

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled Literary Figuration of Jesus in Jose Saramago's *The Gospel according to Jesus Christ* is the result of the study carried out by me for M. Phil. Degree in English under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Joshy V. Paramthottu CMI, former Head, Department of English, Mary Matha College, Periyakulam. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any degree or Diploma and has not formed part of any paper or lecture.

Signature of the candidate

Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation titled Literary Figuration of Jesus in Jose Saramago's *The Gospel according to Jesus Christ* is the record of the research done for Degree of Master of Philosophy by Siby Thomas under the supervision of, Dr. Joshy V. Paramthottu CMI former Head, Department of English, Mary Matha College, Periyakulam, and submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in English.

Dr. Joshy V. Paramthottu CMI (MA (Eng.)

MA(Philosophy-USA).

M.Ph (Bangalore), Ph.D. (USA)

Dean of Studies and Bursar,

St. Charles Lwanga National Seminary

P.O.Box 91173, Klein Windhoek

Windhoek, Namibia

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Introduction

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25). When the evangelist of the Gospel of John penned the last words of what would become the last canonical gospel, he most likely did not realize how truly prophetic his words were. At that point, the landslide of writings detailing and often inventing those "other things which Jesus did" was just beginning (Metzger 166). In the last century alone, more than four hundred novels and novellas have been written about the life and deeds of Jesus. The list of authors who have tried their hands at creating a literary Lord include such notable names as D.H. Lawrence, Norman Mailer, Jose Saramago, Gore Vidal, Jeffrey Archer, Anne Rice, and most recently Philip Pullman. Although their writing styles and philosophical agendas vary drastically, they all share a fascination with the man from Galilee and are not unique in this interest either.

The modern world cannot seem to get enough of stories about Jesus, and if the current publishing trajectory remains steady, then soon it may not be able to contain all of the books being written. Our interest in the novels, however, pertains not only to how modern authors have taken the canonical Gospel material and supplemented and transformed it within these new tales of Jesus' life but also to how interaction with those stories has the potential to alter readers' perspectives of the canonical Gospels once they return to them. An atheist and a life-long Communist party member (Cousland 56) whom some critics refer to as a "political moralist," Saramago frequently displays these ideologies in his writings. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in his 1991 critically acclaimed but highly controversial version of Jesus'

life *O Evangelho Segundo Jesus Cristo* (translated in 1994 by Giovanni Pontierro as *The Gospel according to Jesus Christ*, hereafter referred to as *Gospel*).

By examining Saramago's *Gospel* we will be able to see some standard techniques as well as some unique techniques used by author to either "complement" or "compete" with the canonical Gospels, and through analysing the novels overall Christological portraits, we will be better equipped to judge whether this novel is successful in producing complementing or competing portraits through, or sometimes in spite of, the techniques the author has employed. I found it difficult to follow his style of writing especially the sentences without proper punctuations but as I progressed in my reading I could simply enjoy his own styles to certain extend.

It goes without saying that, like any other sacred writings, the Gospels cannot be replicated, they can only be interpreted and by those who are institutionally entitled to do so. A piece of writing is declared sacred, and used accordingly, because it is supposed to be the bearer of divine Truth uniquely imparted to humankind; once its final format is established, it admits of no changes or additions, which are severely censured by the institution whose function is to protect the uniqueness of the sacred writing in order to guarantee the truthfulness of God's words. As everybody knows, there is no lack of historical evidence of what lays in store for those who dare interpret sacred writings in unauthorized ways.

Jose Saramago, however, does not claim to come up with another interpretation of the Gospels but rather with a gospel in its own right, and one, moreover, that plays with the point of view, since it is offered as a third-person narrative that places the narrator, like the Apostles, in an eye-witness situation but, unlike them, makes him capable of becoming the reliable biographer of Christ's life. The Gospels are thus wrenched away from their canonical

sacredness and launched into the iterative drift of *genre*. Rewriting the Gospels into genre constitutes then a transgressive act of laicization by dint of which “the original undergoes a change”. Truth becomes fiction, which correlates with Saramago’s characters, including God and the Devil, becoming wholly humanized and miracles being therefore accounted for as devices of magical realism. Rewriting is made to reshape writing, in a reversal of roles nicely allegorised when, at the end of the gospel, the dying protagonist on the cross is depicted as crying out “Men, forgive Him, for He knows not what He has done”(377).

One gets the impression that what ultimately infuriated the Catholic right wing in Portugal at the time of the book’s publication was less the story-line – which Saramago follows rather closely – and character design than the dessacralising act of treating the Gospels as a mere genre, of writing a “pseudo-gospel”, an “anti-gospel” or a “fake gospel”, as he was charged with by representatives of the Church. “I write a gospel”: that is what all the self-referential statements in Saramago’s book really add up to. We can hardly fail to recognize the *performative*, which, as is well known, does things with words (Duarte 7).

Reading the *Gospel* in light of it's relationships with the canonical Gospels is only half of the hermeneutical circle though. Part of the intention of rewrites is to reconfigure the way in which readers view the original sources. When the reading pact, which will be explored below, of these textual relations is fully actualized, readers are propelled to return to the Gospels themselves, usually with an altered perspective and often with new insights or questions. In order to illustrate how Jesus novels can send readers back to the Gospel sources and stimulate "novel" re-readings of them, the last part of our study will offer a different type of case study from the first in which we will focus on one particular event in Jesus' life—the Temptation. Before embarking on our quest, however, we first must begin by addressing

some basic questions related to this endeavour, such as what a Jesus novel is and how it interacts with other texts and portraits of Jesus, particularly those found in the canonical Gospels.

Chapter I

Biblical Jesus and Fictional Jesus

As it is evident all the created works are mainly the play of imagination and creativity. So the Jesus novels also of no doubt fictitious. When trying to classify Jesus novels, we find that the first locus of reference providing some delimitation for their form and content is the larger literary genre to which they primarily, but not exclusively, belong—historical fiction. A simple consideration of this genre's title tells a great deal about the nature of the works contained under its umbrella. The fact that "fiction" rather than "history" is the noun found in the title signals that such narratives are first and foremost fiction (Cohin 162). Because a work of fiction is a "literary non-referential narrative text," (Harshaw 229) it is by definition not required to be externally referential to the actual world in any prescribed way. Precisely because the novels are historical fiction none of these historical details are ever completely safe from transformation once they have been imported into the novels' worlds. With fictional Jesuses, we see a strange tension between faithful correspondence to their external counterpart and creative freedom to reconfigure that character in a variety of ways.

In addition to its real-world counterpart characters, historical fiction is also known for its creation of imaginary characters. These characters are imaginary extensions of the external historical world, but they have an existence only in the novel's fictional world. There, the real-world counterparts and imaginary characters blend together to create an internally coherent new world (Harshaw 246).

In Jesus novels, we often see this mixture taking place. Sometimes new characters are invented to narrate Jesus' life from a different point of view and sometimes they are created to add a new plotline. Whatever their purpose or function, the ability of these imaginary

characters to coexist plausibly with real-world counterparts within the new fictional world is a hallmark of historical fiction in general and is specifically seen in Jesus novels (Dolezel 257).

Besides restraining the extent to which a fictional Jesus can differ from its historical counterpart, historical fiction also restricts the liberty of fiction in its creation of possible worlds. Because Jesus novels are historical fiction, they are limited to portraying the actual, physical world of the past—first-century Palestine in the case of Jesus novels. Yet like anything imported from the actual world into the fictional world, even the historical setting is not safe from reconfiguration. Jesus novels, such as Vidal's *Live From Golgotha*, sometimes transgress the boundaries of their first-century settings and cross into other arenas of space and time to present multiple historical worlds.(Ramey 14)

While in one sense all rewrites, including Jesus novels, are global allusions to their source material, they are more than just allusions by virtue of their intentionality in evoking the original sources and the greater extent to which they import the source material. To qualify as a Jesus novel, the novel's fictional Jesus must be externally referential in some way to its real-world counterpart, Jesus of Nazareth. At the very least, the character of Jesus should share the same name and a similar life story with the one who lived and died in the first-century C.E (Crook 34). Precisely because the novels are historical fiction none of these historical details are ever completely safe from transformation once they have been imported into the novels' worlds. With fictional Jesuses, we see a strange tension between faithful correspondence to their external counterpart and creative freedom to reconfigure that character in a variety of ways (Ramey 13).

Besides belonging to the genre of historical fiction, Jesus novels also fall under the category of Gospel rewrites. The idea of Gospel rewrites is similar to the concept of the Rewritten Bible, which was introduced by Geza Vermes to describe post-biblical Jewish literature, such as Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* or the book of *Jubilees* (126). Such works retell stories from the Bible in new ways that often include supplementation and interpretation. These fictive supplements to the biblical stories James Kugel calls "narrative expansions." Of them, he says, "A narrative expansion can consist of anything not found in the original biblical story—generally, an additional action performed by one or more of the people in the story or additional words spoken in the course of the events." They can be as small as an inserted new word or as large as entire new episodes (6). The difference between Vermes' *Rewritten Bible* and these Jesus novels, which we are classifying as Gospel rewrites, seems to be one of quantity rather than of quality. They are in essence doing the same type of rewriting, but the novels are lengthier and more sustained in their efforts at rewriting by reproducing multiple episodes from Jesus' life rather than simply one.

This additional level of external reference, this time to the canonical Gospels specifically rather than to ancient Palestine more generally, again limits the extent to which the novel's fictional Jesus can be reinvented. Rewriting has become a speciality all its own within literary criticism and is popular among those interested in the inter textual nature of texts (Ramey 15). In outlining precisely what a rewrite is, Ziva Ben-Porat states that it is "a retelling of a known story in such a way that the resulting text, the rewrite, is simultaneously an original composition and a recognizable rendition, involving a critical rereading of the source"(93).

In the case of Jesus novels, they are considered Gospel rewrites because their "major building blocks" come from the canonical Gospels although additional pieces are also often imported

from other texts. These texts may often include the non-canonical gospels, ancient historiographical works, such as those written by Philo or Josephus, and theological treatises. Fortney's *The Thomas Jesus* raises an interesting challenge to this rule because its fictional Jesus is more intentionally based on *The Gospel of Thomas'* picture of Jesus rather than on the canonical Gospel Jesus. Yet even this novel is dependent upon the canonical Gospels, particularly for narrative material, which is lacking from the *Thomasine sayings gospel*, and so also functions as a Gospel rewrite (Ramey 16). The Jesus novels are usually rewrites of not just one Gospel but of all four does complicate matters because it means that the reader must constantly be aware of these different texts when analyzing a Gospel rewrite. Readers are first alerted to a novel's status as a Gospel rewrite, and thus to its reading pact that demands engagement with the novel's Gospel sources, by the specific Gospel material appropriated by a novel. There are also other internal cues, such as when a novel refers to itself as a gospel, when a narrator refers to himself or herself as an evangelist, or when the narrator refers to other accounts of Jesus' life, that signal to the reader that the novel is a Gospel rewrite (Saramago 194). In addition, para-textual cues, such as titles and information given on dust jackets and introductions, are also helpful in framing the narrative as a Gospel rewrite. For example, the titles *Testament*, *The Gospel according to the Son*, and *The Gospel according to Jesus Christ* all connect the novels with the canonical Gospels and imply that they should be read as other valid versions of Jesus' life (Ben-Porat 94). The varied ways in which each novel engages with the Gospel source material is one of the major areas of interest to this study. Like everything else imported into the fictional world of a Jesus novel, the Gospel material itself is not safe from being transformed. While some rewritings can be mimetic in form and in content, they can also be subversive in their stance towards the Gospels (Ben-Porat 5). In

fact, subversion or even inversion, particularly of characters' dispositions or roles, are some of the most common practices of rewrites (Saramago 95).

Having established that Jesus novels are primarily works of historical fiction that at least minimally refer to Jesus of Nazareth and to the canonical Gospels, it is important for us to take a step back to examine this person and these sources which the novels rewrite. To do this will involve establishing terminology for the person of Jesus and for his literary portrayals. This endeavour has been aided considerably by Raymond Brown's discussion on different types of Jesus portraits, which he labels the actual Jesus, the historical Jesus, and the Gospel Jesus (105). An understanding of these Jesuses will help us to know the fictional Jesus in a better way.

When speaking of the "actual Jesus," Brown refers to the person who lived in Galilee and died in Jerusalem almost two thousand years ago. While many would call this person the historical Jesus, Brown reserves that term for the historiographical portraits that scholars create. He most likely draws this distinction in order to avoid the confusion between the representation and its referent that often arises with the label "historical Jesus" and with the word "history" in general (Tillich 123). Here the term "actual Jesus" refers to the person who lived in first-century Palestine. If one were able to create a portrait of the actual Jesus, Brown says that it would portray his life from birth until death. It would include information such as what he looked like, what joke she laughed at, whether he fell in love, and so on. In short, such a description would include all of the details of interest found in a modern biography. Unfortunately, much of this information has been lost in the recesses of antiquity and is unrecoverable except through imagination. Yet it is precisely "through imagination" that the

Jesus novels come in. In their fictional portrayals, the novels answer many of the questions about the actual Jesus that are left unanswered in the Gospel portraits.

