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potent connections between the seemingly separate—personal and economic-political, church and society, spiritual and material, disparate types and levels of injustice, the feminist movement and broader contemporary impulses toward liberation. The comprehensive scholarship and clarity of purpose marking this historically sensitive, politically astute "ethics of coinherence" should challenge other religious ethicists, however they might disagree with Harrison on particular issues, to respond in kind.

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POLAND, LYNN M. *Literary Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Critique of Formalist Approaches.* Decatur, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1985. 220 pp. $15.25 (cloth); $10.25 (paper).

Lynn Poland's book, originally presented as her doctoral thesis, is an attentive and careful study in critical history, tracing an arc from Bultmann to Ricoeur via the New Critics. The proliferation of literary criticism in recent biblical studies conflicts inevitably with a kerygma whose literary expression, for example, in the Gospels, has to be demythologized, exposed as a "camouflage" (p. 41) for a truth that is beyond language and that has no objective content. Yet the acquisition of ineffable knowledge is also part of the New Critical program; the close reading of the text reveals a truth that transcends its ostensible content and differs from scientific interpretations of reality. Thus, for critics who are heirs both to the Bultmannian tradition and to New Criticism, there are a number of problems: (1) Does sacred literature require special hermeneutic rules? Does its mystery differ from the mystery of any poem? (2) Is the idea of the Bible as literature—that is, the sacred language—implicitly subverted by the gospel? (3) What is the focus of critical attention? For Bultmann, it is both the historical intention of the work, recovered, for example, by form-criticism, and the existential response; for the literary critic, it is the text itself, shaped no doubt by the community, but nevertheless autonomous. The crisis of authority in contemporary literary criticism would render the discussion still more fraught since it puts into question both the autonomy of the literary work and its transcendent meaning. Poland only just touches on these issues, which simplifies her task and illustrates its major limitation: that the criticisms she examines are but one element in a complex and volatile literary world that rapidly leaves them behind.

Bultmann is the subject of Poland's first chapter. Her exposition is clear, thorough, tracing Bultmann's fascinating theological roots and thus grounding her study in the history of Christian exegesis, occasionally repetitive, respectful, yet accurate in her criticisms. Yet her account has left me puzzled as to why Bultmann should have had such influence. In a sense, it is clear: Bultmann redirects attention from the chimera of the historical Jesus, who might prove to be all too human, to the enigma of the divine word in the godless world, subject to its demythologizing gaze. Mythological thought, that is, the translation of the transcendent into imagery, is meaningless to modern man (pp. 30–31). The critic's task is to make it accessible, through decoding its conventions, to our existential self-understanding, to disencumber the naked kerygma, the *skandalon,* of its outmoded clothes. The consequences are formidable. The first is his avowed adoption of Luther's practice of *Sachkritik*

(content criticism) (pp. 21, 49), the development of a demythologizing canon within the canon that will confirm his theory. This is not only circular, it also robs the Bible of its quality of dialectic, its refusal to be reduced to a single ideology. The second is the separation of the content of the text from its teaching (p. 34), which denies Jesus' historical words ultimate significance. This results from Bultmann's "radicalization" of "justification by faith" (p. 21). Third, if the text is the result of enlightenment, which, moreover, requires interpretation to fulfill its function, it is threatened with redundancy; the *skandalon* does not logically need a text. Fourth, Bultmann's concept of myth ignores the text's temporal dimension; it is because it is human, realistic, and very precisely localized that, as Frei shows, it is moving. Fifth, Bultmann's assertion that mythological thought is alien to modern man is, to say the least, curious, coming as it does from Nazi Germany.

Poland focuses her critique solely on Bultmann's undeveloped and paradoxical contention that there is a possible language of faith. Her second chapter presents the literary-critical antithesis: the literary work depends neither on author nor reader for its meaning; the critical task is not the abstraction of a meaningful content but the apprehension of organic unity. Thereby redemptive, nonpropositional knowledge is transmitted, the New-Critical equivalent of the kerygma. The differences, however, are enormous; incompatible with New Criticism are Bultmann's demythologizing, his separation of form and content, his existentialist translation. Poland's criticisms of New Criticism are familiar and need not be repeated. Her third chapter examines the work of three critics—Crossan, Frei, Via—who have responded in different ways to this conflict. Crossan perceives the parables as antiliterature, in which the assumptions of our ordered, linguistic reality, the myths with which we sustain our lives, are subverted; they reveal a dark gap, a holy negation (p. 119). Thus, Crossan demythologizes Bultmann's notion of God as a covert, existential agent in history, substituting Derridean absence for the metaphysics of presence; he replaces the autonomy of the literary work by the intertextual play of infinite substitution, the idealization of literature by its idolatry. Poland argues that Crossan misreads Derrida in positing a central aporia; even this, she contends, is logocentric. I do not think Derrida is clear on this point; in any case, Crossan's insistent evocation of the voice of Jesus, apart from its significations, firmly opposes him to deconstruction.

