

performance, and contemporary art practices, as well as those with interest in abjection, gender and sexuality, the AIDS crisis, charismatic Christianity, and the construction of religious identity.

*Jeremy Biles*

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**MAD LIKE ARTAUD.** By Sylvère Lotringer. Minneapolis, MN: Univocal Publishing, 2015. Pp. 214. Paper, \$24.95.

Antonin Artaud, the “madman” who authored the seminal 1931 “Manifesto for a Theater of Cruelty,” remains among the most provocative, intractable, troubling, and fascinating figures in twentieth-century intellectual history. Contradictions and enigmas characterize both Artaud and the work (manifestos, essays, scripts, poems, journals, drawings) that bears his name. And indeed, separating the person from the work is nigh impossible—a fact bearing out Artaud’s desire to dissolve the boundary between art and life. Philosopher Sylvère Lotringer’s volume on Artaud emerges in this liminal space between art and life, investigating Artaud in his multifarious (and duplicitous?) theatrical madness. One thing that makes this book outstanding is its focus on Artaud’s fraught religious identity. Displaying religious obsessions through his life, Artaud was for periods a fervent, even maniacal, Catholic. But he would also lash out at God with surpassing virulence in texts such as the “To Have Done with the Judgment of God.” Lotringer’s introductory essay, as its title indicates, asks “Was Artaud a Christian?” to which the author replies, “No, he was Jewish, but the secret was well kept.” Lotringer discloses and discusses Artaud’s Jewish background and his rejection of it, making scathing comparisons to Simone Weil, who “became, if not an anti-Semite . . . at least an enemy of Hebrews, and above all, of herself.” The chapter “To Have Done with All Judgment” comprises an essay focusing on Artaud’s “thundering indictment of God and the Christian age,” which has “no equivalent in occidental culture; not even in Nietzsche’s work”; followed by an interview with Dr. Jacques Latrémolière, a man who professed a deep interest in theology and claimed to have “talked about God” with Artaud during his incarceration at the psychiatric hospital. Later, Lotringer addresses Artaud’s adherence to “a brand of Christianity that according to him condemned all human sexuality to damnation,” before moving into an interview with Dr. Gaston Ferdière, who remains controversial for having applied electroshock treatment to Artaud. Lotringer exhibits a deep fascination with Artaud, and like all fascination, it mingles attraction and repulsion. Scholars and teachers interested in the relations between mental illness and religious identity will find an abundance of worthwhile material in this book. Those in the psychiatric field with special interest in religion might read this book in conjunction with the psychoanalytic literature treating Freud’s case study on Dr. Schreber. And anyone wishing to consider Artaud’s

religious obsessions will find in this book much to provoke thought.

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## Ancient Near East

**FROM THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR TO THE PROMISE OF PRESENCE: A RHETORICAL READING OF THE BOOK OF JOEL.** By Joel Barker. Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures, 11. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014. Pp. xi + 284. \$44.50.

Barker’s slightly revised dissertation (McMaster Divinity College) offers a rhetorical-critical study of Joel with special attention to its persuasive intent, strategies, and effect. The author argues that Joel is a “unified work of prophetic literature that moves from scenes of devastation to promises of restoration by evoking divine and human responses in order to persuade the audience of the necessity of calling and relying on YHWH in all circumstances.” The introduction surveys major issues in research on Joel, including date, unity, the Book of the Twelve, and synchronic approaches. Extended discussion is given to the method of rhetorical criticism and its relationship to the prophetic literature, both with a survey in the introduction and a full-length treatment of Barker’s own approach in chapter two. He adopts a rhetorical-critical approach derived from the works of G. Kennedy and K. Möller, with special focus on the “art of persuasion” in the book, but sufficiently nuances and modifies foundational theories on elements such as the rhetorical situation and rhetorical effectiveness. The analysis proceeds through specific textual units (1:1–14; 1:15–20; 2:1–11; 2:12–17; 2:18–27; 3:1–5; 4:1–21). For each unit, Barker examines four elements: 1) rhetorical unit; 2) rhetorical situation; 3) rhetorical strategy; 4) rhetorical effectiveness. This book will be very valuable for those working with rhetorical criticism, especially those looking for introductory surveys. While some readers may not be convinced by the methodology, the end result is a sophisticated rhetorical analysis, nuanced in appropriate ways, which should be included in all collections of Joel scholarship.

