



Article

Practical Gods: Carl Dennis's Secularized Religious Visions

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Abstract: This paper examines Carl Dennis's secularized religious visions in his Pulitzer-winning poetry collection, Practical Gods (2001). Dennis's secularized religious visions can be quite understandable in the context of the ascending trends of secularization, diversification, and globalization of religion in America, and they demonstrate affinities with literary predecessors such as Wallace Stevens, with his aestheticized religion under the influence of Nietzsche, as well as with the innovative religious thinking of William Blake, Kazantzakis, and Oscar Wilde, and with certain aspects of Taoism and Zen Buddhism. This paper addresses Dennis's perception of theological controversies, such as the contradiction between the omnipotence of God and the existence of evil, theological determinism vs. human free will, theological view of history vs. New Historicism, divinity in man, aestheticized religion, and earthly paradise through the focused lens of Dennis's "practical religion". Despite the breadth of the theses in Dennis's conceived practical religion as examined in this paper, they are all tied up with the core of the phenomenological study of religion: that religion is important to believers of the religion irrespective of the objective truth of the religion or the actual existence of God. In Dennis's views, as accorded with the phenomenological study of religions, God maybe an idea and a fiction, but it is a necessary fiction for humans. Thus, Dennis humanizes gods with the flaws and fragility of humanity while deifying ordinary humanity in the contemporary context. Contrasting what he views as theological determinism with its view of linear history and the apocalypse of grand events. Dennis embraces human free will, a non-teleological, aestheticized living with necessary fiction, and a transient paradise on earth. Carl Dennis's religious vision reveals a poststructuralist (even though he did not brand himself so) abolition of the absoluteness of a transcendent signifier as well as binary opposition (between God and man, good and evil, religious/historical truth and fictionality), and it manifests an affinity with New Historicism and the phenomenological study of religion.

Keywords: Carl Dennis; Practical Gods; poststructuralism; New Historicism; phenomenological study of religion

1. Introduction

Carl Dennis's Practical Gods (2001) won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 2001. In this book, Dennis greatly rewrites and fictionalizes the original tenets of many schools of religions as he understands them. In other words, Practical Gods is an interaction between a poet's literary imagination and his subjective understanding of religions in rather "broad, general terms" rather than the more detailed, "meticulous" understanding of a religious scholar citing from religious texts. Being a contemporary poet, Dennis has rarely been studied beyond one or two book reviews, which do not deal with his religious visions at all. Biographical information about him and interviews with him are also quite scant; therefore, rather than speculating on the context of his writing, the paper focuses mainly on a close-text reading of his poetic work itself in the methodology of the school of New Criticism in addition to the methodology of the phenomenological and poststructuralist study of religion. Apart from citations from Dennis's poetry, this paper also cites from these citations present long-standing religious controversies, and I am not that naïve as to



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Practical Gods

Lingsheng Yao

Practical Gods:

Practical Gods Carl Dennis, 2001-10-01 Winner of the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry Practical Gods is the eighth collection by Carl Dennis a critically acclaimed poet and recent winner of one of the most prestigious poetry awards the Ruth Lilly Prize Carl Dennis has won acclaim for wise original and often deeply moving poems that ease the reader out of accustomed modes of seeing and perceiving The New York Times Many of the poems in this new book involve an attempt to enter into dialogue with pagan and biblical perspectives to throw light on ordinary experience through metaphor borrowed from religious myth and to translate religious myth into secular terms While making no claims to put us in touch with some ultimate reality these clear precise sensitive poems help us to pay homage to the everyday household gods that are easy to ignore the gods that sustain life and make it rewarding Practical Gods Carl Dennis, 2001-10-01 Winner of the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry Practical Gods is the eighth collection by Carl Dennis a critically acclaimed poet and recent winner of one of the most prestigious poetry awards the Ruth Lilly Prize Carl Dennis has won acclaim for wise original and often deeply moving poems that ease the reader out of accustomed modes of seeing and perceiving The New York Times Many of the poems in this new book involve an attempt to enter into dialogue with pagan and biblical perspectives to throw light on ordinary experience through metaphor borrowed from religious myth and to translate religious myth into secular terms While making no claims to put us in touch with some ultimate reality these clear precise sensitive poems help us to pay homage to the everyday household gods that are easy to ignore the gods that sustain life and make it rewarding Practical Gods Carl Dennis, 2001

