the condition that Hamilton be made a major-general and the actual organizer and commander of the military forces. Adams was furious that Washington had compelled him to promote over the heads of more deserving men "the most restless, impatient, indefatigable and unprincipled intriguer in the United States, if not in the world to be second in command under himself."

It is Hamilton's behavior in this crisis that historians have most reproved. The Republicans thought that he intended to use the army against them. Hamilton certainly meant to suppress any domestic insurrection with a massive show of force. When rumors spread that Jefferson's and Madison's state was arming, he seemed eager to "put Virginia to the Test of resistance." When an uprising actually occurred in eastern Pennsylvania early in 1799, he told the secretary of war not to err by sending too few troops. "Whenever the Government appears in arms," he wrote, "it ought to appear like a Hercules, and inspire respect by the display of strength."

Hamilton believed that the crisis of 1798 offered an opportunity to create what he had long wanted for the government: a respectable standing army. Such a permanent force would enable the United States both "to subdue a refractory and powerful state" and to deal independently and equally with the warring powers of Europe. But a potent standing army was just the beginning of Hamilton's plans for strengthening the union. He wanted also to extend the judiciary, to build a system of roads and canals, to increase taxes, and to amend the Constitution so as to subdivide the larger states.

Beyond the borders of the United States, Hamilton's aims were even more grandiose. He thought that the war with France would enable the United States, in cooperation with Britain, to seize both Florida and Louisiana from Spain—in order to keep them out of the hands of France, he said. At the same time he held out the possibility of helping the Venezuelan patriot Francisco de Miranda to liberate South America. In all these endeavors, he told Rufus King, the American minister in Britain, in August 1798, America should in August 1798, America should in Britain, in August 1798, America should in

All these extravagant dreams collapsed with President Adams's new peace mission in 1799 and the end of the quasi-war with France. Many Americans, including the president, thought that Hamilton and the High Federalists had been bent on establishing a regal government allied with Britain, with Hamilton as its head. There is no evidence for such a view, but Hamilton's plans for an imperial America were certainly out of touch with the realities of his world in 1800. Two centuries later, however, these plans do not seem so bizarre. Hamilton would be right at home in our present-day United States and our present-day world. He would love our government's vast federal bureaucracy, its sprawling Pentagon, its enormous CIA, its huge public debt, its taxes beyond any he could have hoped for, and especially its large professional military force with well over one million men and women under arms spread across two oceans and dozens of countries. America has at last become the kind of superpower of which Hamilton could only dream.

Who He Was

By Paula Fredriksen

The Changing Faces of Jesus
by Geza Vermes

(Viking, 324 pp., $25.95)

Providential Accidents:
An Autobiography
by Geza Vermes

(Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 258 pp., $26.95)

There was a time in the West—it lasted until the Renaissance—when what Christians in church believed about Jesus and what professors in universities taught about Jesus corresponded more or less closely. Ecclesiastical creeds and councils set the context for interpretation, which was straightforwardly theological. Jesus was the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, who for humanity's redemption had come down to earth, taken on true flesh, died for humanity's sins, been raised bodily on the third day, established his church, and ascended (in his raised body) back to heaven.

The supporting roles of various of his contemporaries were equally clear. The poor and the outcast loved him. His apostles absorbed his teachings, and they brought this saving knowledge, along with the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, to the Gentiles, who received them gladly. But the Jews whom Jesus first called rejected him: they were too attached to their own rules and rituals, infuriated by his new teachings, and loath to share redemption with the Gentiles. Eventually they prevailed upon Pontius Pilate to kill him; confronted with the evidence of his resurrection, they denied him; and faced with the church's success among the Gentiles, they cursed him. Yet the church triumphed, just as the Old Testament had always said it would.

During the Renaissance, learned opinion started to shift. The ancient manuscripts of New Testament writings that scholars began to retrieve and to study revealed surprising differences between the received biblical text and the readings in the earliest witnesses. References in canonical first-century letters to fourth-century doctrines (such as the Trinity) began to look suspiciously like later additions. Eventually textual critics would notice that some stories about Jesus (such as his encounter with the woman at the well) floated around in different manuscript copies of a particular gospel, and even between the manuscripts of two different gospels.

