Natural Strange Beatitudes: Geoffrey Hill's The Orchards of Syon, Poetic Oxymoron and Post-Secular Poetics AND An Atheist's Prayer-Book
Geoffrey Hill’s The Orchards of Syon (2002) occupies a contradictory position in twenty-first century poetry in being a major religious work in a post-religious age. Contemporary secular and atheistic insistence on the fundamentally crafted and flawed nature of religious faith has led Hill not to the abandoning of religious vision, but to a theologically disciplined approach to syntax, grammar and etymology. This dissertation examines Hill’s claim to a poetics of agnostic faith that mediate his alienation from a cynical and debased Anglophone contemporaneity. The oxymoronic nature of a faith co-existent with existential loss is the primary focus. The semantic distinction between paradox and poetic oxymoron is examined, and the agonistic and aporetic dimensions of the oxymoron are considered as affording theological significance. Poetic oxymoron as site of both foolish babbling and Pentecostal exuberance is made explicit, as is Hill’s relation to the oxymoronic nature of beatitudinous expression and the Kenotic Hymn. Hill’s reading of and relation to other theologically engaged poets is outlined. Thomas Hardy’s tragic-comic vision, Gerard Manley Hopkins’ restrained rapture in ‘The Windhover’, and T. S. Eliot’s expression of kenotic dissolution in ‘Marina’ are read as precursors to Hill’s revisionary God-language. William Empson’s significant difficulties with aspects of Hopkins’ and Eliot’s poetics is appraised as evidence of an oxymoronic and theological dimension within poetic ambiguity. Hill’s imperative to embody and enact theological vision and responsibility is tested in a reading of The Orchards of Syon. Paul Ricoeur’s perception of the religious significance of atheism is provocation for my own creative practice, as is the performative theology implicit in both Graham Shaw’s hermeneutic approach, and Hill’s visionary philology. Creative process draws on Simone Weil’s notion of decretion, the kenotic paradigm as exemplified in the life and writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and the continuing secular vitality of the apostrophic lyric mode.

Description
contrast between them could not have been greater. Illness, and a period of poetic inactivity, preceded Hill’s move to Boston in the US in 1988 to teach theology and English literature. He did not publish another book until Canaan in 1996, after which the books poured from him. He returned to England in 2006. The quartet of books from Canaan to The Orchards of Syon (2002) constitute a modern Pilgrim’s Progress. Hill’s epic conflation of autobiography, theology and history, rendered in defiantly modernist style and startling in its juxtapositions of the contemporary and the eternal. Oxymoron is a figure of speech in which two contradictory terms are put together. Read through this article to know more about examples of oxymoron. Poets and writers use oxymorons to create puns and to add a sense of humour to their work. They are used to highlight certain qualities, ideas or to confuse readers. Read on to know more examples of oxymorons.