JOB:

TRIAL BY ORDEAL

A play in a Prologue, Seven Scenes and an Epilogue from the Book of Job

Wednesday 12 November 2014

7.30 pm

Divinity School Theatre

St John’s College, Cambridge
Special thanks are due to the following, without whose support the production could never have taken place:

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David Ford, Nathan MacDonald, Giles Waller and Martin Worthington contributed the essays on the four phases in the evolution of the Drama of Job from Mesopotamia (c. 1500 BC) to Western Europe (c. 1500 AD).

Gillian Jondorf composed the surtitles, helped by Mary Emerson.

Sam Motherwell contributed all the original drawings and took over the final editing and tweaking of the Powerpoint Presentation.

James and Liz Willetts will be creating a DVD of the performance.

Mark Harrison gave invaluable assistance and advice concerning technical aspects of the visual display.

Laura Keating organised the reservation of seats by email and Tom Parry-Jones took over the final stage of getting people safely to their seats.

Gemma Leavens and her team made us feel very comfortable in using this venue for the fourth time.

Rebecca Buncombe edited and produced this beautiful programme.

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The incidental music is directed by Giovanni Varelli, who edited and adapted the duets from the *Missa de Sancto Job* by Pierre de la Rue.
Ludlul bēl nēmeqi: Job’s precursor in Mesopotamia

Among the hundreds of thousands of cuneiform tablets that survive from Ancient Mesopotamia, it is no surprise that there should be a composition which resembles the biblical Book of Job. Mesopotamian gods often got angry, sending disease and misfortune; and hundreds of prayers are recorded where the suppliant seeks to pacify them – often without knowing what had roused their wrath. The prayers come from a culture where it was generally believed that human beings had been created to relieve the gods of the dreary task of tilling the soil!

The “Babylonian Job” poem is known today as ludlul bēl nēmeqi, or simply ludlul, after its first line: ludlul bēl nēmeqi īlu mušālu “I shall praise the lord of wisdom, the relenting god”. Narrated in the first person, it recounts the suffering and deliverance of a certain Šubši-mešre-Šakkan, who experiences first the wrath and then the mercy of Marduk, chief god of Babylon. It remains unclear what, if anything, the poet has done to deserve his suffering. He speaks of “my sin” and similar locutions, but the contexts are fragmentary.

The poem was widely diffused (we have fragments from seven sites) and originally comprised four ‘chapters’ of 120 lines, each chapter being inscribed on a separate clay tablet. Many of the lines are arranged in couplets, or pairs of couplets; and there is ample and sometimes virtuosic use of parallelism (a key feature of all Semitic poetry, including the Book of Job).

It opens with a 50-line hymn to Marduk, and then goes on to lament the suffering of the protagonist, dwelling, as in Job, on physical illness and social estrangement. In Tablet III he is visited by a series of dreams (strikingly similar to Job 4. 12 ff), featuring emissaries of Marduk, who bring him such things as dressings for wounds, which give him grounds for hope of a coming reconciliation. Finally he is cured, offers thanks, and praises Marduk – the concluding words being tanittaka ūbat, “your praise is sweet”.

The first two tablets are virtually complete. Extracts from the second ‘chapter’ in the original language may be heard at:

http://www.soas.ac.uk/baplar/recordings/.

Martin Worthington
The Book of Job in the Hebrew Bible

We pass from clay to parchment as we move from Akkadian to Hebrew, from Mesopotamia to Palestine, and from c. 1200 to c. 400 BCE (that is, in all probability, after the Jews returned from exile in Babylon).

The Book of Job opens (1–2) with a memorable folk tale, told not without humour and almost in the style of a parable. It relates how the devout, virtuous and prosperous hero is suddenly subjected to loss, bereavement and pain as the result of an almost casual bet between God and his chief prosecutor (‘the satan’ has not yet become a personalized demonic figure). This brief narrative is the occasion for the poetic speeches of Job and his three friends who address the topic of divine justice and the existence of moral order in the universe.

