Voyages in Uncharted Waters

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Voyages in Uncharted Waters

Essays on the Theory and Practice of Biblical Interpretation in Honour of David Jobling

edited by

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List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BZAW	Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
HB	Hebrew Bible
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplements
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplements
NICOT	New International Commentary—Old Testament
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	*Novum Testamentum*, Supplements
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalensis
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLTT	Society of Biblical Literature: Texts and Translations
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SR	*Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	*Vetus Testamentum*, Supplements
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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Uncharted Waters: The Voyage of a Prairie Schooner

Armin Siedlecki, Christine Mitchell, Wesley J. Bergen

'Do you know so-and-so? Well, you should'. In many ways, these words sum up the contribution David Jobling has made to the lives of many people and to biblical scholarship in general. Sometimes the connections made are between individuals, sometimes between ideas, sometimes between theories or paradigms. Among his published works we find titles such as 'Feminism and Mode of Production in Ancient Israel' and articles on deconstruction brought into conversation with liberation theology. His desk (and any other available flat surface) is always piled high with books on any number of subjects. While much of biblical scholarship is taken up with careful connection between ideas A, B, and C, David wonders what would happen when you combine idea A with theory 4 (and a decent beer).

In all of this, David continues to display a keen interest in accomplishing more than the writing of books or the dispersal of information. Writing and teaching and speaking are done in the interest of something beyond themselves. Because he understands that all biblical study is interested, he calls students and colleagues to not only acknowledge their interests, but also work towards interests worthy of their time and effort. Terms like 'justice' or 'truth' or 'equality' come to mind, only to be deconstructed. David wants to change the world.

For nearly thirty years, David has called Saskatoon 'home'. During this time he has worked at St. Andrew's College, a seminary of The United Church of Canada. These years have seen great changes in the United Church, in St. Andrew's, and in David. The nature of these changes could be described in a variety of ways, but in many of them St. Andrew's has been a leader of change in the United Church, and David has been a leader of change at St. Andrew's. Saskatchewan is no demographic center, and Saskatoon is at the geographic margins of the American continent, but David has shown us all that such margins can be leading edges.

Recently, like many of his colleagues, David has been moving in and out of retirement. After his "original" retirement, he focused on his own projects. Then he returned to St. Andrew's as acting Academic Dean for about a year. Although he then retired, again, he returned to direct the college's re-accreditation process. During this entire period, he has never been less than helpful, sage, and gracious. There are no students remaining at the college who had David as a

teacher, but all the students know him because of his many post-retirement jobs at the college.

David's activity at St. Andrew's has not been limited to administration. He continues to encourage and support colleagues in their research and their teaching. His work as mentor and friend is deeply appreciated by current faculty.

In choosing the title for this Festschrift, we recognize that *Uncharted Waters* may not be the most obvious metaphor for someone working in Saskatchewan. Yet we were unable to come up with a simple prairie equivalent. In Saskatoon, one is regularly reminded of both the survival skills of the aboriginal peoples as well as the adventurous spirit of the later settlers, but neither of these images seemed to fit. In the title, we therefore hoped to capture the adventure and the goal of David's work, without invoking the sense of someone wandering blindly through a snowstorm at -40C.

A. Post-Structuralism

Structure, Soil and Play
Some Thoughts on the Bible, David Jobling and Poststructuralism

Wesley J. Bergen and Armin Siedlecki

This collection is organized around three general topics that we felt best described David's main interests as a scholar. This division is artificial, especially in the case of David's work where he continues to insist that categories like these need to be bridged rather than clearly separated. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the gulf between these categories is an illusion. Poststructuralism is always already ideological, ideology is already 'global' in that it takes place somewhere on the globe, and all readings would be strengthened by an awareness of poststructuralist theory and practice.

David is also one of few biblical scholars who can claim the title 'poststructuralist' after having firmly wrestled with the promise and limits of structuralism. While the meaning of 'post' in 'poststructuralism' (or 'postmodern') is the subject of debate, part of the answer lies in the realization that this 'post' is pounded firmly into the soil of history. Thus, the poststructuralist is one soiled by history, fingernails no longer clean from careful washing before sitting down at the neatly ordered desk, but dirty from digging in the dirt with the farmer as together we watch prices fall even as input costs rise, or wiping stained hands on a nearby rag with the industry worker as we watch jobs disappear and dreams die.

Yet it was not only structuralism that remained unsoiled by history. Too often so-called historical criticism was not only based on a limited view of history as a stable, linear sequence of events, waiting to be discovered through rigorous investigation, but was also restricted by the implications of this view of history as ultimately nothing more than just-one-damned-thing-after-another. Criticism that neither engages with its own historical production and consumption nor rejoices with the fun of playing with words quickly becomes rather dull work, done for reasons difficult to articulate. Thus, while unsoiled by history, historical criticism too often became dull as dirt, worn-out soil lacking the compost needed for fertility.

So what are the solutions to this infertility? In the essays that follow, various ideas are explored. George Aichele seems to suggest that theology is the solution. Now I (Wes) have often thought of theology as mostly just compost, so perhaps there is something to this suggestion. Yet Aichele's paper remains

largely modernist in form, a careful description of the ideas of others, standing on the shoulders of the giants while being careful not to muss their hair. He also apparently wants us to believe in theology even while not believing in God. The fertility suggested here is that of the carefully ordered garden, neatly planted in rows and cleared of the 'weeds' that the gods have so carelessly sown.

Francis Landy's garden looks quite different. Here is a riot of color for the eye, vines tangling and twisting around, impossible to follow. Whose son is Caleb, which cities have been conquered when, and how would we know a Canaanite if we saw one? The distinction between flowers and weeds becomes artificial, especially odd in the aftermath of Joshua's clearly bordered land. Yet Landy's garden, so firmly rooted in the text of Judges, appears lacking in edibles. How are we to sustain life, given a text so firmly upheld by death? The compost of Judges is the decomposing bodies of the slain, in the text and all around. Is it sufficient to honor the dead with flowers?

Robert Culley's paper is reminiscent of the tough prairie farmer who, when faced with a barren patch of land, picks up his tools and says, 'I think we can do something with this yet'. Perhaps a more appropriate metaphor is Jesus' parable of wine and wineskins, at least in its Lukan version. Having tasted the new wine of poststructuralism, Culley still appreciates the old wine of form criticism (Luke 5.39). Yet this old wine is not allowed to mellow with age, but is poured into the stew that is Isaiah 38. Thus the wine transforms the stew even as the stew transforms the wine.

Matthew Mitchell looks at the land as it is spread out before him and sees a garden already planted and tended by others. In fact, there are so many gardeners already that they are constantly tilling up the seeds others have so carefully laid down, or planting across each other's rows. He also reminds us that, for the new generation of scholars, French theory can be just as infertile as German exegesis was for many of the previous generation. In good postmodern style, he ponders what sort of work constitutes the 'really real', while at the same time trying to make his voice heard in the cacophony of current scholarship.

Gary Phillips's paper also explores the potential and limits of poststructuralism. In it he both surveys and risks Babel, attempting to communicate in language that disrupts as thoroughly as it informs. In doing this, he shows the deconstructive preference for the frame over the canvas. He speaks at length about Derrida and Levi and their framing of Babel, without specifically commenting on the story itself. Returning to our soil metaphor, Phillips wants to talk about the gardener rather than the garden or the soil.

Each of these essays in their own way confronts language. Poststructuralism provides a framework for exploring the limits of language. While challenging discourse at many different levels, these essays remain a collection of words, 'just' words. In this sense, poststructuralism is both freedom and trap. The sense of freedom experienced by many scholars when first encountering poststructuralism is soon transformed into a new set of boundaries for the next generation

of students. And whether freedom or trap, 'real' participation comes only in the form of the written word, published in the correct places, footnoting the right authorities.[1] Language and writing (even, or perhaps especially in the Derridean sense of *écriture*) thus becomes the mud in which we as the heirs of אדם become stuck. Yet, being creatures of the earth, we ought not to be afraid to get our hands dirty, to play in the dirt, to till the soil of biblical scholarship and occasionally to muddy the waters thought to have been sufficiently charted.

1. I wonder how we as editors would have responded if one of the contributors had submitted a painting rather than an essay.

Surviving Babel

Gary A. Phillips

There is Babel everywhere.
Jacques Derrida

The Carbide Tower, which rises in the middle of Buna and whose top is rarely visible in the fog, was built by us. Its bricks were called Ziegel, briques, tegula, cegli, kamenny, mattoni, teglak, and they were cemented by hate; hate and discord, like the Tower of Babel, and it is this that we call it: –Babelturm, Bobelturm; and in it we hate the insane dream of grandeur of our masters, their contempt for God and men, for us men.
Primo Levi

And shall not Babel be with Lebab? And he war.
James Joyce

Texts survive.[1] They live on in complicated ways, and in so doing outlive their readers. Vitally important texts—founding political, religious and legal documents, for instance—have ongoing impact, for better and for worse, upon individuals, communities and cultures, exerting influence long after their originating authors and institutions have passed from the scene. Readers and authors come and go, but texts persist to be interpreted, translated, applied, to live on, for another day. Texts live on.

Biblical texts are tenacious survivors. Their mode of living on is assured in part by inclusion within a sacred canon, a protected scriptive space that insures continuing attention. Beyond the canon they inhabit a much larger space, a *Lebensraum*[2] that exceeds literary boundaries. For example, the Bible takes material expression in architectural form in cathedral stain glass windows and church cemetery statuary.[3] But that barely scratches the surface of the manifold

1. This essay was born out of conversations of the Bible and Culture Collective on the Babel and Pentecost texts. It is appropriate then that this reflection is first published in a volume that acknowledges and celebrates the ethical passion and collaborative spirit of David Jobling. I also wish to express my deep appreciation to Danna Nolan Fewell for her persistent encouragement and steady critique of early drafts of this essay. Obviously all weaknesses and omissions are mine.

2. Levinas explores the notion of *Lebensraum* as an explicitly ethical space (1994). For an overview of Levinas see Phillips (2000) and Cohen (2001: 1-25).

3. See McDannell (1998).

ways the Bible permeates culture and consciousness. The biblical text lives on through billboards and bumper stickers, sports crowds' handheld signs and popular slogans, public tender and popular crèche scenes, by way of cinema and TV evangelism, in courtroom display and backyard shrines, in geo-cultural designations (the American 'Bible Belt'), public school curricula and official oaths of office. Such vitality of the Book underscores just how deep in the bones the Bible lives. But for as much as the Bible enlivens, it also endangers.[4] Choosing a different trope, we who live with the Bible are not merely its readers, we also serve as its host: the Bible *infects*. The virological metaphor suggests a destructive side of the Bible's potency. Who can not immediately recall a virulent biblical text? The Sodom story. Paul's epistolary appeal for women's subservience. The Gospel's justification of poverty. Divinely sanctioned genocide of women and children. Jewish responsibility for Jesus' death. Verbal and visual, vital and viral, gem and germ, life and death, or better 'lifedeath',[5] the Bible's *living on* is at once bound up with a violent *living off* of those subject to its power. It is the antithetical character of the Bible that makes it both fascinating and fearful or, in Elaine Scarry's terms, both tool and weapon.[6]

The Babel story has survived come hell or high water, even hell *as* high water. Frequently read as an aetiology[7] that explains the origin of linguistic difference and the human aspiration to be God-like, the Babel narrative stands at the conclusion of a primeval history turned increasingly sinful.[8] Other readers suggest the story is less about human overreaching and more about human resourcefulness and self-protection in dealing with a God practiced in destroying creation.[9] While its nine verses present few noteworthy grammatical, source critical or textual conundrums of the sort encountered elsewhere in the opening chapters of Genesis, Gen. 11.1-9 surfaces a host of interpretive issues that ramify throughout Genesis, indeed the whole of the Bible and beyond. On its surface, we read of language diversity and human hubris. Beneath that surface, we are invited to ask about God's own hubris and double-speak, especially God's escalating violent behavior toward humanity and the rest of creation. On its surface, Babel presents a straightforward play upon the meaning of words that seems anything but confusing. But beneath that surface, the text churns metaphorically complicating any easy sense of covenant, interpretation,

4. One is reminded of Rudolph Otto's description of the dual character of the numinous as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (1950).

5. See Langer (1998: 137).

6. See Scarry's extended discussion (1985: 173-76).

7. See Carr (1996: 238-40). On the aetiological implications Carr cites Batto (1992), esp. 50-68.

8. Von Rad (1961: 148-49) and Westermann (1984: 540-42).

9. See P.J. Garland (1998: 515-33). For a more extended treatment see Fewell (2001: 9 n. 32) and her citation of *Sepher Hayashar* and *Tanhuma Noah* and other Jewish courses in Patai (1964) where the 'self-defense' explanation for the Tower is discussed.

textuality, even the Bible itself. Babel as tower/city, story, word and metaphor equivocates and fascinates, inviting translation of Babel into different theological and cultural vernacular, media, materiality and…catastrophes.[10]

Catastrophe and Babel often go together. Occupying narrative high ground after receding flood waters, the tower/text/name/metaphor stands Janus-faced[11] looking back over a preceding disaster and forward toward an undecided human and divine future shadowed by escalating, cataclysmic violence. Questions proliferate. In whose name and about whose name is the future to be understood?[12] What is to be made of the violence that has befallen humankind at the hands of a God whose capricious conduct has all but reversed creation and whose carefully crafted promissory word barely fends off total annihilation? Does the Babel narrative/city/tower/name express confidence in or confusion over a future vested now ironically, paradoxically, in scattered human hands and incompatible tongues? Does Babel anticipate covenant with its promise of evil as well as good, its foreshadowing of oppression as well as prosperity? Does Babel stand as a meta-metaphor for the Bible's own commerce with violence in the unsettling way it 'lives on'? Does 'Babel' challenge us to see the 'Bible' in some deeper, more disturbing way?

As tower, story and name Babel casts both light and shadow upon Abram, his inheritance, and the fruitfulness of the land of promise. The narrative immediately anticipates the dissemination of Abram's family over the face of the earth in fulfillment of the second covenantal promise. Yahweh's assurance in 12.7 puts the best possible face on his recent scattering of human kind (Gen. 11.8). In language that echoes the P writer's injunction in 1.28—'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it', Yahweh turns linguistic loss into geographical, familial and economic gain.[13] Can we not hear overtones of a new subjugation that carries forward the same cycle of violence directed this time not at 'every human heart' (Gen. 6.5) but more selectively at the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, even at Israel herself? After all, the promise itself moves from Abram's being a 'blessing to all the families of the earth' (Gen. 12.3) to 'possessing the gates of [his] enemies' (Gen. 22.17). It is the paradox of a promise that is at once a threat. A pharmakon. From atop the Babel Tower can we catch sight further out of Judges 19 and the unspeakable violence that

10. Babel attracts—and repels—in a way that one finds with Devil's Butte in Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) or the Marabar Hills in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. See Franz Kafka's parabolic midrash, 'The City Coat of Arms', which concludes: 'All the legends and songs that came to birth in that city are filled with longing for a prophesied day when the city would be destroyed by five successive blows from a gigantic fist. It is for that reason too that the city has a closed fist on its coat of arms'.

11. See Fewell (2002: 1-15) and van Wolde (1994).

12. 4.26, 11.4, and all the 'naming' that takes place in the stories and genealogies up to this point.

13. Cf. van Wolde (1994).

will grip Israel at a time when 'every man did what was right in his own eyes' (Gen. 21.25)? And if we peer into the far distance to the end of the second Testament can we not make out the shape of another Babel in namesake (Rev. 18) and the Great Tribulation where a flood of water (Gen. 7.10) gives way to a flood of blood (Rev. 14.20), metaphors now metonyms for a universal violence that flows through Book and earth (Gen. 6.11, 13) touching both covenantal communities?[14] If so, one could hardly imagine a covenantal promise more ironically successful in its injunction to be fruitful and to multiply life as well as death, deliverance along with deluge.[15] Life/death. Both/and. Babel has a special biblical connection to the violence of the flood waters of Gen. 6–9 and beyond, as we will see, to more recent catastrophes.[16]

Babel is not limited in its ties to the Bible or to Biblical violence; it survives the Book in intriguing ways. One need only engage in a quick electronic data search to witness Babel's cultural, temporal, and metaphorical reach. The Harvard Online Library lists the 'Tower of Babel' as a key word in 916 entries. The Harvard Fogg Art Library records 225 visual texts devoted to Babel. More impressive yet, a Google search yields 8.9 million hits, dwarfing even Harvard's striking literary and visual holdings.[17] Babelian connections are made to everything under the sun—board games, libraries, web search engines, literary journals, translation software, architecture, Christian Rock music, Canadian construction companies.[18] You name it and Babel is the name for it. God may have curtailed the tower's vertical reach in the story itself ('So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city', Gen. 11.8), but Babel's name is known in every corner

14. See Samuel Bak's *Elegy III* which forges a link between Judaism and Christianity in terms of the violence of the Holocaust. See also Fewell and Phillips (2005). We argue that the Christian theological appropriation of the Ark as a metaphor for deliverance carries the implication as well of death for all who are non-Christian, namely the Jews.

15. Or, in the language of Genesis itself (as well as Deuteronomy), blessing and curse.

16. On Babel's 'natural' connection to two recent natural disasters see Anita Horton's eyewitness report on the Asian Tsunami that struck December 26, 2004: 'It was like the scene of the Tower of Babel, with so many different tourist nationalities and languages involved. Volunteer translators were working frantically to help already traumatized victims communicate with Thai medical personal, police, and officials. I speak Thai fluently and also speak or read several other languages. I knew that I had to go, to do whatever I could' (http://alum.mit.edu/ne/whatmatters/200504/index.html). On Hurricane Katrina in Aug 2005 see Walid Phares's 'Katrina Geo-Politics: The Tower of Babel and America's "Image" ' (http://www.walidphares.com/artman/publish/article_675.shtml).

17. Compare the following search hits: 'Cain and Abel', 8.7 million; 'Garden of Eden', 6.9 million, 'Adam and Eve', 8.7 million; 'Noah', 20.3 million; 'creation', 311 million, and 'God', 151 million. But eclipsing 'God' are 'translation', 152 million, and not surprisingly 'language', 1.1 billion. Does this suggest Babel's name is more widely uttered even than 'God'?.

18. The Babel Company of Edmonton, Alberta featuring design, construction and remodeling work.

of high and low culture to an extent that would startle even God. Yahweh may have gotten it wrong. It is Babel, not 'the sons of men', who has succeeded in making a name for itself and itself a name, a name whose metaphorical and linguistic afterlife permeates the literary, aesthetic, philosophic, religious and wider cultural imagination. Derrida is right: Babel is everywhere.[19]

The connection between cultural violence and religious imagination is arguable at the root of the Genesis composition. In literary-historical terms, Danna Nolan Fewell argues for a direct tie between Babylon, Babel and exilic and post-exilic violence now posted in Genesis *avant la lettre*.[20] In a compelling essay Fewell explores the way the Babel text records not only the trauma of Israel's violent physical displacement at the hands of Babylonian captors in the 6th century BCE, it also evidences Israel's interpretive effort to come to grips with the idea of covenant as entailing 'lifedeath'. Babel poses the question: From the start was Yahweh a partner in the violence that has beset Israel? Is there an echo in the primeval story of Job's later wrestling with theodicy? The story may well

19. The thematics of interruption, confusion, violence and God's role combine in quite different ways. The effort to translate Babel's confusing meaning (and its literal meaning as 'confusion') and the violence of the tower destruction into a coherent picture is pictured in Pieter Brueghel's magisterial 1563 'Tower-of-Babel'. Evoking Roman Coliseum, cathedral construction, and conscripted labor, Brueghel portrays Babel at once as an ambitious but failed human achievement and a testimony to human ineffectiveness on a grand scale. Despite its rock-solid foundation, the tower veers away from the vertical, leaving the viewer to think that this construction and those responsible for it are surely incapable of achieving its lofty goals. One wonders then whether God's intervention is premature, an overreaction, a confusion about any real human threat. James Joyce's parody of divine authorization in *Finnegans Wake* 'enacts Babel' through metathesis, metalepsis and mime to reveal the confusion of names (*Shem* and *Shaun*), the equivocation of language, and the thematics of violence. 'And shall not Babel be with Lebab? And he war'). The 'he war' encodes and translates both the Tetragrammaton ('Yhwh') and the tautology that lies behind freedom's violence (Exod. 3.14, אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה). Joyce captures graphically and graphemically the Biblical messiness of the 'lifedeath' combination. The linguistic slide that begins with 'Babel' extends through 'he war' conjures up an imaginative slide from the German verb 'to be' conjugation, to the War to End all Wars, to the homophonic Wahrheit/veritas/violence. And finally, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* ties together Genesis 1, Genesis 6–9, Genesis 11 and Exodus 3 in yet a different way. Douglas Adams's 'Babelfish', a biological universal translating device that when placed in the ear enables instantaneous understanding, makes explicit the connection between God's creation of sea creatures, Noahic flood waters and Tower of Babel narratives with echoes of Moses' dialogue about God's existence. A complex visual and verbal parody on God's effort to disable if not destroy human construction and comprehension, 'babelfish' is a tool that enables mankind to prove *God's* non-existence. Turning the effects of the Noahic flood on its ear, undermining the founding religious tautology, it is God, not humanity, who disappears. The thematics of violence, tools, language and suspicion of God in Genesis 1–11 plays out in the visual and literary imagination by way of Babel.

