

# PRISM

A Publication of the Division of Humanities, Pacific Lutheran University

## A Tudor Politician, his Book, and Me: A Love Affair?

Sharon Jansen

One day I fell in love. With a book. It wasn't love at first sight, though. There was nothing very attractive about this particular book, nothing glossy, nothing colorful. It was old, plain, utterly unremarkable. And nothing in it was even very exciting—at least not at first sight. But as I grew to know that book, and as I came to know the mind of the man who had shaped it and loved it, I fell in love too. That was the beginning of a research project that eventually occupied fifteen years, crossed three continents, and followed a trail of clues worthy of the best detective novel.

This love affair began just as I was finishing my graduate coursework at the University of Washington. I can remember quite well the day in Padelford Hall when my advisor, Professor David C. Fowler, suggested I take a look at a microfilm of a sixteenth-century manuscript with the wonderfully bland shelfmark "Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.813." What I can't remember is why he wanted me to look at the book, but it must have had something to do

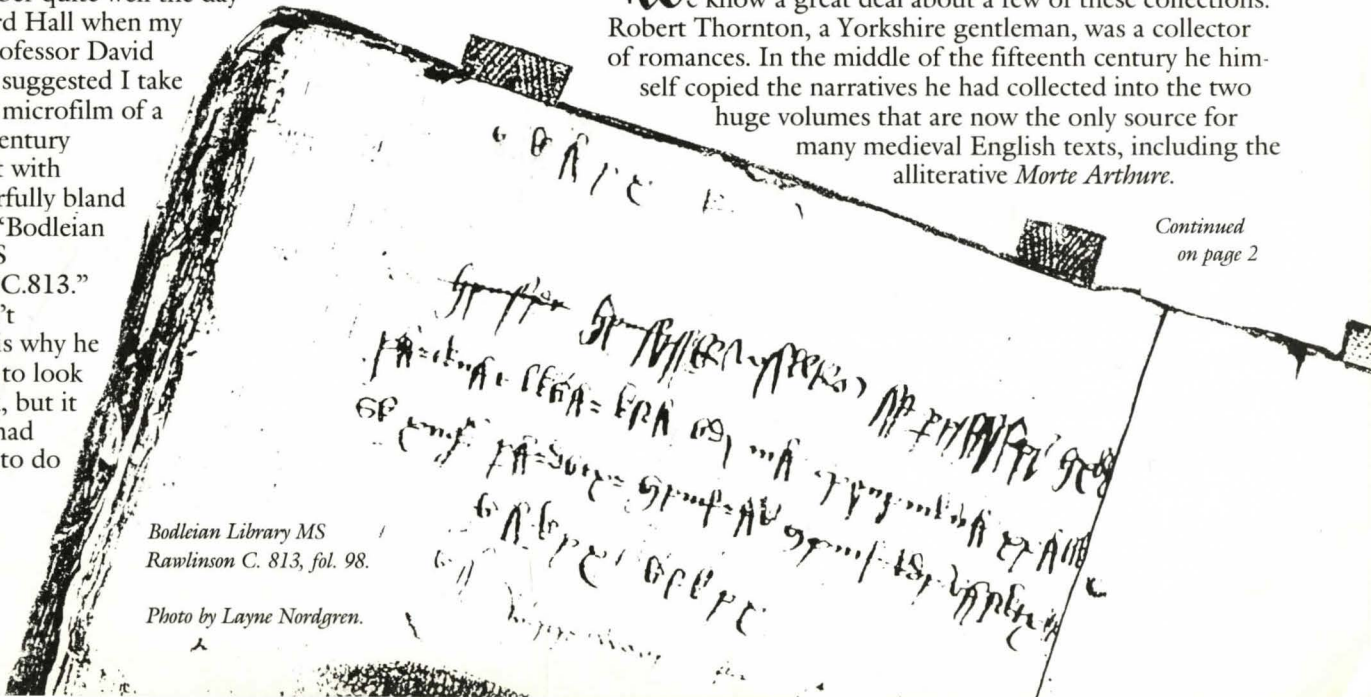
with my growing interest in late medieval collections of poetry and prose compiled during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Some of these collections are "commonplace" books—bills, receipts, medical recipes, factual pieces of information the compiler wanted or needed to remember, and, sometimes, an occasional poem or romance saved along with the rest of the more practical items copied into the book. If you were to open that drawer in your desk or in the kitchen where you save bills, directions, recipes, charge slips, greeting cards, jokes, and articles you've ripped out of magazines, you'd have a good idea of the jumble of the contents in a typical commonplace book.

But some late medieval manuscript collections are quite different. They represent their owner's or compiler's interests in popular poetry and fiction. They are what we now call literary anthologies. Sometimes the volumes are very specific in their contents, containing only love lyrics, or romances, or religious verse, while other collections are more like small libraries, offering a representative sampling of contemporary literature.

We know a great deal about a few of these collections. Robert Thornton, a Yorkshire gentleman, was a collector of romances. In the middle of the fifteenth century he himself copied the narratives he had collected into the two huge volumes that are now the only source for many medieval English texts, including the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.

Continued on page 2



Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C. 813, fol. 98.

Photo by Layne Nordgren.



# Through the Prism

When Martin E. Marty, distinguished scholar of American religious life, visited campus recently to deliver the 1990 Richard Jungkuntz lectures, he underscored the connection between liberal learning and conversation. Dr. Marty stressed that at a distinctive, church-related university we are called to converse with texts, ideas, and traditions—in particular the Christian heritage—as well as with each other. *Prism* is one means by which the humanities faculty nurtures and informs the ongoing conversation.

In this issue, we encounter the lively voices of both new and senior faculty colleagues who frame their intellectual pursuits in terms of storytelling. Sharon Jansen relates her passionate involvement with a manuscript puzzle. Ralph Gehrke describes a rewarding journey to observe antiquities in Syria. Drawing upon not only recent scholarship in the philosophy of history but also the French Romantic author Alfred de Vigny, Mark Jensen posits a relationship between history and narrative. Patricia Killen models just such an historical approach in her recent book on Catholic ministry. Major scholarly works by professors Rita Brock and Paul Menzel also receive attention here.

Beyond the printed discourse we offer humanities alumni and friends, we cordially invite your participation in two special conversations during PLU's centennial observance. A week-long exploration of the Scandinavian heritage is scheduled for July 2-6, 1990. Visiting experts, including professor emeritus Paul Reigstad, will offer perspectives on art and design, genealogy, and immigrant history and literature. On-campus room and board is available at very reasonable rates; registration will be \$30 for the week, \$10 a day. For details, contact Professor Audun Toven, Scandinavian Studies, PLU, Tacoma, WA 98447, (206) 535-7314.

Centennial homecoming will feature a Humanities/Social Sciences symposium on "Shaping Society's Values: The Role of the University." The keynote speaker on Thursday evening, October 11, 1990, will be Dr. Russell Edgerton, president of the American Association of Higher Education. The symposium continues on Friday, October 12, with a lecture by Dr. Inge Lønning, president of the University of Oslo, roundtable discussions, and divisional open houses. Please plan to be part of the homecoming symposium and summer heritage week.

