Summaries of Doctoral Dissertations

■ Robert Ames [PhD]

Looking for the Human: Sufism, Subjectivity, and Modernity in Iran

My dissertation proceeds from two related insights. The first is that Sufism in early modern Iran possessed a coherent theory of knowledge that reflected the period's culture more broadly. The second is that this episteme not only survived modernization, but actually proliferated and took on new literary forms throughout the Qajar period (1785–1925). Sufism achieved this influence in the modern era despite the fact that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are usually figured as ruptures with the early modern intellectual life of the Timurid (1370–1501) and Safavid periods (1501–1722), when the role of Sufism in intellectual life was more visible, if also controversial. Secondary sources usually frame modern Iranian reformism as quite unfriendly to mysticism, given the equation of the modern to the rational and the assumed opposition between the mystical and the rational. However, my research into both reformism and mysticism demonstrates both that mystical rhetoric appeared regularly in supposedly anti-mystical modernist writing, and that nineteenth- and twentieth-century Sufis actually addressed questions of intellectual and political reform in their writing, despite the common assertion that they were irrationally traditional and politically quietist.

I open my research by situating the early modern Sufism of Husayn Vā'iz Kāshifī (ca. 1436/7–1504-5) and Mu'azzin Khurāsānī (d. 1668). Departing from the usual approach to the study of Sufism, I compare Kāshifī's and Khurāsānī's prose works on Sufism to contemporaneous works on literary theory and ethics rather than to earlier "classical" works on Sufism, in order to illustrate that a common conception of knowledge was at work across these disciplines. I then proceed to a comparison of the works of nineteenth-century reformists, like Fath 'Alī Akhundzādah and Mīrzā Malkum Khān, to mystics from the same period, including Mullā Hādi Sabzavārī and Mīrzā Hasan Safī 'Alī Shāh. This portion of my project culminates in a comparison of the poetry of Alī Khān Zahīr al-Dawlah, a Sufi and reformist courtier who participated in Iran's constitutional revolution (1906–1911), and the prose ethics of Mīrzā Hasan Amin al-Sharī'ah, a cleric and a constitutionalist.

Advisers: Ali Asani and Afsaneh Najmabadi

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Austin Campbell [PhD]

Consolation's Afterlife: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Illusion in Anticipating Death
What might constitute an attitudinal excellence for anticipating one's own death? That is the guiding question of this study. In pursuing this question, however, several others arise, suggesting a nested sequence of problems: pull one apart and the next awaits, ever closer to the core of the issue. The first question arises from contemporary moral vocabularies for facing death, which often center around a binary opposition of acceptance (good) versus denial (bad). Should we think about this differently? I argue that we should, but a second question to arise is whether we can even do so. The binary actually grows out of a more deep-seated critique that views consolation before death as an illusory avoidance of difficult realities. Without going back to those roots, alternative proposals may be short-lived. So, the third question is what motivates the critique of consolation as illusion? I argue that this critique trades upon a notion of illusion as a kind of veil, under which we hide from hard truths, and that this notion has been co-defined with religion in prominent strands of critical thought—religion as illusion as consolation. The fourth question, then, is can we think about consolation differently, conceiving it as a kind of excellence for living with our mortality? Can we do so, furthermore, while still preserving important insights from critical theory of religion, which allow us to think about consolation before death after the death of God, a consolation that does not rely upon once-standard notions of afterlife?

My method for pursuing these questions is a mix of historical, philosophical, and literary analysis: historical analysis to contextualize the issue and show its contingency; philosophical analysis to assess rival concepts of consolation and explore their implications; literary analysis to discover sources of alternative imagination and consider how the excellence of consolation may actually be cultivated. After an introductory chapter that surveys a variety of voices critical of consolation, subsequent chapters perform close readings of a few poets and critical theorists, paired together, whose work is especially pertinent to these questions: Wallace Stevens and Friedrich Nietzsche, Rainer Maria Rilke and Sigmund Freud, Geoffrey Hill and Theodor Adorno.

