that

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[4] Linton (1991); see discussion earlier under 'An Integrated Analysis.'
[5] But see Richard Bauckham's comment (1998b, p 11) that readers always have a role in the creation of meaning, since meaning occurs in the interaction of reader and text.

Revelation's symbolism is 'multivalent' to argue against looking for definitive referents of the images to contemporary realities.

But what does it mean for language to be 'multivalent'? The word is a metaphor drawn from the world of chemistry. An element's valence is a measure of how many other elements it can combine with at any one time ('this and this and this...'), rather than how many different elements it could possibly combine with one after another ('this or this or this...'). So something that is multivalent has a great breadth of possibility associated with it; the connotation of the word is to do with *scope* rather than with ambiguity—with indefiniteness of boundary rather than uncertainty of meaning.

This emphasis fits well with Ricoeur's understanding of the power of metaphor. Metaphor's power lies in its ability to open up new possible worlds of existence, worlds that have no boundaries in what they might mean for the reader who 'enters' those worlds. The power is in the sheer scope of the possibilities the world of the metaphor offers, rather than in the fact that the reader has a 'choice' about which world is being opened up. It is in the scope rather than the ambiguity of the metaphor.

If it were otherwise, then the process of reading would put the subject back at the centre; the subject would be master of the metaphor in choosing which possible world to associate with that metaphor, which in turn would become absorbed into the perceiving subject. As it is, criticism, and especially historical criticism, reminds the subject that the text is 'other.'[6]

The task of criticism, then, is to discern from the nature of the semantic impertinence the nature of the world opened up by metaphor. Once that is done, criticism steps back, and the reader explores (with a post-critical naïveté) the possibilities offered in engaging with that world.

c. The Future of Commentary

Richard Coggins (1993) writes perceptively on the dichotomies that have marked the writing and production of commentaries in recent years. Should they be 'academic' or 'confessional'? Striving for the truth or expressing ideology? Re-creating the original context, or exploring relevance to the present-day audience?

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[6] Bauckham (1998b) p 11.

Coggins is aware that these dichotomies are not as simple as they seem. On the suggestion (of Leslie Houlden) that commentaries might 'abandon the uncommitted neutrality of the historian and re-introduce faith into the process of apprehending the text,' Coggins comments: 'I am sceptical as to whether faith, in that sense, has ever left the process' (170).

On the question of investigating historical contextualization versus expounding present-day relevance, my study of Ricoeur in relation to Revelation suggests that commentaries will always need to do both. The second cannot reliably be done without the first, and the first is (from a confessional point of view) pointless without the second. The question then arises: in a world of burgeoning scholarship, what format of commentary can possibly achieve this? How much space can be given over to explication of hermeneutical methodology?

Commentaries on Revelation are increasingly falling into two camps: the short, accessible, more devotionally oriented (Boesak, Rowland); and the monumental tome (Beale, Aune). The disadvantage with the first kind is that there not much room for making the analysis underlying the commentary explicit. The problem with the second kind is that any application that there is gets swamped by the analysis.

The future may lie in a format akin to the structure of the Word series. Here each passage of text is given three sections: 'Form/structure/setting'; 'Commentary'; and 'Explanation.' It is possible to read the (usually accessible) 'Explanation' section on its own, knowing that the justification for these comments is given in the other sections.[7] A commentary in two volumes, with the analysis in the first and the application in the second, would be a significant step forward. This is not just a concern of publishing (I am not sure that such a format would make good commercial sense); finding a format that allows commentators to maintain contact with the academic community, whilst engaging with the confessional, must surely be an essential part of retaining the integrity of both text and reader.

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[7] It is a somewhat retrograde step that Aune's commentary, in the Word series, uses the 'Application' section to give a summary of the earlier analysis, rather than offer application of it.

d. Academic and Confessional Reading Communities

The debate about the role of commentary is one aspect of the traditional mutual suspicion with which those engaged with academic and confessional approaches to reading the Bible have viewed each other. Arguments for the priority of both have been voiced again recently. Francis Watson (1994) argues that reading the Bible cannot be done without meaningful contact with the community whose canon it is, for a variety of reasons, including the nature of humanity as dialogic. By contrast, Philip Davies (1995), as he indicates in his provocative title 'Whose Bible is it Anyway?', wants to be able to read free from the constraints of the confessional community.