20. See Fewell (2001). Fewell argues for a post-exilic context for the composition of Genesis as a way to understand the presence of violence and the interpretive struggle to formulate adequate theological statements about the nature of God and human being.

work then in a complicated way to give expression to and address the violence visited upon Israel, the failed protection that a good parent should have afforded his 'children', and the displacement of that very anger and violence directed toward and narratively acted out now towards others. Israel was conscripted to build towers and cities for its Babylonian conquerors; Canaanites are scripted into a narrative of conquest that invites a connection between Yahweh and other imperial forces. The Canaanites have the bad narrative and theological fortune then of being the wrong people, in the wrong place at the wrong time. The violence visited upon them and their children in the occupation of the Promised Land is what is possible for Israel to think and to write in the aftermath of her own traumatic experience, and Babel names it. The Babel story looks out over and disseminates that pain and violence, keeping watch over what Israel has suffered by projecting it onto others, implicating Yahweh indirectly, but implicating Yahweh nonetheless.

This leads me to ask whether Genesis and the canonical text it opens up is to be thought of as an unfolding, a dissemination of Babel as a name for and in the name of *violence*, *biblical violence*, *covenantal violence*, *religious violence*? Literally, Babel speaks directly about the confusion of texts and languages, but metaphorically and psychologically Babel narrates something important about the placement and displacement in human history of violence in relation to God's intervention and human interpretation. More than a narrative about a deity and a promised people's learning together on the job, Babel sounds out weightier theological (and theodical) and hermeneutical (and human) questions. We should be suspicious, as chary as perhaps the tower builders themselves still reeling from the disaster of that preturnatural flood, of the connection between God and violence that flows just beneath the surface of real life. Babel leads us to ask, Is violence a key, a necessary ingredient in a people's, a text's, a god's survival? Is religion qua religion implicated in violence? Is life with God and life with the Bible 'deathlife'? Babel towers over Genesis, over promised land, over the rest of the Bible, over human experience implicated and imbricated, it seems, in a history of violence that is the other side of life lived in covenant with Yahweh. At the end of a bloody century awash in genocide and religious fervor Babel's question is *the* question. Like the mysterious obelisk in Arthur Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Babel casts a very large—and for many readers—ominous textual shadow.

These observations and questions serve as a entrée to the discussion of survival in the writings of two recent interpreters who have taken up or been taken up by this particular Biblical text: the first by Jacques Derrida in his well-known 'Des Tours de Babel', an intertextual reading of Genesis 11, Walter Benjamin's reflections on translation, and the use of Babel as a metaphor for Derrida's ethico-critical event of 'deconstruction' (a clearly confusing term to many in its own right). The second is Primo Levi's meditation on Babel in *Survival in Auschwitz*. Levi...uses Babel as a metaphor for mediating his suffering experience

in the *lager*, as a translation for the name 'Auschwitz'. While Derrida and Levi share similar concerns with language, dispersion of people, tower construction, and violence, they link Babel in different ways to cultural violence: in Derrida's case to the violence implicit in metaphysical thought; for Levi to the violence of the Lager and the 'new' Bible that must now be written after Auschwitz. For Derrida, Babel serves as a metaphor for deconstruction, a 'babelfish' of sorts for critically translating western thought and the violence of Western thinking (Adams 1979: 50); for Levi, Babel serves to translate the disorder of the highly ordered camps and the impossibility of naming the human suffering imposed upon so many by the Nazis. It is the link between meaning-making and violence, whether one deals with philosophical text or concentration camp that the Babel story names…or unnames. Babel enables and disables sense and for this reason disturbs, unsettles, works. Thus so Babel survives.

Making a Name: Babel and Western Philosophy

We live with the impression that language is clear, clean and in a one-on-one relationship with the world around us. Derrida, however, suggests that language does not work fundamentally directly but indirectly, not unequivocally but equivocally. Following de Saussure, every 'word', 'thing', or 'meaning' is always already mediated by another sign/word, and that sign/word mediated by another, and so on to infinity. There always exists a difference, a gap, an interruption then between the word and its object of reference, between a sign and its meaning. For Derrida, Babel names that 'difference', that is 'The movement by which language, or any code, any system of reference in general becomes 'historically constituted as a fabric of difference'. Babel works as a 'metaphor of metaphor', or 'the translation of translation'. In its telling the story of a God who at once imposes and forbids linguistic and spatial translation (1985: 170), the text enacts narratively the inadequation of one language to another, one aspiration to another, and the inherent need for twists, turns, detours, asides, substitutions, slips of the tongue as a condition for making sense ('brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar', Gen. 11.3). In other words, as a philosophical/linguistic metaphor Babel 'translates' the very impossibility of any translation that presumes or aspires at all costs 'to get it right', to bring things under control, to reign in the slipperiness and slide of meaning by reigning over, to stop difference dead in its tracks, as God does the building of the Babel Tower/city itself.

Derrida sees in the disruption of universal language and of transparency of meaning a broader critique of philosophy and its interests—especially of philosophy's violence—in imposing its logic upon us. Philosophy as a discipline and as a faith pins its hope on a program of 'absolutely pure, transparent, and unequivocal translatability' (1981: 20). Universal translatability is philosophy's goal as it reaches for that master word or sign that enables the thinker to represent the truth universally, univocally, once and for all, totally right. What matters

most to such a program is that univocal truth or meaning is be grasped at any cost. Mastering plurivocity, then, is the supreme challenge—in literary terms controlling for contradictory meanings—and philosophy achieves its goal when translation reduces to the overseeing of the 'transport of a semantic content into another signifying form. There is not philosophy unless translation in this latter sense is possible' (1988: 120). In short, '[t]he thesis of philosophy is translatability in this common sense, that is, as the transfer of a meaning or a truth from one language to another *without any essential harm being done*' (1988: 120; italics mine). Philosophy's constructive project falters when it finds that it can't acquire the master word (or text), can't achieve the cognitive height required to lift it to that one meaning above all other meanings.

The key phrase here is 'without any essential harm being done'. Derrida shows throughout the canon of philosophical writings that harm *is* done, essentially and inevitably. By its very conceptual exclusions philosophy harms when it imposes its form of reasoning or exercises its linguistic imperialism by establishing a project of universal translatability. According to Derrida, philosophy's inadequacy is exposed by thinking of its effort to translate in relation to Babel. As a producer of mixed and incompatible readings, Babel is a metaphor for deconstruction, thus exposing what writing systematically and necessarily excludes in its attempt to generate and stabilize ruling concepts. Babel's importance for Derrida is as a metaphor for what philosophy can't control (the violence) and how philosophy, with the aid of Babel, is unsettled by that very fact. The Babel story lives on in both unruly and orderly ways precisely to help deconstruct philosophy.

Philosophy, like the Tower builders, is always interested in the worst way in making a name for itself (Gen. 6.4). Babel recounts the story of God's interruption of this effort (although, interestingly, not an interruption of the reading and polysemy of the Babel text itself—apparently no one, not even God, can stop that!). Babel is a name that literally and literarily threatens to tower above (or spread out beyond) all other names, including God's own.

> In seeking to 'make a name for themselves', to found at the same time a universal tongue and a unique genealogy, the Semites want to bring the world to reason, and this reason can signify simultaneously a colonial violence (since they would universalize their idiom) and a peaceful transparency of the human community. Inversely, when God imposes and opposes his name, he ruptures the rational transparency but interrupts also the colonial violence or linguistic imperialism' (1985: 174).

God brings about the rupture—i.e. stops the Tower building—by countering with a divine act of violence that 'annuls the gift of tongues' (1985: 176) by negating the original gift of language itself. But God's act entails ironically (advertently or inadvertently?) a no-less-violent colonization of the land of Canaan. Shem's descendants, through the agency of Abram, enter into the land that God shows them (Gen. 12.1) and settle in for the long haul (Gen. 13.12).

God is implicated through the *interruption* of Babel in a violence in the land that begets both inheritance and violence, an expansion and an exclusion of major, cultural proportions. This is not a novel situation. We see Cain spared after his murder of his brother, protected by a divine threat of sevenfold vengeance. We see Lamech promising violence beyond all proportionality (seventy-fold). We witness the 'sons of the gods' taking the 'daughters of men'. And above all we encounter the same in Gen. 6–9 where God responds to a violence that is purported to be found everywhere (Gen. 6.13) with a breathtaking violence that exceeds all comprehension. Violence begets violent order, in both human and divine spheres. Babel—violence—is everywhere.[21]

Derrida focuses attention on the way language works in the story to show that violence and peace are inextricable. 'There is "war" everywhere'. Derrida plays with the word 'war' as both the past tense form of the German verb 'to be' and the English noun designating the rupture of the peace. In this instance Derrida 'translates' Joyce's phrase from *Finnegan's Wake*, a text that, not unlike the Babel story, reflects upon a culture experience of violence in the West brought on by the War to end all Wars. The Tower of Babel is the War/he war Tower. It casts a large shadow upon the land of Canaan, Jerusalem and Athens. In Derrida's terms, God wages 'war' on the Semites, on anyone who aspires to have one name or one language. God is deeply implicated in 'war': in the 'he war', the holy 'war'.

> His name too, like the name of peace, is a function within the system of war, the only system whose basis permits us to speak, the only system whose language may ever be spoken…. War supposes and excludes God. We can have a relation to God only within such a system. Therefore war—for war there is—is the difference between the face and the finite world without a face (1978: 107).

Warfare follows. Without war directed against the 'children of men' there would have been a name above God's name and one language everywhere. But war is such, even when waged by God, as to sully God's hands and to implicate God in the unethical. As Levinas observes: 'Not only modern war but every war employs arms that turn against those who wield them. It establishes an order from which no one can keep his distance; nothing henceforth is exterior' (1990: 21). To the extent war 'suspends morality', war is synonymous with totality.

The Babel fable enacts its own phonetic 'war' of words and sounds intended to disrupt what Levinas would characterize as the Totality. Derrida shows the way confusion is evoked. Babel contributes to the confusion and perfusion of tongues via division, ambivalence, and polysemy, which Derrida sums up by appeal to Joyce's own babel, 'he war', with all the clever twists and turns, linguistic slips and textual slides on the name of YHWH (Exod. 3.14). Names, foundations, languages, tongues, texts, God, 'war'; everything shakes. Not

21. See Fewell (2001) for an extend discussion of violence in Genesis 11. Also see the wider discussion of power in Fewell and Gunn (1993).

simply a literary gateway to the rest of Genesis, Babel becomes a portal to western philosophy, metaphysics and a culture of violence that have operated on the basis of a totalizing logic, a totalizing violence. Deconstruction narrativized, Babel opens the flood gates, violently deluging memory, speaking, writing, which is to say our texts, and beyond that material culture, by washing away the one tongue, the one tower, the one meaning, the one name. Babel thus exposes God's, philosophy's, religion's culpability in and complicity with a broader, deeper violence that marks the nature of life in the West. Is it any surprise, then, as the Google search shows, Babel is everywhere?

The Babeltower of Buna

Primo Levi's words cited in the epigram above come from his *Survival in Auschwitz.* It is a text viewed by critics as a supreme philosophical and literary effort to 'write the disaster' (in Maurice Blanchot's words), to reflect deeply on the unimaginable, to render the experience of the Lager understandable, to communicate the story, as Levi says, to 'the rest' (of us) and to 'make the "rest" participate in it' (1993: 9). *Survival in Auschwitz* is a memorable book, remarkable as much for its simple prose as for its poetic insight into language and translation. Babel is a biblical text/image/story that aids him in speaking the disaster. Levi employs Babel not only as a *name* for translation, naming, ordering, violence, fable, 'Auschwitz', language, and survival, but also as a *form* of translation in action. It is 'Babel' on Babel, a 'babel performance' to use Derrida's expression (1985: 174). Levi's very own 'Des Tours de Babel', the Babel/Buna Tower names the unnamable ('Auschwitz') and the complications that arise when story, name and edifice are identified by anyone who has not experienced first-hand the Holocaust as 'Auschwitz'.[22]

Levi's 'Auschwitz Babel' may be thought of as an excessive case of translating 'Auschwitz',—'necessity as impossibility' Derrida might say or, in Todorov's terms, a 'Facing the Extreme'. But the extreme of what? The limits of meaning? of ordering? of building? of violence? of morality? Todorov's title is suggestive in all of these respects. But *Survival in Auschwitz* reads 'Auschwitz'/'Babel' in a more direct and powerful way precisely because the biblical text deconstructs and shadows the lager (comparable to the way Derrida's use of Babel deconstructs philosophy), therefore raising the most deadly questions about language, violence, and world. In his own way, Levi employs language, story, and images to interrogate reason (and our 'assumptions' about how to speak of Holocaust, the world, human being) in order to disclose translation

22. The Babel story serves as an intertext and subtext in *The Drowned and the Saved,* another of Levi's 'philosophical works'. It is entirely imaginable, too, that *Survival in Auschwitz* functioned as an intertext both for Derrida and the translator of *Des Tours de Babel* (cf. especially 205-207) since Babel plays a prominent role in all of these texts.

and language as neither reproduction, restitution, representation, nor rendering but, in Benjamin's words, as 'symbolic expansion' (1985: 190). From one angle Levi's book is a philosophical engagement, a logical parsing, a rational exegesis, of the expression 'every stranger is an enemy' (a subliminal motive for building Babel to begin with[23]). This is a saying that 'many people—many nations—can find themselves holding' (1993: 9). His text argues for this 'conviction', which he shows lives on most of the time as a 'latent infection', that ordinarily 'betrays itself in only random, disconnected acts,…'. When this conviction, however, 'becomes the major premiss [*sic*] in a syllogism, then, at the end of the chain, there is the Lager'. There is Babel everywhere.

But from another angle Levi writes for a very different purpose—to satisfy 'an immediate and violent impulse', whose origins he locates not in the syllogism but in the Lager itself. Levi invites us here to think about violence and its deeper connection to both logic and Lager, story and structure, translation and Tower, ethics and war. Is violence a necessary condition for order—order's other side, necessary for making sense? Is it a condition of reading and writing? A condition for ethical action? A condition, even, for belief in God? Fragmentary in character, with chapters written, as he says in the 'Author's Preface', out of logical order, *Survival in Auschwitz* is written outside of logical order; it acknowledges the importance of a different order, another way, that supplements logical order, just as Babel serves to supplement 'Auschwitz'. How could Levi not acknowledge reason's powerful role? He is clearly indebted to the language, logic, and tradition of philosophy's order. There could hardly be a more dominant metaphor to evoke the philosophical project of gaining clarity of thought and representation than the Aristotelian syllogism. His book strives in part to do what philosophical ordering does best—to render things sensible, to bring 'Auschwitz' into the light of logic and language, to make it graspable, translatable in the clear, unambiguous, transparent way philosophy does things as Derrida makes clear. At the same time, Babel complicates everything by obscuring that clarity, confusing sense, making things messy rather than tidy.

Levi writes necessarily, deliberately, about this other order, one that is excluded from the order of reason; he calls it in his 'Preface' an 'order of urgency' that is in service of an 'interior liberation' (1993: 9). Levinas would translate this 'morality', 'Ethics', 'the face of the other'. The ambiguity of the word 'order' is not to be missed, especially for a man 'under orders' to build the camps. 'Orders' evokes a range of terms: religious community, the criminal action of those charged with crimes against humanity, an economic action, among others. Ironically, it was the 'order' transforming Levi from chemist to mason that insured his survival in those last days prior to liberation by Russian Army forces. Order and disorder. As a writer Levi finds himself under different

23. My thanks to Danna Fewell for drawing my attention once again to this detail in her argument in her 2001 essay.

orders, or attending to another order of things. He acknowledges a different kind of indebtedness. Levi presents this other order in direct opposition to syllogistic ordering: 'The chapters have been written not in logical succession, but *in order of urgency*' (1993: 9-10; italics mine). He is obliged a second way, and that obligation is traced to an 'urgency' whose origin is tied up with violence and a telos that is liberation, a jarring combination.

This other order raises a number of questions. Urgency for what? What kind of order could possibly stand alongside, if not tower over, the order of logic? Where does it come from? What does violence have to do, if anything, with duty and responsibility, especially responsibility to my brother, Cain's failed responsibility? What is the relationship of violence to liberation, to inheritance, to the future, and how is it that violence is generative? Is reason, the first ordering principle, complicit in violence? Babel as a working concept and image serves to help flush out and translate these unsettling questions. Levi answers this last question about violence with a 'yes'. The Lager, Levi insists, is thoroughly logical: it is 'the product of a conception of the world carried rigorously to its logical conclusion' (1993: 9). Levi suggests that far from being averse to violence, logic itself inflames, amplifies, embraces, perpetuates violence. In Levinas's terms, violence anchors. The rational order, which is philosophy's base of command and control, is violent from the ground up, from the bottom of the Tower to its very top. To say that the logical order—the name (*Shem*, *sham*, *shame*) for philosophy and reason—is inherently violent is to suggest something nearly unacceptable about thought, namely that there is a larger economy of violence within which philosophy, ontology, epistemology, ethics, and even religion itself is situated.[24] If the notion that God is complicit in violence before and after the Tower episode is a plausible reading of the Genesis narrative,[25] Babel is the textual signature of a perpetual violence, divine as well as human, that is ever present in the Bible and in belief. It narrates our central human impulses: to totalize and to fear what is different. Violence is everywhere. Babel and violence. In the 'wartime' culture of the United States at this very moment, it is no wonder Babel is ubiquitous. Google has it right.

Babel points to the human fear of disorder and death, and the impulse toward violence associated with both. The fear of being scattered, of being different, of being set apart, of not being comprehended fuels the totalizing project of constructing transcendent towers, city structures and recognizable names. In turn, the totalizing project evokes fear, anxiety and violence on Yahweh's part. In light of the violence does humankind mirror God or God humankind? Who is made in whose image (Gen. 1.28)? The unbridled aspiration to procreate that brought about 'the men of renown' (Gen. 6.4) and to create a transcending tower/names for themselves (Gen. 11.4) provokes Yahweh who unleashes

24. According to Renè Girard, the sacred is implicated within this economy.

25. See Fewell (2001).

torrents of water and words, the one literal, the other metaphorical, 'death'. Is it the fear of the unknown, of the disorderly, of death itself, that incites Yahweh's excessive violence? We encounter the same fear, Derrida would argue, in the philosophical project that dreams of total knowledge. Franz Rosenzweig ties philosophy's totalizing drive for complete, comprehensive knowledge to its inability to confront the one, real, concrete thing a person can never know, namely her/his own death.[26]

Levi leaves many questions unanswered. So many words go untranslated (there is hardly a page without words and phrases expressed in multiple languages); so many names, texts and languages weave in and out; so many actions remain unexplained (his suicide, his avoidance of war involvement until 1944). Does Levi read 'Auschwitz' to make sense of 'Babel' or 'Babel' to make sense of 'Auschwitz'? Is that the point? Is it an exercise in translating one text in terms of the other in the same way that the syllogism works to enact the ordering impulse of reason? Is the point to clarify, to bring order and light to unruly things so they become transparent and their meaning fully and unequivocally grasped? Is interior liberation but another word for 'clarity'? A synonym for getting clear about 'Auschwitz'? Were it Levi's desire to clarify, to understand, the relationship of 'Auschwitz' to 'Babel' why would he appeal to his other orders, his 'orders of urgency'? After all, Aristotle's order has worked just fine for millennia. It's proven. Rock solid. Like the base of Bruegel's Babel tower. Its name is secure. It towers high. It casts a light over the history of the West. No worry about a failing or falling yet. Philosophy has built itself one impressive edifice; no one would deny that (although one might see it lean away from the vertical). Certainly Levi does not.