Responses to *Prism* articles and other aspects of our divisional dialogue are most welcome. Let's keep the conversation flowing! ■

Janet E. Rasmussen  
Dean

Tudor Politician  
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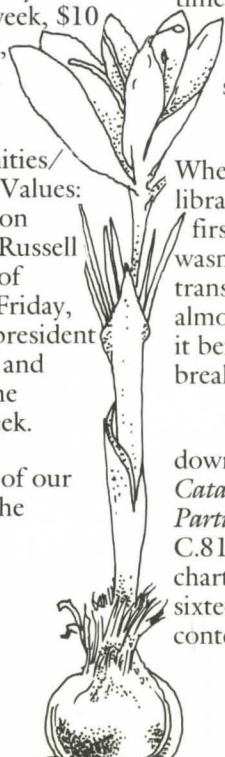
The Auchinleck manuscript, named for the estate that was the book's home before it became part of the National Library of Scotland's holdings, was the production of an early fourteenth-century bookseller who put together a series of small, professionally transcribed booklets into one volume, probably at the direction of the new book's purchaser. The Findern anthology is a large collection of love poetry compiled, poem by poem, over the course of a hundred years, from the late fifteenth to the early sixteenth centuries. It seems to have been used as a kind of autograph album: friends and family members, very often women, copied poems into the book, named for the Derbyshire family thought to have owned it.

The Rawlinson C.813 manuscript has long been recognized as one of very few surviving manuscript anthologies of late medieval poetry. Many of the poems it contains are unique—they survive only in the version copied into this manuscript. Others, however, are lyrics adapted with characteristic freedom from the long poems of very well-known poets such as Chaucer, Hoccleve, and Lydgate. David Fowler had ordered the microfilm because of these fifty-one sixteenth-century lyrics, for they had an indirect connection with the University of Washington, with Fowler himself, and even with the building where I was working in 1975. As I learned, the C.813 poems had been published by Frederick Morgan Padelford, the UW English professor for whom Padelford Hall had been named.

Padelford had begun his teaching career in the UW English department in 1901. Working with a younger colleague, Allen R. Benham, he edited the Rawlinson C.813 lyrics for the journal *Anglia* in 1908. Padelford eventually became dean of the graduate school, but he continued teaching English until his death in 1942. Benham, too, spent his career in the English department at the University of Washington, an emeritus professor by the time my own advisor, David Fowler, joined the English faculty. So on the day that I looked at the Rawlinson lyrics, I was continuing a long if somewhat indirect UW relationship with this curious sixteenth-century literary anthology.

It wasn't an easy relationship to continue, though. When I first tracked down the microfilm and had the library assistant thread it through the reader for me, his first comment was, "Oh—that's Arabic." Unfortunately, it wasn't. The texts were in English, but they had been transcribed in what is called a "secretary script," a difficult, almost indecipherable cursive hand. I had seen nothing like it before, and it took me weeks to make my first real breakthrough, the identification of the letter "h."

While I was working at the paleography, I tracked down an index of the manuscript, an impressively titled *Catalogi Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae, Partis Quintae, Fasciculus Secundus* (Oxford, 1878). The C.813 manuscript was briefly described: "Codex chartaceus, in 4to, saec. xvi" (paper book, in quarto form, sixteenth century). And then followed a complete list of contents. To my surprise, the collection contained much





more than the lyrics edited by Padelford. In addition were some medical recipes (the mixture for curing colic is less interesting than the concoction that will reveal whether a woman is a virgin), a ribald paragraph or two (such as the one describing how to tell whether a woman is a harlot, a “hunter,” or a whore), and a long portion of John Skelton’s political satire “Why come ye nat to court?” I also discovered that about one fourth of the manuscript’s folios were filled with six political prophecies. None of these items had been transcribed, edited, published, or even mentioned before, but they soon came to interest me a great deal more than the lyrics I had known I would find. After I had managed to decipher them, that is.

Once I could read the texts, it didn’t take me long to conclude that what made the book so interesting wasn’t the poetry it contained. Nothing about any of the individual items was particularly moving or memorable (one recent critic called his reading of the fifty-one lyrics “positively penitential”). What interested me was the way the collection had been shaped. Intrigued by the ordering and arrangement of its contents, I began to study it as a literary anthology. From my work, a number of details emerged that began to make the unknown Tudor compiler seem a little less unknown. These details—about the date of the anthology, the connections and associations of its compiler, and the process of compilation—gave me a real sense of its owner’s aims and interests. Maybe that’s when I began to fall in love.

Fascinated by some of the references in the lyrics and by some of the cryptic allusions in the prophecies, I was sure I could date the collection. Several of the lyrics referred to events occurring between about 1517 and 1520, so the compiler seems to have begun the process of gathering material about that time. But the prophecies were vitally concerned with events of the 1530s. Analyzing all of the evidence about dating, I felt safe in concluding that the book was copied during the tumultuous decade of the 1530s, most likely between 1530 and 1535.

The contents of the collection also suggested to me a compiler with definite political interests and London connections, most likely someone with involvement at court. The manuscript contains poems on the death of Sir Griffith ap Rhys, who served both Prince Arthur and Henry VIII; on the execution of Edward Stafford, the duke of Buckingham; and on the death of Lobe, Henry’s court fool, for instance. The inclusion of the fragment from “Why come ye nat to court?” by the court poet Skelton, and the predilection for the poetry of Hawes, who was a groom of the chamber at court, indicate the compiler’s intimacy with the Tudor court circle as well. And this compiler seems also to have a real interest in Wales, a little cluster of his lyrics having curious Welsh connections.

I also began to see the methods used by the “poet” responsible for the creation of many of the unique lyrics in the collection. A significant number of the poems are adaptations from Chaucer, Lydgate, and Hawes, but the adapter’s interest was not simply in borrowing or copying directly from his sources. He selected and edited his

material with interest and with a sense of freedom. Because he chose his material so idiosyncratically from its sources, he must have been quite familiar with them. His borrowings were taken from all parts of the originals. He picked a stanza here and there, sometimes working forward and sometimes backwards. Such a method of creating new works from the originals indicates a familiarity with the originals and the time to undertake such a project. The manuscript’s owner or the adapter who created the lyrics must have had, at one time or another, manuscripts of Chaucer, Lydgate, Hawes, and Skelton, at the very least, and probably a good many more. In addition to having available all these sources, the compiler or his adapter also had the time and desire to collect from them. Who would have had access to all these sources? Were they borrowed or bought? What would have motivated the compiler to put together this anthology?

While I was at work on questions like these, I found there was another woman in the picture. After reading an article I had published about the dating of the manuscript, the librarian at the Bodleian Library put me in contact with Kathleen Jordan, an Australian scholar who was also interested in the Rawlinson manuscript. She was completing a new edition of the fifty-one lyrics. Although we were working, quite literally, a world apart, we decided to pool our interests and research and to attempt an edition of the entire manuscript.