This new knowledge in effect eroded confidence that the texts in the church's Bible corresponded very closely with whatever the original versions of those
texts might have been: too many generations of pious copyists, anxious to “correct” what to them might have seemed like defective recensions, stood between the first Christians and their modern readers. Then Luther, and the Protestant Reformation, complicated these interpretive issues by altering their theological context. In his commentaries, “good” Jews (that is, the Christian ones) and saved Gentiles put their faith in a Christian message that looked surprisingly close to Luther’s own, while the ritual-soaked church of Rome appeared increasingly like their Jewish opponents, the Pharisees. At this point, too, the canon of the Old Testament split between Roman Catholic communities and Protestant communities. The Catholics kept the larger, traditional collection of Old Testament writings based on the Greek Septuagint; the Protestants, more caught up in Renaissance scholarship, accepted as Scripture only those works for which they had a Hebrew original.

The Enlightenment intensified all this activity when scholars, freer from doctrinal constraints than ever before, began to apply the fledgling standards of critical-historical research to the texts of the New Testament, investigating them as they would any other ancient documents. In consequence, the differences in tone and in content between the gospels emerged with increasing clarity, and this discovery called into question their status as historical witnesses to the life and the times of Jesus. The evangelists in their individuality came to be seen more as creative interpreters of traditions from and about Jesus, and thus as witnesses first of all to their own communities and their own historical periods, rather than as historical witnesses to Jesus of Nazareth himself, who had lived and preached (in Aramaic, not in Greek) some forty to seventy years prior to the composition of these gospels. The Jesus of history began to assume features distinct from those of the Christ—or rather, the Christ—of faith.

The linguistic gap between Jesus and the earliest documents about him highlighted another difference between him and later Christian tradition, a difference that was very significant theologically: Jesus would have been familiar with Semitic-language versions of the Jewish Bible, whether Aramaic or Hebrew, whereas Paul and the evangelists all drew upon its Greek version, the Septuagint. Where these two textual traditions diverged sharply—say, in the rendering of Isaiah 7:14, where in the Hebrew a “young girl” (‘talmodh) gives birth to a child, but in the Greek the new mother is a “virgin” (parthenos)—scholars hesitated to attribute to the historical

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O ur program, one of the oldest and most prestigious in the nation, is small (no more than a dozen students admitted in any genre, with all workshops limited to twelve members); very intensive (the Master’s degree is ordinarily awarded after the academic year of eight courses); and highly competitive (normally sixteen students apply for each spot in fiction and poetry). We are best known for the quality of our graduate workshops. All of these are held in the same small room, which allows through its dusty windows a glimpse of the Charles River. Perhaps the most remarkable such workshop occurred when Silvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and George Starbuck gathered for instruction by Robert Lowell—gathered, by the way, less often in that little room than at the Ritz Bar. These days, the poetry workshops are run by our regular faculty of Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky and Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott, who also conducts the playwriting workshops; and those in fiction are led by Leslie Epstein, Susanna Kaynes, and the newest addition to our permanent faculty, Ha Jin. Of course our students have about them the resources of a great university. That means they often take courses with a superb faculty in literature that includes, besides the poets Geoffrey Hill and Rosanna Warren, the scholar Christopher Ricks and Boston University’s two other Nobel Prize winners, Saul Bellow and Elie Wiesel. It is difficult to know how best to measure a student’s success, or the worth of a program to a writer; we can say that our graduates in each genre have accomplished a good deal. Over the last few years our playwrights have been awarded the ABC National Playwriting Prize, the Charles MacArthur Award for Comedy, the Heideman Award, first prize in both the 21st Century Playwrights’ Festival and the Baltimore Playwrights’ Festival, and productions with Naked Angels and the Manhattan Class Co. Quite recently our graduates in poetry have won the $30,000 Whiting Award, the Barnard New Women Poets Series, a grant from the NEA, and the Norma Farber First Book Award from the Poetry Society of America; there have been three winners in three years of the Discovery/The Nation Award, and two winners of the National Poetry Series. In fiction, our students have also won the Whiting Award, along with an inordinate share of the nationwide Henfield Awards. In 1999 our writers swept every major literary award in the country, with Ha Jin winning the National Book Award and the PEN/Faulkner, and Jhumpa Lahiri the PEN/Hemingway and the Pulitzer Prize. Not a year goes by without a graduate of our program bringing out a book with a major publisher, and some, like Sue Miller and Arthur Golden, spend a good deal of time on best-seller lists. Over the last decade we have placed more than fifteen of our graduates in tenure-track positions at major American universities. We make, of course, no such assurances. Our only promise, to those who join us, is of a fair amount of time in that river-view room, time shared with other writers in a common, most difficult pursuit; the perfection of one’s craft. For more information about the program, visiting writers, and financial aid (our teaching fellows conduct undergraduate creative writing classes) write to Director, Creative Writing Program, Boston University, 236 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215 or visit our Web site at www.bu.edu/writing/.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC : OCTOBER 15, 2001 : 49
Jews what would have been possible, so to speak, only in Greek. The gap between history and theology widened.

