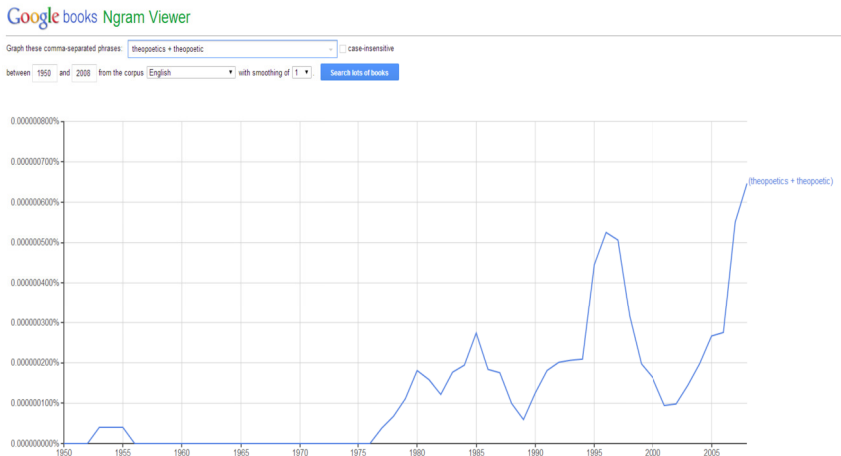


Editorial: Without Ceasing

L. Callid Keefe-Perry

This inaugural issue of *THEOPOETICS* has been a long time in the works. It is a periodical dedicated not only to “Arts and Theology,” and “Theology of Art,” but to the Art *of* Theology, to Theology *as* Art, to theology understood as a created, creative, and aesthetic endeavor. This is a journal for exploring the theory and practice of the particular ways in which we come to name and give meaning to the Divine. It contains work in theology as well as literature. Our hope for the journal is to have it serve as the container for the intersection of several fields of exploration. The intent is to have the content here reside somewhere in the mix of a theological conversation with aesthetics, literature, embodiment, creativity studies, and the philosophy of imagination. It is – in the words of Melanie Duguid-May – an invitation “to participate in an ongoing process of naming, clarifying, and loosing again: to honor *Poesis* as making and remaking without ceasing.”¹



Google Ngram Search Results (*Theopoetics + Theopoetic*): 1950 - 2010

1 Melanie May, *A Body Knows: A Theopoetics of Death and Resurrection*, 25.

According to Google's huge database of scans from material published in English, after a peak in references to theo-poetics in 1996, there was a drop in interest until around 2002 when it once again it began to climb. It has not stopped climbing since. These facts, combined with a desire to have this work available for the citation of the students in the seven schools with graduate theo-poetics courses – up from zero just ten years ago – led to the formation of a very capable and fascinating group of folks who all stepped forward with interest to shepherd this journal forward. We are all eager to see where theo-poetics can be taken and grateful for the sponsorship and support of [The Society for the Arts, Religion, and Contemporary Culture](#), and the arts-based community building organization, [ANTLER](#).

The contents of this issue are drawn primarily from the initial meeting of the Theo-poetics Working Group in 2011. That year we gathered for the first time at the annual sessions of the American Academy of Religion in San Francisco. Since that event, the papers presented there – and those from every subsequent gathering of that group – have lingered in the relatively uncitable location of a folder on the website theo-poetics.net. In the intervening years, however, the marked growth in interest in theo-poetics and a slowly increasing acceptance of the validity of online citations have led us to feel as if the time has come for a journal.

While there will be a preference for content specifically exploring facets of theo-poetics as it has been identified by prior scholarship, use of the term “theo-poetics” or “theo-poetic” will not be the sole criteria for interest. All work that takes up considerations of the method and genre of theological reflection will be considered, especially as it pertains to an emphasis on the particular and the evocative over and above the abstract and propositional. Writing submitted will be high quality, but it will not necessarily be academic in style. This is doubly the case for submitted pieces of literature.

We are eager to remind folks that *poiesis* – which is the Greek root for the poetics that we love – is not limited by language. When Jesus speaks to

Phillip in John's Gospel and says that “the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do,”² he is using the verb *poieō* as “do,” marking this action with the connotation of newness rather than just motion.³ The noun *poema* and the verb *poiein* refer to “a created thing” and “to make,” respectively: theopoetics is the theory and creative practice of making God known. It is not necessarily the theory and practice of making God known via text. That being said, it is because of some of the clarifying essays in this issue that the field as a whole has been able to move somewhat beyond text to begin to consider the theopoetics of a city, a film with no dialogue, and the trauma of war. We hope that the work we share here can serve as a base from which future research may be done.⁴

In Jeffery Hocking's “Liberating Language: Rubem Alves, Theopoetics, and the Democratization of God-Talk,” he details the contributions of Alves to theology, contextualizing his career via the wake of Karl Barth and Ludwig Wittgenstein. He suggests that Alves's method is one which follows on the “death of the analogical method” and moves instead to iterations of stories in the present. Carrying on the theme of iterations upon iterations, my piece “A Heraldic Ethic: Critical Resistance, Theopoetic Embodiment, and Dialogical Impulses,” takes up the question of what the ethical implications are for a theological model that is constantly undergoing revision. When personal narrative and experience are given priority what can be said about ethics? A similar question is taken up in Scott Holland's “A Theopoetics of

2 John 14:12, NRSV.

3 Though both *prassō* and *poieō* translate as the English verb “to do,” *prassō* is used in constructions like “to exercise, practice, to be busy with, carry on” and “to manage public affairs, transact public business” while *poieō* leans us toward “to make, to be the authors of, the cause of” and “to celebrate, to keep.” See Strong's Greek Concordance on 4238 and 4160.

4 While some revisions of these papers have been completed in preparation for their inclusion in this format, it should be noted that each of these papers was originally written in 2010 or 2011. In an attempt to be reflective of the contents of the work as it was originally presented, no substantive changes have been made since that time: the authors' views may well now have proceeded beyond the points made in these essays.

Seeking Cultures of Peace,” which considers how it is that aesthetics and poetics help to shape vision(s) of the ethical. Drawing significantly on Percy Shelly and Holland's own work in the World Council of Churches, the piece makes strong connections between the imagination necessary for political transformation and a poetic articulation which can change the timbre of discourse.

Eric Hall then takes up the work of Eberhard Jüngel in “God’s Metaphorical Creativity: Reflections on the Divine Origins of Creative Human Love.” There he argues for an understanding of “divine creativity and divine love” as a primordial relationship for the Divine, suggesting that the metaphoric character of theology is often underemphasized. Closing this issue is Blake Huggins's “Writing on the Boundary Line: Theopoetics as the Breaking of Form,” in which he explores the literary and inherently poetic register of theology. Working with a mix of Deleuze, Derrida, and Tillich, Huggins suggests we ought to consider developing “a more supple grip on our symbols,” so that we might – along with our language – be “broken open in anticipation of God. And in so doing . . . be inspired and challenged to write, re-write, and write again.” Indeed, it is exactly because of this possibility, this movement towards “*Poesis* as making and remaking without ceasing,” that this journal is being crafted.

Our hope is that this journal – both in its academic vision and the artistic impulse articulated in the next article – serves you as a resource and a catalyst. Please consider submitting articles, reviews, poems, or short fiction yourself. We particularly want to include work from women and people of color. This topic is yet in its infancy, and we want you to read this text as an invitation: your voice and vision is more than welcome.

On Behalf of the Editorial Team of *THEOPOETICS*,



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