It was Kathy who first began to suspect that the inscription on folio 98v of the manuscript might be a code:

~~hpmfrey~~ hpmffrfrfk wffllks ffst ppsffsspr hxkx[runs  
into the binding]  
pffrtknfft lkbffr kstff bd mff cpgnpmknff xxffllks  
Sk xnq pffrdbtxr ~~hpmffrffk~~ hpmfrkdp Rffstktxtx[runs  
into the binding]

Curious, we consulted Bruce Barker-Benfield, Assistant Librarian, Department of Western Manuscripts, of the Bodleian Library, and he was able to confirm Kathy’s suspicion. The inscription was a cipher, and the code a relatively simple one: b=a, k=i, ff or f=e, p=o, x=u. When the letters b, k, p, and x are given their normal value, they are marked: b, k, p, x. The double ff retains its normal value of f at times. Decoded, the cipher reads:

homfrey (deleted immediately) homffrey (last letter altered to read “homfrei”) Wellis est possessor huiui[s libri] pertinet liber iste ad me cognomine Wellis (strictly, uellis) Si unq[uam] perdaturo homffrei (deleted) homfrido (f not marked) Restitutu[m sit]

The cipher on folio 98v thus claimed that someone named “Humphrey Welles” had owned the collection, but who was Humphrey Welles? Could we learn anything about him, or would he remain just a name scribbled onto an odd folio in his collection? We began a rather half-hearted, dispirited search for him. What we found far exceeded our faint hopes. We found Humphrey Welles.



Our search into Tudor records revealed that, as I had suspected, our Humphrey Welles had numerous connections with Henry VIII's court. He was admitted to the Inner Temple in March 1522 and recommended by Cromwell for the king's service in 1538. He was the member for Newcastle-under-Lyme in the Parliament of 1545-1547, still during Henry's reign. He was a holder of the clerkship of the summons before Henry's death in 1547, and from 1557 until 1569, a clerk of the mint at the Tower.

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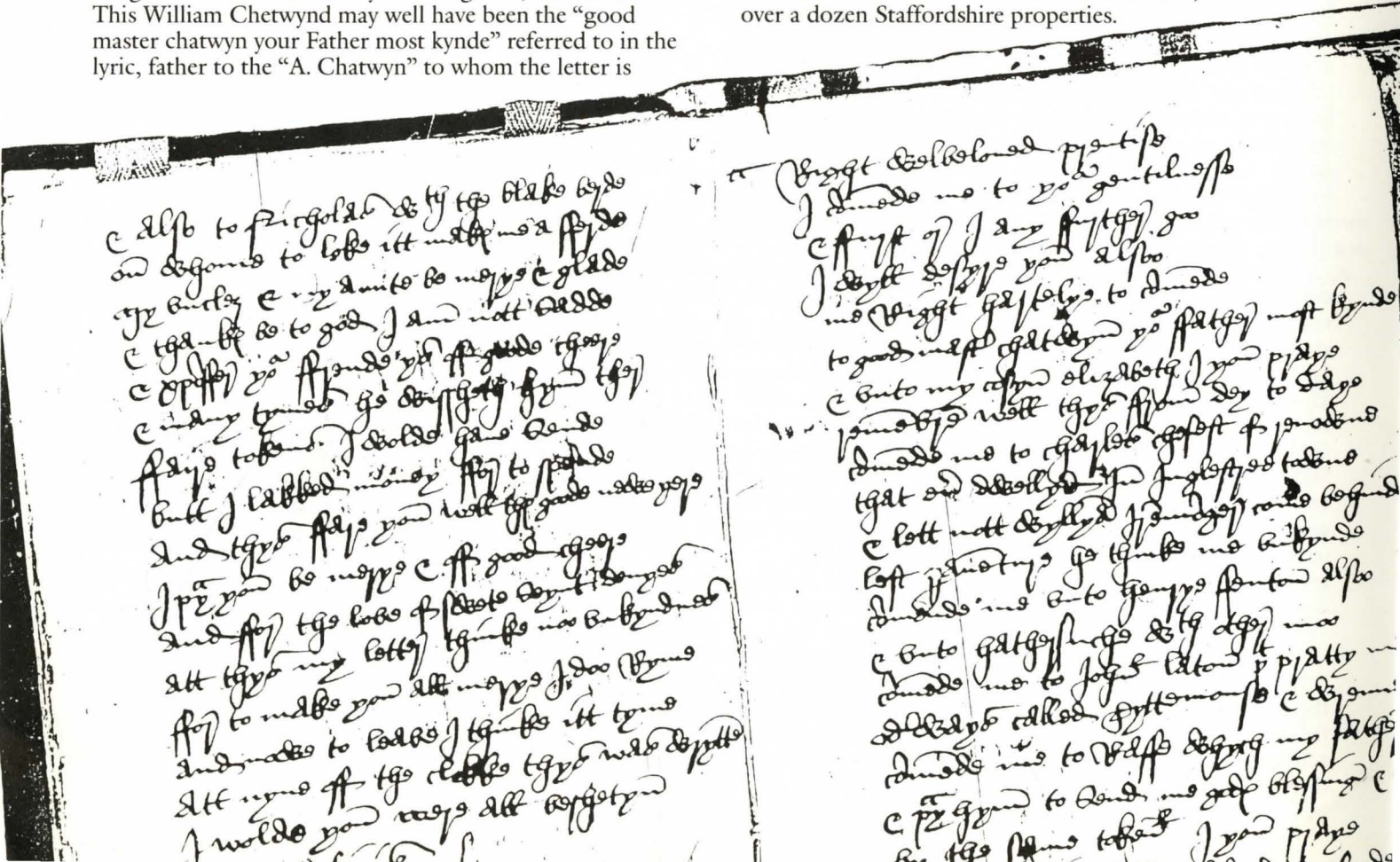
According to other evidence, Welles may have had Catholic sympathies. A reference to him in a 1564 description to the Queen Elizabeth's Privy Council reads: "meet to continue in office; accounted of good men an adversary to religion and no favourer thereof neither in deed nor word, but better learned than the rest." Whatever his religious preference, he seems to have come to terms with the uneasy religious compromise of the queen's reign, since he continued in public office and acknowledged the queen in his will as "defender of the faythe."

Once Kathy and I had linked Welles with the Rawlinson manuscript, we looked at other details in the collection a little more closely. Among the lyrics is a low-key verse epistle headed "A letter Send by R. W. to A. C." Evidence within the poem reveals that "R. W." was a saddler of Ingestre, Staffordshire, writing from London to A. Chatwyn of Ingestre. After a little more detective work, we discovered that Humphrey Welles had married Mary, daughter of William Chetwynd of Ingestre, Staffordshire. This William Chetwynd may well have been the "good master chatwyn your Father most kynde" referred to in the lyric, father to the "A. Chatwyn" to whom the letter is

addressed. In any case, since there was only one Chatwyn/Chetwynd family in Ingestre, Welles's marriage to Mary Chetwynd by 1533 links him at the very least to the same local family and to the people and places named in the anthology itself. Since Welles had a younger brother, Richard, the "R. W." of the poem may have been this younger man.