Into this breach stepped liberal Protestant scholars. In quest of the historical Jesus, they focused on the meaning of a central phrase frequently on his lips in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke: the Kingdom of God. Jesus had used this phrase, these questers maintained, as a moral metaphor: by invoking the Kingdom, he had meant “love one another,” and articulated the “intertestamental” period.

These esoteric and less familiar writings—the Assumption of Moses, the Psalm of Solomon, the Sybilline Oracle, Enoch—also contained the phrase “Kingdom of God,” and they certainly did not use it to stand as a timeless moral metaphor. The Kingdom that these texts proclaimed was an energetically desired and anticipated historical event. Various endtime scenarios crowded their pages. The righteous would suffer, but then they would be vindicated. A great battle between good and evil would ensue, to be led perhaps by an archangel, perhaps by the Lord’s messiah. Exiled Israel, all twelve tribes, would be gathered up into the land, and to Jerusalem. (By the time these writings were composed, ten of the twelve tribes had long since vanished, so the expectation anticipates a great miracle.) The dead would be raised. Gentiles would abandon their idols and worship the God of Israel. The strong theme that was central to all these writings, in brief, was apocalyptic eschatology: the conviction that God was about to intervene definitively in history, and vanquish injustice, evil, and death forever, and establish his kingdom of peace.

For these scholars, Jesus stood within the great prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. These holy men too, they thought, had urged ethical action over ritual performance, prayer over blood offerings, faith over works. But then other scholars started to take their investigations further afield. Turning from the Old Testament canon, they studied instead those Jewish writings from the period much closer to Jesus’s own lifetime, from 200 B.C.E. to 200 C.E., which they desig-
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**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28, 7-10 P.M.**

**Creating Modern Jewish Studies**

- **Dr. Robert Chazan**, S.H. and Helen R. Scheuer Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, New York University  
  **Opening Remarks**

- **Dr. Michael Brenner**, Professor of Jewish History and Culture, University of Munich
- **Dr. Jonathan Frankel**, Professor of Modern Russian and Jewish History, The Hebrew University, Israel
- **Nation-Building and the Israeli Historians: Mythologizers, Revisionists, Post-Zionists**

- **Dr. Jeffrey S. Gurock**, Libby M. Klaperman Professor of Jewish History, Yeshiva University
- **American Jewish History: Personal and Professional Reflections on a Disciplinary Path Towards Scholarly Acceptance**

- **Dr. Stephen J. Zipperstein**, Daniel E. Kosshland Professor in Jewish Culture and History and Co-Director of the Taube Family Center for Jewish Studies, Stanford University
- **On the Evolution — and Future — of Russian Jewish Historiography**

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 29, 8:15-10 P.M.**

**Modern Jewish Studies and the American Context**

- **Dr. Arthur Goren**, Russell Knapp Professor of American Jewish History, Columbia University  
  **Chair**

- **Dr. Jon Butler**, William Robertson Coe Professor of American History, Professor of American Studies and Professor of Religious Studies, Yale University
  **The American Setting**

- **Dr. Deborah Dash Moore**, Professor of Jewish Studies, Vassar College
  **The Urban Context**

- **Dr. Hasia Diner**, Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History, New York University
  **The Multicultural Context**
and pseudepigrapha in various languages; and, in Greek, the work of Jesus's Jewish near-contemporaries Philo and Josephus.