Perhaps it should be noted that once the discussion has got to the point of who 'owns' the Bible, something has gone wrong somewhere. Ricoeur (and Coggins, and others) make the point that there can be no 'neutral' approach to the Bible. And Lundin (1985) emphasises that responsible reading involves not just good method, but a concern for the effect of our particular reading on our own behaviour and on the lives of others. One vital aspect of that will always be the impact on the religious communities 'that have preserved [the Bible], and for whom it makes sense.'[8]

Perhaps the most interesting example of this engagement between the academic and the confessional is the growth in academic respectability of the charismatic/Pentecostal schools of theology. Mark Stibbe (1998) has set out a charismatic understanding of biblical interpretation, with its characteristic emphasis on experience and community. Stibbe has consistently maintained an emphasis on the importance of both the objective and the subjective in biblical studies.[9] Although his article is written in reply to a critique of his approach, he laments the fact that his dialogue partner has never taken up the opportunity to discuss the questions face-to-face (1998, p 193).

In an age where the opportunities for communication are greater than ever, it would be a tragedy indeed if study of Revelation failed to fulfil its promise through the failure of those studying it—from both sides of the 'academic/confessional' divide—to communicate effectively with one another.
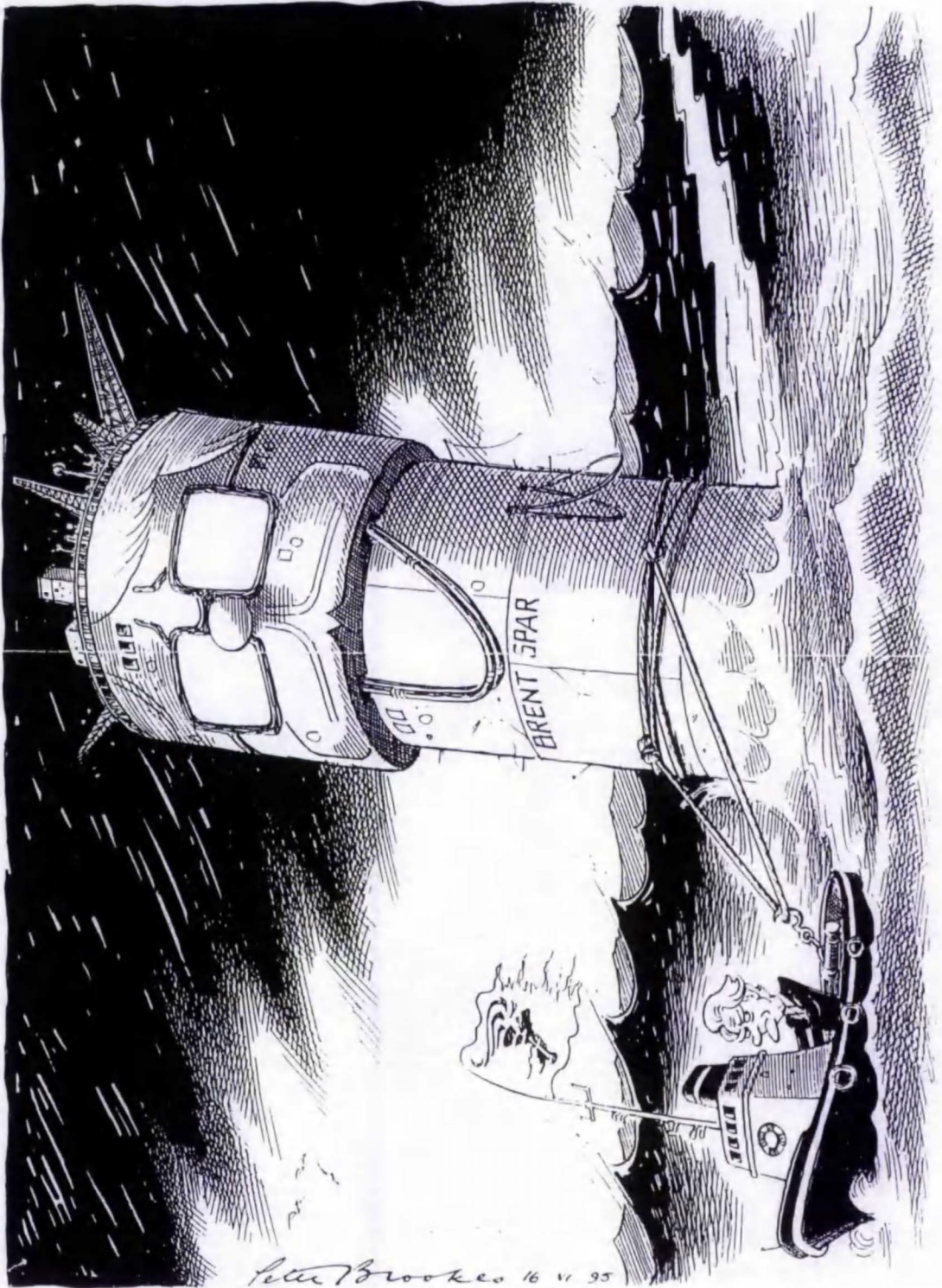
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[8] John Sawyer in Houlden and Coggins (1980), p 321, cited in Morgan (1995) p 395.