The Rawlinson poem mentions other proper names—"Wyllyam Irenmonger," "henry fenton," "Tohn laton," and "Iohn Whitbye," for instance. Tracking down these names was fairly routine once we knew where to look. The parish register of families in the Archdeaconry of Stafford 1532-1533 includes under the division of Ingestre not only "Mester William Chettwyn, Dorothy, Elizabeth, uxores eius," but also "Henry Fenton, Elizabeth, uxor eius," for example. All the names in the poem could be found in the records of Stafford and its neighboring parishes.

Welles's career illustrates changes in the social structure of administrative and legislative power in the Tudor period and shows the upward mobility of professional administrators of relatively obscure origins, provided they found suitable patronage. From being merely a lawyer in 1522, through his connections he was able to achieve advantageous preferment at Court and to find favor with a powerful patron. Throughout the religious and political changes under Henry and Mary, Humphrey Welles's career continued to prosper, and he was restored to the Staffordshire Bench as "better learned than the rest" under Elizabeth. When he died, he owned over a dozen Staffordshire properties.





Whatever may have happened to this particular manuscript after his death, we know Welles owned and valued a number of books. In the inventory attached to his 1564 will, which Kathy and I transcribed from a copy we found in the Lichfield Record Office, he lists, as part of the contents of his study, "a settel to laye bokes in," valued at two pence, "a deske," valued at four pence, and "certain bokes," valued at £6. The books were thus much more valuable than the furnishings of the study. And by way of further comparison, "fyue younge bullockes" were valued at £3 fifteen shillings, while "foure salte with iij couers syluer and gylte" (four saltcellars, three with silver and gilt lids) were worth £11.

As a personal collection, Welles's anthology tells us much about his intellectual pursuits and associations, but it also tells us a great deal about the time when he was putting his collection together. Welles gathered these items and had them put into his book at a time when heads were falling, religions changing, a nation emerging, and the very texture of culture altering radically. The political poems Welles collected show his reaction to and involvement with the turmoil in which he found himself.

Our search to identify Humphrey Welles also led Kathy and me on a number of more personal quests. Kathy journeyed from Australia all the way to Staffordshire to visit Welles's tomb. Over the last several years I spent many days in British libraries searching out and transcribing Tudor legal records and documents. And last summer, after nearly ten years of correspondence, Kathy and I met for the first time. Although we had worked through the mail on our edition of the manuscript and had chronicled the ups and downs of our professional careers, academic publications, and personal lives, we had never exchanged pictures. When she arrived at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport last June, Kathy walked out of the plane carrying a sign. It did not read "Kathy Jordan" or "Sharon Jansen?" It read "Humphrey Welles."

Now that I've finished galley proofs and page proofs for our book, *The Welles Anthology*, now that we've chosen the photographs to be included, the color for the cover, the lettering for the book jacket—now I've slowly come to realize that my relationship with Humphrey Welles and his book has changed. I've worked with this book, more or less actively, since 1975, for fifteen years, for a great part of my adult life. Every research trip to England has included a bit more to check about Humphrey or his book. I've called the manuscript up at the Bodleian for no other reason than to hold it.

Nothing will stop me from doing that on my next trip, or on any future trips, of course. But everything is different now. The passion has cooled. I've become interested in other manuscripts, different questions, newer, more exciting searches. I haven't exactly forgotten Humphrey and his book. Maybe I've outgrown them.

Still, we remain good friends. ■

## Should History Tell a Story?

Mark Jensen

It would appear that Louis XIV never said: "L'état, c'est moi." The researches of modern historians have produced no credible witness attesting that France's Sun King pronounced this coldly witty laconism. But just try to find a modern history of seventeenth-century France in which it is not mentioned. "If he did not say 'I am the state,' it is only because it went without saying," is one historian's way of reporting what never occurred. How is it that history persists in attributing celebrated remarks like this one to individuals who have no claim upon them? Moreover (and more curiously) how is it that we feel it is good to know about this famous, if apocryphal, sentence?

*History will judge . . .* How often history, to whose powers of calm reflection contemporaries blithely relegate the responsibility of deciding this or that question of momentous import, dissolves under close scrutiny into a confused welter of angrily conflicting testimonies! Now, this is clearly an unsatisfactory situation. Since the rise of modern science, there have been some notable attempts to overcome the raucous uncertainties of the tribunal of history. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, for example, the Benedictine monk Jean Mabillon published *De re diplomatica* (1681), a textbook on the principles of verification whereby charters, treaties, and other official documents are to be authenticated. But the effort to found a science of history on such a basis was criticized by the philosophically minded. Fénelon, for example, thought that the historian should "observe the changes in the nation as a whole" rather than "relate particular facts." Inspired by such critiques, the reform-minded eighteenth century sought a more useful kind of history.

In the nineteenth century the discipline of history raised the scientific ideal once more, reconstituting itself in an age of positivism as the attempt to divorce oneself from the passions of the present and to tell the story of the past objectively. In Ranke's famous phrase, history should be recounted *as it really was*: "wie es eigentlich gewesen." For Ranke and for others, the painstaking discovery, examination, and criticism of archival documents was like a laboratory method whereby the historian's labor could transmute the showy dross of a momentous tale into the pure gold of historical truth. Fustel de Coulanges's expression of this ideal was typical: "L'histoire n'est pas un art. Elle est une science pure." Such a formulation may strike us as naive, but modern historiography has been marked by attempts to import into history the prestige of this or that field of scientific or pseudo-scientific endeavor. Sociology, economics, psychoanalysis, anthropology, and linguistics are only some of the disciplines that have been exploited in this way. (The philosophical justification for Pacific



Lutheran University's assignment of the Department of History to the Division of the Social Sciences derives, ultimately, from some such view of the historian's labor.)

6 There has always existed a certain skepticism about history's claims to offer positive knowledge of the past. Such skepticism has usually been founded upon a deep-seated anti-intellectualism or irrationalism, and reflects the suspicion that history is not philosophy teaching by examples, but "an agreed upon fable" (Napoleon), "merely gossip" (Oscar Wilde), or, more provocatively, "a little cesspool in which the mind of man likes to wallow" (Francis Ponge). Philosophical critiques of history's pretensions have been fewer in number, perhaps because the desire for a usable past is so powerful, and because the uselessness of an unknowable past is so plain. Did not Polybius write in the preface to his universal history that "the knowledge of past events is the sovereign corrective of human nature"? If this is wrong, should we not feel as helpless as a victim of severe memory loss?