Vermes constructs his image of Jesus by appeal to these texts. The premise from which he begins is historically unimpeachable: that Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew and his mother tongue was Aramaic. Beneath the koine ("common," that is, non-literary) Greek of the synoptic Gospels, this linguistic layer of Aramaic can still be glimpsed—and occasionally it even comes to the surface. (Commanding a dead child to rise, the synoptic Jesus orders: Taliitha cuimi, or "Little girl, get up!" And his cry from the cross—the first lines of Psalm 22—Mark gives not in Hebrew, but in Aramaic: Eloī, Eloī, lama sabachtani? or "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?")

Vermes regards the synoptic evangelists' portrayals of Jesus as the most reliable, and so he peoples his presentation with other Galilean holy men renowned for their ability to work nature miracles or to cure the ill even from a distance—and (a related expertise) to exorcise demons. Unschooling, perhaps illiterate, these men were remembered in later tradition for their piety, their extreme material poverty, and their powerful prayer. Sometimes their fellow Jews referred to such hasidim ("pious ones") as prophets, even as "son(s) of God," while a hasid might invoke the deity in Aramaic as Abba, "Father." Once, according to a Talmudic story, a "voice from heaven"—that is, God—even proclaimed one of these miracle-workers his son.

By the end of Vermes's book on Jesus, the constant cameo appearances of these charismatic Galileans indeed work a small miracle. The intractably theological titles for Jesus such as "Son of God" and "son of man," and the miraculous deeds attributed to him, all of which in Christian tradition serve to indicate Jesus's unique status as God's Son, are shown to be native to Jewish—and especially to Aramaic and Galilean Jewish—streams of thought. In that context they express not a super-human subject's metaphysical status, but a human subject's moral status as a pious man responsive to the needs of his fellows, and whom, on that account, God particularly loves. To move closer to the Jesus of history—"the real Jesus," as Vermes calls him—the angle of approach should be calculated, he urges, with or from these native Jewish traditions.

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BUT WHAT OF those other writings in the New Testament's core canon, the Gospel of John and the letters of Paul? On these two sources, the Jewish Aramaic traditions provide much less purchase. What, then, can the Fourth Gospel and Paul tell us about "the real Jesus" and about that sole conduit for such historical knowledge, his earliest disciples' proclamations about him? Not much, says Vermes; and in a sense he is right. The hero of John's Gospel is a mouthpiece for the evangelist's theology: it is difficult to place the Johannine Christ's bel canto soliloquies on his own divine nature in a realistic rural early-first-century Galilean setting. And Paul specifically says that he never knew the human Jesus. For the purposes of Paul's message, what needs to be known about the human Jesus is his death, which is the necessary prelude to his resurrection and to the resurrection of the dead and transformation of the living to take place shortly, says Paul, when Christ returns.

Material from these sources that might supplement or enrich what we otherwise possess from the synoptic Gospels—Jesus's teaching regularly in Jerusalem, as John portrays; or Paul's claim that he, and also the Gentiles whom he had baptized, were empowered to do "works of power" and charismatic healings, to prophesy, and to discern between spirits, much as the synoptic Jesus does—Vermes for the most part lets pass by. Those traditions in John and Paul that stand in strongest contrast to Vermes's reconstruction of Jesus's Jewish and Aramaic message, such as those that claim an extremely elevated theological status for Jesus relative to God, Vermes attributes to Gentile, thus pagan,
culture—in John’s case, a native culture; in Paul’s case, the culture of those whom he addresses.