The debate begins when Job cracks under his pain, and raises his voice in lamentation and protest. His three friends – Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar – attempt to give him comfort. They begin cautiously, each counseling Job in turn on how to respond to his misfortune. In a second round of exchanges (15–21), however, Job becomes increasingly irritated by their words which imply that his sufferings are some kind of just punishment. He begins to insist on his innocence, and to demand that he should receive a fair and open hearing, not a ‘Trial by Ordeal’ in which a cruel punishment precedes the unstated charge. As a result, his friends become more belligerent, arguing that experience and tradition show that it is the wicked who suffer. By the third cycle (22–28, omitted from tonight’s dramatisation) the positions have become entrenched, and the conversation breaks down with some of the speeches apparently truncated or lost. In a final lengthy speech (29–31) Job contrasts his former honourable position and his present distress. Again, he asserts his innocence and he calls for the right to defend himself in God’s court.

With the dialogue between Job and his friends exhausted, a younger man, Elihu, bursts in to propose an alternative perspective (32–37): Job is presumptuous in insisting on his righteousness and calling God to account, while the friends have failed to recognise the role of suffering in moral formation.

Finally, all the human participants are silenced as God himself ‘speaks out of the whirlwind’ (38–41) to put everyone in their place. With a series of rhetorical questions of astonishing poetic power, God seeks to demonstrate that, since he has no equal, no one is in a position to question any aspect of his ordering of the universe.

Job thus receives the hearing he desired, though when his day in court arrives he has nothing to say. The very fact that God appears is itself Job’s vindication; the
favourable verdict being reaffirmed in the folk-tale mode that returns in the final chapter to describe his renewed prosperity and length of days.

Nathan MacDonald

Job in the Septuagint

ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΣ τις ἣν ἐν χώρᾳ τῇ Αὐσίτιδι, ὁ ὄνομα Ἰόβ, καὶ ἐν ἁ ὄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ἀληθινός, ἀμεμπτὸς, δίκαιος, θεοσεβής, ἀπεχόμενος ἀπὸ πάντος πονηροῦ πράγματος.

If I were to choose just one book for a desert island ("excluding the Bible and Shakespeare"), I think it would be the Septuagint, the translation into Greek of the Hebrew scriptures made in Alexandria, in Egypt, during the third and second centuries BCE. The story of Job has reached the Mediterranean in the heart of a huge administrative, trading and cultural centre, with a great Library that was almost the eighth wonder of the world.

The translation is fascinating above all for two reasons: it gives us the earliest interpretation of most of the Hebrew Bible (this is how those strings of consonants were then understood); and it is a constant source of illumination of the New Testament (this was the form in which most of its authors knew their scripture).

The Greek version of Job is unlike the majority of the translations gathered in the Septuagint. The author was creative and free, expanding and rearranging the version before him while also removing repetitions. His text is significantly shorter than the Hebrew, but also includes expansions such as the speech given to Job’s wife (2.9), who vents her anger and distress at his afflictions, before uttering the well-known challenge to her husband ‘to curse God and die’. At the end of the book, too (42.17), Job is associated with the Iobab who is named in the patriarchal narratives in Genesis (36.33, 34), whereas in the original Hebrew, Job’s name, country and vicissitudes are unrelated to Israelite genealogy and to Israel’s story.

But the most important fact is that the anonymous translator clearly set out to recreate the impact of what he perceived as a major work of poetic drama, worthy to stand alongside Prometheus Bound or Oedipus at Colonus. This is no mere crib or colloquial paraphrase of the kind found elsewhere in the Septuagint. The vocabulary is wide and often rare; the syntax is quintessentially Greek in such matters as its use of particles; the rhythms make the conceptual parallelisms immediately audible, or else flow freely to give due relief to the key words in a sentence. As you will hear, the translation is a pleasure to read aloud – always the acid test!

Awareness of Job in antiquity is documented by an early reference (c. 150 BCE) to the figure of Job in Ecclesiasticus (49.9), which includes him among the prophets as one who held fast to righteousness. His story clearly circulated widely in the apocryphal Testament of Job, composed between 100 BCE and 100 CE, which stresses his resilience to the Tempter and follows the Septuagint in giving a greater role to Job’s wife.
In the Epistle of James in the New Testament (c. 100 CE), the author presents the biblical character as one to be emulated for his endurance (*hypomonê*, a key root in the Septuagint Job): ‘Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.’ (5:11).

That too might be important to remember on the desert island.