Moving from the actual person of Jesus to his portrayals, we come to "the historical Jesus." The historical Jesus refers to portraits that are also aimed at recovering and presenting the details of the actual Jesus' life. Although the common expectation is that these scholarly reconstructions present Jesus as he actually was, (Ramey20) their ability to do so is limited by the amount of data provided by the ancient sources. Also, just as with any Jesus portrait, their depiction is inevitably influenced by the interpretation given to the available source material and by the methodology used in handling it.

When we observe the way in which historical Jesus scholars typically approach the canonical material, we notice that it differs from the method used by other Jesus portrait painters, especially from those who wish to make a harmonized Gospel portrait of Jesus. Whereas harmonizers try to preserve as much canonical material as possible and to unify the evangelists' voices into one seamless narrative, historians usually go behind the Gospels, disassembling their portraits in order to draw out fragments of a historical reality buried beneath the evangelists' theologically redacted layers. (Hengel 32)

Those specializing in this field vary in their opinions on the historicity of the Gospels, with some pronouncing that little of the canonical material can be traced back to Jesus himself and others expressing more confidence in them. As with anything that has been taken apart, the portraits of Jesus reassembled by historical scholars may not be put back together in the same "Gospel" form and typically do not use all of the Gospel pieces, even pieces about whose historicity they are more confident.

Also, the sum of these reassembled historical Jesuses is often more than the individual parts taken from the original sources, and yet the role that interpretation plays in these portraits is not always fully acknowledged.

Rae criticizes the widespread belief that the actual Jesus can be accessed directly without the “contamination” of interpretation. He censures both those who champion a literal reading of the Bible as a path providing direct access to him and those who believe that the actual Jesus is accessible to any objective observer who uncovers the “neutral” data by stripping back the interpretive layers of the Gospels. (95)

We can see through a quick perusal of the gallery of historical Jesus portraits just how varied their interpretations of what Jesus was actually like can be (Ramey21).

Jesus novelists acquainted with historical Jesus scholarship sometimes intentionally model their fictional creations on different historical Jesuses, and often their approach to the Gospel sources mirrors that of the scholars whose Jesuses they emulate. For instance, with Anne Rice's *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt*, we see a novel influenced by "third quest" historical Jesus scholarship that expresses more confidence in the historicity of the Gospels and that paints a very Jewish Jesus. In contrast, Steven Fortney's *The Thomas Jesus* provides an example of a fictional Jesus based on the work of the Jesus Seminar that elevates the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas as a primary source for uncovering the actual Jesus. By basing their Jesus characters on historical Jesus scholarship, the novelists bolster the historicity of their works and the impression that their fictional Jesuses may represent the actual Jesus.

The final type of Jesus portrait that Brown discusses is that of the Gospel Jesus. As historical Jesus scholars rightly point out, the Gospel portraits are written from theological perspectives, which make it difficult to discern which parts accurately portray the actual Jesus and which are reflections of the evangelists' faith projected onto that person. These portraits may seem inadequate and even unhistorical when approached with the assumptions of modern historiography, but that is because they belong to the world of ancient historiography and should be judged according to those standards and not modern ones. Recent genre work on the canonical Gospels has located them within the realm of Greco-Roman biography.

Since the chief aim of these ancient biographies was to communicate the essence of a great person and why his or her life was noteworthy rather than to merely detail the facts of that person's life, some events were stressed while others were left unrecorded. Ancient biographies also were not limited to only those events that actually took place, and even fictional elements could be a part of their descriptive portraits. Unlike modern biographies, which require historical veracity, ancient biographies were regarded as truthful representations so long as they were faithful to the person's character by picturing who that person "really" was. Plausibility rather than authenticity was the chief means of distinguishing truth from falsehood in their portrayals. In many ways, the Gospel portraits are like icons and are even referred to as such in early Byzantine theology (Lepakin 20). Unlike photographs, which mimetically reproduce their referents with no discrimination to details, icons highlight significant details and suppress those that are less important (Green 93).

They claim to represent what it is most essential about a person and thus are interpretive objects drawing the beholder's gaze to focus on what that person is "really" like. Unlike "realist" genres, iconic imagery draws a distinction

between the real and the actual and asserts that reality is more than that which can be empirically observed and reproduced in an imitative fashion. In fact, representing that which is "really real" may require art that is inherently non-realistic in form, and yet non-realistic should never be equated with completely fictional. Eastern iconic art understands these distinctions and makes a different kind of truth claim than Western "realist" forms of art by asserting that reality can be portrayed, perhaps even better, through non-realistic representations. (Ramey 23)

When we compare the Gospels to icons, we see that the Gospels also attempt to bring their audiences in contact with different aspects of what the evangelists consider to be the essential

When we compare the Gospels to icons, we see that the Gospels also attempt to bring their audiences in contact with different aspects of what the evangelists consider to be the essential features of Jesus' character. Like icons, they train the beholders to see their subject through theological eyes and thus with a clearer gaze on reality (Tillich 133)

Also like icons, the Gospels present us with multiple images of Jesus that though different in many aspects are still united on the features that are most representative of Jesus' person. This multiplicity of images helps to prevent viewers from idolatrously equating one image with the person as if it could fully represent or replace that which it signifies.

Thus, just as with historical Jesuses, we can speak of many different Gospel Jesuses: the "Matthean Jesus," the "Markan Jesus," the "Lukan Jesus," and the "Johannine Jesus." To these we could add the noncanonical variety, such as the "Thomasine Jesus" or the "Peterine Jesus." When Brown uses the term "Gospel

Jesus," he is simply referring to a portrait created by one of the evangelists.
(Ramey 24)

When these novels are examined from a Christian perspective, we find that boundaries are already to some extent established for imaging Jesus. While the plurality of the canonical Gospels may have functioned, at least implicitly, as a stimulus to the production of new Jesus images, this plurality also set limits for the appropriate re-imaging of Jesus. Anyone who has followed the media and witnessed the publicity surrounding the National Geographic's unveiling of the lost Gospel of Judas or the Jesus Seminar's inclusion of the Gospel of Thomas as the "fifth gospel" offering authentic sayings of the actual Jesus is at least aware that there are more gospels than just the four canonical ones (Ramey26). Indeed, the production of gospels appears to have been a major enterprise during late antiquity (Stanton 126). According to the early church's perspective, the "real Jesus" could be found in the four canonical Gospels but not in those other gospels. Therefore, the four Gospels became the canon, the "ruler" against which any other Jesus images should be measured (Green 95). In order for any of those images to remain within the orthodox camp, their depictions of Jesus needed to fall somewhere between the fourfold boundaries established by the Gospels.

Of course, simply because the Gospels provide a fourfold boundary for orthodox images of Jesus does not mean that they are the only sources from which material can be drawn when constructing a new portrait. As noted above, Jesus novels import material from a variety of places. Many orthodox rewrites freely appropriate material from non-canonical gospels, such as names of unnamed characters in Gospels and additional events. It is not necessarily the sources being used that determine a Jesus novel's relationship to its Gospel sources and the boundaries they have established. Rather, it is the way in which those sources are treated and

transformed upon entry into the novel's fictional world that determines whether or not a novel is a faithful rewrite remaining within the fourfold fence.

In writing against Valentinian Gnosticism, Irenaeus once described the Gnostic use of Scripture with the analogy of a beautiful jewel-encrusted mosaic of a king. He compared the Gnostics with men who came along and removed the gems from their original positions in that mosaic and rearranged them to form a new picture, one of a dog or a fox, rather than the original image of a king. They then declared their new patterns to be the true ones, and those who had never seen royalty before mistook the picture of an animal for that of a king (Ramey 28). Irenaeus' analogy is also reminiscent of what scholars and artists have done for centuries with the Gospels as they have used them as a mine from which to extract and then reassemble Gospel bits and pieces into new Jesus images. As mentioned earlier, each person begins with some concept of what the Gospel Jesus looks like, and such an idea is usually a mosaic composition drawn from parts of all the Gospels. Then each person responds to that mental image in various ways but typically by becoming either a mosaic mover, one who, like the Gnostics, rearranges the Gospel pieces to form a new pattern, or a gap-filler, one who leaves the Gospel Jesus mosaic in place and works within the spaces between its pieces. This process certainly appears to be at work in Jesus novels as well. Their authors typically function as mosaic movers or gap-fillers depending on the way that they appropriate the Gospels, and their rewrites ultimately relate to these sources in either broadly competing or complementing ways.

In glancing back across the centuries at various attempts to rewrite the Gospels, we see that some of the very first "mosaic movers" and "gap-fillers" are the authors of non-canonical gospels.

The terms "supplanting" and "supplementing" are often used in speaking of the relationship of these works to the canonical Gospels. For example, in the introduction to Hennecke's *New Testament Apocrypha*, the rationale for considering a work "apocryphal" was not just that it failed to make its way into the canon but also that it either "intended to take the place of the four Gospels of the canon. . . or to stand as enlargement of them side by side with them. . . aimed at supplementing the deficient information which the NT communicates". (Schneemelcher 28)

Similarly, Bruce Metzger divides the apocryphal gospels into two broad categories: those that intended to supplant and those that intended to supplement the four canonical Gospels. We will address the concept of "supplementing" presently, but for the moment, let us focus on how some modern rewrites may or may not share similar "supplanting" motivations with their ancient predecessors.

Unlike their non-canonical forefathers, many modern rewrites do not necessarily aim to supplant the authority of the canonical Gospels. Like them though, these rewrites often offer images of Jesus that intentionally compete with those of the Gospel Jesus. Because the motivation of modern attempts slightly differs from that of ancient ones, I prefer to use the term "competing" in order to describe not only the intention behind these novels but also the way in which their fictional Jesuses function in relation to the Gospel Jesus once the reading pact between these rewrites and their Gospel sources has been activated.

Like many of their non-canonical predecessors and like many historical Jesus portraits, competing rewrites are not content to leave the structures of the Gospel portraits in

place, so they rearrange and remove many of the original pieces and produce an innovative format for their new portraits. Often, these novels intentionally seek to be controversial and provocative when compared to the original Gospel images. Whether one believes that such competing intentions are positive or negative, it can generally be agreed upon that one positive aspect of competing rewrites is that they can be successful as literary works, often unlike their more orthodox cousins, because they are not constrained by the original pictures but are freed from the Gospel boundaries to be more creative.

While the purposes behind many of the competing rewrites vary, one of them is to challenge the historicity of the canonical Gospels. As Ben-Porat explains, "Rewriters of history assume—and often claim—that their versions are better, more representative of historical truth, than previous attempts to present the same facts"(56). In undermining the historical claims of the Gospels, competing rewrites are sometimes quick to dismiss the miracles that are a part of the Gospel world view. Instead, they present alternative views of history that eliminate supernatural interventions. For example, Jim Crace's *Quarantine* has Jesus die thirty days into his forty-day fast; Ricci's *Testament* explains how Jesus' reputation as a healer was exaggerated by a rumour mill spinning greater and greater fabrications of the actual events; Lawrence's *The Man Who Died* presents the popular notion that Jesus never died but simply regained consciousness in the tomb after passing out on the cross; and Vidal's *Live From Golgotha* promulgates the mistaken identity theory of Judas being crucified in Jesus' place. At other times, competing novels willingly allow the miraculous into their narrative worlds and challenge the Gospels not on a historical front but on a theological one. For example, many offer extremely low Christological portraits that are not very complementary to the Gospel Jesus. In Mailer's *The Gospel according to the Son*, in Saramago's *The Gospel according to*

Jesus Christ, and in Kazantzakis' *The Last Temptation*, Jesus is not simply one who struggles with sin but is sinful himself. Other times, it is Jesus' paternity that is suspect; for example, in Ricci's *Testament* Jesus is the bastard son of Mary and a Roman soldier. Sometimes, it is Jesus' intelligence or his sanity that is in doubt, as in Fortney's *The Thomas* Jesus in which Jesus is just a wee bit crazy or in Crace's *Quarantine* in which he is a naïve and slow-witted simpleton.

As we examine our two case studies of competing rewrites, we will explore some of the methods used in them to undermine either the historicity or the theology of the Gospels, and we shall also examine the competing narratives that they offer. In sum, we will attempt to discern just how complementing or competing their fictional Jesuses are in comparison with the Gospel Jesus.

The ancient works that are often deemed "supplementing" have been called so because their aim appears to be not one of replacing the Gospels but of adding to them by inventing extra- canonical episodes for Jesus' life. When scholars who study the non-canonical collection speak of supplementing gospels, they are often referring to the infancy gospels, such as the *Protoevangelium of James* and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (Cullmann 391).