Over the last twenty-five years a radical challenge to the notion of historical knowledge has emerged. A body of work has grown up around the problem of the relation of historical understanding to narrative, conceived as a literary form. In 1973, Hayden White published *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, an extended attempt to analyze how what we may call the literary imagination influences the shaping of traditional historical narrative. White's analysis of historians and philosophers of the nineteenth century argues that their attempts to attain historical truth have been influenced by strategies of "emplotment" (structures of narrative), ideology (political beliefs), patterns of formal argument (founded upon various epistemological commitments), and styles of "tropic configuration" (different ways of giving order to our experience of the world at a preconceptual level). This intricate and difficult volume has stimulated more than defined further work in this field. A number of recently founded journals now specialize in addressing issues raised by the interpenetration of history and narrative, including *New Literary History*, *Representations*, *Clio*, and *History and Theory*. A "narrativist philosophy of history" (the phrase is F. B. Ankersmit's) has thus constituted itself in the last quarter-century as a new school of interpretation in the field of the philosophy of history.

The situation has reached a point at which the intellectual historian Leonard Krieger, in his recent book *Time's Reasons: Philosophies of History Old and New* (1989), speaks of a contemporary "crisis" of faith in the notion of historical truth. He writes:

The most potent contemporary influence on the discipline of history . . . is the challenge to the very substance of the historical approach to life that has been mounted by antithetical agents of the general culture. What is new and especially lethal in the current rejection of history as such is that it is mounted not in the name of science—the older kind of rejection which historians have become quite adept at evading—but in the name of the very life and vitality which historians have prided themselves on recreating.

The books and journals to which I have just referred bristle with references to the latest in literary theory, and often depend upon recent structuralist and poststructuralist philosophies which posit a radical split between language and the world, between words and things. It may come as a surprise, then, to find the contemporary philosophical critique of history's pretensions to truth anticipated in the work of a French Romantic author who wrote a century and a half earlier. In the late 1820s, Alfred de Vigny wrote *Cinq-Mars*, a historical novel set in the seventeenth century about an unsuccessful plot against the Cardinal Richelieu. The novel was well received by the public, but critics raised a variety of objections to the distortions the historical record underwent in Vigny's hands. The philosophically minded Vigny felt the need to justify his treatment of historical materials, but faced a problem: if historians were allowed to define the terms of the indictment, there was no doubt that he would be found guilty on all counts.



Deciding that the best defense is a good offense, Vigny chose to turn the tables on the historians. In an engaging preface entitled "Reflexions sur la vérité dans l'art," he rejected the notion that the work of art ought to be a mere representation or reflection of the real world, and then showed to what extent a narrative history was, in essence, a work of art. For Vigny, this was principally due to a radical insufficiency in the historical record itself.

What is the good of the memory of true facts, if not to serve as examples of good or of evil? But the examples which the slow succession of events presents are sparse and incomplete; they lack a tangible and visible connection that might lead to a single indisputable moral conclusion; the acts of the



human race upon the stage of the world no doubt form a whole, but the meaning of the vast tragedy played there will only be visible to the eye of God until its *dénouement* reveals it, perhaps, to the last man. All philosophies have exhausted themselves trying to explain it, ceaselessly rolling their boulders, which never reach their goal but instead fall back upon them, so that each philosophy raises its frail edifice on the ruin of the others and sees it collapse in turn. It seems to me that man, after having satisfied this first curiosity about facts, wanted something more complete, some grouping, some reduction of this vast chain of events, which his sight could not encompass, to something of manageable proportions which he could use.

With the superb confidence of a young Romantic author in the first flush of what promised to be a glorious career, Vigny declared: "In order to finish dissipating on this point the scruples of several timorous literary consciences that have been strangely frightened by the imagination's daring in making free with the gravest characters who ever lived, I shall be so bold as to propose this: not in its entirety, I should not venture to go so far, but in many of its pages, pages which are perhaps not its least beautiful ones, history is a novel whose author is the people."

To illustrate his point, Vigny adduces three examples of historical events which bear the stamp of the popular imagination, all of them drawn from the tumultuous period of the Revolution and the Empire: the burning of Moscow, the *mot de Cambronne* at Waterloo, and the injunction to the condemned Louis XVI: "Fils de saint Louis, montez au ciel!" Count Rostopchin, as governor of Moscow, was supposed to have set fire to Moscow in 1812 rather than allow Napoleon to enjoy possession of the Russian capital; General Cambronne was said to have riposted "Merde!" to English demands for surrender at Waterloo in 1815; and the *abbé* Edgeworth was alleged to have comforted Louis XVI by invoking the notion of his martyrdom as he stepped up to the guillotine in 1793. In each case, the supposed authors of the memorable sayings or events denied having been responsible for them. But their denials have been in vain.

As if for pleasure and to mock posterity, the voice of the people invents sublime sayings in order to attribute them to those who, being still alive and embarrassed at all the fuss, excuse themselves as best they can as not being worthy of so much glory and renown. But their declarations are not accepted, however much they shout, write, publish, and sign them: their words are sculpted in bronze, and the poor fellows remain historic and sublime in spite of themselves.

This claim is borne out by examination of the treatment of the first two events in the historical literature since Vigny: there are indeed few accounts of the Russian campaign or the battle of Waterloo which neglect to mention

For Vigny, the conclusion is clear: historians should not judge harshly the artist who also undertakes to resculpt the stone of history. The Romantic notion of the artist's quasi-divine inspiration and the period's consecration of the artist as an independent voice of truth is largely responsible for the self-assurance with which Vigny grants the artist the role of arbiter of historical truth.

The rampant propaganda of our age has soured us to such teachings. We have passed from an almost universal belief in progress to an age of intellectual suspicion, in which the debunking of the ideals and aspirations of the past is a characteristic form of intellectual endeavor. In such a climate the assertion of the artist's right to tamper with the historical truth is most dubious. Yet it continues to come up almost every time a work of art undertakes to portray historical events. Discussions like Richard Bernstein's recent article in the *New York Times* asking "Can Movies Teach History?" or James M. McPherson's review of the film *Glory* in the *New Republic* raise few important issues that were not debated apropos of Walter Scott's historical novels. Vigny's excessively bold views were never accepted even in the heyday of Romanticism. Balzac mocked Vigny's pronouncement by writing in *Les Deux Amis* that it amounted to the claim that "There is a truth that is false and a falsehood that is true."

In its critique of history's pretensions to objective truth, however, Vigny's critique is still important. It addresses the unresolved tension—some would say unresolvable antinomy—between an Enlightenment tradition that seeks objective truth in history, and a philosophical tradition dedicated to appreciating the uniqueness of different societies in terms which cannot be reduced to abstract laws or principles. And it is Vigny's identification of narrative as a response to a fundamental human need that makes his piece seem so modern today. The "Reflexions sur la vérité dans l'art" suggest that twentieth-century poststructuralism and the study of narrative have roots in Romanticism—in particular, in what Morse Peckham has termed "negative romanticism." Vigny thus deserves to be considered a forerunner of the narrativist philosophy of history which has come into being in recent years. Though expressed in terms foreign to the contemporary debate, Vigny's preface anticipated some of its insights, earning denunciation by the intellectual forebears of those historians who in our day dismiss the narrativist philosophy of history as inspired by dubious ideas and underlying philosophical biases.