David Ford
In late antiquity and the middle ages, Job was seen as a Patriarch, a prophet of the Resurrection, and a ‘type’ or prefiguration of Christ in his patient endurance of suffering. By the High Middle Ages, he was venerated as a saint. (You will see three notable altarpieces from north-west Europe painted between 1480 and 1510.)

Later images of Job (you will see three of these) show him as a solitary figure, isolated in his suffering, cast out of the city, alone on a dunghill. Yet in most of the images of the period 500-1500, as above, Job is identified not by his isolation, but by those who surround him, offering comfort – or further affliction! Artists loved the frame story. There are representations of the house collapsing on his children, of his camels driven off by enemy herdsmen, and his sheep consumed by the fire from heaven.

Medieval images tend to be enthusiastic in their depiction of his boils and sores, and offer striking parallels with the depiction of the flagellated Christ, the Man of Sorrows; Job is often shown as being scourged – literally – by Satan. Images of Job are most often identifiable by the iconic dunghill; he is regularly depicted sitting on it among a cast of accompanying characters, mostly drawn from the apocryphal Testament of Job, where his wife is given a much expanded role. She is often present in the iconography, remonstrating with him, or soothing his sores with water. His three friends are often shown in regal dress (in the Septuagint, they are all kings).

In one of the most frequent images (more on which on p. 9), Job is shown with musicians, playing to soothe his suffering, like David before the afflicted Saul. Job recompenses them with his scabs, which are then miraculously transmuted into gold; an image, perhaps, both of the power of his saintly piety in suffering, but also of the beguiling powers of music to transmute misery into art.

Representations of this scene, from c. 1500, will accompany the musical interludes, which are arranged from a Mass by Pierre de la Rue, from c. 1510, dedicated to St Job. (It is not irrelevant that, alongside his associations with the plague, leprosy, other skin diseases, and melancholy, Job was to become the key patron saint of music and musicians in the middle ages.)

Giles Waller
The Performers

Prologue and Epilogue

NARRATOR Patrick Boyde
THE LORD David Ford
THE DEVIL Anthony Bowen
MESSENGERS Thomas Michaels
Giles Waller

Scenes 1 - 6

JOB Christos Tsirogiannis
JOB’S WIFE Erica Bexley
ELIPHAZ Anthony Bowen
BALDAD Martin Worthington
SOPHAR Andrew Merritt
ELIOUS Isidoros Charalampos Katsos
THE LORD Nikolaos Vernezos
In the third-century apocryphal *Apocalypse of Paul*, a pseudepigraphical account of the mystical vision of the Apostle, Job appeared as a Patriarch and saint, welcoming Paul into the heavenly city. While seemingly sometimes associated with Adam, the main typological identification of Job, on the basis of his patient endurance of suffering, was with Christ (who had been identified as the primary ‘second Adam’ by Paul in I Corinthians 15:45). In the early church, he was a prototype both of Christ and of the suffering of the Christian martyrs. The very influential allegorical treatment of Job in Prudentius’ fifth-century epic *Psychomachia*, depicts the sufferer as a hardy soldier of Christ, athletically resisting his afflictions in the battle between Virtues and Vices, assisted by *Patientia* herself.

From the early church onwards, apart from his status as a Patriarch and sufferer, Job was also regarded as a Prophet of Christ and the Resurrection. The case was eloquently made by St Jerome in his letter to Paulinus: ‘As for Job, that pattern of patience, what mysteries are there not contained in his discourses?... To say nothing of other topics, he prophesies the resurrection of men’s bodies with more caution than anyone has yet shown. “I know”, Job says, “that my redeemer liveth, and that at the last day I shall rise again from the earth; and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh shall I see God. [19:25]”’.

Jerome was one of several Church Fathers to write a commentary on the Book of Job. By far the most significant for the later middle ages was Gregory the Great’s enormously long *Moralia in Job*, composed in the sixth century. Gregory’s account of his
own motivation for writing the commentary demonstrates Job’s appeal to people of all kinds – learned exegetes, visual artists, musicians, poets and general layman – namely, the attempt to make Job’s great suffering instructive for one’s own. Writing of his own severe affliction with fevers and chronic abdominal pain, Gregory saw the possibility for the greater perfection of suffering in sympathy with that of another: ‘…perchance it was this that Divine Providence designed, that I a stricken one, should set forth Job stricken, and that by these scourges I should the more perfectly enter into the feelings of one that was scourged.’ (Moralia, I, 10).