Practical Gods Carl Dennis, 2001-10-01 Poems explore the divine in the ordinary and attempt to translate pagan and biblical perspectives into secular terms A Study Guide for Carl Dennis's "The God Who Loves You" Gale, Cengage Learning, 2016 A Study Guide for Carl Dennis s The God Who Loves You excerpted from Gale s acclaimed Poetry for Students This concise study guide includes plot summary character analysis author biography study guestions historical context suggestions for further reading and much more For any literature project trust Poetry for Students for all of your research Worldviews and Christian Education W. Shipton, E. Coetzee & R. Takeuchi, 2014-04 In Worldviews and needs Christian Education editors W A Shipton E Coetzee and R Takeuchi have brought together works by experts in cross cultural religious education The authors and editors have a wealth of personal experience in presenting the gospel to individuals with various worldviews that differ greatly from those held by Christians who take the Bible as authoritative They focus on the beliefs and issues associated with witnessing to seekers for truth coming from backgrounds as diverse and animism Buddhism Confucianism Hinduism Islam Marxism Taoism and postmodernism Back Cover Getorix Judith Geary, 2005 In 101 B C Getorix a fourteen year old Celt is deprived of the honor of being sacrificed beside his father when the son of one of their Roman captors requests him as a servant forcing Getorix to seek another way to what he believes is his fate Ten Great Religions: An essay in comparative theology James Freeman Clarke, 1895 The Santaroga Barrier Frank

Herbert, 2002-09-16 Santaroga seemed to be nothing more than a prosperous farm community But there was something different about Santaroga Santaroga had no juvenile delinquency or any crime at all Outsiders found no house for sale or rent in this valley and no one ever moved out No one bought cigarettes in Santaroga No cheese wine beer or produce from outside the valley could be sold there The list went on and on and grew stranger and stranger Maybe Santaroga was the last outpost of American individualism Maybe they were just a bunch of religious kooks Or maybe there was something extraordinary at work in Santaroga Something far more disturbing than anyone could imagine At the Publisher's request this Ten Great Religions: An essay in title is being sold without Digital Rights Management Software DRM applied **comparative theology.** [New popular ed.] 1899 James Freeman Clarke, 1899 Bayard Taylor Liam Corley, 2014-08-21 Bayard Taylor 1825 1878 was a nineteenth century American who combined in his writings and career a catalog of accomplishments and creations that made him one of the most celebrated literary men of his time. The range and significance of Taylor's oeuvre explains his growing importance today to scholars working in the fields of American studies gender and queer theory and the aesthetics of racial and class identities In less than 35 years he wrote seventeen volumes of poetry four novels eight critical works and translations of German classics nineteen travel narratives innumerable magazine essays stories and reviews and thousands of letters to friends admirers hostile reviewers business acquaintances and intimate male companions His extraordinary success on the public lecture circuit made him one of the best known men of his day Taylor s diplomatic career enhanced his reputation and influence as a travel writer and included service as a writer for the Perry Expedition to Japan as a charge d affaires to Russia during the Civil War and ambassador to Germany in 1878 This analysis of Taylor's life and works helps to explain three important shifts in American culture the contradictory development of American ethnocentrism and cosmopolitanism in the nineteenth century the impact of homophobia and homophilia upon American literary production criticism and culture and the inspirational role played by poetry within a religious and economically driven society The introduction describes Taylor's changing fortunes within literary history and presents a methodological approach to the Genteel tradition that recovers its distinctive aesthetic and social values and explains how Taylor is its most winning and significant representative Taylor was a key figure in the genealogy of American interactions with the Islamic world and his travel writing demonstrates how individual advancement in an egalitarian society can be linked with aggressive imperialism abroad Taylor's novels display a subtle pattern of transgressive sexuality and demonstrate how Taylor's manipulation of reputation and genteel aesthetics created a space for individual expression and freedom Taylor s 1870 novel Joseph and His Friend is frequently cited as America's first gay novel This book s analysis of Taylor's poetry draws the strands of egalitarian racialization and male male intimacy together with his abiding concern with regional American identities and the mixed influences of religious subcultures

A Far Country Winston Churchill, 1915 This is a story of the career of Hugh Paret from youth to manhood The phrase a far country is from the Biblical parable of the prodigal

son who takes everything he is given and runs off to fulfill his own desires Paret leaves Great Britain where he grew up and travels to America with his worldly goods while gathering up and refining other more useful talents which provide him the greater wealth of honor and a standard of excellence Once in the New World he attends Harvard graduates is admitted to the bar and joins a firm of corporate lawyers the first of their kind He is introduced to new people different customs and various adventures when he enters the world of big business as it announces the awakening of social ethics In his travels to this dangerous excitement of situation he uses his business flair tumultuously as he gains strength and knowledge in its execution