This study finds that contrary to common scholarly opinion, consolation has maintained an afterlife in modern religious thought and poetry by, as it were, passing through death-by-critique. Illusion is not always simple avoidance of reality; it may also be a reframing of reality through capable imagination, a pressing back upon the merely given in order to make for ourselves a habitable world. Such illusion can support an earthier sense of afterlife rooted in identification with our loved ones, a process through which those who pass on continue in us, as us. This may transform our own anticipation from an imagined blank, a brute cessation, to a vision of continuity. This may not be consoling in the sense of "feeling better" about mortality, but it can support a sense of flourishing, a sense of continuing to

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live until we do not, in face of anticipated ends. For what we most require in face of death may be a state of mind that supports the integrity of love.

Adviser: Mark D. Jordan

Eleanor Craig [ThD]

"Un imaginable boundaries": Performativity, Theology, and the Study of Trauma

This dissertation locates versions of the Fall and original sin at the center of ostensibly secular theories of trauma and extreme violence. The first chapter reviews genealogies of trauma and Christian theological writings that engage with clinical and literary trauma studies. The central chapters read Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery,* Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience,* and Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* for the ways that fallenness orients social and political ethics. I examine each work within the respective thinker's corpus and within its surrounding scholarly contexts.

By juxtaposing these appearances of the Fall, I demonstrate that it operates variously across different projects and methods. The Fall may result in the universalization of trauma, or in a failure to recognize that trauma occurs. Across these divergent outcomes, the Fall tends to posit implicit definitions of the human that are raced and gendered. The fact that this phenomenon is unacknowledged in the theories themselves subverts the concerns for justice that animate these texts. I emphasize the performative work of theory in order to clarify its under-acknowledged participation and activity, to demonstrate that theory cannot function in a solely descriptive mode.

In the closing chapter, I propose that the Fall within theories and theologies of trauma and extremity performs tacit aesthetic education. It trains those who engage with these texts to regard harmed persons as fallen in a way that suggests them to be lacking, diminished in their humanity, and either needing or lost to personal and social redemption. I follow a thread of aesthetic thought that winds from Caruth's thinking on Paul de Man and into Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's reformulation or "sabotage" of Friedrich Schiller's notion of aesthetic education. Reading Bhanu Kapil's experimental work *Ban en Banlieue,* I reflect on the modes of complicity involved in creatively representing trauma. Kapil's book contains self-consciousness about the action involved in writing that I strive to adopt in theoretical discourse.

Adviser: Amy Hollywood

Mohsen Goudarzi [PhD]

The Second Coming of the Book: Rethinking Qur'anic Scripturology and Prophetology

This dissertation aims to reassess the character of the Prophet Muhammad's movement by rethinking major aspects of the qur'anic worldview. Specifically, the dissertation proposes a new interpretation of the Qur'an's conception of scriptural

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and prophetic history, which may be called respectively its "scripturology" and "prophetology." Previous scholarship often considers the Qur'an to espouse a monotonous historical vision in which God sends a series of prophets with essentially identical messages to various human communities. Furthermore, it is often claimed that the Qur'an depicts Muhammad and his scripture as the culmination of this history and thereby as representing a final dispensation destined for humankind.

In contrast to this prevailing interpretation, I contend that the Qur'an envisages history primarily in a bi-modal way, that is, as having two towering moments: the revelation of the Torah to Moses and the sending down of the Qur'an to Muhammad. This contention is based on a hypothesis that forms the analytical core of the dissertation: I argue that the Qur'an, in its discourse on revelations, uses the term *kitāb* not as a label for all scriptures but as an exclusive appellation for the Torah and the Qur'an. That the Qur'an applies the term *kitāb* to the Mosaic and Muhammadan scriptures alone, I further argue, reflects its estimation of the Torah and the Qur'an as the only scriptures that embody consummate divine guidance on account of their comprehensive historical and legal instruction. Moreover, I show that the Qur'an ties the revelation of these two *kitāb*s to God's special regard for the descendants of Abraham: the Torah was sent down for the benefit of Israelites, and the Qur'an is meant primarily for the guidance of Ishmaelites. By recognizing and underlining the Qur'an's Abrahamic exceptionalism, the dissertation recasts the significance of the Prophet Muhammad's mission. In the qur'anic view, the mission of Muhammad does not represent the end of a universal history of dispensations so much as it constitutes the realization of the "Abrahamic dream" for Ishmaelites and thus the second major act in the drama of the Abrahamic covenant.