*Brad E. Kelle*

*Point Loma Nazarene University*

**1177 B.C.: THE YEAR CIVILIZATION COLLAPSED.** By Eric H. Cline. Turning Points in Ancient History. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014. Pp. xx + 237. \$29.95.

This work by an archaeology and classics professor represents the inaugural volume in a new series focused on seminal moments in the ancient history of the Greco-Roman world and its neighbors. Cline’s focus is not so much on the specific date of 1177 BC, when the “Sea Peoples” invaded

Egypt, but on the Late Bronze Age in the fifteenth through twelfth centuries BC and the various factors that led to its decline. The author produces a book for the engaged and interested non-specialist but it is not an easy read; multiple civilizations spanning centuries and continents are in view. Ultimately, Cline argues against an interpretation of the decline that relies solely on the new presence of the Sea Peoples in the area. Instead, he notes that numerous factors were at play in the demise of these societies: invasion combined with climate change (e.g., drought which led to famine), earthquakes, and internal rebellions. The author notes helpfully that no major consensus has emerged among scholars regarding the primary factor for the passing of these empires. Instead, we must be willing to accept nonlinear and complex explanations. Cline has produced an instructive introduction to the Late Bronze Age in the Near East.

*Tyler Mayfield*

*Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary*

**QOHELETH: THE IRONIC WINK.** By James L. Crenshaw. *Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013. Pp. x + 170. \$44.95.

Crenshaw's depth and breadth of knowledge regarding wisdom literature and philosophy are undeniable in this volume; the content is brimming with the insights of a seasoned scholar. He tackles the quandary of Qoheleth's contradictions while maintaining a style that is accessible to an educated lay audience and students of religion. The material is well organized and takes up particular topics from the authorship and purpose of Qoheleth to its theology and reception. Crenshaw engages earlier scholarship without bogging down his reader, and presents his own arguments in a fair and clear fashion. Two of his most convincing claims are that Qoheleth viewed the deity as utterly arbitrary and that Qoheleth wrote in an elusive and absurd fashion to highlight his thesis—everything is futile. An idea of the volume that might meet more resistance is Crenshaw's ironic reading of Qoheleth's imperatives to enjoy life's pleasures. The only weakness of this text is Crenshaw's tendency to stray too far from the primary topic, but this happens on very few occasions. Overall, the book is a strong introduction to the mysterious personality behind the biblical book of Qoheleth.

*Shelley L. Long*

*North Central College*

**READING THE HISTORICAL BOOKS: A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO ENGAGING THE BIBLICAL TEXT.** By Patricia Dutcher-Walls. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. xxi + 178. \$22.00.

This volume puts emphasis on the "reading" rather than the "historical books" of its title. It is a very basic

introduction seemingly intended for students with almost no experience in the critical reading of texts, historical, or otherwise. It begins with a brief sketch of the land, society, and historical events of the OT/HB period ("Discovering the Context of the Text"). There follow two chapters dedicated to helping students read the text as literature and as rhetoric ("Listening to the Story in the Text" and "Discerning the Interests of the Text"). The fourth chapter ("Examining History in the Text") brings biblical historiography into conversation with the historiographical practices of other ancient Near East cultures. The final chapter ("Examining the Shape of History") synthesizes the foregoing to analyze how the rhetoric of biblical histories might have worked in its own contexts and beyond. As the chapter titles indicate, the volume limits itself to the text, and thus to perspectives that will be comfortable to readers who have only the biblical text to go by. The goal is "understanding biblical history *on its own terms*" (emphasis added). It "does not take a particular stand on the extent to which the events recorded in the biblical books happened the way they are described." (Although the author's choice of the word "recorded"—instead of, e.g., "narrated"—says much.) One will have to "read elsewhere" about critical issues of composition, dating, etc. Similarly, no critical stance is taken with respect to the ideologies of the biblical text, even where the biblical text itself invites critical reflection; e.g., "David is a model of exemplary behavior as a king and man of God." The volume introduces a selection of useful information and literary/rhetorical methodology. The focus is basically reading comprehension: bringing the reader to the point where critical study begins.