We can see this gap filling first taking place within some of the non-canonical infancy narratives. Since Matthew and Luke alone of the four canonical Gospels tell anything about Jesus' earlier years, a huge lacuna exists in the Gospel mosaic. To have so much silence surrounding the majority of Jesus' earthly life was not at all agreeable to many of the early Christians (Cameron 113). Because it is only natural that whenever "biographical literature shows gaps, legend generally springs up," (Cullmann 364) it is not surprising that new infancy

gospels arose to fill in those gaps. Motivated partly by curiosity about those years, orthodox rewriters, such as the author of the Protoevangelium of James, began with the Matthean and Lukan narratives about Jesus' childhood and then filled them in with background stories and further details.

Up until this point, we have mainly been concerned with how novelists interpret the Gospels and respond to images of the Gospel Jesus in their Gospel rewrites. This topic will continue to be the focus of the first half of this thesis as we explore four different Jesus novels and analyze how each functions as a complementing or competing rewrite. No less important, however, is the way in which readers respond to these rewrites and how these novels and the reading pacts imbedded within them provoke a rereading of the Gospels themselves. Indeed, this subsequent benefit of stimulating readers to return to the original texts is often pointed out in defense of reading rewrites (Ben-Porat 6).

Yet, the Gospels are not merely reread but also reinterpreted, and this reinterpretation takes place in response to the rewrites and often in light of their perspectives. Mieke Bal argues on behalf of this reversal in hermeneutics in which the prior text is interpreted in light of the later one, and she dubs such interpretation "preposterous" because that which came first chronologically is now read according to that which was written latterly (7). Bal defends this inversion of the traditional order of interpretation by suggesting that any exegesis is preposterous by definition because interpreters always return to a text already influenced by their own culture, so inevitably they anachronistically read the original text. Preposterous readings are simply "wilful and thoughtful deployment of anachronism in the interpretation of historical artifacts"(13).These readings recognize the effect that intertextuality has on the

interpretation of these now rewritten sources. Beyond simply acknowledging the rewrite's role, preposterous readings welcome its voice into the hermeneutic conversation.

Such a "preposterous" reading of the Gospels will be undertaken in the second half of this thesis. Indeed, we will attempt to complete an entire hermeneutical circle of the reading pact in relation to one particular event in Jesus' life—the Temptation. Beginning with an examination of the Gospel accounts themselves, we then will move on to examine how this episode has been rewritten in two of our Jesus novels, one which complements and one which competes with the Gospel accounts of that story. After comparing these versions with one another, we will return to one of the Gospels (Matthew) and offer a preposterous reading of its Temptation narrative in light of questions and issues raised by the rewrites. It is my intention that the subsequent "novel" exegesis of the Temptation will serve as an apology in itself for the benefit that rewrites can play in NT scholarship and also within the church's understanding of the Gospel Jesus.

Chapter 2

Saramago's Gospel as a Gap Filling

Saramago's revision of Jesus' life has generated a wide range of responses, from being considered blasphemous by some and to being hailed as sublime by others. In 1992, the Portuguese government blocked the novel's nomination for a European literary prize because it was deemed offensive to the country's Catholic religion. Saramago, in protest over the offense, left his homeland and moved to Lanzarote. In contrast to the government's reaction, critics like Harold Bloom praise the novel calling it "imaginatively superior to any other life of Jesus, including the four canonical Gospels" (155). Alternatively loved or hated, praised and censured, the novel has certainly elicited numerous responses, but the one point that all readers could probably agree upon is that it intentionally tries to compete with the gospel story. Critics have labeled it a "subversive rewriting of the Gospels," (Ben-Porat 97) the "badspel" according to Jesus Christ, and an "extended and bitter satire on the Bible, the Gospel genre, and the message contained in the Gospels." In his 1998 Nobel Prize speech, Saramago himself called it a "heretical Gospel."

If reader response and authorial intention were all that were needed to categorize *Gospel* as a competing novel, then we would have already made our case. In order to analyze better Gospel's stance towards the Gospels, however, we must examine not only the opinions of others but also the novel itself, particularly how it appropriates and transforms its biblical source material. Therefore, we shall examine this "heretical" rewriting by paying attention to how it subverts the Gospels' characters and their world view in order to produce this badspell.

Like Testament, *Gospel* spans the actual Jesus' entire life, beginning with his conception and ending with his crucifixion. Thus, there is a great deal of potential for the use of Gospel material within this Jesus novel. Although the way in which a Jesus novel moves and manipulates the biblical source material is usually very telling regarding its stance towards the original Gospel portraits, in the case of *Gospel*, its use of the biblical material is not as overtly subversive as that of other competing narratives, such as Testament. While offering a competing message to those of the evangelists, *Gospel* neither moves nor reshapes the Gospel mosaic pieces quite as much we would expect in a subversive rewrite. Most of the individual bits and pieces imported arrive in Saramago's new narrative surprisingly intact. As the following summary of *Gospel*'s use of source material in its plot construction will demonstrate, the novel retains a harmonized plot structure essentially faithful to that of the Gospels while at the same time shifting the sequence of some events.

In Saramago's *Gospel*'s opening chapter, we meet Joseph and Mary, a young married couple living in Nazareth. After having intercourse one morning (11; cf. Matt 1:18; Luke 1:34-37), they conceive their first born son. Four weeks after, not prior to, Jesus' conception, an angel disguised as a beggar visits their home and announces Mary's pregnancy (16-17; cf. Luke 1:26- 38). Months later, the couple is forced because of a Roman census to travel to Bethlehem (28; cf. Luke 2:1-5). There in a cave, Mary gives birth to Jesus with the help of a midwife named Salome, and soon shepherds bearing gifts visit the young family (56; cf. Luke 2:6-20).

Next comes Herod's slaughter of the innocents, which Jesus manages to avoid not because of an angelic messenger's warning but because of some loose-lipped soldiers whom Joseph overhears discussing their orders (80-85; cf. Matt 2:13-18). After hiding in their cave to avoid

the slaughter, the not-so-holy family returns to Nazareth rather than fleeing to Egypt (94; cf. Matt 2:14), where Jesus leads an uneventful childhood helping in Joseph's carpenter shop while attending the synagogue school and studying the Torah. At this point, the source material runs out, and Saramago's *Gospel*, like other Jesus novels, fills in Jesus' hidden years with new material.

After turning thirteen, Jesus' life changes forever when Roman soldiers mistakenly crucify his father Joseph in Sepphoris after they squelch Judas the Galilean's uprising and burn the town to the ground. Jesus then literally and figuratively steps into his father's shoes, inheriting not only his sandals but also his nightmares about the slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem and the guilt that Joseph felt over his complicity in that event. This revelation compels Jesus to visit the temple (169-174; cf. Luke 2:41-52) to ask the elders if a son can inherit his father's guilt. In *Out of Egypt*, the boy Jesus also has an emotional breakdown when he learns about the slaughter of the innocents, and he too suffers on behalf of the murdered children (Rice 286).

During his hidden years, Saramago's Jesus has other adventures, such as working as a shepherd for four years with the mysterious Pastor, meeting God for the first time in the wilderness and making a covenant with him there, travelling to the Sea of Galilee where he meets some of his disciples and where the first miraculous catch of fish occurs (228; cf. Luke 5:1-11), falling in love with Mary Magdalene, and finally being rejected by his family when he claims that God has a special mission for his life. After this rejection, Jesus returns to the lake with Mary Magdalene at his side, and the novel resumes following its biblical source material.

During this period, miracles, like those described in the Gospels, begin to occur wherever Jesus goes—storms are calmed (282, 296; cf. Matt 8:23-27); water turns to wine (290; cf. John 2:1-11); the fever of Simon's mother-in-law vanishes (295; cf. Matt 8:14-15); demons are exorcised from a Gadarene lunatic (296-300; cf. Mark 5:1-20); a fig tree is cursed and dies (302-303; cf. Matt 21:18-22); and five thousand are fed (303; cf. Matt 14:13-21). Here, we see how Saramago, like most Jesus novelists, harmonizes events from all four Gospels. After the climactic testing scene on the lake during which Jesus discovers his true identity as God's Son and what that identity entails (cf. Matt 4:1-11), which we shall discuss at length below in chapter 6, Jesus continues performing biblical miracles, such as the healings of a leper (338; cf. Matt 8:1-4), a paralytic (339; cf. Matt 9:1-8), and a mute man (351; cf. Matt 15:29-31). This time though, he not only heals but also preaches. Surprisingly, his main message—that people must repent of their sins and prepare for God's new era (304)—is very similar to that of the Gospel Jesus (cf. Matt 4:17). Also like his Gospel counterpart, Saramago's Jesus instructs the twelve disciples and sends them out to spread his message (342, cf. Matt 10:1-42).

While the disciples are gone, he and Mary Magdalene travel to Bethany where they stay with Mary's siblings Martha and Lazarus (342ff.; cf. Luke 10:38-43; John 11:1). Although Jesus is able to heal Lazarus of one illness (348), he does not raise him from the dead when he later dies (361-362; cf. John 11:1-44). When the disciples return, they inform Jesus about a prophet called John who is baptising and preaching by the Jordan (353-354; cf. Matt 3:1-12). Now at the end of his ministry rather than at the beginning (cf. Matt 3:13-17), Jesus goes to be baptised by John (355). Also contrary to the Gospel versions, it is Jesus who seeks out John in order to discover if Jesus is the Messiah who is to come (354, 356; cf. Matt 11:2-6).

Next, Jesus leads an attack on the money changers at the temple (359; cf. Matt 21:10-17), but it is not this event that leads to his arrest (contra the Synoptics). Instead, John the Baptist's arrest and beheading (355-356; cf. Matt 14:1-12) prompt Jesus to tell his disciples everything about God's plans for global domination and their own martyrdoms. Jesus, wanting to make sure that none of these predictions come to pass, tries to thwart God's will by quickly arranging to die as the "King of the Jews," a political pretender to the crown, rather than as the Son of God before God can realize what Jesus has done. Judas offers to help by betraying Jesus to the officials and arranging for Jesus' arrest (370; cf. Matt 26:14-16). After undergoing two trials, one with the Israelite religious leaders (372-373) and one with Pilate (373-375), that are similar and yet different from those detailed in the Gospels (cf. Matt 26:57-75; 27:11-14), Jesus is crucified between two criminals under an inscription proclaiming him "Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews" (375-376). Unfortunately, God knew all along what Jesus was doing and shows up in person at the crucifixion. Thwarting Jesus' intention and using Jesus' death for his own purposes, God declares, "This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased" (376; cf. Matt 3:17; 17:5) so that everyone will know Jesus' true identity and so that the religion of Christianity will be founded on the Son of God's martyrdom.

As we can see from the description of source material used in Saramago's *Gospel*, even though some details are changed and others are left out, Saramago, for the most part, retains the basic integral structure of a harmonization of the Gospel narratives. At the same time, he revises that structure at various points and adds to it with details and incidents from apocryphal gospels and other ancient sources.

Saramago's wider and more consistent use of the Gospel material alerts us to the fact that he is a different type of mosaic mover than Ricci. In *Testament*, there is a subtle suggestion through its reshaping and rearrangement that the original mosaic pieces themselves had been painted over and placed incorrectly in the canonical pictures. Ricci presents his aim as simply one of restoring the original, undistorted picture of the actual Jesus rather than the covered-up version of the Gospel Jesus by moving the pieces back to their original shapes and positions (Ramey 113).

Saramago makes no such pretense of uncovering the actual Jesus. In describing his own rewriting efforts, Saramago says that his *Gospel* was not a matter of looking behind the pages of the New Testament searching for antitheses, but of illuminating their surfaces, like that of a painting, with a low light to heighten their relief, the traces of crossings, the shadows of depressions. While Saramago's principal interests are not historical as Ricci's are, they are certainly not as benign as simply "heightening" the relief and shadows of the original Gospels. Also, although he does indeed retain and use the "surfaces" of the NT Gospels for his own story, Saramago is not terribly forthcoming about the alternative ideologies he inserts to undergird and ultimately to transform even those surfaces. *Gospel* turns out to be a theological remaking of the Gospels and of the characters that inhabit their worlds. In the novel, Saramago reformats Jesus according to his own philosophy and then uses Jesus to promote his own gospel of humanitarian compassion. As Cousland has astutely noted, Saramago uses the Gospel events and settings only "to provide a convincing costume for the very different figure that lies beneath them (69).

In *Gospel*, Saramago presents us with a new type of mosaic moving that may be an even more devious way of subverting the Gospels than Ricci's because the Jesus character in Gospel's new mosaic still resembles its original self in some essential ways. We are lulled into uncritical acceptance by the similarity in features between the original and the remake as we are lured into the narrative. Then we are shocked awake when we realize that by changing the whole of the Scriptural world view in *Gospel*, Saramago also has changed the Jesus who inhabits that world. In order to see how Saramago performs this transformation, we must now turn to the narrative world and the characters that exist there.