The two-*kitāb* hypothesis and its corollaries enable fresh interpretations of many qur'anic passages, a process that has far-reaching implications for our understanding of the Qur'an. The dissertation's final chapter outlines some of these implications. For example, I argue that the Qur'an regards not only Jews but also Christians as Israelites, that it labels both communities as *ahl al-kitāb* because it considers the Torah definitive to both, and that early Islam gradually lost its genealogical focus on Abraham's descendants during the Umayyad period.

Adviser: William A. Graham

Amy Rae Howe [PhD]

Right Feelings: On Sentimentality, Philosophy, and Religion in Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe provides one of antebellum American culture's most significant lettered intellectual accounts of the development of morally persuasive literature in the cause of anti-slavery. This dissertation explores the philosophical and religious resources that shape Stowe's literary aim of cultivating the "right feelings" among her readers. By looking to the moral contours of Stowe's published

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and unpublished writings, I argue that feelings are not exercised merely for the pathos of experience in Stowe's novels and correspondence, but are understood as dynamic and cultivable, central to the formation of moral judgment, and intended to lead to humanitarian action. Here, Stowe follows in a Scottish Enlightenment and faculty psychology tradition that aims to cultivate the moral sensibilities of the modern, liberal subject. However, as this dissertation argues, Stowe's invocation of "right feelings" cannot be understood apart from racial and imperial structures of power. The affective terrain of sentimentality and the cultivation of sympathy and "right feelings," for Stowe, *is* the cultivation of Anglo-American sympathy that will hopefully remediate the problem of slavery and liberty. In the spaces of character sketch, family correspondence, and transatlantic literary gift exchange, this dissertation traces the contexts and limits for the cultivation of sympathy and "right feelings," as told through Stowe's fictive and nonfictive moral universe. In scope, this dissertation attends to the corpus of correspondence and literature written at the height of her career and literary acclaim between 1851 and 1859, including *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), *Sunny Memories in Foreign Lands* (1854), *Dred* (1856), and *The Minister's Wooing* (1859). The dissertation contributes to scholarship on the role of religion and sentimentality in nineteenth-century American culture.

Adviser: Amy Hollywood

Eunyung Lim [ThD]

Entering God's Kingdom (Not) Like a Little Child: Images of the Child in the Gospel of Matthew, 1 Corinthians, and the Gospel of Thomas

"Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Matt 19:14). Based on the gospel accounts of Jesus's welcoming of little children, scholars have often presumed that early Christianity offered a new, uniform, and positive understanding of children against the backdrop of the ancient world. This dissertation challenges this exceptionalist approach to history by exploring imagery of the child used in the Gospel of Matthew, 1 Corinthians, and the Gospel of Thomas. In particular, it situates the selected texts within discourses and practices related to children in the Roman Empire and explores the cultural context in which childlikeness in each text should be understood. For Matthew, the little child in Jesus's sayings represents the lowliest of the low in the Roman Empire, functioning to urge the readers to abandon their political and economic privileges. For Paul, "infant" is a term of invective against the Corinthians, whose infantile lack of proper speech and logos marks their unpreparedness for God's kingdom. For the Gospel of Thomas, the child functions as an exemplar of the primordial being in Gen 1:27, who exists without shame, for this gospel idealizes the child's sexually undeveloped body and liminal status in society.

This research demonstrates that there is no one understanding of children among these texts. The authors diversely deploy the child's marginalized status, intellectual

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incapability, and non-gendered state in these three focal texts while inviting the adult audience to envision an ideal believer entering the kingdom of God. These images of children concretize spiritual, moral, and social transformations to which believers must aspire, or which they should avoid, presenting the diversity of religious ideals among those who first used these texts. Their references to children cannot be used as evidence to support claims that early Christ followers were kind in their treatment of children. Exploring the developmental characteristics and social situations of children reveals that early Christ followers cast young children as theological imaginaries for expressing various conceptions of an ideal self who is worthy to enter God's kingdom.