Yet, the question remains: Why a 'Babel performance'? Why does Babel live on this way in his work? The name, story and tower of Babel, this other order in *Survival in Auschwitz*, haunts Levi and the philosophical project as Derrida understands it. Babel is a *pharmakon* in the sense that the tower/text/name/story enables a translation of 'Auschwitz' that simultaneously clarifies and clouds, is both a present and a poison. Levi locates its origins directly in the sphere of violence—his own violent, warring impulses. As such there is a profound connection asserted between the violence that arises here in the name of 'Auschwitz' and the story, name and tower 'Babel' which reenacts the violence of translation. The latter partially performs the former; never completely, of course, because no translation can ever be total. Is it any wonder that we find Babel here in Levi's text? A story, a name and a tower, 'Babel' translates Auschwitz's Carbide Tower of Buna at once empty of German guards but still casting its long shadow over us today (1993: 178).

26. Discussed by Gibbs (2002). Gibbs exegetes portions of Franz Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption* in conjunction with Levinas.

Surviving Babel

'Babel' as story, name and tower is everywhere, and it lives on: 'Confusion' survives. This is Babel's gift to translation and to the Bible. *Survival in Auschwitz* is evidence of Babel's metaphorical power, and we only need look at the iteration and extension of Babel as a metaphor and metaphor of metaphor permeating culture to be persuaded of its staying power. But what exactly does it mean to 'survive' Auschwitz? Is it to survive the ordeal of the Lager? to survive the 'story'? to survive the name 'Auschwitz'? Have we, has anyone, *survived* Babel, in the sense of outliving it? Not yet. Nor does it seem for the same reason that we can imagine surviving the Bible. The Bible lives on. So, too, religion. And philosophy. How quickly we pass over the verb as if its meaning were transparent. We translate it immediately as 'living' as if that made it less confusing. Is it to 'live on' literally (and is that the same as to 'out wear', 'out last', 'out live') or to exist with our desires, our hunger for liberation? Levi committed suicide in 1987. In one obvious sense he did not survive. But textually he lives on through his writing in the same way correspondence outlives its sender or any particular addressee. The same way a cinder survives the fire: by being consumed and supplemented. If this is what it means to survive then a 'babel performance', as Derrida calls it, is about the way a text (biblical or otherwise) make itself available to live on *for* another day, *for* another story, *for* another name, *for* another Tower, *for* another face. Sur-vival means in some monstrous way a 'feeding on', a kind of 'feeding off' of the violence in which we are implicated *for* others. *For* ethics.

For ethics. The violence of a Babel/Bible performance brings us face-to-face as exegetes, as teachers, as citizens, as persons of faith with our various tower constructions and our various namings, with our various displacements of violence upon others, with our desires for mastery and hatreds that deafen us to the voices that call for us from the outside. Exteriority. When we attend to 'Auschwitz' as an aesthetic object or horror show in an attempt to grasp its meaning, to translate it unequivocally, to appropriate and domesticate it as it were, we miss the interruption that signals the ethical moment. Levi's 'Babel performance' enjoins us to see where in our present historical experience Alterity breaks through, maybe especially in the violence of our political and religious existence, as the face of the Other. For Levi it was the face of Alberto. 'Auschwitz/Babel performance' remains a calling/awakening on our part to a certain kind of ethical response and responsibility that demands we face up to the extreme of the Buna Tower and the guard tower and to the faces of every stranger, whether Caananite or Iraqi, who gets in the way of progress, the enemy who must be eliminated on account of the truth or ideology or theology or religion as it has been told to us, constructed for us, or the foreigner who must be molded into an identity compatible with ours. Babel illumines *for* us Tzunami faces, Katrina faces and reminds us that the work of reconstruction rests with

us, not Providence. The moment of Levi's liberation: 'Today I think that if for no other reason than that an Auschwitz existed, no one in our age should speak of Providence. But without doubt in that hour the memory of biblical salvation in times of extreme adversity passed like a wind through all our minds' (1993: 158). A salvation divorced from Providence is a caring for the other.

Babel invites us to see the Biblical text as a compromised place where the Other is met in controversial ways. Not in a moment of purity of understanding or intention, but in the real world of confusion and distorted human aspiration where we no longer speak of Providence. In 'lifedeath'. If we say *yes* to this invitation, then it may be possible to embrace Babel, to survive Babel, with all of its antitheses, less as a monument to human ambition or a reminder of divine paranoia, and more as a gateway[27] to an uncharted ethical future where 'confusion' and difference serve as a hopeful invitation to justice and peace, rather than a cause for war.

> *'Ruhe, Ruhe!' I understand that they are ordering me to be quiet, but the word is new to me, and since I do not know its meaning and implications, my inquietude increases. The confusion of languages is a fundamental component of the manner of living here: one is surrounded by a perpetual Babel, in which everyone shouts orders and threats in languages never heard before, and woe betide whoever fails to grasp the meaning.*
>
> *The Germans were no longer there. The towers were empty,*

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27. Babel literally means the 'gate of God'.

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Postmodernism and the Death of 'Man'

George Aichele

Modernist 'Man'

> From this inner world [the human being] emerges and returns to the outer, but he returns with a *self* which he did not possess before… Far from losing his own self in this return to the world, he on the contrary carries his self to the *other*; projects it energetically and masterfully upon things, in other words, he forces the *other*—the world—little by little to become himself. Man humanizes the world (Ortega y Gasset 1968: 184; his emphases).

The masculine qualities of this passage from José Ortega y Gasset's apology for modernism, not only in the pronouns used to represent the human being but also the image of world-rape, are not accidental. Modernism defines itself as the study of 'man'. and an important aspect of this study has been the exploration of the limits and structures of the human self and its 'other'. The 'inner' freedom of the modern self correlates to the estrangement of that self from the 'outer' natural world. Modern man is alienated from the world and relates to it primarily by exploiting it.

The ideology of modernism arises in conjunction with the rise of 'print culture' (Ong 1967: 17-110). The printed book is quite different than the spoken word or manuscript book produced by premodern oral culture; it is mass produced and demands a mass audience, and it deeply alters the reader's relation to the text (Benjamin 1968: 217-51). Modernism is not identical with print culture, but print culture makes us conscious of our modernity in ways that we never could have been otherwise. Print culture reappraises and re-appropriates ancient (oral, premodern) culture in ways that would have been previously unthinkable. The shift from oral to print culture correlates to major transformations in human thought, society, and the relation to language, with tremendous effects in religion, science and the humanities, and politics (Eisenstein 1979).

Since the Renaissance, the sciences and humanities have devoted a great deal of attention to exploring the binarisms of thought and extension, of Ortega's 'inner' and 'outer' worlds. Modern thought understands man as the Cartesian 'thinking thing' (Descartes 1964: 25), the point of consciousness inhabiting a human body that lives at the center of an extended space. Ortega speaks of the world of the modern human being as a hollow space:

> In distant vision, we do not fix the gaze on any point, but rather attempt to embrace the whole field, including its boundaries… The result is that what we see at a distance is hollow space as such. The content of perception is not strictly the surface in which the hollow space terminates, but rather the whole hollow space itself, from the eyeball to the wall or the horizon (1968: 112).

The modern human being creates the self through construction of a world conceived as a hollow space. This hollow space is the arena occupied by the rational soul or mind, which is the seat of thought and understanding.

The generation of this space results from suspension of the 'natural attitude' (Ortega y Gasset 1968: 37)—i.e., the phenomenological *epoch* . According to Ortega, the resulting stance of 'dehumanization' is in itself of no consequence, but it must yield to, even as it opens a way for, the 'vital imperative' as encounter with a 'destiny' (1968: 152).[1] '*We have*, whether we like it or not, to realize our 'personage'. our vocation, our vital program, our 'entelechy'—there is no lack of names for the terrible reality which is our authentic I' (1968: 166, his emphasis). Symbols map the hollow space of human consciousness and experience as the opening of freedom, and thereby they make possible the utopian project of hope, 'the adventure of the future' (Calinescu 1977: 66).

Ortega shares with Friedrich Nietzsche a metaphysics of nihilism—nihilism as modernist dehumanization, which prepares the way for a surpassing of the present. The modern hollow space is the vacuum that results from the disappearance first of religious and then of political mediation between human beings and God (Dunne 1977: 76-83, 120-26). God dies, according to Nietzsche's madman, because 'we have killed him' (1974: 181, section 125). Thanks to modern science and technology, humanity no longer needs God—for better or worse. 'Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun?' says the madman. In the words of Jürgen Habermas: 'The place into which mankind has imagined God and the gods, after the decay of these hypotheses, remains a *hollow space*. The measurement-in-depth of this vacuum, indeed atheism finally understood, sketches out the blueprint of a future kingdom of freedom' (quoted in Calinescu 1977: 65, emphasis added).

The premodern gods, including the Christian God, are translated into the modern hollow space of 'man'. and theology becomes anthropology, as Ludwig Feuerbach said. This is not to say that religion or God disappears, but rather that their function in the human world changes. Indeed, the ideological twin and mirror image of modernist science is fundamentalism. The Christian God becomes a spirit who lives within the individual's heart, a Savior who can rescue us from the dehumanized hollow space, but also, finally, an Hypothesis that may

1. Much of Ortega's language is reminiscent of Bergson (whom he does not acknowledge) and of Heidegger (whom he does acknowledge in a bitter footnote, where he denies that Heidegger has influenced his thought [1968: 146-48]).

or may not be necessary. The kingdom of God survives as a utopian goal that defines the meaning of human existence.

As science and as fundamentalism, modernism believes in the possibility of finding objective, universal Truth. In the last analysis, modernism is totalitarian and monopolistic. It tolerates no other truths. The two modernist 'grand narratives' of the Enlightenment and of Hegelianism authorize truth and justice by abstracting them and separating them from the local and diverse traditions of specific peoples. These metanarratives reject the authorities of the ancient world in order to create universal history as a new authority and to promote the emergence of Truth in the opening of individual freedom. Modernity posits historical continuity with the past but then seeks to surpass that past in the name of novelty and progress.

Modernist thought posits the logical polarity of true and false statements that makes knowledge possible through referential language. For modernism, language is artificial and yet transparent, making possible clear, unambiguous communication. Understanding results from a successful 'fusing of horizons' between a godlike author and a compliant reader. Perhaps because of its growing awareness of ambiguities inherent in language, modernist linguistics is driven by the search for a perfect language, from John Wilkins's analytical language to Gottlob Frege's 'pure conceptual notation'. This search ranges from attempts to recover the pre-Babelian language spoken by both God and human beings to the artificial, crippled languages of mathematics and modern science (Eco 1995). In each case, the crucial concept of 'representation' defines the possibilities for meaning, and the modernist text is, in Roland Barthes' terms, 'readerly'—that is, full of denotative meaning.

Postmodernity

> O my brothers, your nobility should not look backward but ahead! Exiles shall you be from all father- and forefather-lands! Your children's land shall you love…the undiscovered land in the most distant sea (Nietzsche 1954: 315-16).

Modernism carries within itself the seeds of its own deconstruction. Modernism separates thought and action—word and thing, subject and object—but as a result, modernist thought is haunted by a 'nostalgia for presence' (Lyotard 1984: 79). A slippage between signifier and signified threatens the possibility of meaning, and no logocentric ideology can repair it adequately. The humanistic belief that language accurately mirrors objective reality gives way to an understanding of language as endless semiosis and connotative abyss. The modernist binarism of inner and outer worlds is unsettled. The relation between reality and representation crumbles before the onslaughts of David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and their descendants, and metaphysical absolutes either disappear behind an impenetrable phenomenal barrier or are deferred to an inevitable but ever distant future. Even logic and mathematics are discovered to be incomplete systems, fictional constructs.

The modernist hollow space turns out to be simultaneously habitat and prison for the self—a tomb prepared for the death of man. 'Man' acquires god-like technological powers at the very moment that 'his' own future becomes most doubtful. For both modernist theism and modernist atheism, the death of God is unthinkable. Thus to speak of the death or murder of God, as Nietzsche does, is another way to describe the transformation of humanity. 'Nietzsche seems to have been the first to see that the death of God becomes effective only with the dissolution of the Self' (Deleuze 1994: 58). Nietzsche recognizes that one does not commit deicide without massive consequences—that is, without a profound change of one's own identity. He proclaims that the death of God will be accompanied by the transvaluation and surpassing, and therefore also the death, of man.

The death of God is signaled for Nietzsche by a modernist revolution in thought for which Copernicus and Galileo occupy central positions, but the death of man was signaled in Nietzsche's own time and in the early decades of the twentieth century by revolutions to which the names of Karl Marx, Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud have been attached. Indeed, following Feuerbach and Marx, many have sought to replace the word 'God' with the word 'man'. but we now know that it is also impossible to speak the word 'man' any more. Each term has become a dead metaphor, just so much unwanted baggage from the past. Neither term can speak, either ideally or in reality, for 'all of us'. Nor are any adequate replacements or acceptable translations in view—for instance, 'God' cannot be equivalent to 'ground of our being'. since there is no ground, just as 'man' cannot be equivalent to 'person'. 'God' has been reduced to either a private emotion or an economic value, and 'man' has been reduced to a sexual mechanism or a structure of dominance.

In an age of both the death of God and the death of man, neither traditional narratives (myths and fairy tales of the ancient world) nor the modernist grand narratives are sufficient for the emergence of what Walter Ong calls 'electronic culture' (1967: 88). This increasingly global, highly technological culture is transforming humanity, in the name of 'efficiency' and 'performativity'. into something posthuman.[2] Electronic culture transforms print culture just as print culture transformed oral culture before it. Just as print culture, with its printed texts and photographed paintings, made it possible to rethink the classics and traditions of the ancient world—that is, it deprived them of what Walter Benjamin calls their 'aura' (1968: 223)—so electronic culture, with its telephone and computer networks and digitized texts, is encouraging a rethinking of modernity. The name for that rethinking is 'postmodernism'.

Postmodernity appears in the fragmentation of the modernist hollow space and of Ortega's 'authentic I'. the 'man' who inhabits it. The abstract but unitary hollow space of self and world breaks apart into a multiplicity of

2. See further Hayles (1999) and Lyotard (1984).

spaces—paradoxical, overlapping, local, concrete spaces—that resist or elude in endless regression the modern self's attempts to inhabit or possess them, or to determine their (i.e., its own) identity. The modernist desire for systematic completeness is frustrated, and the possibility of a coherent, meaningful world is short-circuited by the essential failure or incompleteness of every system or structure.

Nevertheless, the postmodern belongs to the modern, even as it deconstructs the binarisms of modernism and rejects any possibility of belonging. According to Jean-François Lyotard, postmodernity is inhuman, joyful, and playful (1984: 80); it destroys self-identity and rediscovers the unknown—the excluded or forgotten—within the known (1984: 100). Postmodernity is the parasite of modernity, the static or noise within the modern ideology (Serres 1982). Lyotard defines the postmodern as 'incredulity toward metanarratives' (1984: xxiv). The modernist grand narratives have lost their potency, and if they are maintained at all, as they still are in much contemporary scientific, political, or religious discourse, they serve as façades behind which quite different ideological forces are at work. According to Lyotard, postmodern discourse is composed of a 'paralogy' of 'little narratives'. and it rejects the terrorism of a totalized system.

> Postmodern science…is theorizing its own evolution as discontinuous, catastrophic, nonrectifiable, and paradoxical. It is changing the meaning of the word *knowledge*… producing not the known, but the unknown… [T]he little narrative remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention… (Lyotard 1984: 60, his emphasis).

Postmodern knowledge is transgressive, decentered, and fluid, and it revels in the nomad and the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Its truths are multiple, transitory, and fragmentary, rather than the one universal Truth desired by modernism. Postmodernism recognizes and explores the fictionality and multiplicity of the self in metafictional stories by Samuel Beckett or Franz Kafka or Philip K. Dick, among others. Similarly, modernist concepts of God conceal, for postmodernism, an 'other'. an unnamable always on the verge of speaking or of being spoken, always on the edge of language. At the same time, modernist atheism is understood to be monotheism without God—in other words, mono-atheism, for it too dwells within the unitary and universal hollow space, i.e., it competes for the same 'place' as God.

Modernity understands history as the quest for an historical origin, but postmodernity denies that any such authoritative *arch* exists, or if one did exist, that it could be known as such.[3] For postmodernism, history is a story selected from among many possible ones that someone tells to make sense of enigmatic relics from a finally unknowable long-ago. As Jorge Luis Borges says, 'time is a fallacy' (1962: 145), and history is a multiply-forking,

3. See de Man (1983: 142-65) and White (1982).

eternally-returning fiction. Michel Foucault's analyses of power, practice, and language suggest the futility of the desire to 'realize our vital program' that figures so strongly for Ortega y Gasset. Postmodern history realizes neither *arch* nor *telos*; the best we can hope for is a narrative that makes us aware of our inevitable biases and throws them into question, not in the hope of finding some objective truth but because without that constant questioning an exclusion of the crucial will result.

Modernist hermeneutics seeks to ground its interpretations in an author's intention or a determinable referent, but postmodern thought defers indefinitely this utopian hope and replaces it with endless textuality, the loss of logical or ontological origin and the concomitant disappearance of definitive meaning. Postmodern stories such as those of Borges, Italo Calvino, and Donald Barthelme are caught up in self-referential webs of ambiguity and paradox. They reveal that reality itself is a fictional construct. Everything transcendental is suspect, and there is no Truth, only truths that are necessarily local and temporary. Postmodern interpretation practices a renewed 'allegorizing' of the text—however, not the classical allegory of eternal Truth hidden beneath the literal surface, but a midrashic, 'ludic allegory' (Crossan 1980: 97) of surfaces that play upon one another without limit. Meaning arises from shifting juxtapositions and intertextualities. We never escape from the literal, alphabetic surface of the text to an ideal, conceptual realm; the fictionality of language undercuts the denotation of extratextual reality. Modernist representation is replaced by the postmodern simulacrum: 'an imitation more real somehow than that which it emulates' (Gibson 2003: 11).

Modernism's coherent beliefs are subverted by postmodern paradoxes. Modernity dwells within the security of a binary logic (or dialectic), but postmodernity turns the scientific 'mirror of nature' (Rorty 1979) upon itself and places an infinitely regressive abyss at the very center of the hollow space, decentering 'man'. For postmodernism, the *epoch* that dehumanizes does not lead onward to either a vitalizing of the life-world (as it does for Ortega) or to utopian *praxis* (as it does for classical Marxism), but it is caught up in or disrupted by what Barthes calls 'bliss' (1975: 14). Bliss exceeds the meaningful completeness of the (true or false) sentence and the readerly control of discourse; it is the 'writerly' outside of language.

The historical author is 'dead'. irrelevant to bliss. Yet bliss also does not stand as a contradictory or antithesis to the readerly 'pleasure' of signification. The 'third language' that is bliss 'scatter[s] the signifieds, the catechisms… *language upon language*, to infinity… That difference should not be paid for by any subjection: no last word' (Barthes 1977: 50, his emphasis). Bliss is not opposed to the modernist desire for meaning and completeness, but instead it is the symbiotic process that keeps modernity 'alive'—that keeps it modern, even as it makes it postmodern.