[9] Stibbe (1992) Introduction. This concern takes the particular form of seeing John's Gospel as both 'poetical and historical.'

Appendix I: Illustrations

WILL THEY DUMP THE REDUNDANT RIG?

" ... AND WHEN YOU WAKE UP YOU WILL BELIEVE THAT ALL OUR FIGURES ADD UP AND NONE OF OUR POLICIES IS HOT AIR ... "

(HYPNOTIST CASE CONTINUES)
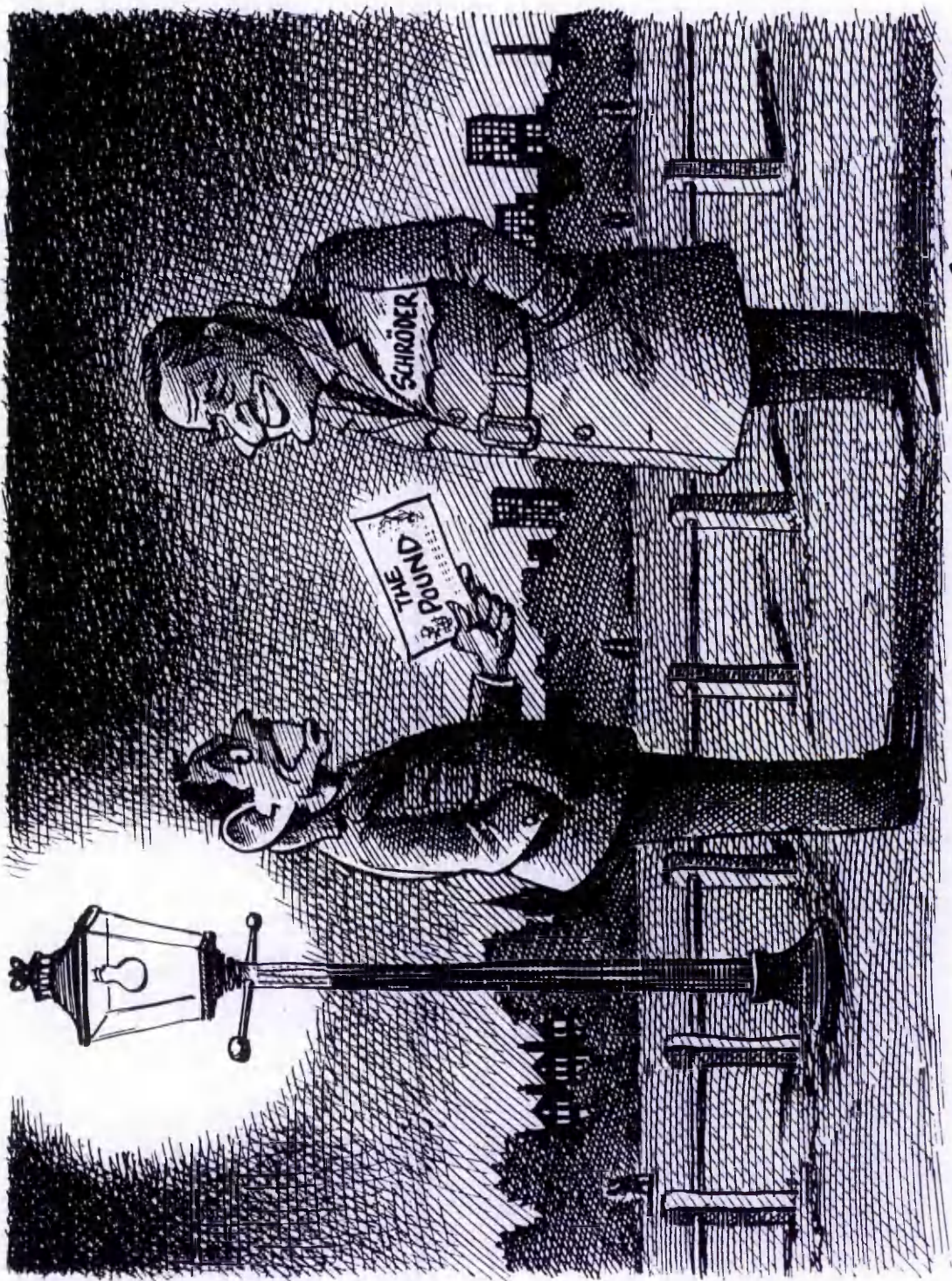
MOMENT OF MADNESS...