If we were to base our opinion of *Gospel*'s relationship with its biblical source material solely on the initial impression given by the novel's outward adherence to the plot imported from the Gospels, we might be misled to conclude that the novel is only slightly subversive in its stance towards the Gospels. Also misleading is the fact that *Gospel* allows miraculous events and divine characters to intrude into its world. On this score, Saramago's novel appears on the surface to be more in line with the Gospels' world view than even Boyd's novel was. The presence of supernatural features in *Gospel*, however, does not necessarily imply that the novel has adopted the Gospel's world view. In fact, Ben-Porat attributes the appearance of miracles to Saramago's adoption of the Latin American style of magical realism rather than to any faithful adherence to the Gospels' theological perspective on supernatural and miraculous incursions into the natural world (96). While Saramago certainly adopts the magical realism mode in some of his other novels, such as *The Stone Raft* (1986) or *Blindness* (1995), it is less certain that magical realism is really what lies at the heart of the miraculous and magical events in *Gospel*.

Magical realism is a term used by literary theorists "to refer to all narrative fiction that includes magical happenings in a realist matter-of-fact narrative, whereby, 'the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, and everyday occurrence—admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism'" (Bowers 2). Magical realist texts are known for being subversive because they break down the barriers between what is assumed to be real and that which is not by placing both magical and realist elements side by side without any hierarchy of order or authorial instruction as to their legitimacy. Because this mode questions the notion of absolute truth in relation to reality, it is also inherently suited to questioning and breaking other boundaries, such as those that are political, geographical, or, in Saramago's case, ontological (Ramey 115). It is often used in post-colonial literature as a way to subvert the dominant historical narrative of colonialism, but in Saramago's novel, we see that his target is the subversion of the traditional narrative of Christianity. Just as magical realist texts are often used by those on the margins of society, those speaking from the position of the "other," to critique the powerful elite, dictators, or other dominant forces of society, so too we see Saramago using his novel to cast God in the dictatorial role and humans in the marginalized, oppressed peasant role. The view of the "other" espoused by Saramago is that of the atheist, a minority in a Christian-dominated culture.

While it is true that *Gospel* carries many characteristics of magical realism, such as excess, fantastical elements, a sense of mystery, metafiction, intertextuality, parody, and certainly a type of political critique, the novel perhaps is not best categorized as a work of magical realism. Certainly Saramago does not deny the reality of the miraculous or the magical, and he does not try to explain these events away as a more modernist author, such as Ricci, would

by giving plausible scientific explanations for them. He willingly admits such intrusions into his narrative world, but the difference in *Gospel* is that such events are intrusions into the narrative world and are not presented as a natural, ordinary part of it. When magic or the miraculous happens, such as the appearance of the shining dust after the annunciation, Jesus's inheritance of Joseph's dreams, or the traditional miracles of Jesus' ministry, characters are always surprised. They question their existence and sometimes seek natural explanations or accept them as divine invasions into their world rather than understanding them as part of the natural order.

Perhaps here we see Saramago using even the miraculous elements of the narrative to promote his humanist agenda because in the final analysis these magical happenings are viewed as unwelcome and unneeded. The miraculous in Saramago's world, unlike the miraculous in the worlds of most magical realist novels, is not the vehicle of deliverance or subversion for the oppressed but the means of oppression by the deity. It is intrinsically tied to the Christian church and its God and as such needs to be rejected just as Jesus tries to reject the magical powers bestowed on him by his Father (Ramey 115).

Instead of looking for divine and miraculous deliverance from their problems, humanity is encouraged by Saramago to be their own solution and to celebrate the beauty of the natural order. In this way, *Gospel* resembles more the magic realism of Europe than the magical realism of Latin America since in the European variety the ordinary is given a mysteriousness and a marvellous quality whereas in Latin America the genre focuses more on blending the real and the magical together in such a way that both are common and ordinary in the narrative world. We can see an example of this difference in the birth narrative of *Gospel* in which Saramago celebrates the marvellous ordinariness of the sexual encounter between Mary

and Joseph and its ability to bring new life into the world. Yet he also mixes magic into that act with the appearance of the beggar and his magic dust and the claim that God mixes his seed with that of Joseph's. Unlike Latin American magical realism, the intrusion of these extraordinary characters and of this event is not presented as commonplace but as extraordinary and as a matter of much concern and discussion among the peasant villagers in Nazareth. Also as we see later in the novel, God's miraculous interference with this natural act is seen as unwelcome and as the beginning of disastrous consequences for humanity.

In sum, it appears that Ben-Porat is perhaps mistaken in attributing Saramago's inclusion of miraculous elements to magical realism rather than to an adherence to the Gospels. Instead we find that Saramago includes such events precisely because they are a part of the traditional Christian narrative, but he adopts them in order to subvert them once they are imported into his narrative world. There they are rejected as impositions of the divine dictator. Saramago, in resemblance to the magic realism of Europe, prefers to champion the marvellousness of the ordinary and the majesty of the natural order.

By digging a bit deeper into the narrative world of *Gospel*, we find that in other ways the novel is not as complementary to the Gospels as an initial glance at its imported structure and affirmation of the miraculous might suggest. In fact, *Gospel* turns out to be the most subversive of the Gospel rewrites that we have examined because it intentionally inverts the metaphysical framework and the moral polarities of the Gospels (Cousland 60). As Ben-Porat and other critics have already noted, "The most irreconcilable element with faithful representation is, of course, the seemingly complete reversal of roles between God and Satan"(98). Yet even though *Gospel* reverses the moral characters of God and Satan, it does not invert the nature of good and evil themselves. In the novel, we see that realism rather than

nominalism rules its world since on the surface there clearly are universals, qualities such as "goodness" and "beauty," that have real ontological value and that exist apart from the entities that possess those qualities.

These universals do not have an existence simply because God wills them to be as they are or because they are an outflow of God's own nature. In fact, the reader cannot rely on the fact that God himself possesses "goodness," "beauty," or any other positive quality traditionally ascribed to God. Judgement on what is good and evil in Gospel's world is not dependent upon God's verdict, and even God himself can be critiqued according to these standards that exist above and apart from God.

In Gospel's world, the defining criterion for calling any of the characters "good" is whether or not they show humane compassion for others, which on a macro level manifests itself in the elimination of unjust and oppressive structures afflicting humanity and on a micro level occurs with the performance of even the smallest acts that alleviate the suffering of others. Here, we see Saramago's own beliefs seeping into Gospel's worldview and begin to understand why critics refer to him as a "political moralist". (Ramey 119)

Once, when asked to summarize precisely what his moral philosophy entails, Saramago did so with a short quote from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: "If the human being is shaped by his circumstances, then it is necessary to shape those circumstances humanely." One critic has observed that "the novel serves as an evangel for the humanistic communism Saramago espouses"(Cousland 67). Throughout Gospel, structures, such as Christianity, and characters, such as God, that Saramago portrays as inhumane are critiqued. The real heroes of the novel,

who also happen to be faithful disciples of Saramago's humane philosophy, emerge as those who oppose these inhumane structures and strive to show compassion to their fellow creatures. These disciples do all they can to proclaim Saramago's gospel by announcing that God's inhumanity to man is the true tragedy that needs to be met with some "good news."

Chapter 3

Complementing or competing characters

In many ways, the God of Gospel's world is Satan's antithesis. He is a deity who "chooses to suppress compassion" (321) and for whom humans, including Jesus, are simply tools to be used and exploited for his purposes. As Bloom rightly observes, Saramago's God "manifests neither love nor compassion for Jesus or for any other human being" (Bloom155) Saramago's God sacrifices both sheep and humans on the altar of his consumptive desires and feels no remorse for what happens to them (329). As Satan tells us, God does not sleep and so is able to "avoid the nightmares of remorse" (193). In short, Saramago's God is the polar opposite of a compassionate humanitarian and of his Gospel counterpart. It is precisely on humanist grounds that Saramago not only creates but also critiques God's character. For Saramago, the atheist, God is merely a human invention (Frier 370) and therefore can be reinvented by Saramago as he sees fit. Because Saramago looks at the actual world and sees atrocities committed in the name of God, he creates a God in his alternate universe reflective of those actions. He makes a God who is capable of countenancing all the blood poured out in his name (330). Then, using the voice of the narrator and of other characters, Saramago judges his God according to humanitarian standards and finds him wanting for failing to show compassion to humanity.

None of the theodicies traditionally used to defend God are able to get Saramago's God off the hook in this Gospel. For example, a defense that offers heaven or some other type of recompense for earthly suffering is judged as an unsuitable justification for God's inhumanity now. Although God will occasionally compensate someone like Job for all that he has taken from him, the narrator charges that, by and large, God does nothing to repay the suffering of

millions of others (105). While Saramago's God offers the hope, not the promise, of happiness in heaven in exchange for earthly suffering, Jesus says that this hope is not enough to make up for the misery that humans currently undergo (319). 180 What Gospel's humanitarian philosophy demands from God is not restitution for pain but the complete removal of it. Similarly, a justification of recompense does not address the real problem of why suffering exists in the first place. It does not answer questions such as, if God knows the future, then why does he not prevent evil occurrences? Tragedies in Saramago's world raise many of the same questions that plague our own world, such as this question of divine foreknowledge and God's actions in light of it. After the slaughter of the innocents, Joseph is condemned because of his failure to rescue the children since he knew beforehand what was going to happen. The condemnation of Joseph functions in the novel as an implicit critique of God, who also knew about the event and surely had more power and time to stop it than Joseph did.

The incident also explores the question of God's goodness in light of his selectivity. Just as Joseph saved his own son while letting others perish, so too God rescues a few children like Isaac and Jesus while allowing many more to be slaughtered. Such a dereliction of duty to protect all the innocent children leads characters like the slave Salome to wonder whether God is so impotent that he cannot "come between the sword and little children" (180). One typical response to such assaults on God's character is that God does not intervene in every case because such interference would destroy the free will of God's creatures. The free will defense, however, does not work in Gospel's world because Saramago's God has not given humans true freedom to do other than what God wills. Gospel's world is a fatalistic one (96) where God decides the fate (341). In this alternative universe, humans are "nothing but complete slaves of God's absolute will" (265) and are required to follow that will no matter

what it is (150). As Jesus realizes, "[M]an is a mere toy in the hands of God and forever subject to His will, whether he imagines himself to be obeying or disobeying Him" (181). Even covenants are illusionary because they make humans think that they have a choice when they really do not. The irony of being chosen by God is that it means humans have no choice (312-313). In fact, it appears that the only reason why humans have "freedom" in Gospel's world is so that God can punish them (171), and unfortunately for them, "God does not forgive the sins He makes [them] commit" (127). In *Gospel*, Saramago dismantles these traditional defenses of God's character by changing the metaphysical nature of God himself. There is no reason for defending this God because he unashamedly admits to determining everything, from the slaughter of the innocents (155, 180) to the crucifixion of his son (311). The determinism of Saramago's world is basically a type of hyper-Calvinism, but unfortunately the divine dictator deciding the fate of humanity is not the loving God traditionally portrayed in Christianity. What Saramago presents is a version of Luther's "hidden God" who looks precisely like the sort of monster one would expect to find behind all of the evil in the world.

The first disciple of Saramago's *Gospel* is his Satan character, and nowhere is Satan's humanitarian compassion better portrayed than in the wilderness episode. In a parody of epic proportions, Satan poses as a shepherd called Pastor. While in biblical literature God is often referred to as the shepherd of God's people (e.g., Gen 48:15; Ps 23:1; 80:1; Isa 40:11) and Jesus is called the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14), in Saramago's *Gospel*, it is Satan who plays the role of the good shepherd, tenderly guarding sheep that are not even his own. Implicit in the name is the suggestion that this "Pastor" is better able to shepherd and care for humans than God. The new "gospel" that Pastor preaches is "precisely about shaping humane

circumstances for humans and their fellow creatures" and is strikingly like Saramago's own philosophy.

Pastor not only preaches but also enacts his humanitarian gospel particularly through his care for the sheep. For example, he shears them only to keep them from suffering under the weight of the wool in the summer, will not use their wool for profit, and refuses to sell the lambs for sacrificial purposes. A practitioner of euthanasia, Pastor kills sheep only when they are too old or sick to keep up with the rest of the flock (190). These mercy killings are just one side of Pastor's humanitarian philosophy that promotes a "natural" order for life—death for the aged is acceptable but for the young and innocent is wrong and unnatural. In accordance with his philosophy, Pastor can condemn the sacrifice of lambs in the temple while committing the slaughter of the aged in his own flocks. Pastor's compassion, however, extends beyond sheep to humans. For example, he abhors the slaughter of the innocents in Bethlehem and has "compassion" on Jesus when he hears God's plan for Jesus' martyrdom (312).