Metamorphosis

> Everywhere we live in a universe strangely similar to the original—things are doubled by their own scenario. But this doubling does not signify, as it did traditionally, the immanence of their death—they are already purged of their death, and better than when they were alive; more cheerful, more authentic, in the light of their model, like the faces in funeral homes (Baudrillard 1994: 11).

Postmodernism is defined by the death of man, and our reluctance to let man die reflects our modern alienation from the earth. Nietzsche knew this, and he says it over and over again. Nevertheless, it seems quite likely (and I think that Nietzsche would agree) that this transformation affects some of us more than others. With the triumph of modernism, the middle class—the moving spirit and great agent of modernity—has lost its genuine revolutionary impetus. It has succeeded to the point of its own stagnation; it has been enslaved by its own success. The people who produced so much of the ferment of the last several centuries—in politics, the arts, technology, education, and religion—has subsided into complacency or even, it now appears, into reactionary fanaticism. The Marxist analysis is correct: the human group that produced the modern world has ceased to occupy the primary position of historical agent. We dig our own graves.[4]

A somewhat different metaphor appears at the end of Tommaso Landolfi's bizarre story, 'Pastoral'. Large numbers of people crawl, unconsciously and instinctively, into 'hideous, foetid' sacks.

> I begin to be alarmed; I can no longer hide it either from myself or from you. An unbelievable number of people here have already fallen asleep… At the back of their eyes I could see the languor which I have come to recognize. It is not difficult to prophesy that soon they will all have fallen sound asleep (1963: 23, 24-25).

By the story's end, everyone (and apparently even the narrator) has fallen asleep. These people sleep away the winter and wake up every spring; yet the narrator is horrified by the un-naturalness of it all. Landolfi's extended metaphor suggests a cocoon into which modern 'man' seals himself up, with an uncertain future. The larval being[5] that is modern 'man' creeps on toward a destiny that is probably not what Ortega had in mind.

The hour grows late, and we can't stop yawning. We fear this uncertainty and the impending metamorphosis that Landolfi's image suggests. Who will keep watch over us, to guarantee that we do not slip over into coma and then perhaps death? Who will check our vital signs and look for bedsores? Upon what

4. Indeed, Marx and Engel's gravediggers of the bourgeoisie (1959: 20) and Nietzsche's gravediggers of God (1974: 181) are probably digging the same grave.

5. 'Selves are larval subjects… The self does not undergo modifications, it is itself a modification…' (Deleuze 1994: 78-79).

cosmic alarm clock can we depend? How will we be wakened, and when? What will we become? We slap ourselves and shout, walk around the room once or twice, drink black coffee and turn up the music, but after a while nothing works. We are too tired, and soon even the most violent actions will not maintain our consciousness. Like Jesus' disciples in Gethsemane, we can no longer keep watch. Something shifts in the world, and we are missing it.

The world that we have taken for granted is coming to an end, and something new is beginning—something still to be determined, but troubling to think about: the posthuman being. 'Man' does not simply come to an end. The question is not simply, 'When and how will man end?' but also, 'What will man become?' Will the posthuman consequence of the death of man be something entropic like Nietzsche's insect-like 'last man', or will humanity be surpassed toward something greater and more hopeful? Will the being who arises from this deathlike sleep be god or monster—or both at once? Only now are we able to see that we are becoming, and that we have always been, 'one like a son of man' (Daniel 7.13)—that is, a simulacrum.

This numbness, this hesitation and stumbling-about today—is it a crisis of some sort, a turning point? Or is it simply an end, our end? Is what we feel some sort of spiritual arteriosclerosis, symptoms of the senility of the modern world? The Oxford English Dictionary notes that 'larva' refers not only to 'the early immature form of animals', but also (obsoletely) to a ghost or specter. Will this sleep culminate in death or in the transformation of humanity? We hope (and also fear) that if we awaken again, we will not be the tired old 'men' that we are now, but revived and transformed into something new, something very different. This dormancy would then not be just sleep or even death but transmutation, and its sequel would not be just resurrection or non-existence but transfiguration.

We could then recognize our current state not only as an end, but also as a beginning. Does the caterpillar, as it spins its own cocoon, think that it is dying? Does the butterfly remember that it once was a caterpillar? Whenever a civilization comes face to face with its own impotence and chaos, as we do today, people are tempted to think that they are at the end of time, like Daniel's 'son of man'. We need to suspect that apocalyptic thought, and also to ground our inevitable apocalyptic urges in the earth, and in the everyday world.

Posthuman Gods

> The gods of old mated sometimes with mortal women, our legends tell us. … The nameless, forgotten ones. … They have gone back into the still waters of the lakes, the quiet hearts of the hills, the gulfs beyond the stars. Gods are no more stable than men (Howard 2003: 201).

> Perhaps at this moment a god of the nether world situated in the center of the earth with his eye that can pierce granite is watching us from below, following the cycle of living and dying (Calvino 1985: 58).

Premodern/modern/postmodern do not form a linear historical sequence. To think of postmodernism as the next historical phase in Western culture, or to turn posthumanity into yet another step along some evolutionary path, is to forget that the teleological continuity of history is itself a modernist fiction, an ideological construct that conceals important breaks and multiplicities (de Man 1983: 150-51). Just as print culture is not identical to modernism, so electronic culture is not identical to postmodernism. Postmodernism does not belong to any ordered progression. Indeed, postmodernity is not necessarily new, and in some instances it may even predate modernity. Lyotard makes it clear that the postmodern is 'that which, *in the modern*, puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself; … that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unpresentable (1984: 81, emphasis added).

Postmodernism belongs to the modern, as something within it, and perhaps even within the premodern. In a similar vein, Katherine Hayles argues that 'we have always been posthuman' (1999: 291), parodying Bruno Latour's provocatively titled analysis of the roots of modern science: *We Have Never Been Modern*. To paraphrase Lyotard, posthumanity is that which, in the human, searches for new presentations of humanity, in order to impart a stronger sense of humanity's other (i.e., humanity's unhumanity). Electronic culture makes us aware, in ways that we never could have been before, of the posthuman being that we have always been.

Recognizing our posthumanity requires a deep rethinking of theology—that is, it requires postmodern theology. For postmodernism, there is no single universal Truth, but instead there are many local truths; there is no one Reality but instead many realities. The postmodern world is fragmentary and incomplete, the product of a plurality of localized and transitory 'paralogies' reflecting radically different concepts—that is, concepts that cannot be reduced to compatible 'points of view' on a single shared Reality. Even to speak of a 'world' suggests a totality that is illusory. Instead, there are many worlds, constantly colliding, coming apart, reassembling. As a result, postmodern thought is not atheistic, but rather a/theistic (Taylor 1984), or better yet, poly/theistic. No single, unique God could hold the plural, partial worlds of postmodernity together. Only a multiplicity of deities could manage so much. Thus monotheism is too imperialistic, exclusive, and totalizing for postmodernity.[6] Indeed, it is the God of modernist monotheism whose death is announced by Nietzsche's madman.

The old tribal gods around which human civilizations once formed have long since departed, and they were replaced for modern 'man' by the one (male) God of monotheism (and atheism). Like the ancient tribal gods, the modern God was formed in human image, and like the old gods (and the decaying middle class),

6. See Schwartz (1997) and Docker (2001).

he has since ceased to inspire or provoke. The divine spirit of revolution and creativity that once blessed modern bourgeois humanity has degenerated into a Disney animation, who tantalizes our senses and stimulates our cravings, but who eventually leaves us disappointed. He has become a bumper sticker god, a media glitter god, the god of popular religious, political, or business movements. This modern God always was rather mechanical (like William Paley's watchmaker), for modern 'men' have always wanted results, a 'religion that will work', whether it be positive thinking or Pentecostalism. However, we understand machines better today. We know that they too age and eventually become obsolete.

Gods do not die, and they are not born, without struggle and suffering. Perhaps instead of simply disappearing, the ancient gods have been transformed, and even now they are metamorphosing into something different, just as we are. Postmodernism is polytheistic, but not in any traditional, premodern sense. Postmodern thought is too anti-dogmatic, ad hoc, and playful for that, and in any case, the plausible deities of our electronic culture are not likely to be identical to the old premodern ones, the gods of oral culture. Like everything else in the postmodern world, the new gods are simulacra, copies without origin. The postmodern gods are hyperreal: '[h]istory erased via the substitution of an identical object' (Gibson 2003: 194).[7] These gods are neither omnipotent nor eternal, and they are symptoms of our postmodern condition, not its cause.

Postmodernism opens up opportunities to read biblical or other texts in radically new ways—that is, to see them as postmodern texts, written for and about posthuman beings. For modernism, the Bible's authority could be either justified or rejected in the name of fundamentalist dogma or historical science, but for postmodernism, 'the Bible' as a canonical entity no longer exists. Its status as the Word of God becomes problematic at best. The ideological complicity of biblical texts (and of the canon) in racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, colonialism, and other forms of oppression is exposed. Traditional, logocentric belief in the possibility of a coherent 'biblical theology', an underlying, integrative message of the Bible as a whole, becomes increasingly difficult to maintain.

Canonical control over the meaning of the diverse texts of the scriptures is loosened. Just as the one God whose Word the Bible was becomes many, so it becomes possible to read the biblical texts poly/theistically.[8] The various texts acquire new identities, sinking or floating in intertextual currents beyond the control of theological orthodoxy. The texts also metamorphose. Removed from the canon of the Bible, the former scriptures are placed in playful, intertextual

7. See also Eco (1985). For fictional descriptions of such gods, see Gaiman (2001) and Miéville (1998).

8. See Miles (1996: 398-99) for one example. Nevertheless, Miles's reading remains within the canonical frame.

juxtaposition with a wide variety of non-biblical texts. The stories, poems, and sayings, along with traditionally potent phrases such as 'the kingdom of God', 'repentance', and 'salvation', are re-contextualized by these juxtapositions and sometimes take on remarkably different and fluid meanings.

The Christian God, newly resurrected following his death in modernity, takes his place alongside numerous other divinities, including Yahweh and Allah, each of them equally real and equally virtual, each of them different. He can no longer claim to be omnipotent or universal, and he is evidently not 'the same god' that is worshipped by Jews or Muslims. He is specific, finite, and distinct. He is no longer the God understood by either modernist theism or modernist atheism, and he is not the God of premodern Christianity either. Yet maybe in this postmodern form he too can survive the death of God and the death of man.

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Judges 1: The City of Writing, the Sacred, and the Fragmentation of the Body

Francis Landy

Judges 1 would be a great subject for David Jobling: a structuralist swamp of cross-references, tangled genealogies, ethnic ambiguities, erased but recurrent traces of the past, anecdotal figments and territorial fragments. It is a liminal text, belonging to both or neither Judges and Joshua, inaugurating history 'in the land' and evoking prehistory, claiming the future and leaving it intact, a site of miscegenation, non-fulfilment, peaceful coexistence. At the centre, or at least one of the centres, there is a woman, who represents all women in this text, and in particular the maternal strangeness of the Land, which offers sexual pleasure and death. In it writing is displaced by history, which becomes historiography, a writing of writing. David is of course one of our familiar spirits, a boundary crosser and destabilizer, a brilliant writer and an indefatigable reader. Like Othniel in our text, he is one who finds the lost voices of Torah.[1]

Judges 1 has a double function: it introduces the main themes and motifs of the book of Judges;[2] at the same time it is a throwback to, a doubling, of, the book of Joshua, in which incidents and the whole scheme of conquest are repeated.[3] Judges and Joshua, those beautifully constructed texts concerning the collapse of political authority and narrative coherence,[4] are refracted through a

1. The Talmud (*b. Temurah* 16a) reports that through his power of dialectic (*pilpul*) Othniel restored 1700 *halakot* which were forgotten during the period of mourning for Moses. In this way he became as master of the city of the book. Cf. Ouaknin (1995: 15) who comments 'These forgettings, these erasings of knowledge, must be considered as something positive and necessary'. Cf. also Gunn (2005: 19).

2. Schneider (1999: 1, 22-23) and Webb (1987: 118-19) both stress its introductory function, in contrast to those critics who see it as a Deuteronomic supplement. See also Younger (1995: 86 n. 32).

3. Judges 1 summarizes much of Joshua 13–19; in particular, Josh. 15.13-19 and Judg. 1.10-15 are parallel texts. Judg. 2.8-10 repeats the account of the death of Joshua in Josh. 24.29-31. Brettler (1989b; 2002: 94-96) has proposed that Judges 1.1–2.10 was originally an appendix to Joshua; this, however, is to ignore its introductory function. Jobling, similarly, thinks that 'it belongs more naturally to the book of Joshua' (1998: 34). Jobling has emphasized that the divisions between books are the result of choices (1998: 36), and reads 1 Samuel 1–12 both as part of an 'extended book of Judges' and of the canonical book.

4. Brettler (2002: 104) does not agree with those literary critics who find a strong coherence

chapter in which they are inverted and negated. The high hopes of the beginning of Judges founder in its dismal conclusion; the book of Joshua, the embodiment of Mosaic succession and Israelite unity, never happened, and with Joshua's death we start again. The main narrative thread, a tale of tribal successes and failures, is inconclusive, but is interrupted by three vignettes, which, to adopt Mieke Bal's term, suggest a counter-coherence, and are comments on the narrative of which they are part. A number of critics have noted this: for instance, Gunn and Fewell (1993a: 162-63) suggest that Adoni-Bezek, the first Canaanite victim, is actually a parabolic reflection of exiled Israel;[5] the representative and symbolic function of Achsah has been frequently discussed, especially by feminist critics.[6] In this paper I want to focus on the figure of Othniel, the city he conquers, and the wife he wins and perhaps loses.

Othniel is the first judge, and as such a paradigmatic figure (3.9-11),[7] especially since he represents the tribe of Judah,[8] divinely appointed to lead the struggle against the Canaanites in 1.2. Judah suffers from narrative eclipse for most of the book of Judges; that it is foregrounded here casts Judah as nor-

in the book, though he does grant it a certain overall, tendentious organization (1989a; 2002: 104, 109-10), from a Judean perspective. There are differences concerning (a) what constitutes unity; (b) the relationship between unity and disunity in any work of art; (c) the level at which one finds unity (e.g. a work may be unified as the product of a certain culture). In the case of Judges, the problem is that highly heterogeneous materials exhibit remarkable correspondences. In particular, Brettler misunderstands Bal, whom he uses as an example of an attempt to establish a counter-coherence on the fate of the women in Judges (2002: 106-107). Bal's target is the concept of coherence as such, what she calls 'the politics of coherence' (1988: 18-19). Instead, the history of women in Judges 'inscribes the chaotic "fullness of life" ' (1988: 18). From a different point of view, Gabriel Josipovici (1988: 110) writes that 'the book of Judges is indeed oddly fragmented and jagged…but this is part of what it is about'. See also Exum (1990), for whom Judges is characterized by the breakdown of the ostensible structure and the instability of the character of God. Brettler (2002: 104) remarks that for Exum the instabilities help to unify the book; that is not, however, what she says, despite her insistence on its complexity. Exum is influenced by Polzin (1980), who argues, from a Bakhtinian point of view, that the text, and Judges in particular, is a dialogue between the official Deuteronomic ideology and its critique. Judges exemplifies the breakdown of all ideological coherence.

5. Likewise, they see the story of Achsah as a parable of the destiny of Israel and, in particular, Judah (1993: 161-62).

6. Klein (1988: 26; 1993a: 25, 1993b: 56-60; 1999: 21) regards Achsah as a 'model woman' within the patriarchal system, comparable to her husband as the 'model judge', and a symbol of Israel as a bride of God. Others emphasize more her subversiveness, and her anticipation of the fates of other women in Judges; so, for example, Schneider (1999: 11-17), Ackerman (1998: 1-2, 5-6), who contrasts her assertiveness with the subordination of other women in the HB, Bal (1988: esp.149-56), and Jost (1997).

7. The paradigmatic function of Othniel as the ideal judge has been frequently been noted (e.g. Brettler 2002: 4-5; Exum 1990: 411, 414; Schneider 1999: 38-39; Polzin 1980: 156).

8. Othniel's function in providing a Judahite judge is frequently adduced as a reason for his otherwise colourless presence (Brettler 1989b: 404-405; Schneider 1998: 39).

mative, in contrast to the waywardness of the rest of the book.[9] Othniel has appeared before, in 1.13, corresponding to Josh. 15.17. There he captures Devir, which used to be called Qiryat-Sefer, the city of the book, and thereby wins his brother, Caleb's, daughter, Achsah.[10] It is the stuff of heroic legend, and anticipates David's reward of Michal.[11] As Caleb's younger brother, moreover, he is associated with the one survivor of the Mosaic generation, following Joshua's demise, who is granted entrance into and possession in the land owing to his fidelity. Caleb thus personifies Mosaic purity, even greater than that of Moses. In Josh. 14.13-14, the gift is specified as Hebron, the city whose giants terrified the spies; in Judg. 1.20, the donation is attributed to Moses.

The sequence however is odd. In v. 3 Judah proposes a mutually profitable association with Simeon, a rare moment of fraternal alliance in Judges, which is perhaps less disinterested than it seems.[12] In vv. 4-7, it attacks Bezek; the

9. Interpretations of Judges 1 as pro-Judahite propaganda abound; so, for example, Auld (1975), Mullen (1984), Brettler (1989b), Weinfeld (1993), Sweeney (1997), Amit (2000: 120-21). Blum (1997: 208) argues that it emanates from a royalist circle in postexilic Judah, in contrast to Van Seters (1983: 337-42) who assigns it to P on the somewhat tenuous ground of the use of the word גורל. Guillaume (1998) attributes it to the Jerusalem elite in the reign of Manasseh as a polemic against the Judean tribal aristocracy, who are identified as the 'sons of Judah'. Guillaume's reconstruction depends on a distinction between 'Judah' and 'the sons of Judah', as well as of the politics of Manasseh's reign, for which there is no substantive basis.

10. It is ambiguous whether Othniel is Caleb's brother or nephew, since the phrase 'his younger brother' could qualify either Othniel or Qenaz (Gunn 2005: 23-25). Schneider opts for the former (Schneider 1998: 10), though she notes that the relationship is uncertain. However, in a compound expression Othniel is the more likely antecedent. See also Woudstra (1981: 241) who argues on the very infirm ground of the Massoretic accentuation. If it were Qenaz, one would expect a specification, such as 'son of his brother, Qenaz'. In the parallel verse in Josh. 15.17, the detail that he was younger is missing.

11. The comparison is also made by Jost (1997: 115-16). It foreshadows, as several critics note, the motif of 'foolish vows' in Judges (Webb 1987: 87, Schneider 1998: 11).

12. In his structural summary, Younger (1995: 77) describes this as a 'compromise' between Judah's role as leader of Israel and the autonomous actions of the tribes in the rest of the book. In reality, it is less an alliance and more a takeover bid; see Josh.19.1-9, according to which Judah incorporates Simeon because of its superior numbers. Simeon is a famously disinherited tribe (Gen. 49.7), which does not appear in Moses' farewell blessing (Deuteronomy 33) or Deborah's song (Judges 5). Brettler (1989: 401, 416) thinks that this is a positive note concerning Judah, since it emphasizes its supreme power, even at the cost of other tribes' independence. Klein (1988: 23), in contrast, sees in it a derogation from Yhwh's appointment of Judah as the conqueror of the land in 1.2: 'from the outset, Israel exerts self-determination, evidencing automatic trust in *human* perception'. But nowhere does it state that Judah should fight alone against the Canaanites; indeed, the Israelites' question in v. 1, 'Who will go up for us against the Canaanites first of all?', shows that they are looking for a leader to replace Joshua in a collective endeavour. Moreover, Yhwh's statement that 'Behold, I have given the land into his hand' is a familiar idiom for Yhwh's predetermination of the victory (cf. e.g. Num. 21.34); it does not mean that it does not require human effort or skill to achieve it, as the whole history of the conquest shows. Fritz (2004: 376-77) suggests that the mention of Simeon was motivated by the ideological requisite of the twelve tribe system, though why that should have been a necessity is not clear to me.