Adviser: Laura S. Nasrallah

Adam S. Lobel [PhD]

Allowing Spontaneity: Practice, Theory, and Ethical Cultivation in Longchenpa's Great Perfection Philosophy of Action

This is a study of the philosophy of practical action in the Great Perfection poetry and spiritual exercises of the fourteenth-century Tibetan author, Longchen Rabjampa Drime Ozer (*klong chen rab 'byams pa dri med 'od zer* 1308–1364). I inquire into his claim that practices may be completely spontaneous, uncaused, and effortless and into what this claim might reveal about the conditions of possibility for action. Although I am interested in how Longchenpa understands spontaneous practices, I also question whether the very categories of practice and theory are useful for interpreting his writings. In taking up these questions, I maintain that Longchenpa's texts can contribute to inquiries into the nature of human practices and action that are relevant today. It is my aspiration that this dissertation may facilitate engagement with Longchenpa's reflections on the nature of liberative practice by thinkers in post-Heideggerian continental philosophy, especially in relation to conceptions of intentionality, causality, agency, ethics, and free will.

The study begins with the historical context for issues of spontaneous practice relevant for Longchenpa's Great Perfection tradition in fourteenth-century Tibet. Following from this context, I present four different interpretations of causal action, which I call the "four configurations." Comprising the second part of the study, my examination of each of these configurations will consist in an exploration of what I argue are four primary ways to construe the nature of practice in terms of intentionality, theories, and causality. The first configuration addresses spiritual exercises that begin with theoretical views that are deliberately applied in actions. The second configuration focuses on methods that begin with embodied practices. The third configuration explores metaphysical foundations for actions. The fourth configuration looks to tacit social practices and networks of relationships as conditions for methods of ethical self-cultivation. Yet each of these characterizations falls short of what I will argue is Longchenpa's understanding of practical action. Each of these configurations fails to provide the most satisfying, and in the end

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accurate, model of the process by which human beings perform freedom. The central chapters of the thesis bring together the history of Buddhist spiritual exercises, Longchenpa's writings, and selected issues from contemporary philosophy and sociology of practice.

I will show how Longchenpa's spontaneous practice theory challenges some of the most basic assumptions about practices, and how it questions whether even well-meaning techniques or manipulations can lead to freedom. From this critical reading, I will also glean affirmative aspects of Longchenpa's approach. Once we suspend the first configuration, we can see Longchenpa's phenomenology of knowledge. By moving beyond the second configuration, I am able to point to his conceptions of time and an effortless style in his instructions for spiritual exercises. I argue that this effortless style is distinct from many interpretations of "sudden" conceptions of Buddhist practice. Going beyond the third configuration allows us to garner a sense of groundless potentiality in actions. And finally, interrupting the fourth configuration provides an opportunity to discern Longchenpa's spontaneous ontological ethics.

My primary thesis is that if practices are preconceived to be causal, teleological, and intentional, they will be predetermined in terms of an imperative to produce effects. Some form of willfulness becomes necessary to mediate between theory, action, and agency. Therefore, to allow for spontaneous practices, there can be neither a theoretical nor a practical *a priori* foundation, and they must be freed from causality and object-directedness. This observation calls into question the entire metaphysics in which the western apparatus of practice and ethics is thinkable. I would like to put the meanings of practice into the form of a question. Longchenpa will help us to reawaken a sense of wonder and uncertainty about the practical.