"We have no territorial demands; we want the world!" Anti-nazi cartoon, based on the visions of the horsemen, Rev. 6:1-8, by "Bert," In *Neuer Vorwärts* Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia. 15 März, 1936, Nr. 144 (Beilage). Source: Die Deutsche Bibliothek, Deutsches Exilarchiv 1933-1945, Frankfurt am Main.
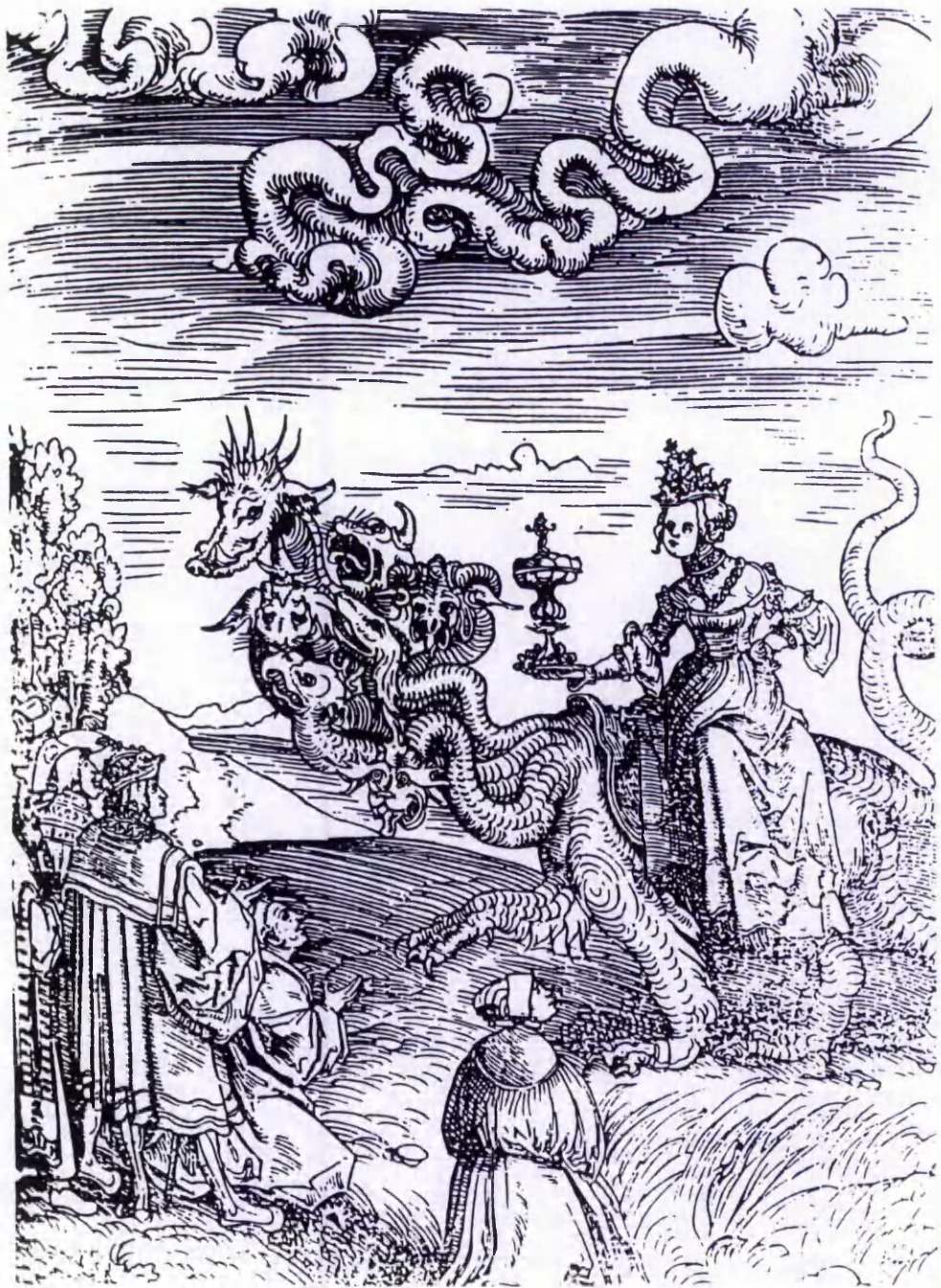
The Whore of Babylon (Rev. 17:1-18). Woodcut from Luther's *Das neue Testament Deutzsch* (Wittenberg: Melchior Lotter the Younger for Christian Döring and Lucas Cranach the Elder, September 1522), in the Richard C. Kessler Reformation Collection, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University. Used with permission.