Lord of Bezek is brought to Jerusalem and dies there. In v. 8 it captures and burns Jerusalem. In v. 10 the Judahites proceed to Hebron, where they smite the three Anakites; there is no mention, however, of capturing or burning the city. In v. 13 Othniel captures Qiryat Sefer; in v. 16, the Qenites go up with the Judahites; in v. 17 the Simeonites are again allied with the Judahites; in v. 20 the Judahites give Hebron to Caleb, who dispossesses the three Anakites; in v. 21 the Benjaminites do not drive out the inhabitants of Jerusalem. There is thus a circular structure, as well as a linear one.[13] This leads to contradictions: was Jerusalem captured and destroyed or not? Is it Judahite or Benjaminite?[14] In Josh. 15.63, the failure to dislodge the inhabitants is attributed in almost identical terms to the Judahites. Was Hebron attacked once or twice? Is there a difference between smiting and dispossessing the Anakites? To ask such questions is perhaps to misunderstand the effect of reprise or closure produced by the circle. But it is also unsettling, in particular because of the discrepant fate of Jerusalem and the intimations of failure in the final section, in which the Judahites are unable to dislodge the inhabitants of the plain.[15] Whatever it is, this is not the end of the story. The pattern imposes simultaneity upon the section, so that it becomes an historical counterpart of the topographical description of Judah's territory in Josh. 15.20-62. It is disrupted, however, by the tendency to narrativization, and by the difficulty in reconciling alternative accounts. These have the consequence of actualizing different narrative possibilities, which will play against each other in the text.[16]

Jerusalem and Hebron are paired together at the climax of the sequence, just as they are in its initial section, where they precede the anecdote con-

13. Younger (1994: 215, 1995: 77) provides a convenient (and almost identical) structural table.

14. According to Josh. 15.7-8 and 18.15-16, Jerusalem is just on the Benjaminite side of the tribal border. In that case, Auld's statement (1975: 275) that there is no evidence that the symbiosis of Benjaminite and Jebusite in Jerusalem was ever the case or believed to be the case is overstated, especially in view of II Sam. 24.20, I Kgs 9.20 etc. See also I Chron. 9.3, in which Jerusalem is inhabited by both Judahites and Benjaminites, as well as northerners.

15. Advocates of the view that the narrative emanates from a pro-Judean source overlook or downplay the negativity of the end of the account, suggesting, for instance, that the Benjaminites replace the Judahites in 1.21 (in contradistinction to Josh. 15.63) so as to transfer the blame onto them (Mullen 1984: 46; Brettler 1989b: 400; 2002: 101: Weinfeld 1993: 392, 396). But it is hard to imagine that a competent reader would not notice the discrepancy between 1.8 and 1.21. As Polzin says, the effect is of surprise and disillusionment: 'the bubble bursts' (1980: 149).

16. The repetition ensures that it is ambiguous whether that there are two or more versions of events, or whether they occurred in sequence. Younger (1995: 81) writes 'The writer/editor of Judges 1 has disclosed simultaneity in the guise of sequentiality'. This is true of the book as a whole, and is a symptom of the temporal disruption, what Gabriel Josipovici (1988: 108) describes as the faltering rhythm of Judges. Klein (1988: 12) suggests that vv. 1-15 'depict relatively long periods in brief spans of reading time'. The opposite is the case: there is no indication of chronological time, and the repetition imposes simultaneity on the expositional sequence.

cerning Othniel, Achsah, and Qiryat Sefer. This is structurally central, paired however with the detail about the Qenites who, like the Simeonites, accompany Judah. The central parts are the point of convergence of the matching outer ones. They concentrate our attention on Caleb's family, and perhaps on the Mosaic heritage. The inner, familial world reflects the outer, public domain of warfare, tribal politics and demographic accommodation (the coherence and counter-coherence, as Bal would put it). But are they congruent or otherwise?

Jerusalem and Hebron are important signifiers. Jerusalem is the future capital, mediating between north and south, Judah and Ephraim; Israel's failure to capture it is a symbol for the incompleteness of the conquest and the disunity of the nation. Throughout Judges its ambiguous exclusion from the body politic of Israel collaborates with that of other centres, notably Shechem in Judges 10. In the story of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19, in particular, Jerusalem is a haunting absence, a would-be place of safety. In 1.8, Judah's conquest of Jerusalem is another promise of Judah's supremacy and the success of the divine program, only to meet with disillusion thirteen verses later. It preempts, and points towards, David's achievement several centuries hence.

Hebron is coupled to Jerusalem as past to future, patriarchy to monarchy. The Israelites are coming home, to a land of maternal sweetness, to nurse on milk and honey. The infantile fantasy of plenitude is combined, however, with horror. This is the problem of the spies, as Ilana Pardes (2000: 109) beautifully argues: 'it is a land that eats its inhabitants' (Num. 13.32). Throughout the book of Judges the land is a fearful temptation, sexual and spiritual, full of indigenous gods, goddesses and people, who pose the threat or promise of assimilation. 'The Jebusites live with the Benjaminites (or Judahites) in Jerusalem to this very day': that is the comfortable laissez-faire we live with. Conquest of the land means eradication of its local deities and its children; its possession is violation. Since, however, it is home, return to it is also return to a past self. The Canaanites are the living traces of the past, and subject to repression as well as avowal. If the land is the matrix, it is now alien territory, and consequently, in Freudian terms, uncanny (Pardes 2000: 113). Possession of it is always uneasy.

But it is not only the matrix. Hebron is the site of the ancestral graves, in the uterine Cave of Machpelah. Caleb, in spying out the land—that figure for the primal scene—comes across the paternal crypt, bearing the ossified seeds of his own generation. Caleb is the spy who is not afraid of the cannibalistic mother and who as a result acquires the paternal legacy and resting-place; he is the fathers' custodian and representative. Hebron, as a sacred site invested with the power of the ancestors, is always a potential if repressed rival to the state sacrality of Jerusalem. Caleb, as the last vestige of the Mosaic age, is also uncanny, a figure of the past transplanted into unfamiliar territory.

However, Hebron is guarded by three Anakim, giants with antediluvian associations.[17] Ilana Pardes (2000: 114) suggests that they are 'a distorted image of the patriarchs'. Giants are preeminently uncanny; as guardians of the tomb they are also guardians of the womb, which is now deadly. In them the maternal and paternal aspects of the homeland, which are elsewhere split, merge. As Pardes says, the past they evoke is a prepatriarchal one, and one that has ostensibly been obliterated. In overcoming the giants, Caleb has an Oedipal function, since he defeats those who protect the matrix; they are personae, perhaps, of the fathers, but even more of the dangers posed by the Canaanite mother/other. Caleb then, venturing to the site of conception and interment, finds something even more primordial. Lawrence Sullivan has shown that antediluvian eras are characterized by the suspension of the conditions and limits of our world.[18] The giants are the product of miscegenation between gods and humans; their world is filled with violence. But their world is also a reflex of our world, in which the human heart remains intractably evil (Gen. 8.21). Imagery of the Flood, and the possibility of its recurrence, is all-pervasive in the biblical text (Landy 2001). Giants, in fairy tales and legends, are figures of a fabulous past and imaginary terrors, which the hero dispels so as to be able to enter our world.[19] Yet their overthrow is never complete; they still haunt the fringes of our, and the textual, imagination.

This is not the only trace of the antediluvian past in our text. In the next episode, as an aside to Judah's exploits, we hear about the Kenites who accompany them. Their eponymous ancestor is, here, Moses's father-in-law.[20] But it is also the name of Adam and Eve's firstborn son, displaced because of fraternal violence, and the progenitor of the alternative, extinct, genealogy to that of Seth in the primeval narratives.[21] The occurrence of the name Cain on both sides of the Deluge suggests that it never really happened, or that their journey to the Promised Land resurrects unexpected ghosts. But that is material for another article.

17. In Num. 13.33 the Anakim are identified with the Nefilim, the offspring of the sons of God and daughters of humankind in Gen. 6.6 (cf. Pardes 2000: 109).

18. Sullivan (198: 25ff.). Although Sullivan's immediate subject is South American religions, he emphasizes that his insights have cross-cultural applicability.

19. Pardes (2000: 114-15) cites Bettelheim (1989) that giants in fairy tales represent adults, who will eventually be cut down to size (Bettelheim 1989: 28). Pardes rightly points out that in her text, Numbers 13–14, as in ours, they represent a much darker side; though they may be cut down and dispossessed, they still remain a haunting presence, as the rest of the book, if not the Bible, shows.

20. Names for Moses' father-in-law abound: in Exod. 2.18 it is Reuel; in Exod. 3.1 and 18.1-12 it is Jethro, of which Jether in 4.18 is a contraction; in Num. 10.29 and Judg. 4.11 it is Hobab, who is identified in Num. 10.29 as the son of Reuel; alternatively Hobab here may be Moses' brother-in-law. In our text, I take קיני to refer to the name of Moses' father-in-law rather than simply a generic term. The ethnic affiliation of Moses' father-in-law likewise varies: in Exodus and Numbers it is Midianite, in Judges Kenite. One may note, too, that in Gen. 36.4, Reuel is Esau's son.

21. Knoppers (2004: 316) assumes the connection, which is denied by older commentators.

The Canaanite past is also indicated by Hebron's former name, Qiryat 'Arba'. A change of name signifies a change of identity and a wish to annihilate the indigenous toponyms, with their accumulated store of meanings, together with the inhabitants. Yet it survives, precisely through the text that records its erasure. The city acquired its name, so Josh. 14.15 and 15.13 inform us, from 'Arba', who was either the 'greatest man' (14.15) or the 'ancestor' of the Anakites. Who was Arba, and why was he called 'four'? Repeatedly, the text speaks of the 'three sons of Anak', who correspond to the three patriarchs and to the three sons of Mamre. The quaternity indicates something in addition to the triads otherwise associated with the city, or perhaps something missing, such as Anak himself. At any rate, it suggests a centripetal wholeness, as of four quarters or directions, in which one piece is lacking. The previous name of the city thus imparts a mystery, a union of multiplicity, and a gap (between sons and fathers? patriarchy and maternity?).

From Hebron the Judahites proceed to Devir, whose structurally central position I have already noted.[22] Devir, however, is rather lacking in significant associations. Why is it so important? And why does Caleb delegate its capture to someone else, indeed anyone else?

Devir means 'inner sanctum', and is a term used of the holy of holies. Possibly it refers to a local shrine; the conquerors impose their own form of holiness over the traces of its former existence. We do not know, however, of any temple in Devir; although in Josh. 21.15 it is an Aaronide city, it has no special sacred connotation. Its status, however, must be correlated with that of the sacred sites of Hebron and Jerusalem. The inaccessible divine presence, which somehow encompasses or characterizes an entire city, evokes the numina of the patriarchs in Hebron and the conquered but still undefeated enclave of Jerusalem. The sanctity of those cities is transferred to Devir; the danger of intrusion into the divine presence is thus defused or at least deflected. We have, indeed, a classic instance of displacement. Caleb's acquisition of Hebron fulfils his presage that the motherland may be taken and the paternal position filled (especially if the giants are seen as hostile projections of the fathers themselves); the incestuous and Oedipal implications are avoided through substituting a younger brother, a daughter, and another city.

We immediately run into a problem, however. Othniel is ben Qenaz, Caleb, in Numbers and Joshua, is ben-Yefuneh. Othniel is perhaps a half-brother,[23] except that Num. 32.12, Josh. 14.6 and 14, in a spirit of compromise, call Caleb ben-Yefuneh the Qenizzite.[24] Now the Qenizzites are one of the peoples whose

22. In Josh. 11.21-22, Devir is mentioned in tandem with Hebron as a city inhabited by Anakim, who nonetheless lived throughout the land. Their survival in Philistine cities is one of the indications in the first part of Joshua of the failure of the narrative program.

23. This solution is proposed by the Talmud, *b. Temurah* 16a.

24. Klein (1999) confuses Kenites and Qenizzites.

land is promised to Abraham in Gen. 15.19.[25] So Caleb, that paragon of Israelite purity, is actually not Israelite at all; the one who possesses the land and the graves of the ancestors is not their descendant. It is not so simple, however. In Gen. 36.11, Qenaz is Esau's grandson (Fewell 1995: 139).[26] So Othniel, the ideal judge, and Caleb, according to Joshua, are Edomites. Then the antipathy between Jacob and Esau, with its immense biblical resonance, is transformed into amity. Their territories intermesh; if Judah (and Israel) is led by Edomites—or alternatively, grant them territory—the ethnic polarizations which the Bible uses to define Israelite identity break down.[27]

In Chronicles, matters become more complicated still. Caleb has a third father, Hezron (I Chron. 2.9, 18),[28] and a fourth, Hur, if I Chron. 2.50 not be emended.[29] Hur, however, is also his son, according to I Chron. 2.19, though in I Chron. 4.1 his father is Judah. Caleb is thus engendered by his own son and marries his grandmother! In 4.13 he is once again the son of Yefuneh, and, ambiguously, grandfather of Qenaz. One of his descendants is Hebron, according to 2.19; in conquering the city he is reabsorbing or misrecognizing his own seed. Homecoming is confusing, for what one sees are jettisoned fragments of oneself. Caleb's four fathers, like the quaternity signified by the Anakites' parentage, point to the ramification of patrilineage, or, more mundanely, the uncertainty of tradition. Genealogical lines criss-cross endlessly, between generations, families, and peoples. Real history, according to Chronicles, is that of peaceful proliferation, through which Israel becomes ever more intricately interconnected within itself and with its neighbours.

Caleb promises his daughter Achsah to whoever takes Qiryat-Sefer. The gift of a daughter is an uncertain wager, and suggests an equivalence between the city and wife, one which will be underscored in the text. The city of the sacred is correlative, in the realm of politics, to the domestic intimacy, which, as Bal shows, is repeatedly violated in Judges. But here, uniquely, the exchange is to all appear-

25. Fewell (1995: 139). The Qenizzites disappear, however, from the canonical list of the peoples of the land.

26. There is an obvious contradiction between Genesis 15 and 36; in Genesis 15 the Qenizzites are indigenous people, in Genesis 36 they are Edomites.

27. Might there be a socio-political background to this? In the Persian period Hebron was Edomite. That does not necessarily mean a change of population. Might some families simply have switched their political/ethnic allegiance, or straddled an ethnic liminal zone?

28. Knoppers (2004: 305) solves the problem by suggesting that Caleb ben Yefunneh and Caleb ben Hezron were different persons. However, it seems unlikely that two people with the same name would both be associated with Hebron, or that there were two clans called Caleb in Judah. As with Moses' father-in-law, these are probably variant traditions.

29. The MT reads 'These were the generations of Caleb ben Hur'. With the versions, it makes sense to omit, בֶן 'son of'. Knoppers (2004: 314) notes that Hur also has Edomite (or rather pre-Edomite) associations. Making Hur into a father as well as a son of Caleb reinforces the implication of a throwback to a primordial or even antediluvian past.

ances smooth, and the gift is not even a gift. Achsah remains within the family.[30] The paradigmatic sin of miscegenation is avoided, though indirectly consummated by Othniel's indigenous affiliations. Self and other, Israelite and Canaanite, are surreptitiously united. But so are father and daughter. No sooner is she given, than Achsah returns to her father, bearing a message and a demand. She is then the bond between brothers. But beyond that, if Othniel is a displacement of Caleb, his surrogate in taking the city, he enacts a sexual wish. The relationship between uncle and niece is a licit form of incest, bordering on the paternal realm.[31] The union through Othniel avoids the prohibition, and a destructive fusion. It is the obverse of the desire for the mother/motherland which Caleb obtains. In the daughter, as in the daughters of the land, he may see her persona, transmitted through the generations. Fathers and daughters are destructively implicated throughout the book; Caleb's promise is structurally the opposite of Jephthah's vow, as Schneider (1999: 11) and others note.[32] The sacrifice of a virginal daughter to God in the paternal home corresponds to, and reverses, the possibility of incest. Sexual union between father and daughter is the antithesis of, and equivalent to, the consumptive union of the daughter with the patriarchal deity in the sacred flame. Fire and sex are metaphors for each other throughout the book. The fire that has destroyed the sacred site of Jerusalem, and the ashes on which perhaps are constructed the newly founded one of Devir, ensures the conquest of the Promised Land, and is the sign of an absence in its midst.

Here incestuous implications are averted through metonymy, which replaces father with brother, legislative amnesia, and the change of name, and hence of meaning. Devir used to be Qiryat Sefer. The book, the writing, of the City of the Book is the mirror image of the book in which its destruction is written. There was another book, and another version of this history (Fewell 1995: 132). What is the relation between the sacred and the writing it supplants, and the writing through which it is narrated, and circulated? The book tells of another book, and it is full of other voices, the voices of those who were displaced and are victims of its desires and obsessions—even silent voices, such as the Levite's concubine.

Before the story of Devir and the conquest of Jerusalem and Hebron, there is another brief episode, that of the victory over Bezek and the death of its ruler:

> Judah went up, and Yhwh gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they smote in Bezek 10,000 men. And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek and they

30. Bal (1988: 149) emphasizes that thereby the gift remains a proper gift, and the conflicts—in particular between virilocy and patrilocy—which sees underlying the stories concerning women in Judges are avoided. See also Szpek (2002: 252).

31. So of course is the father–daughter relation, which is notoriously missing from the incestuous codes. The displacement from father to uncle is compounded by what I call legislative amnesia.

32. See the detailed discussion in Bal (1988: 49, 51), Klein (1993a: 26) and Webb (1987: 87), who calls it 'a grotesque and tragic parallel'.

> fought against him, and they smote the Canaanites and the Perizzites. And Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him; they caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. Adoni-Bezek said, 'Seventy kings, their thumbs and big toes cut off, used to scavenge under my table; as I did, so has God repaid me'. And they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there (1.4-7).

As the first campaign in Judges it has an emblematic quality, as a model consequence of the cooperation of Judah and Simeon, like the destruction of Hormah in v. 17. Similarly, Adoni-Bezek, as the first enemy to be given a voice, speaks for them all, represents the other side of the story. Bezek, however, appears for the first time in the Hebrew Bible.[33] The Judges 1 narrative, which elsewhere replicates Joshua, claims a fresh start, capturing new or overlooked territory. Bezek is perhaps a place of no importance, for instance, in that it took no part in the confederation of southern cities in Josh.10, except for the detail that seventy kings scrabbled under Adoni-Bezek's table. How big is the table? Adoni-Bezek has subjugated seventy kingdoms! However we interpret it, it is a substantial dominion. In Josh. 12.24, the narrator claims that Joshua conquered 31! Seventy, moreover, is an ideal number, used for instance for Jacob's, Gideon's, Abdon's, and Ahab's posterity, and for Moses' elders.[34] In Genesis 10, the world comprises seventy nations.[35] Thus Adoni-Bezek is a world ruler, prefiguring Jerusalem's aspirations as well as the empires which will destroy it. Adoni-Bezek's death in Jerusalem thus marks the end of an old order, and an old imperium. Bezek is anonymous, and unprecedented, precisely because it is universal.

The big toes and thumbs are extremities, whose amputation leaves the body intact yet deformed. As a synecdoche, a pars pro toto, they foreshadow the fragmentation of the body in the book,[36] just as the conquest of Bezek is a prelude to that Jerusalem and Hebron, the future capital and the ancestral home. The Canaanite lord is alive, a symbolic survivor of his people, and the Judahites enact on his toes and thumbs the death he will soon suffer, and which in a sense he has already suffered.[37] He lives and dies at the same time. His death in Jerusalem, still intact, not only anticipates its destruction in the next verse, but ensures that its prehistory will include the demise of its Canaanite antitype.

33. Elsewhere it only occurs in 1 Sam 11.8, as the place where Saul mustered troops to fight against the Ammonites. Schneider (2000: 6-7) suggests an intertextual connection between this episode, the story of Adoni-Bezek, and that of the Levite's concubine.