Christianity as a religion, Vermes explains, is thus the result of a Jewish-Gentile hybrid, which spread in an increasingly Gentile and pagan environment, inevitably acquiring non-Jewish elements as it grew. The Hellenistic synagogue, home to Greek-speaking Jews (such as Paul), to the Septuagint, and to those Jewishly sympathetic Gentiles who were familiar enough with biblical stories to understand the religious significance of the Christian message—Jesus as the son of David, or the seed of Abraham, or the shoot of Jesse—scarcely figures in Vermes’s account. He seems to envisage a one-generation transition to the new faith.

The movement, in this view, was rapidly mutating, and it soon lost its appeal for Jews. Its Gentile members, offended by the Jewish rejection of what they took to be the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel, became increasingly anti-Jewish themselves. The Jews may have rejected the church; but in the view of the (now Gentile) church, God had first rejected the Jews and put Gentile Christians in their stead. For all these reasons—the centuries of anti-Judaism in Gentile Christian theology, the blends of pagan and Jewish thought found variously in the Greek New Testament documents ostensibly about Jesus, the necessary compromises with pagan culture made by Paul when trying to take the message to the Gentiles—the features of the Jewish Jesus, Vermes concludes, have been obscured. Until fairly recently, they would even have been denied.

But these days a recognizably Jewish Jesus no longer startles or offends. Indeed, as Vermes notes, “the Jewishness of Jesus is now axiomatic... [even for] those New Testament scholars who can only pay lip service to it.” In this regard, he says, New Testament studies have changed significantly since 1973, when even the title of his first book on this highly charged subject, Jesus the Jew, shocked some in the Christian world. And the field is drastically changed; indeed, it is “almost unrecognizable” from the perspective of 1945—the year before the young Vermes, released from the necessity of hiding by the end of the war, began his advanced academic training in Louvain as a novice residing with the Fathers of Notre-Dame de Sion, a nineteenth-century order founded specifically to pray for the conversion of the Jews.

His concluding evocation of the year 1945 recalled to me the poignant elosing address. Indeed, as Vermes notes, “the Jewishness of Jesus is now axiomatic... [even for] those New Testament scholars who can only pay lip service to it.” In this regard, he says, New Testament studies have changed significantly since 1973, when even the title of his first book on this highly charged subject, Jesus the Jew, shocked some in the Christian world. And the field is drastically changed; indeed, it is “almost unrecognizable” from the perspective of 1945—the year before the young Vermes, released from the necessity of hiding by the end of the war, began his advanced academic training in Louvain as a novice residing with the Fathers of Notre-Dame de Sion, a nineteenth-century order founded specifically to pray for the conversion of the Jews.

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bring order to this chaos, Vermes picked up and saw, for the first time in his life, a Hebrew Bible. It was a transforming moment. “This filled me with fascination, and an irresistible urge to learn Hebrew,” he relates. This accidental encounter set him on the path to becoming who he is. And, of course, given his personal choices, his family, and his times, this decision to learn Hebrew had a certain poignancy.

One of his uncles, seeing the young seminarian hard at work on a Hebrew grammar, wryly remarked: “I see you’re now busying yourself with what you should have learned as a child.”

His memoir is also a love story. Its prologue begins with this heart-stopping sentence: “Shortly before midnight on 9 June 1993 I realized that my wife was dying.” Pamela Vermes brought Geza Vermes into a new life. They met in 1955, and eventually married, and collaborated in his scholarly publications, and together found their individual ways from Catholicism toward Judaism, she as a “religious agnostic” (her self-designation), he as a non-observant though highly identified Jew.

And Vermes’s story is also in part an international thriller, especially with the high-level goings-on around the Scrolls. The full sordid tale of spite, scholarly selfishness, and undisguised anti-Semitism, which kept access to the Dead Sea texts restricted for decades to a tiny cartel, unwinds in his pages. Telegrams and letters fly between Jerusalem, Paris, Oxford, Washington, and southern California’s Huntington Library; careers crash; scholarly hypotheses come and go like clay pigeons in a skeet shoot. It is all great stuff, especially because we know the happy ending: the scrolls—thanks in part to Vermes’s efforts—are now open and available to all interested scholars.