*Christopher B. Hays*

*Fuller Theological Seminary*

**JEREMIAH AND GOD'S PLANS OF WELL-BEING.** By Barbara Green. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013. Pp. xiii + 221. \$49.95.

This book explores the literary figure of Jeremiah as presented in the book of Jeremiah. Without shirking critical awareness of complexities, the author focuses instead on the literary construct that emerges from the extant text when read according to a narratological model. The author considers a potential plot line that the primary character follows in the book. Each of the seven chapters presents the literary portrayal of a particular section of Jeremiah, based on the author's own outline. One particular theme that emerges from her reading is that Jeremiah's story involves his perception and awareness of his role in God's communication with the people. This story takes various turns, but God's intention to establish well-being for and with the people orients the entire mission of the prophet, who is revealed to be vulnerable and frail when his work fails. This book offers a fresh way forward for engaging a convoluted, debatable text. Its primary weakness could also be its predominant strength: it starts from an awareness of the complex critical

issues involved in reading Jeremiah, yet moves forward without being bogged down in the mire. The book could be useful to academics and laypersons, alike. The former might find one useful model for synthesizing the usual issues; the latter, a moving, incisive reading of pressing theological issues in the book of Jeremiah.

*Daniel D. Bunn Jr.*  
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**WOMEN'S DIVINATION IN BIBLICAL LITERATURE: PROPHECY, NECROMANCY, AND OTHER ARTS OF KNOWLEDGE.** By Esther J. Hamori. The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015. Pp. xiii + 271. \$85.00.

This book shifts biblical scholars away from an often narrow focus on ancient Israelite prophecy as the primary, legitimate means of divine-human interaction to a more expansive understanding of divination, defined as any action that results in the attainment of divine knowledge. Divination, then, certainly includes prophecy, but also points to other ways of accessing the divine (e.g., necromancy); Hamori terms these ways "arts of knowledge." The author also innovates by focusing attention on women's participation in divination within biblical literature. After two helpful introductory chapters, which lay out the central questions and previous research, the volume treats various women in canonical order by way of thirteen separate chapters. The expected women are present: Miriam, Deborah, the necromancer of En-dor, Huldah, and Noadiah. Lesser known figures are included too: the "wise women" of 2 Samuel, the prophet from Isaiah 8, the daughters of Joel 3, and the woman of Proverbs 1–9. Hamori does not force the diverse depictions of these women into a singular argument about women's divination in the Bible; instead, she allows each biblical passage to stand independently. The author has nicely filled a gap in biblical scholarship with this volume, and I highly recommend it for scholars and interested non-specialists.

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**THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE ASSYRIANS IN ISAIAH: SYNCHRONIC AND DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVES.** By Mary Katherine Y. H. Hom. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies, 559. New York: Bloomsbury, 2012. Pp. xiv + 235. \$39.95.