Adviser: Janet Gyatso

Ian MacCormack [PhD]

Buddhism and State in Seventeenth-Century Tibet: Cosmology and Theology in the Works of Sangyé Gyatso

This dissertation studies works of the Desi Sangyé Gyatso (1653–1705), a prolific and influential Tibetan statesman. Its main sources are texts by Sangyé Gyatso and, to a lesser extent, by the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso (1617–1682). The Dalai Lama was the highest authority of the Ganden Phodrang government, founded in 1642. Sangyé Gyatso was his lieutenant and took control upon the latter's death. During his tenure as ruler, Sangyé Gyatso made major intellectual and practical contributions to this Tibetan Buddhist state. He wrote at length about the ruler's authority and the goals of the state. His ideas developed in close conversation with Buddhist texts, concepts, and practices, leading to novel reformulations of well-traveled ideas, while also informing court practices, rituals, and architecture.

Though famous as a politician, Sangyé Gyatso's thinking about Buddhism and state has received less attention in scholarship. This project sheds light on

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several of his texts, both in the interest of fostering further study and to suggest alternative possibilities for thinking about religion and politics, beyond exposing the mechanisms of power. Over six chapters, this dissertation highlights three major productions of Sangyé Gyatso's rule: a model for public speaking, a holiday to commemorate the Dalai Lama, and a new palace built in Lhasa. It argues for the direct participation of cosmological and theological discourses and their related practices in the work of situating, articulating, and realizing a Buddhist state.

Adviser: Janet Gyatso

Jennifer Aileen Quigley [ThD]

Divine Accounting: Theo-Economics in the Letter to the Philippians

This dissertation investigates how early Christ-followers used financial language to articulate and imagine their relationship to the divine. In the ancient Mediterranean, the divine was an active participant in what we call the economic sphere. Gods and goddesses were represented as owning goods, holding accounts, and producing wealth through the mediation of religious and civic officials. In this dissertation, I use a variety of epigraphic, papyrological, and literary evidence to examine the use of financial terms that are found throughout Paul's letter to the Philippians, asking: what sorts of human-human and human-divine relationships are described? Paul describes his relationship with the Philippians using the business language of a koinōnia, a shareholding venture, in the gospel. He uses the language of deposit and security to represent his imprisonment as a contribution to the success of the gospel venture in which both he and the Philippians participate. In Philippians 3, he commodifies Christ and suffering. In Philippians 4, Paul refers to a divine accounting system to offer a promissory note to the Philippians for their support of him. I also explore Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians*, which exemplifies one trajectory in the afterlife of this theo-economic rhetoric. There the commodification of Christ and suffering has been turned towards polemical ends.

My study adds a new framework of analysis, theo-economics, to New Testament and early Christian texts. This new framework allows a better understanding of major theological and economic logics in early Christianity, and the imbrication of themes such as poverty, labor, social status, cosmology, and eschatology. The framework of theo-economics also makes visible an emerging "economy of suffering" in early Christianity, which is present in the Letter to the Philippians and expands in multiple directions after Paul. Thus, my study has implications for New Testament and early Christian studies as well as Roman history, economics, and the study of religion.

Adviser: Laura S. Nasrallah

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Scott Rice [ThD]

A Living History: Trinity and Divine Activity in the Theology of Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Robert W. Jenson

This essay offers a constructive take on the theological relationship between God and history. In the wake of the revitalization of the doctrine of the Trinity in modern theology, I examine how a trinitarian understanding of God's being can be used to articulate a notion of God's living relation to history in a pre-temporal, inner-historical, and eschatological perspective. I explore this topic by way of a critical engagement with the trinitarian theology of Isaak A. Dorner, Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Robert W. Jenson.

The central question of the triune God's living relation to history derives from a modified form of Dorner's way of reconciling a notion of divine immutability with the revealed vitality of God in nineteenth-century context. With the twentieth- and twenty-first-century theological figures of this study (Barth, Pannenberg, and Jenson) the question is intensified: How does the Trinity of God's being not only ground God's activity *ad extra*, but enable the history that God lives with others? How do construals of eternity and divine immutability bear on the conception of the reality of God in history? And how does a historicized notion of the triune God encompasses an idea of God as transcendent being? My constructive response to these questions incorporates the various contextual links, internal critiques, and adaptations between these figures and their theological work.