34. In Gen. 46.27, Exod. 1.5 (Jacob), Judg. 8.30 (Gideon), Judg. 12.14 (Abdon), 2 Kgs 10.1 (Ahab), and Exod. 24.9, Num. 11.24 (Moses' elders)

35. Sarna (1989: 69) notes the number and comments that it 'evoke(s) the idea of totality, of comprehensiveness on a large scale'.

36. Josipovici (1988: 114) comments in particular on its anticipation of the dismemberment of the Levite's concubine, as does Schneider

37. The motif of the king as symbolic survivor whose death completes the conquest recurs in that of Agag (I Kgs 15.33), which might be seen as concluding Jobling's 'extended book of Judges'. It is found also in the death of the king of Ai (Josh. 8.23, 29).

The seventy mutilated kings feeding on scraps under the table are a metaphor for the fate of imperial subjects; they are dehumanized, more precisely caninized. It is a ritual of humiliation; Adoni-Bezek feasts above, the enemies consume (how?) the remainders, the vivid reminders of their defeat. The stray body parts denote not only human cruelty—a delight in pain—but a corporeal subject, a grieving over lost members that will surely haunt the fringes of the text, as well as the boundaries of Adoni-Bezek's body and realm (is there are an archive of lost fingers and toes?)

The motif of dogs recurs in Caleb's name, as well as in the lapping of the Israelites who fail the divine test in Judg. 7.5. The Israelites are like dogs, whose revenge God enacts, as Adoni-Bezek admits. Adoni-Bezek acknowledges divine or poetic justice, with an awareness of underlying processes, the order of the world as it should be, that is unique in Judges. Adoni-Bezek, the Canaanite, speaks for the official ideology of the book, which will be subverted. He insists on the completeness or wholeness (שלם) of divine judgement, a confidence which is echoed in the name of the city in which he dies (ירושלם), the city whose capture will complete the conquest of the land. Yet that wholeness or completeness is manifested through, or contradicted by, the violation of that wholeness, culminating in the Levite's concubine and fratricidal war.

The success and partial failure of Judah is complemented by that of the house of Joseph, whose fragile unity is a harbinger of subsequent conflict. For the moment, however, 'YHWH is with them' (1.22), just he was with Judah and their ancestor Joseph. They spy out and conquer Bethel, the house of God, equivalent, in northern Israel, to Devir and the cities it designates. The 'house of God' and Devir, the inner sanctum, correspond, though opposed by political division and priestly contention. Bethel is still the site of Jacob's dream, and might represent a focus of resistance, in the text, to Jerusalemite hegemony. The narration of the capture of Luz through the treachery of one of its inhabitants echoes that of Jericho, as well as Caleb's spying out the land.[38] Thereby a relationship of *hesed*, covenant loyalty, supplements and coexists with the divinely ordained destruction of the city; God may either authorize the pact, since he is 'with them', or part company with it and them. There is a bond between the conquerors of Bethel and its twin city outside it. The former name means Deception (Boling 1975: 59). There is an apparent homology between Devir and the City of Writing, and Bethel and Deception. Danna Fewell has suggested that there is a word play between *devir* and *davar*, the word that emanates from its midst.[39] The word—divine, Mosaic, etc.—supplants the previous script, Canaanite literature and culture; it is the Israelite difference, innovation, mysterium tremendum.

38. The parallel is often noted. Cf. Becker (1990: 47) for a detailed comparison, Schneider (2000: 21), and Gunn and Fewell (1993: 160), who stress the degree to which it deviates from the Rahab model.

39. Fewell (1995: 132). She also adduces 'plague' and 'matter' as further possible significations.

Bethel is founded on a dream, a passage between heaven and earth, and a promise, according to which the previous world is a deception, a house of lies. Judges narrates how, on the journey to the Promised Land, one cannot escape from writing, deception, and miscegenation. Like Caleb, one finds oneself as an other, an unfamiliar part of oneself. Jerusalem, the Davidic kingdom, is a mixed heritage, where Benjaminites and Jebusites cohabit. Underneath it are the remains of a former city, and a king whose mutilated body anticipates the fragmentation represented in the book and proclaims the wholeness of the capital city and divine judgement. And there is Achsah, subject of a different paper, who takes over the story of which she is part, crossing gender as well as ethnic boundaries, obtaining blessing and the sources of fertility from her father, mediating between father and uncle, sexual and paternal relation, transferring Caleb's Oedipal and incestuous fixation into an autonomy that permits history to continue. Achsah's words and actions are enigmatic; they draw attention, through their difficulty, to the physicality of her presence and her voice, and the materiality of writing. Writing echoed in other writing, left over fragments of the past, in the lies and strange deaths of Judges, round a sacred and political centre that is displaced, absent, and self-destructive.

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Isaiah 38
The Meeting of Two Genres

Robert C. Culley

In ch. 38 of the book of Isaiah a poem about a rescue from death is found within a story about King Hezekiah's rescue from death. It is not unusual in biblical texts to find poems incorporated into stories, and so Isaiah is not remarkable in this regard.[1] Still, Isaiah 38 constitutes a rather interesting example of the juxtaposition of prose and poetry in that both the poem and the story are examples of traditional genres found elsewhere in the Bible. In other words, the story about Hezekiah's rescue from death can be related in terms of genre to a number of other traditional stories. Similarly, the poem can be linked to a number of traditional psalms that deal with rescue from death. If one takes into account the network of relationships thus formed, Isaiah 38 can be seen as a very dense treatment of the theme of rescue. This study will explore in a rather preliminary way this density, the density produced by placing two genres together and the further density produced when these are traditional genres. This is particularly interesting, if traditional genres can be understood as modes of discourse, ways of talking about a theme (in this case, rescue) each with their own traditional patterns, language, and imagery. If this is so, then the story and the poem of Isaiah 38 not only offer two different perceptions of the theme of rescue but set them together, inviting readers, in a very compelling way, to engage in an exploration of the interplay between both.

Two terms have been introduced that will need further comment to explain how they will be used in what follows. One is *genre* and the other is *traditional language*. Since this is a short study, these topics will have to be treated briefly so that I can only gather together my tentative perceptions on these topics in a series of terse comments. The first term is genre. The discussion of genre is, of course, a broad topic that extends to all literature and has long been a topic of discussion among literary critics and theorists. This broader discussion is known to me only in fragments through a limited acquaintance with some of the writings of scholars like Northrop Frye (1957), Fredric Jameson (1981), and Hans Robert Jauss (1982). In biblical studies, discussion of genre began in a significant way with Hermann Gunkel. Although he seems to have resisted

1. See the recent discussion of poems set in narratives, which also includes a review of scholarship on the topic, by James W. Watts (Watts 2005), and his earlier work (Watts 1992).

the phrase,[2] form criticism became the common term for genre analysis in the Bible, and this discussion still continues with some vigour.[3] In this study of Isaiah 38, my understanding of genre will not follow closely the lines commonly associated with form critical studies. One important difference is that I am not trying to define what original readers and audiences may have recognized as genre but only mentioning groupings that I can identify on the basis of similarities recognizable to me, and thus probably to other modern readers. Whether ancient readers saw these groupings as well, we cannot say.

Another important difference from most form critical studies is that I have thought it best to bracket out discussion of *Sitz im Leben*, the original setting in life of the genre, and not include it the discussion of genre. This decision does not imply that there is no relationship between texts and genres on the one hand and history or social settings on the other. It is rather a question of how and at what stage such relationships can be explored most fruitfully. In my view, it seems preferable to resist treating the relationship of text to setting in causal terms, as though the social and historical settings form such a key factor in the production of texts so that they must play a crucial role in interpreting texts. It seems to me more useful to view the relationship between text and context as reciprocal. In this way, then, genres can be viewed as having at least as much influence on interpretation of settings as settings may have on genres. In other words, genres can be understood as strategies or movements in language which serve to organize and articulate ways of looking at reality.

My approach to genre differs from form criticism in yet another way. In defining genre, the central feature for me is not a list of the bundle of elements that may or may not be present in a given example of a genre but rather the movement or strategy that drives, shapes, and gives direction to the stories or poems that make up the genre in question. For example, rescue stories in the Bible seem to follow a movement from a difficult situation to a rescue, a more specific articulation of the movement from complication to resolution, often recognized in narrative study as the basic movement of all stories. However complex the plot may get in biblical rescue stories, the movement from difficulty to rescue remains the fundamental movement. In the poems about rescue such as complaint psalms and individual thanksgivings, a narrative movement of rescue does not shape the material, although it may be implied. Other concerns drive these poems. In complaint psalms a strategy of persuasion governs the prayer in that someone in difficulty is appealing to the deity to be rescued. A movement toward a desired outcome is projected. In individual thanksgiving psalms the strategy lies in providing appropriate thanksgiving and praise

2. In a recent article, Erhard Blum refers to a letter in which Gunkel expresses unease with the phrase (Blum 2003: 33).

3. See the many articles in the recent volume edited by Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zwi (Sweeney and Ben Zvi 2003).

for a rescue already accomplished. These thanksgivings are very similar to complaint psalms in that a movement from a difficult situation to a rescue is usually implied, except that the perspective of the one praying no longer comes out of the situation of difficulty looking ahead to rescue but from the situation of a successful rescue looking back. The kind of movements I have just described in stories and poems seem to me to be fundamental for understanding genre because they shape, arrange, and manipulate the material in stories or psalms.

From what has been said, it must be clear that I am looking at genre largely as a feature of text and language rather than historical or social context. In this study of Isaiah 38, then, genre will be viewed primarily as a mode of discourse, a way of talking about a theme, in this case the theme of rescue which both story and poem feature although in different ways. If, as I have already suggested, a group of stories or a group of poems that form a genre can be seen as a kind of discourse or way of talking about a theme like rescue, then we might say that a genre embodies a common perspective or vision that inhabits in one way or another all the members of the genre.

The issue of genre is, of course, complex and any attempt to describe it involves choices. For example, one may think of genre as a paradigm or pattern into which all relevant poems or stories fit. Another option, especially when speaking of traditional genres, would be to think of the group of stories or poems that make up a genre as a cluster, or even constellation, of related stories or poems, a grouping of many individual examples. In a cluster, some items may be close to one another and be thought of as near the center but other items may be less similar and therefore can be considered to be on the edges of the cluster. In other words, the relationships among items in terms of similarities and differences may vary considerably. To imagine a genre as a cluster of poems or stories that vary from each other in greater or lesser degrees has the virtue of recognizing that the group of poems or stories, in all their variety, amounts to an exploration or mapping of the possibilities of the genre. To be sure, the boundaries of clusters are never clear. As an example, one may think of the many variations and options found in the complaint psalms, a group which nevertheless offers one of the clearest examples of a traditional genre in the Bible. Even with the variety, the group of stories or poems belonging to a genre still presents a focus or vision, even though a very complex or even, one might say, a fragmented one. Thus, to read a rescue story is to read all the rescue stories in the sense that for many readers or listeners all the other stories are virtually present to them and so available to them as they read.

The second notion that needs comment along with genre is traditional language. Granted, this is a rather elusive term. It can mean so many things. In what follows, I will use traditional language to refer to recurrent patterning, imagery, and language that is often present in narrative and poetic genres in the Bible. When in his definition of genre Gunkel spoke of a common treasury of

thoughts and moods as well as a recognizable form language for each genre, he was touching directly on this question of traditional language (Gunkel 1998: 15-18). While Gunkel's observation remains quite valid, it seems to me useful to try to separate the question of traditional language from the definition of genre, even though the relationship between genre and traditional language is quite close in biblical texts. Furthermore, there appear to be many reasons why patterns, language, and imagery are repeated in biblical texts. Borrowing, copying, and imitation, have been suggested and there is some validity to these suggestions, but use of traditional language should be included in any list of possibilities. In this study, traditional language will be taken as a plausible, if not likely, explanation for repetition on the basis of my own study of poetry and stories.[4] From my point of view, traditional language may well go back to oral traditional language. In biblical texts, any oral traditional language is likely that which has found continued use in a scribal period.[5]

There is one further preliminary issue that may be mentioned. It concerns the state of the biblical text and what to do about it. The text of Isaiah 38 contains a number of problems, as do many biblical texts. In the prose sections, the problems are mainly related to the order of events in the narrative. In the poem, the problems have to do with words and forms that are puzzling or do not seem to fit. Most commentators propose changes and emendations in an effort to restore an earlier, and presumably better, stage of the text. While some of these proposed emendations do seem likely or even probable, many corrections are educated guesses, often chosen from two or more options, all of which may be possible but none of which is compelling to all. Such corrections yield a text that is clearer, at least from a modern perspective, but nevertheless tentative. While I do not object to scholars proposing emendations, my own inclination is to recognize the problems but leave most of them unresolved. In other words, if we are not sure about corrections, can one simply refrain from making changes in all but the most likely cases? To do this will,of course, leave many gaps in the text. Still, in spite of the uncertainties and puzzles left in the text, it can be argued that both the story and the poem of Isaiah 38 may still be grasped in broad terms. In the narrative section the basic narrative pattern can be discerned. In the poem most of the larger images and their arrangement can be identified. Therefore, at least for this brief study, I have decided to let the tensions and inconsistencies, the unusual words and phrases, remain without trying to correct them and simply recognize them as gaps or blurred patches in the text.

With these preliminary remarks, we may now turn to the text of Isaiah 38 itself. The story and the poem will be considered separately first and then together.

4. See for example my *Oral Formulaic Language* (1967) for poetry and my *Themes and Variations* (1992) for narrative.

5. See my discussion in 'Orality and Writtenness in Prophetic texts' (2000: 46-56).

The story will be approached in terms of traditional patterns. It covers vv. 1-8, 21, 22 and tells how King Hezekiah became mortally ill but was restored to health. This involves a prayer by the king, two announcements through Isaiah, a negative one saying that the king will die and then a positive one saying that the king will live. A sign is given to confirm that the positive announcement will happen. At this point, another prayer from the king appears that seems to be a poem of thanksgiving (vv. 9-20) After this poetic section two verses, 21 and 22, appear to bring the story to an end. Even though not all the elements in the story are entirely clear, the main movement or sequence of action from difficulty to rescue, is clear, and this is why it can be described as a rescue story. There are many stories in biblical narrative that have this movement as a central feature (Culley 1992: 63-55, 146-56). What I call rescue stories can be very short as in 2 Kgs. 2.19-22 or very long as in the Exodus account, Exodus 1–15. This main movement or sequence of action in stories can be used, and this is what I have done, as a key in order to gather stories into different genres.[6] One might prefer to produce more specific groups, say stories about kings and prophets but this yields rather small groupings. The advantage of using the movement from difficulty to rescue is that one may examine the theme of rescue on a broad scale and on many levels.

While identifying the main movement of the action is one way of grouping stories into narrative genres, the stories making up the group may still vary considerably as to how the main movement of rescue is carried out. Stories can incorporate many secondary movements into the action of the story.[7] It is, therefore, important to study the rescue stories as individual stories as well as members of a group or genre because, while they all share the movement toward rescue, they display their own perspectives and their own way of narrating the theme of rescue. Since each rescue story is different, examining a group of these stories in the Bible amounts to exploring the theme of rescue, mapping out its possibilities and boundaries. As a rescue story, Isaiah 38 bears its own specific shape and characteristics yet it remains one realization or articulation of a rescue pattern shared with the other rescue stories.

The next step, then, must be to read the story in Isaiah 38 again in order to see how the rescue movement or sequence is worked out. The opening description of the problem situation is stated in two ways. First, it is simply said that Hezekiah became sick with a fatal illness. This is enough to make clear that the king faces a critical situation, his own death. However, this situation is then

6. In *Themes and Variations* (1992), stories were grouped according to their main action sequences, so that there were rescue, punishment, announcement, and prohibition groupings, for example. I did not call them genres then, although now I would be willing to consider these groupings as genres, a point that I will not try to argue here.

7. See the discussion of different kinds of action sequences in *Themes and Variations* (1992: 47-76).

elaborated and complicated by the sudden appearance of the prophet Isaiah who, without any further explanation, presents a word from Yahweh, using the usual prophetic formula ('so says Yahweh'), announcing that Hezekiah will die and not live. It is confirmed that the illness will indeed be fatal. For whatever reason, Yahweh has decided that the king will die.

This assertion appears to fit into a movement or sequence, often encountered in stories, which can be called an announcement movement or sequence.[8] Something is signaled or announced at one point in a story and one expects to hear later that it happens. It usually does, particularly if it is announced by the deity. A tension is created between announcement and its realization, like waiting for the other shoe to drop. Once something is announced, anyone following the story usually anticipates that the narrative will at a later point recount the realization of this announcement. Sometimes, however, the very fact that Yahweh has announced something can be sufficient. The announcement is as good as done and no further comment confirming that it happens is necessary, since it is taken for granted that what is announced will occur.

Here, however, the announcement about the king's certain death does not happen. Hezekiah responds to the announcement of his death with a prayer. The prayer is a simple one and asks only that Yahweh remember Hezekiah's faithfulness, integrity, and the propriety of his actions. No other request is made explicitly but the prayer implies that Hezekiah deserves better than the fate announced for him. Whether Isaiah has left the scene of not, we do not know but a word of Yahweh comes to the prophet and instructs him to say in Yahweh's name that the prayer has been heard. Yahweh has changed his mind. In other words, the announcement about Hezekiah's death will not happen. It is then replaced by two other announcements. First, it is said that Hezekiah's life will be extended for fifteen years. The way this new announcement is phrased suggests that the original announcement has not been canceled outright but rather mitigated allowing for a fifteen year extension. The second announcement is also puzzling in many ways. It declares that the deity will rescue him from the King of Assyria. A need for rescue from the king of Assyria was not presented as an issue at the beginning of the story. This announcement shifts the focus of rescue from Hezekiah as an individual facing death through sickness to Hezekiah as king, the leader of a nation, facing defeat at the hands of a powerful invader and all that this entails. This announcement, then, includes both the king and the city, although something like this has already come true in the previous chapter and is never mentioned again in Isaiah 38. Incidently, the juxtaposition of the healing and the deliverance of the city may suggest that both are recognized as rescue stories,

8. For examples of announcement sequences, see *Themes and Variations* (Culley 1992: 71-75). They are very common. For an announcement which is announced but merely assumed to happen and not narrated, see the story of Ahab in 1 Kgs. 20 (pp. 83-85) and for an announced punishment that is mitigated see the story of Ahab in 1 Kgs. 21 (pp. 85-87).

and this may support my suggestion above that a whole range of stories can be included under the heading of rescue. Otherwise, stories about restoration from a sickness are not common, although they certainly exist (1 Kgs 17.17-24, and its parallel 2 Kgs 4.8-37, and 2 Kgs 5.1-19).

A sign is then offered to show that what Yahweh has announced will happen. The offer of a sign to confirm an announcement is rare in biblical narratives, although one is offered to Ahaz in Isaiah 7 and Gideon demands signs in Judges 6. The details of the sign in Isa. 38.7-8 are murky but it has something to do with moving the shadow of the sun on some steps. At this point the story could end because the announcement of the resolution of the difficulty, death through sickness, has been modified so that the king is no longer in danger of death from his illness. Even though the poem is introduced at this point, two further statements (vv. 21-22) are added at the end of the poem and they appear to be meant as a continuation of the story. The first statement (v. 21) describes an instruction from Isaiah that a poultice should be put on a boil so that the king might live. This is new information. The story has not until this point mentioned that the mortal illness was caused by a boil. Nor did the announcement that the king's life would be extended contain any hint that preparing and applying a poultice would be necessary. The second statement (v. 22) has Hezekiah asking about what sign there will be that he will go up to the house of Yahweh. Again this statement is new information. Both of these statements appear to fit into a fuller story, or other versions of the story, that could have been told but were not. It is difficult to explain why they were added in this way.

In summary, the following points need to be emphasized. First, this story follows traditional patterns. In terms of genre, the story can be viewed as a rescue story with the usual movement from difficult situation to rescue. As noted, this pattern fits in with many other stories in the biblical tradition. In filling in this rescue pattern the story uses different kinds of announcement patterns, one of these has a sign as confirmation, setting aside the mention of a sign in v. 22. The main participants in the story are Yahweh, the king, and the prophet, again a common set of characters in biblical rescue and punishment narratives. This story leads us into the familiar world of biblical narrative.