Delphi Complete Works of Winston Churchill (Illustrated) Winston Churchill,2023-08-30 An American best selling author of the early twentieth century Winston Churchill wrote the historical novel Richard Carvel which was a huge phenomenon on its 1899 publication selling two million copies at a time when the U S population was only 76 million The book launched Churchill s career and was followed by a series of meticulously researched historical novels that were tremendously popular in the 1900 s and 1910 s For the first time in publishing history this eBook presents Churchill s complete works with numerous illustrations rare texts and informative introductions Version 1 Beautifully illustrated with images relating to Churchill s life and works Concise introductions to the major texts All 10 novels with individual contents tables Features the rare short story Faith of Frances Craniford appearing here for the first time in digital publishing Images of how the books were first published giving your eReader a taste of the original texts Excellent formatting of the texts The complete plays Rare poems available in no other collection Includes Churchill s non fiction The rare Christian study The Uncharted Way first

time in digital publishing Ordering of texts into chronological order and genres CONTENTS The Novels The Celebrity 1898 Richard Carvel 1899 The Crisis 1901 The Crossing 1904 Coniston 1906 Mr Crewe s Career 1908 A Modern Chronicle 1910 The Inside of the Cup 1913 A Far Country 1915 The Dwelling Place of Light 1917 The Short Stories Mr Keegan's Elopement 1896 Faith of Frances Craniford 1917 The Plays The Title Mart 1905 Dr Jonathan 1919 The Poetry The Poems of Winston Churchill The Non Fiction A Traveller in War Time 1918 An Essay on the American Contribution and the Democratic Idea ☐ EXCLUSIVE COLORING BOOK Edition of Winston Churchill's A Far Country ☐ 1918 The Uncharted Way 1940 Colour the Classics, 2024-06-19 Dive into a Classic Tale A Far Country by Winston Churchill Hey Bookworms Looking for your next literary adventure Winston Churchill's A Far Country is a captivating read that will transport you to another time and place Why A Far Country Should be Your Next Read Historical Intrigue Set during the American Revolutionary War this novel weaves a tale of love loyalty and political upheaval Rich Characters Follow the journey of Hugh Paret as he navigates the complexities of life love and ambition in a changing world Timeless Themes Explore themes of identity power and the pursuit of happiness that resonate even today Why Choose A Far Country for Your Next Read Engaging Plot Get lost in Churchill's masterful storytelling as he brings history to life with vivid detail and emotional depth Thought Provoking Reflect on the timeless questions raised in the novel and how they mirror our own experiences and struggles Ready to embark on a literary journey to A Far Country Get Your Copy of A Far Country Today Happy Reading The Literary Enthusiast Country, Complete Churchill, 2016-02-22 My name is Hugh Paret I was a corporation lawyer but by no means a typical one the choice of my profession being merely incidental and due as will be seen to the accident of environment The book I am about to write might aptly be called The Autobiography of a Romanticist In that sense if in no other I have been a typical American regarding my country as the happy hunting ground of enlightened self interest as a function of my desires Whether or not I have completely got rid of this romantic virus I must leave to those the aim of whose existence is to eradicate it from our literature and our life A somewhat Augean task I have been impelled therefore to make an attempt at setting forth with what frankness and sincerity I may with those powers of selection of which I am capable the life I have lived in this modern America the passions I have known the evils I have done I endeavour to write a biography of the inner life but in order to do this I shall have to relate those causal experiences of the outer existence that take place in the world of space and time in the four walls of the home in the school and university in the noisy streets in the realm of business and politics I shall try to set down impartially the motives that have impelled my actions to reveal in some degree the amazing mixture of good and evil which has made me what I am to day to avoid the tricks of memory and resist the inherent desire to present myself other and better than I am Your American romanticist is a sentimental spoiled child who believes in miracles whose needs are mostly baubles whose desires are dreams Expediency is his motto Innocent of a knowledge of the principles of the universe he lives in a state of ceaseless activity admitting no limitations impatient of all restrictions What he wants he wants very badly indeed This wanting things was the corner stone of my character and I believe that the science of the future will bear me out when I say that it might have been differently built upon Certain it is that the system of education in vogue in the 70 s and 80 s never contemplated the search for natural corner stones

Hearst's ,1914

Hearst's International ,1914

Eventually, you will utterly discover a new experience and ability by spending more cash. yet when? realize you tolerate that you require to get those every needs afterward having significantly cash? Why dont you try to get something basic in the beginning? Thats something that will lead you to comprehend even more as regards the globe, experience, some places, taking into account history, amusement, and a lot more?

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