What such critics fear in admitting the claims of the narrativists is the loss of a standard of objectivity and the reign of arbitrariness and subjectivity. But a common theme of one group of narrativists is that there is a more than arbitrary relation between the narratives history employs to recount the past and the "real world" which narratives describe. Contemporary philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre (*After Virtue*) and David Carr (*Time, Narrative, and History*) consider narration, or story-telling, to be inseparable from human experience. According to them, there is less to be feared from self-consciousness about the narration of history than might be at first expected. But that is, as they say, another story. ■



# A Visit to Syria

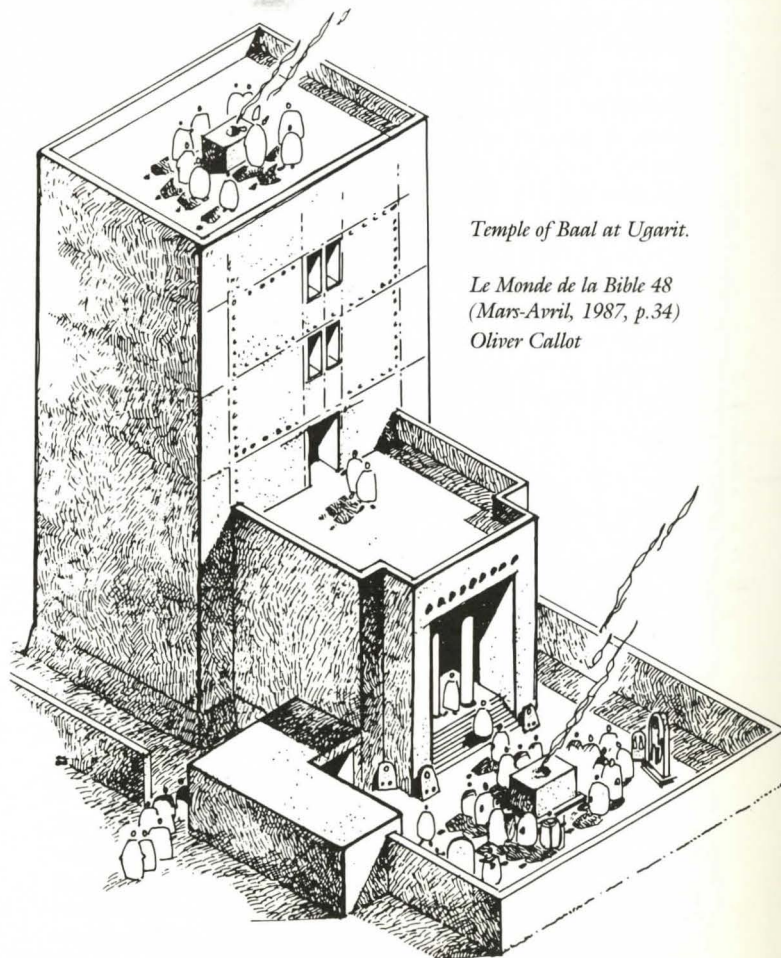
Ralph Gehrke

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Biblical scholars who wish to profit from direct contact with the locale and antiquities of their discipline are well advised to visit not only the Holy Land itself but also those neighboring lands that share in a great deal of common history and culture. Though often undervalued in favor of Egypt and Jordan, Syria offers visitors unique opportunities for getting to know a rich variety of antiquities that illuminate the world of the Bible. Last year, while on sabbatical in Munich, I had the opportunity to join a well-designed West German study tour to Syria. Our group's very competent leader was an experienced scholar-archaeologist, Dr. Margret Karras-Klapproth of the University of Muenster's Department of Ancient History. What follows is a biblical scholar's attempt to share with colleagues some reflections on the unique experience of visiting four biblically-significant sites in Syria—Damascus, Palmyra, Mari, and Ugarit.

Damascus is still—despite inevitable modern developments—a beautiful, well-watered oasis town. As in biblical times, it nestles between the slopes of the Mt. Hermon range and the Syrian desert. Today Westerners are intrigued by its distinctively Arab atmosphere. Yet it is by no means a mere fortified maze of narrow winding streets like so many of the cities that sprang up in the wake of the initial Muslim conquests. In fact, two landmarks from biblical times are still the determinative features of its city center. The first is what Acts 9:11 names “The Street Called Straight”, originally the Roman city's *cardo* or main street. This is where Ananias was told to seek out a new convert, the church's former violent persecutor, Paul of Tarsus. The second ancient landmark is the city's central sanctuary, where in successive ages believers have worshipped Hadad, Zeus, Jupiter, Christ, and now Allah. The present sanctuary, the Ummayyad Mosque, is surpassed in Muslim eyes only by Mecca's Great Mosque and Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock. The Mosque takes its name from the dynasty that built it in the early eighth century as the center of a realm that stretched from Afghanistan to Spain. Despite subsequent destruction visitors are still impressed by its vast, minaret-studded, open-air courtyard and, inside, by its spacious prayer halls, richly carpeted, and aisled by a virtual forest of handsome stone pillars. The complex's most exquisite treasure, however, is its ancient gold-green mosaics; their non-figural trees, plants, and palaces depict The Garden of Paradise.

The National Museum at Damascus preserves some of Syria's most significant antiquities. Chief among its bible-related treasures are the colorful wall paintings from an ancient synagogue's assembly-room and from a nearby house-church's baptistry. Both had once been carefully covered—and thus preserved—in their original position on a street that ran along the city wall of Dura Europas when (ca. 250 A.D.) military strategy dictated their incorporation into an enlarged defense system. Among the synagogue's murals is a surprising interpretation of the Prophet Ezekiel's Dry Bones Vision: the Messiah at the Resurrection transforms corpses ejected from earthquake-cloven tombs into a new-age living people! Significantly, the murals from what is the oldest known house-church are not found in any of the several other important rooms that clustered around the building's open-air central courtyard: its “school room,” its “library,” its porticoed “social alcove,” or its largest room, its assembly hall. They are from the separate room that was oriented toward a columned baptismal font. The murals here illustrated what was significant to those who celebrated baptism on that spot: Christ's sepulchre, over which the Easter sun is dawning as the three Marys approach from the darkness with lighted candles. Also depicted are several other episodes from the gospels: Jesus stilling the storm and healing the paralytic. These murals tell us how some Jews and Christians interpreted key aspects of the biblical tradition in the pre-Constantinian era.



Temple of Baal at Ugarit.