Giles Waller
Job and the Artists: Iconography from c. 200 – c. 1500 CE

The iconography of Job perhaps owes more to the colourful narrative of the apocryphal Testament of Job than it does to the biblical book itself. When looking at representations of Job, there are often instructive tensions between possible interpretations according to the canonical, and non-canonical sources.

His image was amongst the earliest to appear in Christian art. The iconography of Job on his dunghill is found in the mid-third-century synagogue at Dura Europos, in the fourth-century Catacomb of Domitilla, and notably on the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus. Here we can glimpse the tangled skein of early Christian typological interpretation. Job sits on his dunghill, while his wife stands next to him, clasping her tunic to her face (presumably on account of the stench of putrefaction – a vivid image for a sarcophagus). Between them stands a third figure, who is either one of Job’s friends, or Satan - an identification given weight by the mirrored imagery of the adjacent scene, in which Adam stands beside Eve, tempted by the Serpent. Job, then, is a second Adam, diabolically tempted by his suffering, and tormented by his wife, who (satanically) tempts him to ‘curse God and die’.

In addition to the various physical afflictions for which his help was sought, Job was also the patron of those suffering from melancholy, and he is frequently depicted in the ‘melancholic’ pose of the philosopher, with his chin propped on his hand, seemingly lost in contemplation, an iconography also associated with his commentator, Jerome. Perhaps the most striking use of this image is in Vittore Carpaccio’s extraordinary painting The Entombment of Christ (c. 1505, now in Berlin), which shows the melancholic Job contemplating the pallid corpse of the one he is thought to foreshadow, surrounded by skulls and lamenting disciples. Here, the ‘Prophet of the Resurrection’ gazes on the one whose death is to bring this resurrection about.

Frequently, Job is depicted with musicians, often playing pipes, harps, organs, trumpets and lutes. These images reflect one of his most important patronages: music and musicians. In all probability, this musical attribution derives from the apocryphal Testament of Job. In this version, Job on his dunghill is visited by musicians, who play to soothe his suffering. He pays them with all that remains to him – the flakes of his corrupted and desiccated skin. These, in proof of his miraculous piety, are then transmuted into golden coins. In the biblical book itself, however, the references to music are less positive. Here, it is the wicked tormentors who are said to ‘take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ’ (Job 21:12). The ambiguity of the musicians in depictions of Job might thus reflect a tension at the heart of the story itself: are not the so-called ‘comforters’ really more like tormentors?

Giles Waller
Saint Job: Medieval Cult, Maladies, Musicians and Funerals

The bridge between learned commentary and popular piety may be identified in the most enduring and influential presence of Job in the Middle Ages: in worship and liturgy. The funeral services of the Office of the Dead, which varied greatly in different regions and eras, were permeated with references to Job. From the earliest known form, the second-century Commendatio Animae (‘Deliver us as you have delivered Job’) to the eleventh-century Sarum Rite and beyond, Job became an increasingly prominent and regular companion to the prayer life of Christians, and in particular in their rites of mourning the dead. The haunting words of Job 14: 1, as found in one fifteenth-century text which was widely familiar to laymen, are still recognisable in Church of England funeral services today: ‘A man þat is born of a womman, lyue þ schort tyme, & is fillid wi þ many wrecchidnessis. / which goi þ out & is defoulid as a flour, & flee þ as a schadewe, & dwelli þ neuer parfitli in þe same staat.’

The popular cult of ‘Saint Job’ flourished in the High Middle Ages, as he became the patron saint of sufferers from various skin diseases – particularly leprosy, sufferers from worms, and venereal diseases. He was perhaps an obvious figure of devotion for communities ravaged by plague (as attested by the Venetian church of San Giobbe of 1493, and of Bellini’s famous altarpiece). In this veneration, he was not only a ‘figure’ of Christ, the martyrs, Adam, or the sufferers themselves, but also an important intercessor, one through whom prayers for deliverance could be addressed.

How, then, did the Franco-Flemish composer Pierre de la Rue (b. 1460) come to write a ‘Mass of Saint Job’? The origins of the work are uncertain, but one clue might lie in Saint Job’s patronage of musicians, mentioned above.