ic An early Christian sarcophagus showing the three young men of the Book of Daniel refusing to worship the image set up by Nebuchadnezzar. See pp. 199, 222.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

© Steve Bell 1994
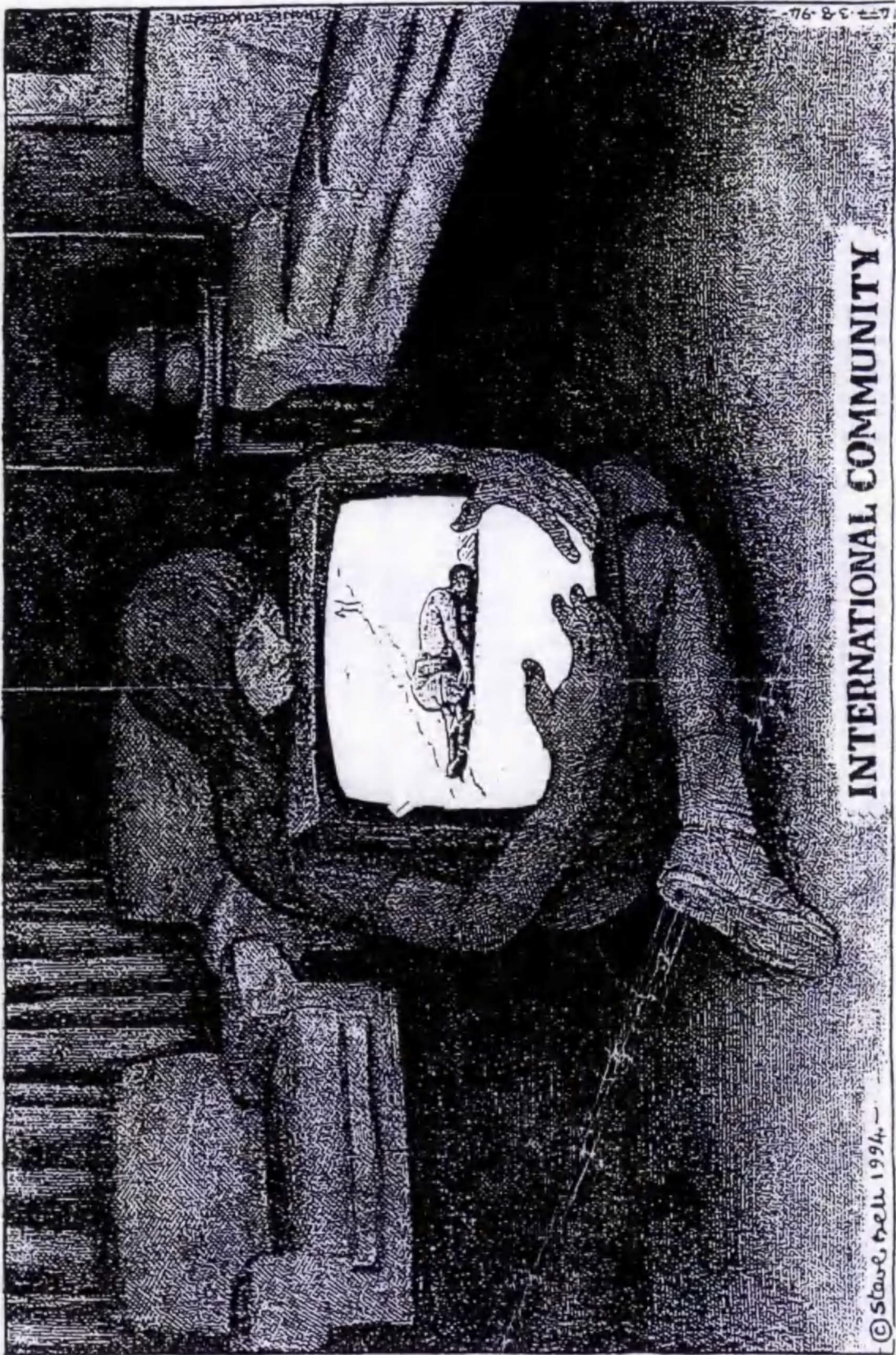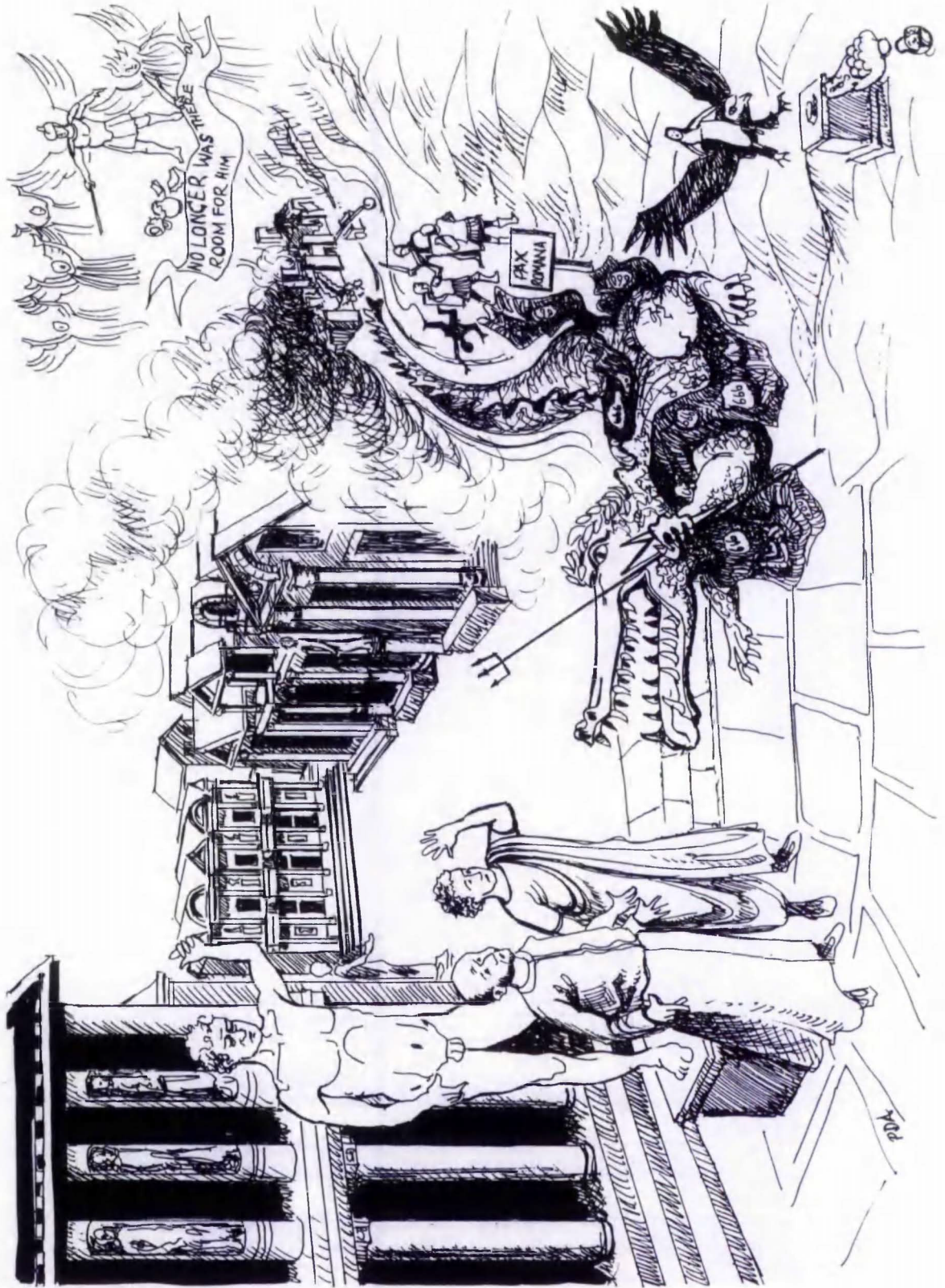
Appendix II: Bibliography

For convenience in reading, I have separated works consulted into those actually cited in the thesis (citation being by author and date only) and those works which shaped or influenced my thinking but have not been cited within the text.

Abbreviations used for journal titles follow those given in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107.3 (1988) pages 579–596.

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