*Le Monde de la Bible* 48  
(Mars-Avril, 1987, p.34)  
Oliver Callot



Today's Palmyra is the best preserved of a number of ancient Syrian "ghost towns" that mirror the world of the Bible in the period from Alexander to Constantine. Visitors with only a modicum of historical imagination can therefore easily picture what contemporary Damascus or Antioch were like in the days of the Apostle Paul, or the Evangelist Matthew, or the church father Ignatius . . . We had been traveling for a full morning through the desolate Syrian desert when, at long last, we neared our destination: a new, large oasis with an extensive grove of palm trees (Palm-ya). Our high expectations were greatly exceeded by reality as soon as we caught sight of Palmyra's extensive ancient ruins. What we were looking at was the vast ancient city itself, its criss-crossing colonnaded main streets linking various scattered monuments. But impressive as it was, what we saw was only a shadow of the actual ancient city built up by Syrian merchants over the centuries as a sort of "harbor in the desert" for caravans that brought goods (silk and spices) from Persia to the empire ruled by Rome. Even though current restoration is far from complete, enough of the ancient city has been uncovered from the rich red sands to give those who walk through it (as we did for several hours in the pleasant late afternoon) a vivid sense of moving about inside an ancient city. It was a city complete with the typical features of a major town of the time: a number of porticoed shopping centers, various types of sanctuaries (built here, however, in accordance with oriental custom: each temple surrounded by a huge colonnaded courtyard), numerous public baths, entertainment facilities including a theater with well-preserved seats and an elegant stage, aqueducts that provided water at many public fountains, a huge city-government compound (complete with toll-booth lists of tariffs for various types of goods and a huge banquet room for entertaining visiting merchants). Its summary destruction in the third century A.D. (for daring to defy imperial Rome!) resulted in the desert sands preserving whole areas of its ruins.

Ordinarily there would be little for visitors to see in Mari at the site of the vast Middle Bronze Age Amorite royal palace (100 miles east of Palmyra, near the Iraq border, on the Euphrates River). After all, very little is usually preserved for sight-seeing after archaeologists have finished digging through the various strata of a buried mud-brick city. In the case of Mari, however, the fire set by the city's ancient Babylonian conquerors, fire that was intended to destroy the vast complex, has (ironically!) preserved much of it for later study. Moreover, by means of an ingenious canopy of translucent plastic sky-lights, custom built to replace the ancient clerestory roof, the French excavators have preserved ancient halls whose exposed walls would otherwise have been eroded soon after excavation. Visitors to Mari are able, therefore, to enter the very heart of King Zimri-Lim's palace: his throne room and the very ancient sanctuary out of which the Amorite palace gradually grew. The ancient palace-walls still stand almost to their original height. Some of them had once been decorated with colorful murals that depicted scenes of procession and royal investiture.

Modern visitors can therefore still get an impression of what must have also been the experience of ancient visitors—say, of ambassadors sent to Mari from Babylon by Hammurabi. Cuneiform tablets found in the palace archives provide scholars with literary sources for the study of life in ancient Syro-Palestine and for comparison with another collection of ancient texts, that of the Bible. Scholars have been especially interested in comparing the Mari texts with what the Bible's oldest traditions tell of ancient Israel's forefathers like the patriarch Abraham, who reportedly first lived in this region before traveling southwest to the Promised Land.

Excavations on Syria's Mediterranean coast at the site of the Canaanite city of Ugarit have provided us with all sorts of interesting and significant finds. Among the important literary documents discovered there are various types of religious texts (including the famous Baal Myth), records of temple-administration, and both business and diplomatic correspondence. Equally important are the finds of uniquely Canaanite art and architecture; an extensive stone-masonry palace-complex, exquisite ivory inlays for royal furniture, an "acropolis" crowned by a multi-storey "skyscraper temple" for the worship of Baal, private houses equipped with running water and sewage disposal facilities.

Even though the site is the source of important discoveries, visitors there can easily end up being disappointed, after they have wandered over acre after acre of darkened, lichen-encrusted stone foundation walls and paved courtyards, struck by the absence of the sort of spectacular antiquities that are encountered at other Syrian sites. To appreciate this site, therefore, requires imagination and some homework. Nonspecialists are usually pleasantly surprised to learn, for instance, that some of the earliest known alphabetic documents were found in Ugarit or that discoveries here have revealed to us more about the Canaan that confronted the Israelite tribes when they entered the Holy Land than the corresponding Canaanite strata of the buried cities in Palestine itself—indeed more than the Bible tells us about Canaanite culture.

At the same time it is also now very clear to specialists that Ugaritic literature (to restrict comparative comment to this one key area of study alone) comes out of a history quite different from that which produced the Bible. To be specific, both Ugarit and Jerusalem were capital cities. But Ugarit was a great Canaanite commercial city which disappeared about 1200 B.C., whereas the Judean hill-country capital was never a commercial center and the biblical tradition began before the Israelite tribes arrived in Canaan. And it continued after Jerusalem was destroyed and Jews lived in the Diaspora. Moreover, the biblical literary tradition, unlike the Ugarit texts, appears in a well-organized canonical corpus, one that has been continuously preserved and fostered within communities of believers, to the present. Yet another example of the way Syria's antiquities have illuminated the world of the Bible for me as I continue to reflect on their significance. ■



## Recent Humanities Publications

Rita Nakashima Brock

### *Journeys By Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*

Crossroad/Continuum, 1988.

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While Jesus Christ has been upheld as the heart of the promise of Christian faith, he has been a major problem for many feminist theologians. The Christian tradition has claimed that women could not be ordained to the priesthood because Jesus was male. Why is it that Jesus' maleness has excluded women from full participation at all levels in Christian communities, but none of his other human characteristics—such as race—has been a principle of discrimination? For example, Jesus' race has not excluded Asians from ordination. How can proclaiming that God was incarnate in male form do anything but reinforce the patriarchal idea that women must submit their lives to male authority? Can a male savior save women? Is it possible to examine Christian faith from a feminist perspective and find meaning in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth—meaning that takes faith beyond the injustice of male dominance?

These are some of the basic questions behind my discussion of christology. Christology is a field that examines doctrines about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as the human incarnation of God. I reconstruct christology from a feminist perspective beginning with the belief that God is love and that God's incarnation is revealed through love. I do not, however, view the highest love as unconditional and self-sacrificial. Rather, I believe the deepest life-giving love is reciprocal and intimate. I call this mutual love erotic power.

Human beings are by nature "relational," brought into existence by relationships of love which nurture us all our lives. But this nurturing love is not a virtue that someone possesses and dispenses by choice. It is a power that emerges in the connections between persons, a power that cannot exist in solitary individuals. However, in a broken and unjust world, the pain of that world also becomes part of our own being through our relationships. We find ourselves, also, broken-hearted.

The New Testament Gospels show that broken-heartedness can be made whole through exorcism and healing, which are metaphors showing how God liberates the oppressed and restores right relationships. Through this liberation and restoration, hope for the coming of God's true commonwealth (the Greek *basileia* is often translated "kingdom") is revealed, not in Jesus alone, but in the community which loved him. Hence, God is incarnate, not in a single human being, but in all those who make and

sustain liberating, wholemaking communities. This incarnate love allows the community of Jesus to survive his tragic death, to be with him through the sorrow, to return to the tomb, and to be surprised by the resurrection. In expanding Christ beyond Jesus of Nazareth, I argue that the incarnation and redemption of God is found in Jesus' community. ■

Patricia O'Connell Killen

### *Journeys in Ministry: Nine Memoirs from Around the World*

Co-editor Peter Gilmour

Loyola University Press, 1989.