In *Gospel*, it is not Satan who is responsible for the structures that cause humanity so much suffering and fear. He tells Jesus, "I don't recall having invented sin and punishment or the terror they inspire" (325-326). No, in this narrative world, it is God who bears that responsibility, and "[n]o one in his right mind can possibly suggest that the devil was, is, or ever will be responsible for so much bloodshed and death" as God is (328). As the reader learns in the traveler's tale, in the devil's alternative universe Satan would deny humans nothing so that there would be no problem of sin (195). Satan desires for humans to be happy and to enjoy their lives. In fact, the only person to whom the devil ever denies anything is himself (263).

Perhaps the most prominent symbol of Satan's compassion and his particular care for the life of Jesus is the bowl that appears at key scenes throughout the novel. Compassion for the frailty of humanity is symbolized by two other bowls in the novel as well. First, after learning that his neighbor is dead, Joseph stays in Sepphoris to tend a stranger instead of returning safely home. He holds a bowl to the boy's lips sharing life-giving water with him. The bowl embodies the compassion that Joseph has finally learned to give, and the scene functions as a reversal of the slaughter of innocents when Joseph put his own family's well being ahead of the lives of the Bethlehem families (277).

Second, when Jesus runs away to Jerusalem where he finds himself alone and without any food, a Pharisee has compassion on him and buys him a bowl of food. In that scene, the narrator explicitly links the earthenware bowl with fragility and the precarious nature of humans who, like the bowl, are so easily broken (168). In the "annunciation" scene, it functions first as an extension of Mary's compassion as she gives food to Satan who is disguised as a beggar (Bloom 163). He returns it to her with compassionate words about the condition of humans, who are only "[e]arth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" (16 17), words embodied by the luminous earth left in the bowl. Jesus' own growing existence parallels this strange earth, and, like it too, Jesus is also held in a fragile chalice, his mother Mary's womb (Cousland 58). In this scene, it is Satan, not God, who commemorates Jesus' entry into the world as a frail creature, and it is Satan, not God, who pities the destiny awaiting Jesus and all humanity (Ramey 121).

The bowl appears throughout the novel always connected with either Jesus or Satan and usually related in some way to the frailty of humanity and used as a symbol of compassion for their plight. It last materializes at the foot of the cross where it collects Jesus' blood as it drips

down (377). Aside from the Eucharistic symbolism, the bowl acts as Satan's final gesture of compassion. As it was at the beginning of Jesus' life, so it is at the end. Satan, not God, marks Jesus' passing and values his life as symbolized by the blood he collects in the earthenware bowl.

Clearly Saramago's Satan has little in common with the Satan of the Gospels but much in common with Saramago's humanist philosophy. Even within this dramatic character revision, Saramago's Satan does retain one classical satanic feature—that of functioning as God's antagonist. Although in outward appearance God and Satan could be twins except for the beard that God has (310, 314), they are neither identical in character nor in purpose.

Saramago's Satan still tries to oppose God's will and also tempts Jesus to do the same. The only difference is that in this nightmarish inversion of reality Satan is justified in his opposition. Instead of tempting Jesus to evil, Satan tempts him to have compassion on humanity, something that is apparently not part of his Father's plan.

Saramago's inversions of Satan and God change the entire playing field in the world of his novel and turn out to be the most significant factors influencing the depiction of Jesus. In this Gospel, Jesus learns at the feet of Satan rather than at those of his Father (Cousland 68). Cousland makes a telling observation when he notes that one of the differences in Gospel's Christological portrait to those of the Gospels is that Saramago's Jesus is not a teacher. He preaches in public very little and only latterly in life after God commands him to offer the simple message of repenting of one's sins because God is getting ready to establish a new kingdom (334, 338). Instead, Pastor and Mary Magdalene function as Jesus' teachers. Because of the four years that they spend together, it is no surprise that Jesus' character resembles the devil more than the deity. Tutored by his "Pastor," Jesus soon adopts his humanitarian brand

of compassion and begins to imitate his master's mercy killings of the aged sheep (200) while refusing to sacrifice a young lamb to his Father at the temple (209, 211). Jesus carries Pastor's humanitarian lessons into his own ministry so that when he multiplies the catches of the Galilean fishermen, he makes sure to keep moving from town to town to spread the wealth to everyone (275-276). Displaying an unselfishness that is admirable, Jesus refuses to set up his own fishing business but offers his miraculous powers freely to all (294). He castigates those who try to keep the price of fish artificially high by throwing some of the catch back and threatens to cease helping them if they do not share their blessings with others (280). With his other miracles, Jesus continues to display compassion on frail humanity by healing the sick, the deaf, lepers, and mutes. Rejecting his Father's habit of sparing only some while sacrificing the rest, Jesus refuses to be rescued while others around him perish. When caught in the midst of a storm, Jesus calms the sea so that all the fishermen return safely to shore with him (282). Compassionate acts like these that relieve the suffering of others are probably what lead Bloom to proclaim, "The glory of Saramago's *Gospel* is Saramago's Jesus, who seems to me humanly and aesthetically more admirable than any other version of Jesus in the literature of the century now ending" (162). These deeds also help Jesus to pass *Gospel's* humanitarian standards and allow him to be classified as good, like Satan and unlike God.

In portraying Jesus as humane and compassionate, *Gospel's* portrait of Jesus is complementary to that of the Gospels. As with the *Gospel* plotline, Saramago again retains enough external features of the *Gospel* Jesus to keep his version from appearing as a blatant contrast. Christological attributes are cloned from the original version and transferred to the rewritten Jesus where they are then subtly twisted. In other words, Saramago's Jesus is to the *Gospel* Jesus what Bizarro is to Superman. Both doppelgangers resemble their originals in

externals but do not retain their characters and often bungle many of the attempts to emulate their actions.

Saramago constructs his Jesus by preserving, at least nominally, many of the titles of Jesus, such as Son of God (262-263, 297) and Messiah (357). On this point, Saramago is markedly different from Ricci, who refuses to portray his Jesus in either of these traditional categories. Yet even though cast in these orthodox roles, Saramago's Jesus is far from successful in them. To begin with, Saramago's Jesus is a rather unaware and ill-prepared Messiah. He does not even know of his own identity as the Messiah until the very end of the novel when in a reversal of roles Jesus must ask John the Baptist to confirm his messianic identity and to give him advice for what he should do as the Messiah. John, quite rightly, tells him to figure it out for himself. When Jesus first hears a description of John, he comments that John better fits the part of the Messiah than he does, and the reader cannot help but agree with this assessment (354). The sole occasion when Jesus claims his messianic identity is during his trials, and there he does so only so that he may be sentenced to death as a false Messiah, a pretender to Israel's throne rather than as the Son of God (369, 372). Ironically, the only act performed by Saramago's Jesus that could be categorized as messianic is his dying. Like the Gospel Jesus, he intends his death to be a liberating act for his people; however, Saramago's Jesus hopes to free them from the clutches of God rather than from their sins (cf. Matt 1:21; 26:28).

As the Son of God, Saramago's Jesus is also unconvincing, partly because he does not resemble his power-hungry Father and partly because the reader is never entirely sure about Jesus' paternity. Although God himself informs Jesus of his divine identity (308), the reader does not know whether to trust God's word on this matter since God also reveals that in Saramago's world gods can lie (320). Jesus could, after all, simply be the son of Joseph who

has been hoodwinked by God into fulfilling his purposes. Because God supposedly mixed his seed with Joseph's and since paternity tests are never completely conclusive on these matters, the reader is told that it would be hard to prove which one is Jesus' true father (262-263, 308; cf. 318). Jesus, to his credit, would prefer to be Joseph's son rather than God's (312).

To say that the Father and Son have a strained relationship in *Gospel* is putting it mildly. Unlike the Gospel Jesus, Saramago's Jesus and his God are anything but one (cf. John 10:30). Well-conditioned in Satan's humanism, Jesus questions the inhumanity of his Father's global domination plan, demanding to know why the one true God is unable to bring his purposes about without requiring the sacrifice of so many lives. Jesus, like Satan, believes that humans should be able to live and enjoy life on earth rather than renouncing their earthly existences so that they may have the chance of going to a heaven where none of life's joys await them (320).

In *Gospel*, Jesus "emerges in the novel not as the divine Son of God but as an unfortunate and deluded victim of a faulty religious impulse. "This Jesus is not a divine being in control of his destiny and the destinies of others but a pitiful figure "shanghaied by God, for God's own purposes of power." When Jesus tries to renounce his Father and to rescind their covenant in order to help humanity, he is prevented from doing so because of the constraints of the fatalistic world that he inhabits where God forces everything and everyone to work according to his desires but not according to the good of humanity (315, 330, 369; cf. Romans 8:28). God takes control of even Jesus' words (340) and warns that if he refuses to perform miracles God will still make them happen (314-315). Even his final scheme to die as the "King of Jews" rather than as the Son of God is thwarted when God appears at the crucifixion announcing Jesus' identity as his Son (376). Jesus is not able to fully reject God's will even

when he attempts to do so. Frier talks about the passive acceptance of authority throughout the novel, citing examples of Mary's acceptance of the patriarchal system, the laity's acceptance of the superior religious authority of the rabbis, the soldiers' acceptance of Herod's order to kill the children, and Joseph's acceptance of the slaughter of those children. Likewise,

it is "Jesus himself who, even when he attempts to reject the law of the father, still implicitly recognizes it by attempting to outwit rather than defy that authority. . . . [I]n the end he makes a token gesture to fulfill the letter of God's Word (by dying as the Messiah of the Jewish people) rather than rejecting outright the creation of a tradition (that of orthodox Christianity) whose practical consequences he finds too appalling to contemplate. . . . Jesus sees a lapse into fatalism and 'becoming one with his father-God' as preferable to a bid for independence". (381)

Ultimately, this rift between the Father and the Son undercuts the plausibility of Saramago's Jesus functioning as the "Son of God," but such disunion has to exist because of the radical transformation of God's character in Gospel. Because God is a selfish being only concerned with his own glory, he cannot work for the benefit and betterment of humanity. Whereas in the Gospels, the cross is seen as "the ultimate expression of God's compassion and mercy for humankind,"(Ben-Porat102) in Gospel, the cross is the beginning of the genocide of humanity, starting with Jesus. Therefore, for Jesus to be considered good, he has to reject his Father. Saramago can complement the *Gospel* portrait of Jesus as compassionate and caring only by allowing him to fail in his role as the Son of God. Instead of resembling the obedient Son in the Gospels who is one with his Father in person and purpose, this Jesus opposes his Father in order to be merciful to humankind. Aside from retaining the qualities of love and

compassion for humanity, Saramago's Jesus manages to convey successfully only one other essential feature of the Gospel Jesus—his humanity. Like Boyd, one of Saramago's main concerns seems to be the humanizing of Jesus, which is no surprise given Saramago's humanist philosophy. Like the Gospels, Saramago emphasizes Jesus' kinship with Adam and thus with all of humanity, but "instead of making him a sinless second Adam as Paul does [cf. Rom 5:12-21], Saramago shows him to be fallible, ignorant, and sinful" (Cousland 66).

Perhaps the most shocking aspect of Saramago's portrayal of Jesus' humanity is his sexuality. In *Gospel*, the reader meets a Jesus who desires to masturbate (227) and who, unlike Kazantzakis' Jesus, is not just tempted by sexual visions but actually fulfills them. Saramago's Jesus begins "living in sin with Mary Magdalene" (295) not long after he turns eighteen, and the two continue as lovers until his death. Saramago's Jesus turns out to be fully human but not in the Chalcedonian sense. He is neither the prototype of what God intended humanity to be prior to the Fall nor the firstborn example of what resurrected humanity shall be. Instead, he is simply a reflection of what flawed humanity currently is—sinful, weak, scared, and confused. And yet he is also capable of love, compassion, and enjoyment of life. According to Saramago's humanist philosophy, this Jesus is a success because he functions as the symbolic every man. All of his imperfections are to be embraced and celebrated because they are part of his humanity. This Jesus is the prototypical tragic hero, who although destined to fail still chooses to strive against the oppressive forces, which in this case are God and religion. Saramago offers his Jesus as a noble example for the rest of humanity to emulate.

Chapter 4

Saramago's Temptation Narrative

In this section, we will focus on the portrayal of one particular Gospel event—the Temptation. Saramago presents the testing of Jesus as the climax of the novel, giving prominence to an event that seems to be less than central in the plots of the Synoptic Gospels. If emplotment provides meaning, as Ricoeur has suggested (251), then the placement of the testing scene as the climax of a Jesus novel certainly affects the meaning of the story being told. This placement is particularly significant given that in the Gospels the climax of Jesus' life is the Crucifixion, not the Temptation. Some might disagree and suggest that the Resurrection, not the Crucifixion, is the climax of action in the Gospels. I would argue that, at least in the Synoptics, the Resurrection is the resolution of the Crucifixion climax and not the climax itself (Ramey 136).