In formulating a conception of the triune God's living relation to history, Barth's doctrine of election is gleaned for an idea of the Son's obedience that underlies the vitality of God in the relation between God's pre-temporal eternity and history; Pannenberg's concepts of the dependent monarchy of the Father and divine self-actualization are utilized to generate a view of the livingness of God in history; and Jenson's eschatological idea of the Spirit is used to support a historical notion of divine freedom. The concluding assessment identifies the constructive possibilities, opened up by this study, for a trinitarian understanding of the relation between God and history, including a way forward on the question of the vitality of God in history based in the divine person of the Spirit as the possibility and guarantor of the future.

Adviser: Francis Schüssler Fiorenza

Tyler Schwaller [ThD]

The Use of Slaves in Early Christianity: Slaves as Subjects of Life and Thought

Early Christianity emerged within an empire built on the backs of slaves. Christians likewise participated in the slaveholding practices of the Roman Empire. Christians owned slaves, were slaves, and made use of enslaved labor, even if some in antiquity, including Christians, resisted slavery. Yet, current interpretations of slavery language in New Testament texts—and in particular in its earliest writings, namely the letters of the apostle Paul—are often abstracted from the social and material

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conditions of enslavement within the Roman Empire. Paul's self-identifications as a "slave of Christ" and "slave to all" are frequently treated as metaphorical, bifurcated from "real" slavery.

This dissertation examines slavery language in the letters of Paul, alongside material, literary, and legal evidence evincing the social-material functions of Roman enslavement. I argue that Paul's writings are dependent upon, not set apart from, practices of slaveholding. When Paul calls himself a slave, the term is not "merely metaphorical" but reflects the presence and influence of the enslaved. I propose strategies for reading in ways that foreground the enslaved, which will make explicit their exploitation but also their vitality. I do so by drawing upon black feminist historiography, feminist rhetorical analysis, and queer frameworks that elaborate both the material and discursive mechanisms by which social hierarchies are enforced, and the tactics used by subjugated people to navigate and resist their constraints. By analyzing Roman and early Christian sources through these lenses, I demonstrate how Paul's self-representation as a slave and his discussions of the role of the enslaved largely reflect prevailing Roman attitudes and practices regarding the use of slaves. At the same time, I highlight evidence for slaves' capacities to work toward their best advantage and cultivate relationships that resisted their alienation and dehumanization. Reading Paul's letters in light of such a dynamic interplay between slaves and freepersons, this dissertation concludes that the language of slavery in the letters of Paul is not divorced from the realities of enslavement but contains traces of enslaved life.

Adviser: Laura S. Nasrallah

Kynthia Taylor [PhD]

The Erra Song*: A Religious, Literary, and Comparative Analysis*

This study presents an edition and analysis of one of the latest works of Babylonian mythological literature, the *Erra Song*. It is founded both on a fresh edition and translation of the text with detailed lexicographic and grammatical commentary, in appendix A, and the collection of all available attestations of the names of the text's major figures across the entire span of Mesopotamian history, a project that undergirds Chapters 3–5.

The first chapter offers an overview of previous scholarship on this text. Chapter 2 attempts to resolve some basic interpretive obstacles to understanding the thread of the text's narrative, such as who speaks what lines and what antecedents lie behind certain ambiguous referents; it is concluded therein that the text, said to be a revelation from the god Erra, opens with a hymn to the god Išum that is general rather than serving as the beginning of the narrative proper. Chapter 3 constructs a history of Erra's cult, arguing that the etymology of this god's name cannot be established and that, associated in every era with war, Erra is portrayed in increasingly savage ways over time. Chapter 4 evaluates the evidence for the history of Išum's cult and concludes that, never a fire god, Išum gradually migrates

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into the god Nergal's orbit and, in late texts, comes especially to be associated with magical practices. Chapter 5 assesses the history of the cult of the Divine Heptad, the semi-demonic creatures who goad Erra into action in the *Erra Song*, and asserts that many purported references to the Divine Heptad are, in fact, better understood as references to other supernatural beings with whom the Divine Heptad are occasionally conflated. Chapter 6 takes up the problem of general issues of interpretation, arguing that Erra's attack on the cosmos, as recounted by the text, is not motivated by a desire to punish terrestrial misconduct; that there is no reason to suppose Marduk, Babylon's high god, abandons his cult statue or is parodied for needing to have his jewelry cleaned; and that the text skirts issues of theodicy without addressing them. Finally, in Chapter 7 the *Erra Song* is assessed vis-à-vis related Mesopotamian literature, and it is argued that, unique in many ways, the text shares certain stylistic properties with "wisdom" literature even as it appears to belong loosely to the genre of mythological poetry.