This revised dissertation (University of Cambridge) examines the characterization of the Assyrians in Isaiah in each text in which they are mentioned explicitly or implicitly. Hom analyzes the "final, received form" of the Masoretic Text, and all of the passages examined come from Isa 1–39, with one exception (52:1–6). Her main focus is on synchronic analysis and "narrative artistry," but she integrates redaction and diachronic considerations, especially concerning the

compositional history of the book and its relationship to the characterization of Assyria. Following an introduction that discusses previous research, methods, and terminology, Hom examines the relevant passages from Isaiah in canonical order. The analysis of each passage includes the determination of the textual unit and its role in the book, study of the exegetical elements and literary devices, consideration of the possible historical situations, and particular scrutiny of the role of Assyria in the text. The author argues that the characterization of Assyria in Isaiah is not one-dimensional or static, but has multiple aspects and different emphases in various passages. Typology is the primary literary device associated with the portrayals of Assyria, and Isaiah manifests a development in which Assyria generally moves from the "paradigmatic punitive instrument" of Yhwh that oversteps its bounds to the "typological foreign oppressor of Yhwh's people," especially serving as the type for Babylon that follows. The volume makes a well-researched contribution and will benefit both students and scholars of Isaiah and the literary and historical matrices of the prophetic literature.

*Brad E. Kelle*  
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**MOTHER ZION IN DEUTERO-ISAIAH: A METAPHOR FOR ZION THEOLOGY.** By Maggie Low. Studies in Biblical Literature 155. New York: Peter Lang, 2013. Pp. xiv + 222. \$85.95.

This slightly updated version of the author's 2009 dissertation employs Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor theory, an "eclectic" intertextual methodology, and a "close reading" of passages in Deutero-Isaiah (DI) to argue three main points. First, in DI, Zion represents YHWH's holy city, not YHWH's people, and is therefore innocent of the sin that caused the exile. This is in marked contrast to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, where Zion represents Israel, the people, and is depicted as a guilty, adulterous wife. It also contrasts with Lamentations, where she represents both the people and the city, and is portrayed as experiencing both pain and guilt. Second, although Zion is the personified mother of YHWH's people, YHWH the creator is actually the one who births his people. Specifically, Low argues that Isa 54:1–3 evokes Jer 10:17–25, where YHWH is said to remove his people. The purpose of DI's evocation of this text is to portray the reverse fate: it is YHWH who brings the people back. Although scholars such as Seitz and Goldingay have recognized that the rhetoric in DI indicates that YHWH "brings the people," Low wants to push further, emphasizing that YHWH actually gives birth to the people. Finally, it is mother Zion, as YHWH's royal city, not Israel, who is exalted over the nations to demonstrate YHWH's sovereignty. Low's argument, though at times hampered by a confusing organization of the biblical passages, warrants serious consideration by both scholars and students of Isaiah.

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**GOD, HIS SERVANT, AND THE NATIONS IN ISAIAH 42:1–9: BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS AFTER BREVARD S. CHILDS AND HANS HÜBNER.** By Frederik Poulsen. *Forschungen zum Alten Testament II*, 73. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014. Pp. xiv + 269. €79.00.

The first half of this revised PhD thesis (Copenhagen) takes up the worthy question of the role of the OT in biblical theology. Poulsen uses Childs of Yale University, and Hübner, professor of NT at Georg-August-University of Göttingen, to raise issues of canon formation, authority of OT, theological use of Hebrew Masoretic and Greek Septuagint versions, definitions of biblical theology, and the interpretation of the OT within biblical theology. While other scholars could have been incorporated to enrich the discussion, these two exemplars do indeed engender many seminal questions for the field of biblical theology. In the second half of the volume, Poulsen turns to Isaiah 42:1–9, examining it through various lenses. One chapter deals with the passage's context in the book of Isaiah and with regard for the servant figure. Another chapter compares the Masoretic and Septuagint versions of the passage, noting that the Greek translator creates a series of textual links to earlier Isaian messianic oracles. One chapter focuses on citations of Isaiah 42 in the NT to argue that the NT authors interpret the servant both in individual and collective terms. The final chapter provides a reading of Isaiah 42 in light of the entire Christian Bible. This work will be of interest especially to biblical theologians, scholars of Isaiah, textual critics, and persons interested in the figure of the servant through the biblical text.