But owing to who he is, when he has lived, and how he has written, Vermes’s life story reads as well as a history of Jewish-Christian relations in the twentieth century (the worst century so far, as Diana Trilling once remarked), as well as a history of the academic study of those relations. His autobiography thus places his scholarship, and particularly his New Testament scholarship, in a larger context. Readers of both can see not only how Vermes’s life informed his work, but also how the myriad cross-currents of Jewish-Christian relations must inform any such endeavor in the area of historical Jesus research.

A historian does not have to be Jewish in order to produce a Jewish Jesus: in 2001, thanks in part to the work of Vermes and scholars like him, a more or less Jewish Jesus is the one whom any historian of any religious orientation or none, pretty much expects to find. That churches and synagogues, separately and together, are exploring and making their peace with the Jewishness of Jesus—again thanks in part to the work of Vermes and scholars like him—is, I think, an even more significant cultural fact. It shows the beginning of a way forward out of centuries of mutual suspicion, resentment, and—within living memory—much worse. For our culture, it is also the measure of recuperation from the shock of the Renaissance and the secularization of time and nature that followed in its wake, when the gap between history and theology (for Jews as well as for Christians) first started to make itself felt. We still live in that gap; but we need not be lost in it.

Immorality Play

By Ruth Franklin

Flights of Love
by Bernhard Schlink
translated by John E. Woods
(Pantheon, 304 pp., $23)

That bad books are the books most widely read is an entirely mundane phenomenon of contemporary culture. Every week the major book reviews assess a dozen books in a variety of genres, of varying quality but deemed of sufficient significance or originality or beauty to merit a thousand words or so. With only a few exceptions, these books then vanish forever: good books get reviewed, but bad books get bought.

Once in a while, though, books of “literary merit” do take a spin on the best-seller list. These are often just bad books in disguise—Corelli’s Mandolin, or A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius. With regard to style, both of those books are credible imitations of the real thing; but unlike the “designer” handbags hawked on the street, what gives away these knock-offs is not their detailing but the absence at their core. Under the weight of all their trappings—pseudo-historical documents, lengthy digressions on esoterica, winking self-referentiality—they shudder with emptiness.

The best recent example of the disguised bad book is surely Bernhard Schlink’s The Reader. Schlink was a professor of constitutional law who wrote mystery novels in his spare time, but with the publication of The Reader in 1995 he rapturously onto the literary scene in Germany and around the world. The book already ranks among the best-selling German paperbacks of all time, and around two million copies have sold in the United States alone, fueled largely by Oprah Winfrey’s endorsement. Der Spiegel deemed Schlink’s book “one of the greatest triumphs of German literature since the novel The Tin Drum.” If Günter Grass’s epic was the quintessential novel of the wartime generation, The Reader was aimed squarely at the “second generation,” the lucky but oppressed ones born later.

There is every indication that Flights of Love, Schlink’s first collection of short stories, may fare similarly. Sandwiched between J. K. Rowling and John Grisham, it has been a presence on the German best-seller lists since its publication last year. German critics have praised Schlink as a “master of the craft” and his stories as “virtually perfect.” One writer for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung has mordantly proposed that the stretch of highway between Frankfurt and Stuttgart be nicknamed “the Flights of Love Stretch,” since it is the same duration as the playing time of the audio version of Schlink’s volume. Oprah’s vast flock will no doubt snap it up in its English translation.

Schlink’s disguise is well-made. He is a master of appearances, but only of appearances. His books appear to have serious themes: in The Reader, the difficulties of the second generation in reconciling with the Nazi past; in Flights of Love, the jealousies and infidelities and sublimities of love affairs. Both books owe the entirety of their momentum to the machinations of plot, but the plot is spun charmingly and convincingly enough that you hardly have a chance to discover that the characters are vacant, virtually without interior lives. Schlink’s style is perfectly calibrated to appeal, spare enough to earn the intellectual-sounding description of...