Advisers: Piotr Steinkeller and Peter Machinist

Craig Henry Tichelkamp [ThD]

Experiencing the Word: Dionysian Mystical Theology in the Commentaries of Thomas Gallus (d.1246)

The mystical theology of Thomas Gallus, "the last great Victorine," was inseparable from his theology of sacred literature. This dissertation analyzes Gallus's major works: his commentaries on the Song of Songs and the *Corpus Dionysiacum* (*CD*). I argue that Gallus's mystical theology emerges from his analysis of constitutive theological tensions in the *CD* about God, language, and mystical perfection. That is, in navigating the *CD's* conceptual apertures, Gallus is even more Dionysian than has been estimated previously. At the same time, Gallus's mystical theology is an original creation—distinctively Augustinian and Victorine, and informed by his complementary interpretation of the Song as depicting the union between the soul and the Word. Thus, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of both the inherent interpretive possibilities and the varieties of medieval reception of the *CD*.

This dissertation makes a second contribution to the field by articulating how Gallus's role as a commentator is key to understanding his mystical theology. The practice of commentary writing played a significant role in Gallus's affective Dionysianism, which saw the contemplative soul in an unending pursuit of loving, experiential knowledge of the Word of God. In Gallus's commentaries, we find a coherently performed, if incompletely realized theory and practice of Christian wisdom. I argue that to understand Gallus's practice of commentary writing (beyond its pedagogical practicality), we should look to the account of Christian perfection articulated in the commentaries themselves.

Finally, Gallus's commentaries were attempts to experience (*experientia*) and explain (*explanatio*) the eternal Word of God, and this dissertation also calls attention to the rhetoric of experience within Gallus's commentaries. In conversation with

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debates about religious experience within the study of mysticism, this dissertation argues that, not only is Gallus's use of *experientia* central to his theological and mystical program, but understanding its use in his context can aid a reconsideration of the conceptual reservoirs from which contemporary scholars of medieval mysticism are to draw. Gallus's rhetoric of experience is rich enough to contain a number of tensions within Christian mysticism that remain salient today (such as immanence and transcendence, talkativeness and ineffability, intellect and affect).

Adviser: Amy Hollywood

Justine Wilson [PhD]

Beyond the Equivalence Divide: Developing a Performative Theory of Biblical Translation

This dissertation uses a comparative analysis of Cherokee and Greek scriptures to develop a performative theory of biblical translation that argues that new Christianities are created through processes of translation. I argue that these new Christianities develop by the tracing of alternative lineal memories through collectivized remembrances that lead back to traditional indigenous beliefs and practices rather than to the early Church in first century Palestine. The narrativizing of these collective lineal memories creates not only individual and communal identities, but also governing/sovereignty structures. I further argue that collective remembrance also entails collective forgetting. When these collective lineal memories are selectively evoked, they can result in the collective forgetting of inconvenient historical events and subject entire classes of people to abjection when their presence interferes with desired communal identities and sovereignty structures. My study includes an examination of oral traditions and hymnody because I argue that they are as integral to the field of biblical studies as the study of written scriptures.

This project is interdisciplinary and creates conversation partners with scholarship in translation studies, performance studies, memory studies, postcolonial studies, and Native studies. I argue that one cannot understand what is happening in processes of biblical translation outside of these interdisciplinary dialogues. The dissertation concludes that every biblical translation project has strong ethical considerations that cannot be fully appreciated outside a performative understanding of biblical translation. I contend that biblical translation can create new communal identities through the tracing of lineal memories that can function both subversively and regressively based on changing contexts.

Adviser: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza

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