Frei, in contrast, adopts the New Critical program; the New Testament, he holds, is based on realistic narrative, to be read with the same assent, closeness, and receptiveness as a novel. Attempts to extract a message from it, to demythologize it, are contrary to its human and temporal nature. Poland criticizes Frei, wrongly it seems to me, for undervaluing the role of the interpreter; she attributes to him views that are merely cited by him as part of his metahistorical argument. She also disputes his assertion that there is no gap between representation and what is represented; this would produce, she suggests, a different Jesus for each gospel. This is not an objection, however; it merely points to the multiplicity of personality that is one of the strengths of our story.

Poland presents Via as a critic who proposed an adequate synthesis of New Critical and Bultmannian positions without being able to put it into exegetical practice. He stresses the cognitive value of the literary work and also the context, preunderstanding, and awareness of convention that determines our reading of it. This brings us to the fourth chapter, on Ricoeur.

For Ricoeur, the Bible is poetic in function (p. 190); to the "hermeneutics of suspicion" of Freud, Marx, and so on, it brings a "hermeneutics of restoration" (p. 163), a participation in being displacing the objectifications of discourse. It reads the reader, eliciting a new self, but only through interpretation ("explanation"), the critical phase that all discourse shares. Even the New Testament is an interpretation, distanced, more or less, from the event to which it witnesses. Ricoeur criticizes Bultmann for isolating the kerygma from the text, for moving too quickly to the unpremeditated assent. In part, this is because he does not question the text's, and hence his own, abstractions, his demythologized canon within the canon, in relation to other forms of discourse; he does not, for example, investigate the meaning of narrative as a biblical mode of divine expression. For Ricoeur, the Bible is the meeting place of many genres, points of view, and interpretations. But it also refers to a world, which is both our world and the Kingdom of God (p. 193). This differentiates the Bible from other literature and marks Ricoeur's opposition to the New Critics and their successors. Poetry is the scene of our transformation through the illuminating creativity of metaphor. God is the point of convergence, the coordinator, of all the referents in the text (p. 193), the residue that transcends and is uncompleted by them. At the limit of our world we encounter that which addresses us, unfolds its kingdom among us, and surrenders to our critical, skeptical discourse.

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DAMROSCH, LEOPOLD, JR. *God's Plot and Man's Stories: Studies in the Fictional Imagination from Milton to Fielding.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. xi + 303 pp. $25.00.

What has religion to do with the rise of the novel in England? Leopold Damrosch proposes to answer this question, not by revising the traditional estimation that the answer in some fundamental sense involves Puritanism, but by looking at Puritanism in a more searching way than previously has been the case. Thus the second through fourth chapters of this volume (almost two-thirds of the total work) are devoted to studies of Puritan literature: one chapter is devoted to Puritan biography and autobiography, one to Milton's *Paradise Lost,* and one to Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress.* The result is the book's central thesis: the narratives of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England are best understood as attempts by their writers to replicate nothing less than the hidden order of divine providence. Armed with this interpretive framework, Damrosch then turns to the novel, examining in the book's final three chapters DeFoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* Richardson's *Clarissa,* and Fielding's *Tom Jones.* The underlying assumption, apparent if not explicitly stated, is that the Christian myth of this period was fundamentally Puritan; it follows that Damrosch documents the religious concerns of DeFoe, Richardson, and Fielding in terms of the ways they do and do not correspond to the Puritan narrative ethos he sketches. This assumption is in my judgment dubious and proves to be so even in Damrosch's own interpretations. Nonetheless, the developed parallel between providential ordering and narrative ordering—between "a structure of will that determines" and "a structure of explanation that interprets"—is in fact illuminating.