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**JUDGES 1–12.** By Jack M. Sasson. *The Anchor Yale Bible*, 6D. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014. Pp. xx + 593. \$100.00.

Sasson, a well-known Assyriologist, biblical scholar, and professor at Vanderbilt University, pens the latest volume in the renowned Anchor Yale Bible commentary series. This work replaces the 1975 Judges commentary by Robert Boling in the series and focuses on the first half of the book with the second volume on chapters 13–21 to follow soon. The commentary's introduction is somewhat brief at 32 pages; the reader can sense that the author wishes to comment on the biblical text itself instead of general topics and the history of interpretation. The commentary portion of the volume includes three sections for each biblical passage: a new translation, meticulous and copious notes, and more general comments. Sasson is at his best when weighing interpretive options and building his arguments in the Notes section; biblical scholars will find a fruitful dialogue partner here. His "chatty" writing style effectively draws the reader into the biblical narrative and the historical context.

Readers without a scholarly background will appreciate his summative exposition in the Comments section for each passage. The commentary's primary strength is its use of ancient Near Eastern history, literature, and languages. The commentary concludes with 75 pages of endnotes and subject, modern author, ancient sources, and ancient keyword indices. This volume sets a new standard for contemporary judges scholarship.

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**INTERPRETING THE PROPHETIC BOOKS: AN EXEGETICAL HANDBOOK.** By Gary V. Smith. *Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2014. Pp. 214. \$22.99.

In keeping with the aims of the series, this volume offers a guidebook for exegeting and preaching the prophetic literature. The primary audiences are Christian (especially conservative evangelical) seminary students and pastors. Smith introduces historical and literary aspects of the texts, and especially aims to help readers identify the "one main theme" and major "theological principles" of the texts in question. Following the series format, the book first discusses the nature of prophetic literature, including what the author identifies as "temporal categories" of prophecy (present events, future events, apocalyptic) and genres, poetic features, imagery, and persuasive elements. Chapter two briefly summarizes the major themes of each of the prophetic books (including Lamentations and Daniel). Chapter three addresses interpretive issues related to the texts, including historical backgrounds, ancient Near Eastern prophecy, textual criticism, and commentary and computer resources. Chapter four discusses interpretive issues that confront contemporary readers, especially those from conservative evangelical circles (e.g., literal or metaphorical prophecy; conditional or unconditional prophecy; NT appropriations). Chapters five and six conclude the book by describing the stages for preparing to proclaim prophetic texts and providing two examples (Isa 31:1–9; Jer 23:1–8). While the book will be useful in certain theological contexts, the volume omits any serious attention to gender issues/feminist concerns and eschews many new approaches such as violence studies, trauma theory, and postcolonialist perspectives.

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**REVELATION AND AUTHORITY: SINAI IN JEWISH SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION.** By Benjamin D. Sommer. *The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015. Pp. xviii + 419. \$50.00.

This volume combines Sommer's expertise in biblical studies and biblical theology with his study of modern

Jewish thought in order to construct a contemporary Jewish approach to God's revelation at Mount Sinai. Using close readings of biblical texts such as Exodus 19–24 in conversation with Franz Rosenzweig and Abraham Joshua Heschel, the author argues for a "participatory theory of revelation." This understanding of revelation is minimalist: God spoke very little or not at all at Sinai so that the specific content in the Bible is human interpretation. The book contains many other substantial arguments as well. For example, Sommer argues for a reconception of the Bible as a work of Jewish thought (as Oral Torah) in need of comparison with postbiblical Jewish thought. The author also lays out a modern Jewish approach to Scripture that incorporates biblical criticism and reads Written Torah as Oral Torah. This erudite work addresses biblical scholars, theologians, clergy, modern Jewish thinkers, and interested nonspecialists. Sommer is to be commended for his willingness to incorporate critical biblical scholarship into contemporary theological discussions of Judaism. He has produced yet another groundbreaking work.