The Institute of Pastoral Studies (IPS) at Loyola University of Chicago is the largest and oldest of all ministry institutes associated with Catholic universities in the United States. Over 1200 people from all over the world have studied there during the Institute's first twenty-five years. That anniversary provided an occasion to assess the Institute's impact on contemporary Catholic theology and ministry. Two current issues in Catholic studies gave the assessment more than parochial value: the extent to which the theology of Vatican Council II has permeated the church's ministry in the twenty-five years since it ended; and the character of the theology of church emerging as Roman Catholicism shifts from being a European-centered to a world church. IPS's historical commitment to teaching post-Vatican Council II theology and the international nature of its student population made an assessment of its impact on contemporary Catholic theology and ministry pertinent to both issues.

*Journeys in Ministry* is a volume in which eight ministers—lay and ordained, men and women, celibate and married—tell of their work and their own journeys in discipleship. The memoirs are introduced by a history of IPS and followed by an historical-theological analysis of the theology of church in the eight ministers' stories. Leadership training in South Africa, parish renewal in the Diocese of Perth, Australia, pastoral care with AIDS victims in Uganda, medical service in the Amazon jungle, hermitic life in Vermont, religious education in Chicago, youth work in London, support for abused women in Taiwan—these are the settings from which the eight contributors reflect on the meaning of the gospel, of the church, and of ministry for now and the future.

Though the ministers, their work, and their settings are diverse, their stories are shot through with a common vision of church: "people called to embody, to witness, and to elicit from each human individual and culture the dignity and freedom of the daughters and sons of God" (104).



*Journeys in Ministry* takes a narrative approach to theology and religious history. While that approach runs the risk of being impressionistic, it has the advantage of remaining close to human experience and of revealing content and nuance. This is particularly important in times of personal and ecclesial change. Shifting cultural assumptions and contexts challenge denominations. People who come from diverse cultural standpoints identify themselves with a common tradition, but their understandings of that tradition are colored by their cultural presuppositions. To become a genuinely world church a denomination's members must move below inherited doctrine and discipline to the original stories that fund their faith tradition. They must find where and how those stories connect with the lives of people. Common telling of the stories and their meaning is the beginning point for a redevelopment of doctrine and discipline that can convey the integrity and intelligibility of the tradition in language and thought forms not hobbled by European and North American biases.

The narratives in this volume are a contribution to this vital ecclesial task. In each of them one can discern shifting understandings of how individuals relate to religious traditions, of the role of individual freedom and commitment in the personal and corporate religious journey, of the challenges that cultural and political situations today present to inherited theology. More than anything else, the narrators who contributed to this volume demonstrate just how a religious tradition can fund creativity, courage, and innovation, while remaining faithful to its inherited wisdom. ■

Paul T. Menzel

***Strong Medicine: The Ethical Rationing of Health Care***

Oxford University Press, 1990.

Financed by insurance and constantly enhanced by new technologies, modern medicine is destined to absorb large amounts of extra resources for disturbingly little benefit. To keep medicine worth what it costs, sooner or later we will have to ration care—forego some services that may benefit certain patients. But can we do that and still morally respect the individual patients who end up getting short-changed? Are health care providers not supposed to be loyal to their patients' best interests?

I argue that this dilemma can be resolved: if we use our heads, we can ration care and still fully respect the individual. A key factor here is some sort of inclusion in the rationing policy formation process of the people who will end up being patients. If their consent to risk is expressed in an informed prior unwillingness to bear the economic expense of a more ample health care system, then we can be justified in later withholding some of their possibly beneficial care. Patients of integrity who consent

to such risks have no legitimate complaint against providers who stick by the lean health care systems thus endorsed. That will be "strong medicine": hard for the patient to swallow and difficult for the medical profession to administer, but morally proper and necessary nonetheless.

After responding to some basic philosophical challenges to this line of argument, I apply it to various particular controversies in health economics and health policy. I conclude, for example, that the quality and length of life for which we save a patient should affect whom we save, even when that length and quality is sufficient for the patients we do not save to want to live. We might even go as far in this direction as the British, say, and deny kidney dialysis to many older recipients.

We should also not think that doctors' good and courageous intentions to ration care will inevitably be decimated by the threat of malpractice suits. The legal analogue to the moral argument of a patient's prior consent is a properly understood, resurrected version of the now commonly discarded defense, "assumption of risk." In the long run the law will and should follow our best moral thinking on the matter. If the moral argument centered on patients' prior consent to rationing holds up, we should soon begin to see an expense-based defense gaining force in malpractice suits.

Quality of life and the threat of malpractice suits are only two of the book's applications. I also argue for the following conclusions. The total, often hidden cost of preventive measures (like getting people to stop smoking) should sometimes lead us to back off from aggressively promoting such measures. Handicapped newborns may be allowed to die because of enormous expense. The level of health care that society provides its poorer citizens need not be middle-class level care but only the leaner care that they as prospective rationers of their resources would select. A competitive market system for delivering care will confront severe but not strictly impossible moral problems. We should abandon the current voluntary donation system of procuring transplant organs and take organs by assumption unless the person objected to their removal when he or she was alive. And finally, older people often have a personal moral duty to die relatively cheaply.

A society of integrity will not run from such conclusions. Strong providers and patients will not run from them either. ■



## Contributors:

**Rita Brock's** field is feminist theology; her book *Journeys by Heart* won the 1988 Crossroad/Continuum Publishing Award for the best manuscript in women's studies. Rita, Assistant Professor of Religion at PLU this year, has accepted the chair in humanities at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota.

**Ralph Gehrke** is Professor of Religion; his field is biblical studies, especially Old Testament. He has authored *A Popular Commentary on 1st and 2nd Samuel* and *Old Testament Story*, and has translated from the German C. Westermann's *Psalms* and H. W. Wolff's *The Prophet Micah*. Ralph retires this year.

**Sharon Jansen**, Associate Professor of English, is a specialist in medieval literature; her book *The Welles Anthology: A Critical Edition* is forthcoming this spring (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies).

**Mark Jensen** received his Ph.D. (1989) from the University of California, Berkeley. He joins us as Assistant Professor of Languages. Mark's field is nineteenth-century French Romanticism; he has special interests in historiography.

**Patricia Killen's** field is theology and religious history in the U.S.; she has special interests in the place of community in religious history. Patricia joins us as Assistant Professor of Religion.

**Paul Menzel** is Professor of Philosophy; his specialties are ethics and legal philosophy.



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## PLU Centennial Events

**SCANDINAVIAN HERITAGE WEEK**, July 2-6, 1990. Learn about immigrant life and literature, art and design, family and social history. On-campus housing available. Teachers may enroll for credit as Education 503. Contact: Audun Toven, Scandinavian Studies, (206) 535-7314.

**SYMPOSIUM ON SHAPING SOCIETY'S VALUES**, October 11-12, 1990. Explore PLU's role and future with national leader Russell Edgerton, University of Oslo president Inge Lønning, and members of the PLU community. Contact Jan Barker, Social Sciences, (206) 535-7664.

**Janet Rasmussen** is Professor of Norwegian and Dean of the Division of Humanities.

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