One commentator who has shown an interest in the traditionality of this story is Joseph Blenkinsopp (Blenkinsopp 2000). He approaches the story in terms of what he calls type-scenes, an idea also discussed by Robert Alter in his book on biblical narrative.[9] In his study of oral narrative poems like Homer, Albert

9. *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Alter 1981: 50-51). In referring to my monograph on biblical narrative (Culley 1976), Alter suggested that I had not noticed in my studies of similar biblical stories that I was in fact dealing with type-scenes discussed by some Homeric scholars. Alter had not noticed that in my studies of similarity in biblical stories I was in fact dealing with the phenomenon he calls type-scenes. In the first chapter of that monograph I discussed the phenomenon variously called by folklorists: stock incident, episode, core plot and also noted their relationship to Lord's compositional theme and story pattern in oral narrative poetry.

Lord speaks of different kinds of elements used in traditional, oral narrative used to build long oral narratives: formulas, themes, and story patterns. Others have referred to themes as type-scenes or typical scenes. For short prose stories in the Bible, I tend to avoid the term 'type-scenes' in favour of 'story patterns', since typical scenes as such are fairly rare. While scholars have offered several options for describing what Blenkinsopp, following Alter, calls type-scenes, my way of dealing with this phenomenon is to view these story patterns as movements or sequences of action. Above, I have related this to genre.

We turn now to the poem. The poem has a title (38.9) which functions as do Psalm titles, although this heading can be set aside for the moment. The poem, as does all poetry, features images and so the psalm will be considered in broad terms by following the main blocks marked by major images and themes. While the poem of Isa. 38.10-20 has many textual problems, often at the word level, it is still possible to identify most of the major images and grasp their force, at least in general terms. It is then possible to trace a pattern of the imagery that articulates the desire to express thanks, if this is indeed a thanksgiving rather than a complaint.

The main focus of the discussion to follow will be to see how the traditional imagery expresses this traditional psalm type of thanksgiving of an individual. The precise genre or type of the psalms remains open to discussion and the reasons for this will be seen as the text is reviewed. In the end, it may not matter a great deal which genre we choose. Individual complaints and individual thanksgivings are quite similar because they both involve the description of a difficult situation and praise. The key to distinguishing them is the perspective expressed, that is, whether the poet is speaking out of the difficult situation and anticipating rescue or whether the poet is speaking from the position of having been rescued and looking back on the difficulty. Since I have already indicated that I am prepared to leave gaps in the text, I will not be reviewing the text critical issues which have already been thoroughly discussed by commentators. The plan will be to identify the series of images along which the poem moves. Here again Blenkinsopp is worth mentioning because he discusses the poem in terms of its images. The difficult state of the text has already been granted. I offer a set of headings which mark off the way the language and imagery is grouped.

Death as a rude separation. The first few verses explore the meaning of death for the one praying. The phrase 'I said' seems to put the description of the experience of facing death in the past as in some other individual thanksgivings (for example, Pss. 30.7; 31.23; 41.5; 82.6; Jon. 2.5). The speaker pictures himself sitting at the very gates of Sheol contemplating his fate. He reflects on how death is coming prematurely, well before it should. Another use of the phrase, 'I said', introduces two thoughts about death that are not entirely clear, although both seem to stress how death is a fundamental separation, a separation from Yahweh and a separation from fellow human beings. The two images that follow continue the theme of death as separation and portray it as dramatic

and sudden (v. 12). The petitioner has been pulled up like a tent and his life torn like a piece of cloth from a loom by a weaver. Both actions imply that someone is rudely, if not brutally, bringing his life to a sudden end. Although not named, this person can only be Yahweh. This leads into the next group of thoughts.

Yahweh's role as attacker. The end of v. 12 brings a significant shift. Yahweh is addressed directly as the one who is behind what is happening. The next verse, v. 13, makes the nature of Yahweh's action excruciatingly plain. Yahweh is a lion attacking its helpless victim and shattering his bones. The imagery of birds in the following verse may well, although it does not really fit closely with image of the lion, stress the helplessness of the victim before the onslaught of the deity. In v. 15, Yahweh's role is clearly stated once again: 'What can I say…? He has done it'.

The most difficult verse in the poem is v. 16 which I am quite content, with Hans Wildberger, to leave untranslated (Wildberger 2002: 441). The last verb with it's suffix, 'restore me to life', sounds like an appeal, which one would expect to find in a complaint psalm. However, if we read this psalm as an individual thanksgiving, we would have to read such an appeal, if that is what it is, as something said in the past when the speaker pictured himself in the throes of his bitterness and pain.

Yahweh's role as rescuer. In the next verses, the rescue appears to be viewed as something that has already happened. This fits very well with the notion that this psalm is a thanksgiving of the individual, although it must be added that in complaints, rescue is sometimes pictured as something that has already happened, Gunkel's 'certainty of being heard', often a concluding element (Gunkel 1998: 180). At this point, Yahweh's role is suddenly reversed. The deity no longer intervenes in the form of a deadly attacker who has apparently precipitated the crisis of the immediate threat of death but emerges as the generous rescuer who pulls the victim back from the pit and casts his sins behind his back. Here sins are mentioned for the first time. They were not identified as an issue before but the comment may imply that they lay behind Yahweh's attacks and the crisis of premature death. This would at least offer a reason for Yahweh's attack which could then be seen as punishment, although this explanation is not distributed uniformly throughout the poem. Even so, it would not explain the ferocity of the assault described as that of a lion.

Praise in thanksgiving. The last few verses (vv. 18-20) turn to praise. In an individual thanksgiving this would be fitting because the movement or direction of such a psalm is to praise and thank Yahweh for rescue. One must add, however, that complaints may also conclude with praise, although for an anticipated rescue. The language used here is worth noting. It is indicated (v. 18) that the those who descend to Sheol, that is the dead, do not praise Yahweh. This kind of statement is used in some psalms as a reason why the deity should rescue (complaints: 6.6 and 88.11; a thanksgiving 30.10 as well as 115.17) but here this statement about Sheol and death is contrasted to what follows in v. 19

where it is affirmed that the one who is alive will indeed praise. With this balancing statement the force of v. 18 as an argument for rescue is changed so that it appears to enhance the ability of the rescued to thank and praise for their good fortune.

In summary, the language and imagery of the poem remain generally in the traditional world of the complaints and thanksgivings of the individual. Still, this poem develops its own perspective within these genre boundaries, in this case, by opposing Yahweh as fierce attacker to Yahweh as the timely rescuer. This opposition is left unresolved, although an explanation of sin and punishment is hinted at. There may be a certain match with the story in that Yahweh decides that the King must die but then changes his mind and lets him live.

Now, looking back at the chapter as a whole, some final comments can be made. It was suggested at the beginning that Isaiah 38 forms a very dense treatment of the theme of rescue, and the rest of the discussion sought to explain and illustrate this suggestion. Density is produced by bringing together two different genres both of which feature the theme of rescue. In this way, two different modes of discourse or ways of talking about rescue have been placed together and invite readers to reflect on the interplay the two perspectives that have created. Further density is produced by the fact that both genres represented are traditional in the sense that each shares patterns, language, and imagery with other examples of the same genre. The presence of one example of a genre makes present for readers familiar with the tradition the whole genre-cluster. Thus, the genre-clusters associated to the story and the poem are active in the reading process.

At the same time, the text of chapter 38 of Isaiah with its particular poem and particular story must remain the focus of our attention. It is the text being read. It has the first call on our attention and needs to be read with a careful awareness of its individuality and uniqueness. Even so, the density produced through the juxtaposition of the two kinds of generic discourse and through relationships of various kinds to other examples of the two genres present impinges significantly on our attempt to read Isaiah 38. The complexity creates a tension in the act of reading. On the one hand, there is the strong pull of the genre and its traditional language to absorb the individual poem and story into their respective generic visions. On the other hand, the individual poem and story with their particular treatment of traditional material pull us toward their distinctive presentations and articulations of the genre. There is no simple way to resolve the tension, nor should it be resolved or reduced, because the interplay yields a rich and stimulating encounter with the text.

There remains one further matter concerning the effect of the two genres together. The structure of the chapter implies that the poem functions within the framework of the story and should be read in the light of the story. In fact the poem has a title (38.9) which summarizes the historical occasion for the psalm, as do many of the psalm titles, and suggests that that this occasion is the context

within which the poem should be understood. However, as we have seen, the language of the psalm does not match all that well with the details of the story, or any specific occasion for that matter, which is true of individual complaint and thanksgiving psalms in general. The language and imagery of the poem seem to lift attention above particular instances to a more general perspective on the theme of difficulty and rescue. The story cannot really be read as a frame for the poem but story and poem need to be read as parallel perceptions. The story tells us what happened or was thought to have happened. It particularizes the experience of rescue in terms of a specific person, Hezekiah and an incident in his life. Through imagery and traditional language, the poem explores the phenomenon more generally, reflecting on its nature and implications.

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Scholars of Repute

Matthew W. Mitchell

> *The best illustration of the influence of Hegel in the field which interests us here primarily is F.C. Baur's work in New Testament history and theology, which began in 1831 and continued until his death in 1860… Owing to the artificial and unilinear character of Baur's reconstruction and to the extreme lateness of his dates, his position is no longer held by any scholar of repute… However the problems which he formulated still remain in the foreground of research and New Testament scholarship has never lost the Hegelian coloring which it received from Baur.*
> Albright 1957: 87-88

> *My third aim [in this book] was to come to terms with 1 Samuel as a historical document in a double sense, as coming out of some setting in ancient Israel, and as being a piece of historiography, a telling of the past.*
> Jobling 1998: 3

I want to begin with another quotation from David, as well as a personal confession. My quotation is David's succinct assessment of theory and method: 'In a sense the whole discussion of method boils down to forming the habit of thinking through what one is doing as part of doing it' (Jobling 1998: 26). My confession is that, in writing this piece about 'summarizing scholarship' and attempting to 'think it through' at the same time, I have struggled to come to grips with my own comparatively brief journey from being a student of David's to an active scholar in my own right. Among the most persistent issues that I have wrestled with has been what it has been like to become 'a scholar', and yet to be preceded in many ways by a reputation like David's. By saying a 'reputation like David's', I mean that place David's name occupies within the ideological terrain of biblical studies. His name readily conjures up a whole range of terms and associations: 1 Samuel, ideological criticism, post-structuralism, *Semeia*, postmodernism, and theory.

As a student I knew David simply 'by reputation' before I had met him or read his work or had attended a single lecture. But it was not the reputation of a *scholar*, the '1 Samuel' po-mo David, simply the usual undergraduate student oral lore surrounding what professors were 'tough' or 'interesting' (in the days before ratemyprofessor.com had appeared). As my journey continued though graduate institutions and degrees, the similarities and gaps between the 'David' I had seen as a student, the 'David' other professors seemed to know, and the

'David' I was by then reading left me intrigued by the often unspoken role that 'reputation' plays in biblical scholarship. I doubt that experiencing a difference between the 'written voice' and the person, or discovering the role that academic pedigrees and reputation play is unique to me, but the seemingly unconscious and silent manner in which it operates stands in contrast to its prevalence. Now certainly in a volume in honor of David Jobling, most of the authors and the prospective readers will simply accept the notion that biblical scholarship is a far from objective enterprise, and knowing me to be a student of David's, most readers would understandably expect me to share such a notion. This awareness does not negate the point that reputation and personality help to shape our receptivity to certain points of view. Indeed, even such assumptions about who is doing the reading and writing in a volume such as this are precisely the kinds of thoughtless habits of mind that David's work challenges, and illustrate the principle of academic reputation. After all, how much does being 'somebody's student' actually tell us about that particular scholar's views? Yet biblical scholars often *want* to know that Mowinckel studied with Gunkel, or Koester with Bultmann, although few will explicitly write about it as a 'factor' in assessing someone's scholarship.[1] However, my own admittedly limited experience at scholarly meetings tells me that this sort of intellectual family-tree making is part and parcel of our assessment of a scholar's work, whether it is acknowledged or not. Let me be explicit in this regard then: I was David Jobling's student for four semesters of biblical Hebrew, as well as three semesters of Hebrew Bible while an undergraduate, and the topic of my MA thesis was first formulated in one of his classes (Mitchell 2004). It is small surprise to me that his influence should loom so large in my own sense of scholarly identity.

David's work has been in large measure about laying bare these sorts of unconscious and hidden elements in scholarly discourse. This is not an attempt to overthrow logical analysis, as opponents of critical theory maintain, but rather is an effort to fully understand the aims and purposes of scholarly inquiry. As another prominent Canadian scholar once noted, an emphasis on logical forms of argumentation all too often hides the elements of desire and personality that are its driving force.

> In considering the *logic* of an argument our attention is *directed away* from the fact that the argument is what *the person* constructing the argument *wants to be true*… In theory an argument would not depend for its validity on the person who advanced it: *it would be the same argument no matter who worked it out*. But *nobody quite believes this*: there is always some glimpse of relation to a personality (Frye 1990: 12 [italics mine]).

1. One notable exception is an enjoyable essay by David J.A. Clines entitled 'Philology and Power' (Clines 1998: II, 613-30). Clines dwells more on the 'direct' connections within philological schools, and does not specifically address the broader issue of reputation, aside from the derision Mitchell Dahood's name receives in some circles.

This essay, then, is about reputation and the rhetoric of scholarship. Although the topic of my essay is Ferdinand Christian Baur, I will not interact closely with his writings. Nor will I make reference to Paul's writings, even though much of the discussion of Baur takes place within the confines of Pauline scholarship. Nor will I attempt to establish any kind of conclusion about Baur's work or Paul. My interest is in *the way* in which Pauline scholars discuss Baur and his work, and what that reveals about 'reputation' and scholarship's own telling of its past.

The New Rhetoric and Scholarly Rhetoric

The Postmodern Bible is one of the most significant and ambitious attempts to introduce critical theory to biblical scholarship (Aichele *et al.* 1995, hereafter *PMB*). Although I first encountered the book itself while an undergraduate (from David, naturally), it served largely as a reference work for me throughout my subsequent studies rather than serving as an influence in its own right. However, it was an important gateway to other materials, and first introduced me to the concept of rhetorical criticism. *PMB* specifically discusses Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's study of argumentation, *The New Rhetoric* (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969). This work was an attempt to study 'argumentation' in a broader sense, not simply the exploration of the categories of Greco-Roman rhetoric that serves to define 'rhetorical criticism' as practiced by many New Testament scholars. The emphasis on discourse, and the disconnect between argumentation and 'truth' make the reference in *PMB* understandable. Statements like 'the object of the theory of argumentation is the study of the discursive techniques allowing us *to induce or to increase the mind's adherence to the theses presented for its assent*', are clear attempts to block out the study of argumentation as a path to 'truth', even if the language is not entirely what we would now recognize as postmodern (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 4). Also, given that the focus on the structure of argumentation corresponds with the movement from structuralism to post-structuralism (that is, thorough analysis of the structure of argumentation causes it to appear 'structured' [or even 'constructed'], at which point the idea that 'the structure' is somehow natural or intrinsic becomes less tenable), the inclusion of the *New Rhetoric* in *PMB* becomes even more understandable.

While the *PMB* is more concerned with the application of new rhetoric to the biblical text, I find myself increasingly concerned with the additional question as to what this theory means for the argumentation one also finds *within* Pauline scholarship. That is, rather than viewing this point of departure as simply a call for 'coming to terms with the rhetoric of religion' (*PMB*: 171) or even the 'rhetoric of Paul', I am motivated to come to terms with the rhetoric of scholarship (cf. the approach in Matlock 1997). Although 'appeal to reputation' is not itself a rhetorical term, belonging to a subset of other categories, its use is

so prevalent that it deserves exploration.[2] The figure of F.C. Baur serves as an especially useful lens through which to study the rhetorical workings of Pauline scholarship. Baur, as a representative of the Tübingen School, stands as the figure 'credited' with inaugurating modern biblical scholarship, and 'blamed' for foisting upon it the misguided theory that the origins of Christianity lay in a sharply demarcated struggle between the followers of Peter and of Paul.[3]

> No single event ever changed the course of Biblical scholarship as much as the appearance of the Tübingen School. All New Testament criticism and, derivatively, much Old Testament criticism from the mid-nineteenth century onwards finds its origin, consciously or unconsciously, in this school (Harris 1975: 1; cf. Baird 1992: 244-94; Schweitzer 1912: 12-21).

However, given this emphatic utterance of importance one wonders about the reasons behind Bruce Kaye's observation in 1984 that 'in recent years there has been something of a growing interest in the work and contribution of Ferdinand Christian Baur', and its guarded follow-up: 'Baur's reputation in English scholarship, however, is not high now *nor has it ever really been*' (Kaye 1984: 193).[4]

Baur's Reputation: Hegelian Oversimplification and Willful Misreading

For the late nineteenth century, one could say that some of Baur's views were simply too 'radical' to be received positively. His rejection of the historical reliability of much of the New Testament, his skepticism towards 'supernaturalism', and his attack upon scholarly credulity regarding 'miracles' certainly earned him detractors, some of whom openly regarded him as an enemy of the Christian faith (Neill 1964; Luedemann 1989: 220-21 n. 56). Harris makes clear that Baur's relationship to David F. Strauss was a key element in this regard (Harris 1975: 27-36), although Baur himself also continually cautioned that the historian should not 'give unqualified assent to every miracle which is related in the New Testament', since doing so constitutes an 'evasion of the critical ques-

2. Depending on its use, reputation would fall under the sections on 'Interaction of Act and Person' and 'Argument From Authority' (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 296-310).

3. A simpler part of my motivation for combining these issues arose from the experience of writing a doctoral dissertation on Paul. The more intimately I was forced to adhere to scholarly formats and guidelines, and the more I imbibed and absorbed the various nuances of different scholarly authorities on this or that aspect of Paul, the more I have tried to think through what I 'was doing' as part of 'the doing'.

4. See also Rollmann 1988, and for a brief biography see Harris 1975: 11-54. F.C. Baur was described in the 1960s as 'one of the most neglected' of scholars and theologians (Hodgson 1966: 6). Harris claims in his introduction that there was little published of note on Baur for one hundred years (p. vi). However, the 1960s did see publication of his collected works in German (Baur 1963). Most notable for recent English-language scholarship is the reprint of Baur's *Paulus* in 2003, after a period of almost one hundred and thirty years (Baur 1876).

tions which as historians they should have investigated'. For a critical historian, in Baur's view, even the question of whether or not miracles are possible is 'quite superfluous' (Baur 1876: I, 99, unnumbered footnote).

There are also judgments concerning the reliability of extra-biblical materials that are problematic in hindsight for scholars. Baur famously rejected the authenticity of the Ignatian corpus, and relied heavily upon the Pseudo-Clementine material as a reliable gauge of the hostility between Jewish Petrine Christianity and Gentile Paulinism, often citing it in the same breath as Paul's epistles and using it almost as a parallel source from the viewpoint of Paul's opponents (Baur 1831: 136; Kaye 1984: 199, 214-17).[5] His views on these issues have been thoroughly critiqued and rejected almost universally.[6] Holding these minority viewpoints is not, however, the biggest obstacle for Baur's subsequent reputation.[7]

Baur is often accused of 'Hegelianism', and throughout much twentieth century scholarship this criticism has often been repeated,[8] and finds itself reproduced as common knowledge in back cover 'blurbs'.[9] Even for those scholars who surround this description with laudatory comments, this failing of Baur's is reason enough to ignore his conclusions. Scholars undertaking to utilize Baur

5. In Baur's view Peter's ongoing conflict with Simon Magus is believed to be a thinly veiled reference to Paul. 'Die paulinischen Briefe an die Korinthier und Galater auf der einen und die Clementinen auf der anderen Seite bezeichnen uns die äußersten Puncte, an welchen die in der ältesten Kirche gegen den Apostel Paulus erhoben Polemik, der Gegensatz des paulinischen und petrinischen Christenthums, fixirt werden kann' (Baur 1831: 136). See also Baur 1876: I, 88-91.