As discussed in the prolegomenon, the inter-textual relationship between the Gospels and these Gospel rewrites encourage the reading of these texts alongside one another. When readers actualize the reading pact, a cross-directional interpretation takes place as the novels are judged according to their progenitors and the Gospels are "preposterously" evaluated by taking into account the potential interpretive guidance offered by the rewrites. In order, therefore, to engage fully in this reading pact, after analysing the novels' testing scenes, we will return to one of the original Gospel accounts of the Temptation and re-examine that passage within its own narrative setting and in light of questions raised by the rewrites. By engaging in this cross-textual analysis, we will be able to offer an example of a hermeneutical circle that can arise when new texts come into contact with older texts and have the effect of sending the reader back to investigate those original texts afresh. Beginning with a short

overview of standard interpretations of the Temptation in the Gospels, we will then move on to investigate the rewritten versions of that event and end in the next chapter with a reinterpretation of the original source material, specifically Matt 4:1-11.

When rewriting the Temptation, novelists have several retellings upon which to draw because the event appears in all three Synoptic Gospels. Mark 1:12-13 presents the shortest version mentioning nothing about a fast and offering no explanation as to which type of tests Jesus undergoes or how he deals with them. Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 follow another strand of the story, which source critics attribute to a common source other than Mark, such as Q (if Matthew and Luke have no literary relationship) or Matthew itself (if Luke used Matthew). It is this second strand that contains the descriptive material upon which most authors build when constructing their rewrites. According to this strand, Jesus goes into the Judean wilderness, where he fasts for forty days and is tempted by Satan in three specific ways: to turn stone(s) into bread, to jump down from the temple pinnacle, and to worship Satan.

Even though Matthew and Luke include roughly the same material, they do diverge on a few points. The most notable difference between the two accounts is the order of the three tests. Both begin with the challenge of turning stone(s) to bread, but the challenge for Jesus to cast himself down from the temple and the enticement to worship Satan in exchange for earthly rule are reversed, with Matthew placing the worship challenge last and Luke placing it second. Most interpreters when speaking collectively of the Temptation event reference Matthew more than Luke and follow Matthew's chronology. Likewise, novelists also predominantly follow Matthew's version, but Saramago unsurprisingly do not follow any of the Synoptic versions in particular but only borrow symbols and images from their narratives.

We will continue our discussion on biblical source material by focusing mainly on the Matthean version.

Using typology, Matthew structures the Temptation in such a way that the setting of Jesus' forty-day fast on a mountain in the wilderness echoes the forty-day fast by Moses (and also Elijah) on a mountain in a wilderness setting. Warren Carter has also drawn attention to the use of synkrisis in Matthew whereby the reader is meant to compare Jesus with other characters, some of whom are outside Matthew's narrative. One of the major comparisons readers are meant to draw is between Jesus and Moses. Throughout Matthew—from Jesus' miraculous escape as a baby during the slaughter of the innocents (Matt 2:13; cf. Exod 1:22-2:10) to his giving of the law on a mountain (Matt 5-7; cf. Exod 19-31)—Jesus' life and ministry intentionally parallel that of Moses (Carter 203). Warren Carter has drawn attention to the use of synkrisis in Matthew whereby the reader is meant to compare Jesus with other characters, some of whom are outside Matthew's narrative. One of the major comparisons readers are meant to draw is between Jesus and Moses. Throughout Matthew—from Jesus' miraculous escape as a baby during the slaughter of the innocents (Matt 2:13; cf. Exod 1:22-2:10) to his giving of the law on a mountain (Matt 5-7; cf. Exod 19-31)—Jesus' life and ministry intentionally parallel that of Moses (Ramey 138). Matthew especially heightens the connection by describing the fast as lasting for forty days and forty nights (Mark and Luke mention only forty days) so that Jesus further typifies Moses' unnatural feat of not breaking his fast at sundown and somehow still surviving (Beare 108). While Jesus' testing certainly recalls that of Moses, it also offers a striking allusion to that of the Israelites in the wilderness. Jesus, like his ancestors, goes into the wilderness where he wanders for forty days rather than forty years, and like them, he also experiences hunger during that period. The similarities

between Jesus' and Israel's wilderness experiences are further heightened by the content of the three temptations. Jesus' first temptation of bread recalls the Israelites' grumbling for food and their receiving manna from God (Exod 16). Likewise, when Jesus is asked to test God's protective promises by jumping off the temple peak, this potential trial of God reflects that of the Israelites at Massah when they demand water as proof of God's provision and presence (Exod 17). Finally, although there is debate over which specific OT story the third temptation represents, the typology points to Israel's pattern of betraying God by worshipping false idols. One specific example of this pattern occurs when the Israelites make and worship the golden calf (Exod 32).

Whereas the tests follow a sequential reading of Exodus, Jesus' rebuttals to all three are drawn from Deuteronomy and are placed in Matthew in reverse order: 8:3—refers to manna; 6:16—refers to the Massah testing; 6:13—refers to worshipping God only. Deuteronomy 6-8 is set within Moses' address to the Israelites (5:1) prior to their crossing the Jordan and taking possession of the land (9:1). In his speech, Moses gives the Israelites instructions on how to succeed in the land by learning from and not repeating their previous failures in the wilderness. It is most pertinent for our discussion to note that these instructions from which Jesus quotes in his own forty-day wilderness temptation are set within an explanation of why the Israelites were tested in the wilderness for forty years (8:2). During that time God was testing them to see whether or not they would be obedient to God and faithful to their covenant.

Matthew's Temptation, therefore, has rightly been called a "haggadic exegesis of Deuteronomy" (Taylor 30) and an "early Christian midrash," in which Jesus functions as the archetypal obedient son who follows God's commands and succeeds in every area in which

Israel failed (Ramey 139). Thus, the election of Israel and the testing of the Israelites in the wilderness are transferred to and isolated in one person—Jesus—highlighting his representative role (Donaldson 92).

Attempting to discern the meaning of the Temptation and particularly of each of the three tests has vexed interpreters for centuries and led to a variety of explanations. Luz has helpfully outlined four of the most typical interpretive positions of Matthew's Temptation for us. Besides the typological view described above, he lists the parenetic, Christological, and messianic interpretations.

The first view, the parenetic, sees the Temptation as a simple story of Jesus overcoming typical temptations to evil. This interpretation, particularly popular among the early church and during the Reformation, views the three tests as paradigmatic examples of resisting the sins of gluttony, vainglory, and greed. Jesus' victory is seen as a parenetic example meant to inspire and teach members of the Christian community how to conquer their own temptations. Similarly, a modern variant on the parenetic interpretation is that of the psychological interpretation, which equates Jesus' temptations with the universal temptations of materialism, thrill-seeking, and a desire for power over the world (Ramey 140). One problem with this interpretation is its assumption that "temptation" is always an enticement to evil or wrongdoing. While this definition is reinforced by the linking of temptation with evil in the Lord's prayer (Matt 6:13), such an understanding does not tell the full story of what temptation means either in the biblical narrative in general or specifically in Matthew's Temptation. The Greek word translated as "tempted" in Matt 4:1, has several meanings but is most often used in the Bible to describe trying, testing, or tempting. Typically, this testing is of "something or someone in order to determine or demonstrate worth or faithfulness." The

person performing the test can be anyone from Satan (e.g., Matt 4:1; 1 Thess 3:5) to Jesus (e.g., John 6:6) to humans (e.g., Exod 17:2; Isa 7:12; Heb 3:9). Even God is often depicted as the one doing the testing (e.g., Gen 22:1; Exod 20:20; Deut 8:2). In fact, in what are believed to be some of the earlier writings in the OT, testing is principally done by God and of God's people in order to prove their obedience, loyalty, and faith in God over a period of time (e.g., Gen 22:1-19; Exod 20:20).

Gerhardsson notes that in the OT this word typically occurs within the context of the covenant relationship between God and his people. Sometimes, it is used positively, describing the way in which God tests his people, but it is also used negatively, telling how those people tested God. The word implies that the testing is to see whether or not a covenant partner will hold up his or her end of the bargain.(26)

In a later tradition, Satan or other adversaries of God whose “purpose is to separate men from God” try to force humans to decide for or against God through a time of temptation (e.g., Job 7:1; 10:17). Again, we see that temptation is fundamentally a loyalty test rather than an enticement to do evil. Of course, when failing that test means siding against God, then we could also define the temptation as an enticement to evil, if "evil" is simply defined as doing other than the will of God.

In sum, instead of automatically interpreting temptation to evil, the term often refers more to testing where one's loyalties lie. Testing is the better translation for the word because it does not necessarily have the same pejorative connotation in English. In Matthew's Temptation, although the aim of persuading Jesus to act against God's will is a negative one, the actions

that Jesus is asked to do may not in themselves be wrong, such as Jesus placating hunger with bread.

The second alternative interpretation of the Temptation that Luz describes is known as the Christological interpretation. It suggests that the Temptation was written to identify who Jesus is and that the narrative's main agenda is to counter alternate identities attributed to him in antiquity. With the first two tests, Matthew shows that Jesus was not a magician or a Hellenistic miracle worker. With the final temptation, he rebuffs the notion that Jesus was a political Zealot. The meaning of the event under this interpretation is that Jesus proves himself to be the Son of God by rejecting these other identities. While it is certainly true that the Temptation is a Christological passage and that part of its central meaning involves Jesus' identity as the Son of God, it does not seem likely that the pericope was constructed as an intentional counterargument to pictures of Jesus as a magician or a Jewish zealot. As Luz rightly concludes, "It is not possible to construct a unitary background against which our story polemicizes (185).

Finally, the third view that Luz surveys is a messianic interpretation of the passage. It suggests that each of the three tests can be correlated with contemporary expectations for the Messiah. The three basic dimensions of messiahship according to this theory are prophetic, priestly, and royal. The Temptation becomes a test for Jesus to prove himself as the Messiah by fulfilling each of these expectations and also is a debate over how Jesus should enact these particular roles. With an understanding of these typical interpretations of the Temptation, we are now better prepared to analyse the rewrites of the Temptation.

In Saramago's *Gospel*, we find a remarkably different approach to rewriting the Temptation. Rather than replicating the three tests in one temptation scene, as Boyd does, Saramago provides three distinct testing scenes, which are better classified as global allusions to the Temptation. These global allusions are: the four years Jesus spends with Pastor in the wilderness including the Passover test, Jesus' encounter with God in the desert, and Jesus' conversation with both God and Satan on the Galilee lake.

What Saramago does in each of these scenes is, in one sense, akin to Matthew's own usage of typology. Like Matthew, Saramago refers to earlier writings by appropriating themes, phrases, and symbols from them so that his new narrative is at once its own entity but also meant to be interpreted in light of the older stories. Yet these scenes are not just typological recastings of one character in another's story, as when Matthew presents Jesus as the new Moses, because the character in Saramago's scenes is still called Jesus and is related in a referential way to the Gospel Jesus.

In the following sections, we will explore Saramago's three testing scenes but give priority to the final one that functions not only as a revision of the Temptation but also as the climax of *Gospel*, which the first two testing scenes anticipate. We will again discuss how these temptations relate to their canonical predecessors. Since these are testing scenes, we will again be discussing the question of fidelity and how Jesus responds to these challenges of faithfulness to God and humanity.

The resemblance of the four years that Saramago's Jesus spends in the wilderness with Pastor (199-217) to that of the forty days that the Gospel Jesus passes in the wilderness with Satan is hardly lost on the astute reader. This period also resembles the biblical narrative because once more the test is primarily about loyalty. From the moment Jesus asks to join his flock, Pastor

endeavours to make Jesus one of his sheep (187). At the hands of his tutor, Jesus' education in the art of humanitarian compassion begins as Pastor tries to break Jesus out of his conservative mindset in which he blindly accepts whatever his Israelite religion has taught him about God and the world. In all of their theological conversations together, Pastor trains Jesus to analyse God's decrees and to decide for himself whether they are good and compassionate.

When the Passover festival arrives, Pastor tests Jesus to see if he has really learned anything regarding the value of life and whether he will follow God's sacrificial laws blindly without questioning their inherent cruelty. Pastor tells him, "Then pick yourself a clean lamb, Jesus, and take it to be sacrificed, since you Jews attach so much importance to such practices. Pastor was putting him to the test, to see if the boy could lead to its death a lamb from the flock they had worked so hard to maintain and protect". In *Gospel*, we see that all communication is mediated through this one narrative voice, and this is why there are no quotation marks or separate paragraphs to distinguish different speakers or to mark dialogue from narration.

Technically speaking, there is no proper dialogue in the novel because it all has been taken up into the one "narrative voice." I have inserted single quotation marks here and in other places to help the reader who lacks the context to distinguish the speakers whose dialogue is being narrated by that one voice. On the way to the temple, Jesus, pondering the idea of animal sacrifice, wonders "why God could not be appeased with a cup of milk poured over His altar. . . or with a handful of wheat" (208). Suddenly, pity for the lamb stays his hand, and he refuses to sacrifice it. Saramago's novel is not the only fictional account that presents animal sacrifice

as a troubling aspect of the Israelite religion. Jesus realizes that he cannot willingly take part in such a slaughter and so rescues the lamb, preferring for it to die a natural death (211).