Devotion to Saint Job was widespread in the Low Countries of the period. The musicians’ guilds of Antwerp and Brussels were dedicated to him, and there was a flourishing cult at Wezemaal in Brabant, where the church was dedicated to Job in the fourteenth century, the shrine sustaining a significant number of pilgrims and musicians. Margaret of Austria was de la Rue’s employer from 1508 or 1509 until 1515. As a child she suffered a broken betrothal. Her two husbands both died very young. Her only child was stillborn. In 1521, she commissioned an altarpiece of Saint Job from Bernard van Orley and it is within the bounds of possibility that she similarly commissioned the great Flemish musician.

Giles Waller
Who’s who?

**Erica BEXLEY** specialises in Latin poetry and holds a temporary lectureship in the Faculty of Classics. She came to Cambridge the long way, from Melbourne, via America and Greece.

**Anthony BOWEN** is a former Orator of the University and Emeritus Fellow of Jesus College. He has been busy with Greek plays since his schooldays.

**Patrick BOYDE**, Emeritus Professor of Italian, has adapted and directed eleven plays in Ancient Greek, squaring up in turn to Odysseus, Oedipus, Prometheus, Ajax, Achilles and Aeneas, before coming up to scratch against ‘the most noble of the men of the East’.

**David FORD** is Regius Professor of Divinity, and Director of the Cambridge Interfaith Programme. He read Classics at Trinity College Dublin, where he performed in Greek plays, before studying Theology at Cambridge, Yale and Tübingen.

**Harry HICKMORE** is studying for an MPhil in Musicology at Emmanuel College, where he took his BA in Music. He is joint principal of the Cambridge University Chamber Orchestra (CUCO).

**Gillian JONDORF** is a modern linguist who has composed the surtitles for all the Ancient Greek semi-staged productions.

**Dan JUNCU** returns to the Synchronisers’ cubicle for the third time, bringing his knowledge of Greek from the hills of Romania.

**Evangelos KATAFYLIS** comes from Thessaloniki where he studied Theology. He took a Master’s at Edinburgh, before becoming a PhD student here, working on Gregory Palamas and his theological encounters with Muslims.

**Isidoros Charalampos KATSOS** was brought up in Athens, where he was ordained a deacon in 2010. Having a PhD in Law from Berlin he is now unrelentingly pursuing a PhD in Theology here.

**Simone MAURER** has come to Clare Hall from Brisbane to take an M. Phil in Music Studies (specialising in flute performance) and studies with Michael Cox from the Royal Academy of Music.
Andrew MERRITT is a native of Virginia. He is currently pursuing an MPhil in Classical Philology, knowing himself to be a spiritually imperilled idolater of grammar.
Who’s who? (continued)

**Thomas Michael**s studied at ETH Zürich obtaining a MSc in Mathematics and a MSc in Physics, both in 2012. He is presently doing a PhD in Chemistry at St. John's.

**Sam Motherwell** has drawn the images for many previous productions since 2009. He is past President of the Cambridge Drawing Society, and is still active as a crystallographer.

**Christos Tsirogiannis** took his Ph. D from Hughes Hall. He is a Greek forensic archaeologist specialising in the research and repatriation of illicit antiquities.

**Giovanni Varelli** is a PhD Candidate in Music at St John’s. Brought up in Mantua, he became interested in medieval music manuscripts while taking a BMus in Cremona. His favourite pastimes are hunting dispersed mss. fragments – and gardening.

**Nikolaos Vernezos** was ordained in Greece in 2001. He has been looking after the Greek Orthodox Community in Cambridge since 2006. He has an MPhil from Magdalene and is finishing his Ph.D on the cult of the saints in late medieval England.

**Giles Waller** is a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Faculty of Divinity. His first degree was in Theology at Peterhouse, and he is currently finishing a doctoral thesis on theology and tragic drama.

**James Willetts** used to be Principal Teacher of Classics at Ardrossan Academy and is now a documentary film maker. He will be filming the performance.

**Liz Willetts** is a writer. She has a PhD in English Literature. She assists with the photography and filming.

**Martin Worthington** is a lecturer in Assyriology in the Division of Archaeology. Raised in Italy, he dabbles in languages and day-dreams of writing a novel.