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## Greece, Rome, Greco-Roman Period

**RITUAL AND RELIGION IN FLAVIAN EPIC.** Edited by Antony Augoustakis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xvii + 406. \$150.00.

This collection of essays is the result of an international conference at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The contributions, for the most part written by distinguished scholars of Flavian literature, are grouped in three parts: 1) gods and humans; 2) death and ritual; 3) ritual and the female. The authors examine the literary representation of a wide range of religious aspects—prayers, hymns, divination, purification/pollution, *evocatio*, chthonic ritual, Orphism, religion, and power. They bring them to bear on the fundamental interpretative questions of the Flavian epics, including the *Achilleid*. Particularly commendable is the way a number of contributors anchor the representations they study in a wider literary or religious context. With few exceptions, the contributions are closely focused on the central topic of the volume. Some contributors examine the presentation of a religious phenomenon in two or more of the Flavian epics. Together with the very thorough cross-referencing between individual essays throughout the volume, this gives the reader a comprehensive picture of religion and ritual in the four epic texts that are still too often treated separately. The volume fills a significant gap in the growing body of literature on Flavian epic and is an essential reading for anyone interested in these fascinating works.

Anke Walter

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**PLATO'S CRATYLUS: THE COMEDY OF LANGUAGE.** By S. Montgomery Ewegen. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014. Pp. xvii + 227. \$34.99

The playful, comic, or parodic character of the *Cratylus*, especially its etymologies, has long been acknowledged in scholarship, and attempts have been made to pinpoint Socrates' targets. This volume joins the discussion by emphasizing the importance of the dramatic play in Plato's *Cratylus*. Its aim is to look at how this dialogue presents itself instead of examining it through the lens of the interpretive tradition that has accrued since antiquity. The *Cratylus* is not an attempt at establishing a *serious* linguistic theory, but rather represents a *comic* view of λόγος (broadly understood). The dialogue's treatment as σπουδογέλοιον is at times executed through cratylean interpretations that draw on the multiple meanings words can have. For example, on p. 57, the fact that ὀρθός means "correct" but also "erect" leads to the conclusion that ὀρθός should be translated "erect" in the *Cratylus*, thus implying both an erotic nuance—inherent also in Hermogenes' name via Hermes' divine persona and the aristophanic associations of the patronymic Hipponikos—and an upward motion such as Hermes' movement between the human and divine realms; thereby the semantic choices speakers/readers constantly make when employing language are ignored. Categories such as σκῶμμα, irony, comedy, laughter, satire, parody seem sometimes to be used interchangeably, and but for very few exceptions the literature is limited to works written in English. The difficulties inherent in this dialogue as a λόγος that has λόγος (language) as its subject matter are rightly emphasized. Although thought provoking, this volume will probably please the philosopher more than the philologist.

Athanassios Vergados

University of Heidelberg

**A CULTURAL HISTORY OF GARDENS IN ANTIQUITY.** Edited by Kathryn Gleason. A Cultural History of Gardens, Volume 1. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. Pp. xiii + 287; illustrations. Cloth, \$104.00.

This book is the first in a series of six volumes which survey the history of gardens from antiquity to the modern age. The present volume aims to cover the garden, public and private, from around the sixth century BCE to the sixth century CE (though some chapters go back as far as the third millennium BCE and as far forward as 800 CE). Although gardens in the ancient Near East, Egypt, and Greece receive some attention, the focus is mainly on the abundant archaeological and literary evidence from the Roman Empire. The eight chapters provide discussion of the literary representations of gardens (both real and fictional) and of the archaeological evidence from the gardens themselves: botanical, hydraulic, sculptural, artistic, and architectural. The authors outline the myriad meanings that gardens afforded their respective audiences and convincingly demonstrate how gardens were enmeshed in social and political practice. There