Jesus' refusal to take part in the sacrificial system functions as a denouncement of God's participation. With this salvific action, Saramago implicitly condemns God's inaction to deliver his own creatures. The narrator makes a similar point earlier in the novel when upon observing the sacrificial system in effect at the temple, he states, "Anyone witnessing this scene would have to be a saint to understand how God can approve of such appalling carnage if He is, as He claims, the father of all men and beasts" (73) Jesus' inability to slaughter this lamb is compared with God's ability to kill his own animals and, as we will later see, his own children. Seeing that Jesus has learned something under his tutelage and that Jesus has sided with him rather than God in this test, Pastor smiles when Jesus returns (216).

Unfortunately, for both Pastor and the lamb, Jesus has neither absorbed Pastor's lessons completely nor sided with him fully. Three years after rescuing his lamb and passing Pastor's test, Jesus is once again tempted to sacrifice that same lamb. In typical Gospel fashion, the traditional biblical roles of Satan and God are again reversed in this second testing scene when God, not Satan, offers Jesus a bribe of power and glory in exchange for Jesus' worship and obedience (220-221; cf. Matt 4:8-9). If Jesus had earlier displayed his allegiance to Pastor and Pastor's humanitarian compassion by depriving God of a sacrificial lamb, then now Jesus can affirm his allegiance to God and seal their covenant by offering the very lamb that he had rescued from the altar. Acquiescing to God's demand for them to be tied in "flesh and blood" (222), Jesus sorrowfully sacrifices his pet sheep and aligns himself this time with God rather than Pastor.

While this second testing scene refers to its biblical predecessors with its desert setting (218; cf. Matt 4:1) and the power and glory bribe (cf. Matt 4:8-9), it shares little else with the Synoptic versions. Ben-Porat, who also identifies this event as an allusion to the Temptation, describes it as "where innovation is much stronger than representation and disloyalty [to the original text] is stretched to the limit"(100).

Yet the Temptation is not the only biblical scene upon which this second testing is modeled. Cousland argues that it is a conflation of Jesus' own wilderness testing with that of Adam's Eden testing so that Saramago's Jesus recapitulates Adam's experience. The academic typology is clearly present when the narrator describes how Jesus "confronted the desert in his bare feet, like Adam expelled from Eden, and like Adam he hesitated before taking his first painful step across the tortured earth that beckoned him. But then, without asking himself why he did it, perhaps in memory of Adam, he dropped his pack and crook, and lifting his tunic by the hem pulled it over his head to stand as naked as Adam himself" (219). In the final analysis, Saramago's Jesus resembles Adam much more than the Gospel Jesus because he fails the temptation and yields to the bribe of power and glory (Cousland 67).

When Pastor hears what Jesus has done, he is disgusted and angrily says, "You've learned nothing, begone with you" (222). Contrary to Matthew's Gospel, it is the Satan character who banishes Jesus from his presence and not the other way around (cf. Matt 4:10). Even though Jesus lives in a deterministic world in which his fighting may ultimately be futile, Pastor still wants him to fight against that world's inhumanity and therefore against the God who stands behind it. Referring to Pastor's dismissal of Jesus, Frier comments, "What Jesus needs to learn is that merely perceiving the inevitability of an event does not make that situation *ipso facto* one that should readily be accepted" (375). With this banishment, Saramago's Jesus, similar to

Adam before him, is cast out of a pastoral Eden, and his moment of weakness makes certain his now inevitable death. As Cousland writes, "By bowing to the authority of God and agreeing to sacrifice the lost sheep, he guarantees his own upcoming role as a sacrificial victim"(67).

Saramago, once again true to his revisionist methodology, sets this final forty-day testing scene on a lake rather than in the desert wilderness, where the first two testing scenes and those in the Gospels occur. Even this watery setting, however, is not as unconnected to its dry counterpart as it would first appear. As Saramago's God notes while in the midst of the lake's mist, being there is not unlike being in the desert (311). Simon too likens Jesus' forty days on the lake to the experience of searching for God in the desert (335). As promised at their last meeting in the desert, God reappears to Jesus when God is ready to fill Jesus in on the fine print of their contract. Their discussion revolves around Jesus' identity as the Son of God and what his future mission will be (307). God explains that he is dissatisfied with being only the God of the Jews (311) and has a territorial expansion scheme for becoming the God of the entire world. In order to gain this wider market share, however, God needs his son to be crucified as a martyr because apparently martyrdom is the best public relations scheme for marketing and expanding a new religion. When Jesus asks why he cannot simply preach the kingdom or call people to repentance as the prophets did, God says that the people need "stronger medicine, shock treatment," and the crucifixion of God's son will provide precisely that jolt (316).

This time around, Jesus is not afraid to question either God's plans or his character. Jesus, now more familiar with God's character, predicts that God will gobble up those who follow him (313). Having now fully adopted Pastor's philosophy of humanitarian compassion, Jesus wants to make sure before he helps set in motion God's global domination plan that the lives

of his followers will be better and happier in this life as a consequence of his martyrdom (317). Unfortunately, Jesus' first suspicion is confirmed with God's answer of a list of martyrs, the Crusades, and the Inquisition that will result because of Jesus' death. In the middle of the long list of martyrs, God pauses to ask Jesus if he has had enough yet, and Jesus retorts, "That's something You should ask Yourself" (324). Horrified, Jesus discovers that his followers' earthly lives will not be better but worse because of his death. But the "good news," at least in God's opinion, is that "they will have the hope of achieving happiness up in heaven" (319). Upon hearing this distressing news, Jesus laments his role as God's son and tries to break their covenant by refusing God's bribe. Jesus cries, "Father, take from me this cup. . . . I don't want the glory." Unfortunately, God responds, "But I want the power" (330). Pastor, ever the humanitarian, is moved by the suffering that will be inflicted upon Jesus and upon all of humanity under God's scheme, so he tempts God with a proposal that is not unlike what Boyd's Satan suggests to Boyd's Jesus during the kingdom test. To prevent all of that future anguish, Pastor will sacrifice himself and his earthly kingdom. He reasons that with his removal from the earth, evil itself will disappear. Because God's power would be ultimate already, his global domination plan would be redundant and Jesus' death unnecessary (330-331). God, however, disagrees and does not succumb to the temptation. He replies to Pastor, "I much prefer you as you are, and were it possible, I'd have you be even worse. . . . Because the good I represent cannot exist without the evil you represent, if you were to end, so would I, unless the devil is the devil, God cannot be God" (331). In return, "Pastor shrugged and said to Jesus, [']Never let it be said the devil didn't tempt God[']" (331). Even though Pastor knows that there is probably nothing to be done to stop this megalomaniac's plan, he still tries to tempt God. The question remaining is whether Jesus will follow his Pastoral example.

At the end of the boat temptation, all hope seems lost because Jesus appears to be acquiescing to God's demands. It is not until the end of the novel, however, when Jesus tries to die as the "King of the Jews" rather than as the "Son of God" in order to thwart God's plans (369) that we discover Jesus' true allegiance is with Satan and with humanity. Although he may not be able (and as it turns out, is not able) to oppose God's will, he decides to at least try (369), and in so doing, he proves himself to be a true disciple of Saramago's humanitarian compassion and to be aligned with the devil rather than with God.

The final testing scene in *Gospel* serves as the novel's climax. In this scene, *Gospel's* discordance with the Gospels becomes fully unmasked, allowing us to observe the extent to which Saramago's bad news competes with the Gospels' good news. Throughout the novel we can observe Saramago's criticisms of the Christian religion and of its God through several recurring motifs that converge into one massive conversation between God, Jesus, and Satan on the lake. There, Saramago's humanitarian philosophy finally conflicts openly with his caricature of Christianity and of the God he creates to stand behind the religion.

Some of the foremost issues against which Saramago rails in this scene include the problem of innocent suffering, the guilt caused by that suffering, the distortion of life and its natural joys, and the problem of religious violence in general along with the particular case of a Father's cruelty to his own son. All of these themes, in one way or another address the problem of the devaluation of human life. First, let us begin by reviewing the innocent suffering motif. Earlier this problem was presented through events like the Bethlehem slaughter, the mistaken crucifixion of Joseph, and the sacrifices of birds and beasts at the temple. Now on the lake,

this unsettling issue is focalized in the future suffering and martyrdom of Jesus' innocent and unsuspecting followers.

By recounting name upon name of those sacrificed to the Christian religion, the narrator prompts the reader to question whether a system built upon and inclined to produce so much suffering can be good for humanity. The reader, along with Jesus, is also led to consider the goodness of a God who can recite "in the monotonous tone of one who chooses to suppress compassion" the names of so many victims (321).

Second, when faced with the suffering of innocent victims, most of the novel's characters respond with a profound sense of guilt whether or not they bear responsibility for that suffering. For example, Joseph, who is only guilty of the sin of omission rather than one of commission, carries the burden of the deaths of the slaughtered innocents in Bethlehem for the rest of his life (95-96). Similarly, although Jesus is in no way complicit for their deaths, he inherits his father's guilt and his nightmares and spends a lifetime afflicted by the knowledge of that atrocity (144). *Gospel* draws an implicit but very intentional comparison between these characters and God, who as we learn during the climax, "feels no remorse" (329). The juxtaposition of these characters and their reactions to the innocent suffering of others leads the reader to ask why it is that these characters, who are far less responsible for such suffering, are capable of feeling guilt and remorse, yet God, who ordained these events, feels nothing. Jesus' reaction to learning about his heavenly Father's lack of remorse and inability to feel guilt over such suffering is remarkably similar to his earlier response when he learns about his earthly father's complicity in the Bethlehem slaughter. As he did before with Joseph, Jesus once again assumes his Father's guilt when he tells God, "Well, since I'm already bearing this burden of having to die for You, I can also endure the remorse that ought to be

Yours" (329). This act makes Jesus both a truly humane and tragic figure and presents him as the foil to God, whose truly inhumane and uncompassionate character is fully revealed.

Third, as in the first testing scene, one of Saramago's main issues with religion is that it offers a distorted view of the body and prevents people from enjoying the natural pleasures of life. In the desert, the example provided is sexuality. Pastor accosts Jesus' view of sexuality by arguing that no part of his body is inherently shameful. He suggests that there is something wrong with a god who cares more about prohibiting the enjoyment derived from fulfilling "natural" sexual desires than about protecting his creatures from neglect, oppression, and slaughter (196-197). On the lake, the supporting illustration is the renunciation of life by Jesus' future disciples, many of whom will cloister themselves away from society and beat their own bodies to prevent themselves from indulging their natural desires. As Pastor points out to Jesus, this renunciation is a second way that Jesus' disciples will part with their lives, the first being the martyrdoms mentioned above (325-327). Jesus realizes that God and this new Christian religion he intends to found have nothing to do with enjoying life but will destroy humanity's experiences of natural happiness. Fourth and finally, another theme emerging throughout the novel and climaxing in the lake testing is the problem of religious violence. During the first four-year testing period, the problem of violence committed in the name of religion is embodied in animal sacrifice. Similar to the way that God's care for children is judged against a father's provision for his son in the Gospels (Matt 7:9-11), Pastor prompts Jesus to consider whether God's concern for his creatures should not at least parallel that of the creatures' concern for one another. If a ewe would be horrified to learn that her lambs were being slaughtered in the temple (193), then how can God not be horrified? As we see in the climax, violence inflicted upon innocent sufferers is not only found in the sacrificial

system but also in wars promulgated by religious beliefs. Saramago made plain his own feelings towards religion and the violence it engenders during his Nobel Prize lecture. There, in discussing the writing of one of his other novels, he tells how with only the light of his own reason he had to "penetrate the obscure labyrinth of religious beliefs, the beliefs that so easily make human beings kill and be killed"(Ramey161). Here, Saramago's God forecasts atrocities, such as the Crusades and the Inquisition, which will be committed by Christians crying, "God wills it" as they kill others (328). At the end of hearing about so much "good news" that God will bring to humanity, Pastor comments, "One has to be God to countenance so much blood" (330).

Unfortunately, all of this violence will be brought about by one act, the most atrocious of any that we have yet mentioned—Jesus' crucifixion. What makes this act so heinous is that it is committed by a father against his very own son. Of course, we have been prepared for this revelation all along with the symbolic nature of the nightmares in which Joseph rides to kill his own son and the narrator's comments about the dreadful death of being killed by the very father who gave him life (91). Ben-Porat comments on this matter: "Knowing that this plan involves the crucifixion of God's son, even a reader who can be satisfied with the inevitable Freudian explanation of the homicidal aspect of father-son relations cannot but muster this knowledge of the planned sacrifice of Jesus to explain why Joseph sees himself in his dream as a soldier coming to kill his son rather than as the father who tries to save him. For a discerning reader this strange reversal of roles between a protective father and his son's murderer becomes another strong link between the novel and the Gospels"(101). We know very well what Saramago thinks of such a father and what we are to make of this God, but the key question is what Jesus himself will make of such a God. In this climactic scene, Saramago

forces his Jesus character to come face to face with each of these problems afflicting humanity and to question the God who is responsible for them. Jesus' real test is whether he will still align himself with such a monster and allow such a system to be founded in his name.

As are most versions of Jesus to some extent, this one also is created in his author's image for he reflects the horror and repugnance that Saramago feels when facing such a God and such a religion. While it takes him time to garner the courage, Saramago's Jesus, like Saramago, chooses to rebel against this "good news" and endeavours to prevent God from founding his kingdom on the blood of his creatures.

Saramago's Jesus answers this question by agreeing with Satan's very accurate assessment of God's character. Abandoning his identity as the Son of God, this Jesus prefers to side with humanity against the "Ultimate Structure" oppressing them. Given the two options he faces of siding with a maniacal God planning world domination or joining with a compassionate Satan who offers to sacrifice his position in order to relieve human suffering, Saramago's Jesus makes the better choice available to him within Saramago's fictional world.

Gospel pictures Satan tempting Jesus not with something that is evil or wicked but with something that is good—to have compassion for humanity. Satan character promote an agenda focused on relieving and eliminating the systemic causes of humanity's suffering. It views physical, earthly happiness as being of primary importance and denounce anyone or any system that devalues human life. Satan character presents himself as compassionate humanitarian who for the benefit of humanity is willing to sacrifice his own positions of power and remove himself from the earth if by his removal sin and suffering will cease.

The Satan character in this novel also share the idea that humans do not need to be saved so much from themselves as from the structures that afflict them. In *The Hidden Years*, Satan presents the two greatest causes of human misery as hunger and religion, and he blames God for both of these flawed systems. Boyd's Satan reasons that, if Jesus were to eliminate these systems, then humans would naturally be good and sin would be no more. In *Gospel*, Pastor hints to Jesus that religion, and its dogmatic beliefs, might be the greatest structure oppressing humans and keeping them from enjoying life. More precisely, he thinks that God is the one great structure, the one dominating and oppressive system, that needs to be challenged and changed. In *Gospel's* narrative world, if humans are evil, it is because these systems have distorted their natural goodness.

In the opinion of Satan, God should be judged according to humanitarian standards that measure a person's goodness by the amount of benefit or harm that person brings to the world. Based on this criterion, Satan condemns God because not only has God failed to show compassion by relieving suffering, but also, according to them, God is the one ultimately behind the dysfunctional systems that oppress humanity.

As we have seen before, Saramago's characterization of God and the different metaphysical nature of his fictional world create a contradictory Jesus character who, unlike his *Gospel* counterpart, sides with Satan when tested rather than with God. Saramago's novel offers an answer that distorts the original premise of the question and blocks us from returning to it. Because of this reformulation of the given propositions, Saramago's narrative does not contribute to solving the problem of God's goodness in light of suffering. On that topic, his novel does not converse but only condemns. According to *Gospel's* worldview, there is no question of how a good God can allow suffering to exist. Its answer is simply that if there is a God, then that God cannot be good.

Saramago's celebration of humanism suggests that human nature and human desires are innately good and should be indulged. If only all the structures oppressing humanity could be removed, then there would be no further suffering. As we learn in the tale in the novel about Satan's parallel world, Satan would deny humans nothing and place no dogmatic belief structures on them, and therefore, there would be no problem of original sin, suffering, or punishment. Yet Gospel undercuts its own evangel with Jesus' miraculous fishing ministry. When Jesus enacts Saramago's humanistic vision of compassion by eliminating hunger in a small sector of Galilee and providing an Eden of fish, the results are less than stellar. What Boyd's Jesus had predicted would happen if he were to give humans abundant bread (that is, when he says, "Would he not even destroy his neighbour's bread to starve him into submission" [216-217]) comes true in Saramago's novel. Instead of destroying bread to starve others into submission, the fishermen, following the principle of supply and demand, throw back part of their miraculous catches in order to regulate prices by keeping the price of fish artificially high (280)

Saramago is adept at pointing out the systemic problems facing humanity and both question God's culpability for those systems, only one of them addresses the human factor contributing to societal ills. Gospel simplistically blames the entire problem on God and despairingly tells us that nothing can be done so long as humans are under such a monster's thumb and continue to be brainwashed by his propaganda. Episodes like the miraculous fishing ministry, however, give us glimpses that perhaps all would not be well even in Gospel's world were the divine tyrant removed and all the oppressive systems overturned. Perhaps there would still be a

further factor contributing to the problem of evil and suffering, the human one, that Saramago fails to address and for which he does not offer a solution.

Having now analyzed the testing scenes in this Jesus novel, we can see that rather than settle issues of interpretation, it merely raise more for us. The novel functions in it's own right as commentary on the biblical texts, but more than that, it transforms the texts and defamiliarizes them so that we are sent back to them with many novel questions. This novel prompts us to "preposterously" return to examine the Matthean Temptation narrative in light of this subsidiary narrative. In preparing to do so, we find that there are many new and exciting questions to be explored.

The intriguing priority of place given by this novel to it's temptation scenes raises the question of importance of the Temptation within the overall Matthean narrative. Here the testing of Jesus functions as the climatic conflict tying together central themes woven throughout the narrative. *Gospel* spans Jesus' entire life, yet Jesus' temptation on the lake functions as the climax of that novel as well. Jesus' subsequent short-lived ministry and martyrdom serve only as the resolution of his conversation on the lake with God and Pastor. In Matthew's Gospel, however, the Crucifixion, not the Temptation, functions as the climactic conflict between Jesus and the "satanic characters" of that Gospel.

The Temptation appears towards the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, and at first glance, it does not seem to function in as important a capacity as the novels would suggest. Perhaps though there are more connections between the Temptation, which the novels appropriate and present as the climax of their own "gospels," and the Crucifixion, which Matthew presents as the climax of his Gospel, than first meets the eye. Therefore, one of our main questions when reexamining Matthew's Temptation will be to ask how it functions narratively within that Gospel and if it serves as some sort of pre-climatic event, perhaps somehow tied to the true climax of Matthew's Gospel—the Crucifixion.

Another important issue raised by the novel is that of typology. Saramago links Jesus' own testing back to that of Adam and demonstrates how Jesus' experience in the wilderness is tied to that of ancient Israel's. Yet the novel not only gazes backwards on these intertextual allusions to the OT, but it also looks forward to Jesus' later crucifixion. Such a connection was more explicitly shown in Saramago's work, where the debate during the lake temptation centered on whether or not Jesus would obey his Father by dying on the cross. They demonstrate how a scene can be tied both typologically backwards to previous narratives and characters and also forwards. The novel's own linkage between these scenes leads us to reconsider whether Matthew, who we know was fond of intertextual allusions, may have also placed intratextual allusions to his own work within the Temptation narrative.

The theme of compassion inherent in the novel's temptations leads us to examine if and how this theme can be seen in Matthew's Gospel. The novel presents two dueling notions of compassion and offers the Jesus character of each a falsely dichotomous choice of deciding for one at the expense of the other. This observation causes us as readers to once again pause and consider whether or not Jesus' own passion was also anticipated in Matthew's Temptation narrative.

Finally, the temptations in the novel is not solely tests of whether or not Jesus will side with Satan or God and with their competing kingdom visions; they are also invitations for Jesus to question God's character and thus to "test" God. Theodicy is a major theme of this narrative as it calls into question God's goodness in light of the problem of human suffering. Such a dominant theme provokes us to reexamine Matthew's Temptation to see if there is any questioning or "testing" of God in light of the problem of universal suffering.

As this chapter draws to a close, we see that the "preposterous" interpretation process is just beginning. Reading rewrites can be a dangerous experience because they challenge us to think

and to open up new avenues of exploration. They provoke us to reconsider texts whose interpretations we may have already considered a settled matter. Rewrites breathe new life into our tired eyes and cause us to read familiar texts anew.

Conclusion

As a committed member of a Christian faith community, I typically am inclined to agree with more orthodox views and portraits of Jesus. For example, while I recognize the role of theological interpretation in shaping the canonical Gospels and do not believe that these ancient biographies are simply direct representations of the actual Jesus, I also stand beside the proto-orthodox community in affirming their portrayals as faithful and instructive for the Christian faith. Much as Johnson argues, I believe the Jesus encountered in the Gospels to be the "real Jesus" in the sense that his being and person are most accurately captured there precisely because the Gospels do go beyond his earthly actuality and point towards his post-resurrection existence and enthronement. As Johnson argues, the Gospels reveal this real Jesus—the Jesus who was resurrected, who is the Son of God, and who continues to live seated at the right hand of God (Acts 2:34). Their descriptions surpass the boundaries of modern historiographical inquiry and are told from the point of view of resurrection faith. "[T]he real Jesus for Christian faith," according to Johnson, "is not simply a figure of the past but very much and above all a figure of the present, a figure, indeed, who defines believers' present by his presence" (Johnson 142). While I agree with historical Jesus scholarship that the theologizing that takes place in the Gospels makes it more difficult to recover the actual Jesus, as a Christian, I believe that their theologizing is not problematic but positive precisely because it paints a much richer portrait of whom, by faith, I believe Jesus to be.

By directing our attention at the textual level and by activating the reading pacts imbedded within the novels, we have been able to analyze not only their fictional Jesus characters but also the novels themselves and their function as Gospel rewrites. Through this process, we have discovered that our literary analysis is not confined only to the rewrites themselves.

Instead of ending with the novels, our quest circled back to the Gospels as we "preposterously" interpreted these sources in light of questions raised and views presented in these fictional accounts of Jesus' life.

As we reflect on our journey through these literary landscapes, we will begin by assessing how useful our categories of complementing and competing were in understanding the relationship between the rewrites and their progenitors and in evaluating the Christological portraits they created. One of the principal guiding assumptions of this study has been that while all Jesus novels function as Gospel rewrites, their relationships with the canonical Gospels can be extremely varied. We divided the rewrites into two broad but heuristically useful categories and surveyed several techniques used by the novels in order to achieve their aims of either complementing or competing with the Gospels. Not surprisingly, the particular novels we discussed both conformed to these categorical expectations and often subverted them. Sometimes the very techniques used to compete with the Gospels turned out to produce portraits of Jesus that at points were quite complementary. The reverse was also the case with the complementing novels.

The death of Saramago's Jesus also contains a salvific aspect. By having his Jesus fail in his role as the Son of God, Saramago creates a somewhat complementary portrait of a compassionate and caring Jesus, who tries to die in order to save current and future followers from a manipulative God, whose world domination plan will ultimately lead to pain and destruction for many. Furthermore, the ultimate answer as to why Jesus suffers in Saramago's novel mirrors that of Matthew's own explanation—because God wills it—even though Saramago develops a God character who is fundamentally different from the one in Matthew's presentation.

Our study found that some of the central roles of Gospel rewrites are those of filling in the gaps left by the canonical versions of Jesus' life and of proposing answers to some of the many questions regarding the actual Jesus. Instead of satisfying our curiosity and resolving unanswered mysteries though, these retellings can raise even more issues and send us back to the original texts with more questions than we previously had.

As readers return to the Gospels and interpret them preposterously, they are able to test theories proposed in the rewrites against the original texts. While some may find such anachronistic interpretation ultimately unhelpful and perhaps even harmful, Mieke Bal reminds us that all exegesis is in one sense "preposterous" in that we always interpret texts after they have been written and bring to them our own cultural and personal presuppositions. Bal actively engages with the ideas presented in later texts and argues that they too should be allowed a voice within the interpretative act. In this thesis, we have drawn on Bal's theory and suggested that such wilful anachronistic interpretation may aid in understanding the original texts themselves better.

Although it points to a different kind of infinity to claim that the world could not contain the "many other things which Jesus did" were they to be written down, it might not be too fanciful to suggest in a parallel fashion that even the large and ever-growing corpus of Jesus novels cannot contain the diversity of opinion about this man from Galilee. That one man could inspire so many portraits, so varied in style and content, attests to the inexhaustible greatness of his character and the desire that so many feel to recreate him in a way that allows them to connect with him. That four Gospels could spawn over four hundred Gospel rewrites in the last century alone reminds us not only of their continued centrality within modern culture but also of the affective power of their stories. Recreations of Jesus and his stories are

guaranteed an ongoing role in popular culture certainly for the foreseeable future, and for this we should be grateful because they continue to challenge us to re-examine that old, old story that many assume they know so well. So long as Jesus novels are produced, our quest for the fictional Jesus and for that elusive shadow of the Galilean standing behind him will continue. For now we see through the myriad of Jesus stories darkly, but perhaps one day we may see the reality face to face.

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