6. Unfortunately, Baur's bold claim that the Pseudo-Clementine material could be used as a guide to Jewish Christian hostility to Paul has to deal with a chronological gap of 'at least 120 years', a gap that few Pauline scholars since are willing to bridge in so straightforward a fashion (Luedemann 1989: 2, 21-23). Hans Joachim Schoeps has dealt with this material, though largely with its redaction and its serviceability for uncovering traces of the Jewish Christian Ebionites, as have J. Louis Martyn and Luedemann (Jones 1995: 17-20, 25-31). Jones shares Baur's view in the end, albeit much more guardedly, that the Pseudo-Clementines represent a type of Jewish Christianity that stands 'in some sort of direct genetic relationship' to the earliest form (Jones 1995: 165).

7. For Harris, however, such mistakes loom large. Baur's rejection of the supernatural is a dogmatic presupposition intrinsically linked to his errors in historical judgment (Harris 1975: 249-62).

8. In teaching an undergraduate survey course in Christianity in 2005, I was astonished to find Baur making a one-sentence cameo in a textbook that covered the entirety of Christian history. 'The Hegelian legacy in theology is seen most clearly in the work of F.C. Baur (1792–1860), a New Testament scholar at the University of Tübingen who saw the contrasting positions of Peter (insistence on works of the Law) and Paul (grace as freedom from law) as thesis and antithesis respectively, resolved in the experience of the Catholic Church' (Keen 2004: 290). My surprise remains greater at his meriting inclusion than at the assessment.

9. Note the comment of Mark Nanos on the Hendrickson reprint of *Paul*, which represents this view as received wisdom: 'Baur's application of Hegel's dialectical theories to the writings of Paul profoundly shaped the discourse of his mid-nineteenth century German contemporaries'.

or deal with his views seriously are thus forced to address this concern, which originated within Baur's own lifetime and to which he himself devoted some energy refuting (Luedemann 1989: 219-21 nn. 53-57; Goulder 2001: 1-15). In his study of Baur, Hodgson is at pains to argue that Baur's work on Paul started 'well before Baur first read Hegel', and he devotes a large amount of space to defending and examining Baur's view of history and his method of historical writing (Hodgson 1966: 22 n. 85, 268-81). Harris takes almost the opposite view in his study, confidently asserting that:

> Baur did not deny he was a Hegelian; he merely asserted that he refused to be labelled as an adherent of any philosophical system. Against the whole tenor of Baur's utterances during these years [1833–47], no isolated statements of Baur himself or opinions of his later interpreters can overthrow the Hegelian testimony which breathes through so many passages where the dogmatic content of the Christian faith is under discussion (Harris 1975: 156).

Among contemporary New Testament scholars, Gerd Luedemann is vociferous in Baur's defense, stating that although one often reads that Baur's writing 'were nothing else than a prejudiced reconstruction on the basis of Hegel's philosophy', such 'accusations' are made by those scholars who are 'not in a position' to make them. Luedemann claims that Baur's critics have either simply not read him, or not read him carefully enough, although the above quotation from Harris seems to indicate that denials from Baur himself prove nothing to such scholars.

> The sketch offered above of how Baur *really* came to his conclusions [through a study of the Corinthian letters] may be sufficient to refute these allegations, which only *prove that Baur's exegetical works are unknown territory* to a sector of the present generation of scholars…most of Baur's detailed analyses referred to above have *nothing to do with a preconceived theory* (Luedemann 1989: 6-7 [italics mine]).

Another longstanding criticism directed against Baur is the accusation of 'oversimplifying' (Schoeps 1961: 63-64). This criticism is often couched in the same language as the attacks upon Baur for his Hegelianism, and may be viewed as simply a broader application of the crux of that accusation: *Baur's commitment to a certain philosophical approach and certain theoretical frameworks predetermined his results*. A principal example of this criticism can be found in one of the most important mid-twentieth century scholars of Paul, Johannes Munck. Munck directed a large portion of his *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* specifically against Baur and what he perceived to be his negative influence upon twentieth century Pauline scholarship (Munck 1959: 69-86). Munck aimed to be 'the ultimate refutation of Baur', and he argued that Baur's portrait erred in its understanding of 'conflict' within Paul's writings, as well as in its assumption of a single source for that conflict (Luedemann 1989: 25).[10]

10. He also describes this book as originating from a 'kind of love-hate relationship with

> The *immense simplification* that Baur's *theory* brings with it by finding everywhere in all Pauline texts the same contrast between the apostle and Jewish Christianity (as a rule its chief leaders in person) has ever since lain like a load on the exposition of the Pauline letters. *Instead of a richly faceted historical reality, there has been found a colourless homogeneity*, caused by *making inferences everywhere from a one-sided interpretation* of early Christianity. The *picture of Baur* that at any rate the author of this book has received *by reports and accounts* that were sympathetic towards Baur was that of a systematic theologian, who *by virtue of his philosophical efforts for co-ordination turned a living history into a rationalized and dead abstraction* (Munck 1959: 70 [italics mine]).

This criticism of Munck's has become part of a standardized argument against Baur. For both Munck and Albright, Baur's philosophical views caused him to oversimplify the evidence and to force the texts into a preconceived theoretical model. Harris notes,

> Thus in order to strengthen his case for the historical framework which he had adduced, Baur simply grasped at every straw he could find. The date and authorship of each New Testament book was then determined according to how it fitted into this historical framework (the tendency approach). 'Fitted' is the wrong word. Baur *forced* the books into the framework by manipulating the facts and distorting the evidence, by emphasizing the details which harmonized with his view while omitting everything which did not (Harris 1975: 258).[11]

Thus one finds that a contemporary Pauline scholar like Mark Nanos can similarly proffer his 2002 *Irony of Galatians* as a non-Baur interpretation, inasmuch as it *does not* impose 'some other larger construction, for example, the Pauline versus Petrine hypothesis of Christian origins or *the conspiracy theories closely related to this*' (Nanos 2002: 23 [italics mine]).

Embraced by the Margin: Dubious Defenders

Baur has had some defenders among biblical scholars, however, most notably Gerd Luedemann and Michael D. Goulder. Goulder has explicitly claimed that Baur's view of early Christianity is quite simply the correct one, and he has, almost single-handedly among English language scholars, devoted some attention and a great many articles to updating and expanding it as a way of explaining the entirety of the New Testament (Goulder 1991a; 1991b; 1991c;

regard to the Tübingen school'. Munck attempted to make clear 'that the first letter to the church in Corinth does not speak of factions among the Christians there, but that the texts that have hitherto been used as evidence for that assumption mention only disunity and bickering' (Munck 1959: 135-36). Baur exaggerated the mere 'bickering' of a 'church without factions' (the title of Munck's fifth chapter) into sectarian rivalry.

11. I am not sure that any scholar can fail to be guilty of emphasizing what helps their argument while omitting what does not.

1992a; 1992b; 1992c; 1994a; 1994b; 1999a; 1999b; 2001; 2003).[12] However, lest one imagine that this energy will signal a reassessment of Baur's reputation, an assessment of Goulder's own status within the field should give one pause. Goulder has expanded the stamp of Pauline authenticity to epistles completely dismissed by Baur himself *and most scholars since* such as Ephesians and Colossians (Goulder 1991a).[13] The problems with Goulder's updating of Baur do not end with his own marginal views on authorship, however.

Considered on its own merits, Goulder's support can charitably be described as something of a mixed blessing for one's reputation among the community of biblical scholars.[14] Given the 'essentially negative reputation' Goulder himself has as 'a maverick, an *enfant terrible*, even a member of the "lunatic fringe" of Biblical Studies', it is an open question whether or not his enthusiastic embrace merely underscores the relative marginality of Baur's position in English language scholarship (Goodacre 1996: 28, 33-37). Goulder is, among other things, one of the most persistent critics of the Two-Source theory of the Synoptic problem. His extensive writings against the existence of the Q-source certainly give the impression of one who does not mind swimming against the stream (or tidal wave, in this case) of scholarly consensus. Also, much like Baur, Goulder's entire body of work *also* suffers from the criticism that he oversimplifies complicated matters in search of a singular theory that explains everything. Indeed, the tendency to look for a single explanatory model is characteristic of Goulder's scholarly writings. When combined with Baur's own reputation for 'forcing' texts into the constraints of a historical theory, Goulder's work runs the risk of merely serving as further confirmation of Baur's reputation.[15]

12. I here am thinking of Luedemann as a 'German-language' scholar.

13. Colossians has a moderate amount of scholarly support as to its authenticity, while Ephesians is widely held to be deutero-Pauline.

14. The same could be said for Gerd Luedemann, who (similarly to Goulder), has renounced Christian belief on the basis of his scholarly inquiries. Some of the furore over subsequent restrictions placed upon him within the Theology Faculty of Göttingen can be reviewed in Luedemann *et al.* 2002. Although the situation is different from that of Goulder's resignation from the Anglican priesthood, the impression one receives of Baur's champions is that of a rather troublesome, contrarian lot of unbelievers.

15. Goulder's series of studies on the Book of Psalms, for example, bear an almost uncanny resemblance to his work on the New Testament in terms of the emphasis he places upon an explanatory model (Goulder 1982, 1990, 1996, 1998). His work on the Psalms is based on the theory that 'long sequences of psalms reflect the course of liturgy in national festivals at various times in the northern and southern states' (Mays 1985: 318). In and of itself, there is nothing unsettling about this theory, but it bears a strong similarity to the 'lectionary theory' that Goulder first developed in the 1970s as an explanation for the Gospels (Goulder 1974; 1978; 1989; Goodacre 1996: 19-21). That is, if the Psalms were shaped by ritual and liturgical use in ancient Israel and Judah, we need only uncover the proper settings to explain the pattern (i.e., the 'book' divisions, groupings of psalms and their headings and superscriptions) of the present Psalter. If the New Testament documents were shaped by their use in worship and preaching of the early

How Scholars Write: The New Rhetoric and PMB on Dissociation

Scholarly argumentation is highly structured and formalized. We biblical scholars are often merely 'tweaking' or modestly redefining the interpretations of previous scholars, or objecting to someone's misrepresentation of someone else's reading of Paul (this is hardly a trade secret, I should think, nor is there necessarily anything wrong with it).[16] According to the New Rhetoric, objections to the arguments of others often take the form of a denial of the 'existence of a connecting link' in a previous argument by affirming the improper association of 'separate and independent elements'. Breaking apart these links is easier in the historical study of something like Christian Origins in some senses, given the hypothetical nature of the historical proposals being made. In this context, one need only think of scholarly denials of the weight Baur places upon the Pseudo-Clementines. Examples can be multiplied even in the case of a single Pauline letter such as 2 Corinthians, by reference to varying uses of redaction criticism and theories of interpolation that 'break' the connections between the chapters of the received text, so that in the end one may well be reading a 'different' text from that of another scholar.

Argumentation also involves the use of what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca refer to as 'dissociation' (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 411-59). Dissociation differs from the 'breaking of connecting links' in that it brings about a 'change in the conceptual data' used in argumentation (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 411). That is, argumentation involving the use of paired terms in which one term is implicitly *or* explicitly given greater value, while the other term is associated with a stance or viewpoint against which one is arguing, 'term I' and 'term II' in their description, (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 420-26). Dissociation is 'the other major technique [next to association] used in all argumentation. Dissociative techniques aim at a disjuncture between a 'reality', which is to be valued as a result of the argument, and a given 'appearance' which is to be devalued or decentered' (*PMB*: 155). The paired terms used in dissociative arguments (e.g. means/end, individual/group, letter/spirit, appearance/reality, theory/practice, etc.) are often reversed, or 'rejected' as (in

church, once again, we need only uncover the patterns derived from the Old Testament texts or 'key liturgical occasions in the Jewish festal year' to explain the structure of selected New Testament passages. Goodacre notes that Goulder altered this theory slightly a decade after first exploring it: the theory that 'the Synoptics, especially Luke, are organized on the basis of an annual cycle of readings from the Old Testament which are fulfilled in sequence, week by week, is now shelved' (Goodacre 1996: 20). The correspondence to the Jewish festal calendar remains, however.

16. A good example of this standard structure can be seen in Meyer 1991 and Sanders 1991. This exchange discusses E.P. Sanders and his, in Meyer's view, erroneous use of Jeremias as a foil for his own scholarship. This example will be returned to below, although a large component of it centers on Jeremias's acquaintance (or non-acquaintance) with rabbinic literature.

another dissociative pairing) being only 'verbal' and not 'real'. The connections between the New Rhetoric and deconstruction/post-structuralism are at this point even clearer. If Jacques Derrida's work deals in 'the inadequacies of binary thinking' and offers a 'novel critique of the frameworks in which critics traditionally operate' (Sherwood 1996: 189), the New Rhetoric offers a study of the structures of argumentation and binary thinking that, having focused on rhetorical process rather than 'truth', implicitly call into question the truth claims made through that process.[17] Deconstruction, after all, points out the 'arbitrary preference for one term of a binary opposition over the other—absence over presence, clarity over obscurity, etc.' (Jobling 1998: 11), the very binaries most often encountered in the rhetorical use of dissociation.

Abstract/Concrete

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca give two examples particularly pertinent to Pauline scholarship's rhetorical practice: 'individual' paired with 'universal', and 'abstract' paired with 'concrete'. Now some of this language is perhaps inevitable in many instances of scholarly discourse, and it will certainly come as little surprise to Pauline scholars to hear that the terms 'universal' and 'particular' are commonly employed in their field.[18] This language is so prevalent in Pauline studies that proper analysis of these terms alone would require a separate study.[19]

The issue of abstract/concrete terminology is more easily assessed, although I do not think the full extent of its use or its implications has been acknowledged. A scholarly monograph is an extended attempt at persuasion, and in biblical scholarship that claims to follow historical-critical principles it is accepted that an 'abstract' notion or portrait is less likely to be 'historical' than a 'concrete' portrait. Thus it should perhaps come as no surprise that F.C. Baur's later opponents represent his 'historical' work on Paul as based upon abstraction and idealized philosophical speculation, while his supporters argue that his views were based upon careful sifting of the evidence and close interaction with the primary sources (= 'concrete'). Although I suspect that Baur did some of both, I raise the point because it is also an extremely telling initial response for a biblical scholar to assert that *someone they disagree with is simply not reading carefully (or widely) enough*. Luedemann's characterization of Baur's critics as

17. Once the seams of production are made visible in an argument or theory, claims to absolute certainty become rather less convincing.

18. Contemporary Pauline scholars often assert that the post-Sanders 'New Perspective' in Pauline studies is an attempt to do away with Christianity's traditional reading of Paul through a 'universalistic paradigm' (Donaldson 1997: 4).

19. I had initially planned to make this aspect of Pauline scholarly rhetoric the focus of this piece, but soon realized that it would take me far beyond the range of my allotted space.

'not having read him' is simply a reversal of the argument against Baur's work. Because of Hegel, Baur did not read Paul carefully, because you have read (or heard!) that Baur was a Hegelian, you have not read Baur carefully!

An Autobiographical Conclusion: Desire, Kermode, and the Witch of Endor

From a broader perspective, I also wonder if the reputation that Baur has received forms part of an ongoing rhetorical hostility towards 'theory' intruding into concern with 'the text' (cf. again the discussion of 'anti-rhetorical rhetoric' in Matlock 1997). One can compare Goulder's dismissal of these considerations as irrelevant in evaluating Baur as an example of the same notion directed in Baur's defense. Let's simply 'read the text', and allow his exegesis to stand or fall by its own merits. This is the approach a 'reputable' scholar might take. In discussing hostility to critical theory, Terry Eagleton comments that the view 'that theory is incapable of close reading is one of its opponents' most recurrent gripes', and he then notes that 'when it comes to a thinker like Jacques Derrida, the more apt accusation might be that he is far *too* painstaking a reader' (Eagleton 2003: 92). Biblical scholars have certainly mastered the former 'gripe', as we can see from a quick glance at the history of Baur's reception. Happily enough they are becoming equally familiar with the 'apt' accusation's rhetorical impact as well.

In an interesting parallel to David Jobling's work, *both* of these responses seem to inform many of the criticisms that *PMB* itself received. Frank Kermode's accusation that 'the team is far more interested in Theory than in the Bible' (Kermode 1995: 31), is most informative in comparison to that of reviewer Anthony Lane, who thinks that *PMB* actually 'unpicks' texts 'with disdain' and deconstructs them 'to death' (Lane 1995: 100). One is either simply reading the wrong thing (i.e., not really '*reading* the Bible', but foisting Derridean/Hegelian theories upon it), or else reading too closely to see what the text is *really* about (cf. Carroll 1998 for a more adequate response). Given this state of affairs, Luedemann and Goulder's defenses of Baur's views seem simply like rhetorical reflexes; automatic, but also rather weak and uninspired.

In my case, perhaps I was drawn to Baur simply because I 'wanted' my reading of a particular passage to be right, and have chosen to emphasize arguments and thinkers that support my case. Or perhaps I am simply drawn to the minority positions of free-thinking contrarians for some unknown reason I have yet to fully understand. After all, I am a student of David Jobling's.

At a first glance, the appearance of an essay discussing one of historical-critical scholarship's 'founding fathers' in a volume in honor of one of the leading proponents of postmodern biblical scholarship may seem a trifle unusual. Of course, *as* a biblical scholar I presumably now should castigate such a reader for 'not reading' David's work 'more carefully'. However, one of David's last-

ing contributions as a teacher and a scholar is the admission and recognition that scholarship is more often about the impressions and ideas one gains of and about a text or a thinker than it is about those texts or ideas themselves.

I learned from David that scholarship is about the things we do not discuss, and that scholarship is largely autobiographical. My own interests in F.C. Baur and Paul were almost certainly a direct result of David Jobling's influence as a teacher. If David's early work was a reaction against 'the historical criticism that had dominated' his own student experience, surely it is telling that I as one of David's students am drawn towards F.C. Baur (Jobling 1998: 15). And if a 'focus on discourse' and 'seemingly pre-existing truths' is 'always implicit in the postmodern', it often seems to me that even some of the dry philological, historical, *and seemingly traditional* work I find myself engaged in bears the traces of David Jobling's influence (Jobling, Pippin, and Schleifer 2001: 4).

In *1 Samuel* David discusses the historical anxiety about the reliable transmission of God's word, focusing much of his discussion on a reading of the story of the Medium of Endor (Jobling 1998: 256-57, 301-05). Although in the context he is writing of 1 Samuel and its place in the Deuteronomic History, the question he raises about whether the stories we receive *from the past about the past* are reliable is a 'devastating' doubt, since the 'usable memories' are all that ultimately remain (Jobling 1998: 302-303). Surely, however, this applies equally to any story that biblical scholarship tells of its own past. Historicizing previous scholarship as a part of the process of doing our own scholarship is a far harder task than assuming that our arguments stand or fall simply by the skill and ingenuity with which we read the biblical text. It is no secret that the rise of fundamentalism is historically connected to the anxieties provoked by the rise of higher criticism, nor is it any secret that those anxieties have not disappeared. The same anxieties are present, or at least they should be, in regards to the 'legitimate' history of scholarship. Perhaps Baur's reputation *needed* to be what it was for writers like Munck, if for no other reason than Munck's being able to write his own work. That, to my way of thinking Munck's and Baur's understanding of Christian Origins are extremely similar simply reflects the different stakes and issues I have invested in my reading of Paul.

In this light, Goulder and Luedemann rebutting charges of Baur's Hegelianism, or Meyer's defense of Jeremias against the willful misreading of Sanders, have little connection to my own use of Baur and hold little interest for me. I have no idea about the 'correct' understanding of Jeremias or his work, but there is little point in arguing that such battles are really 'about' Jeremias or his work. The recent debate over Jeremias illustrates this process extremely well. In his work, modern issues (the Holocaust, anti-Judaism, anti-Semitism, the history of Christian triumphalism) are now so closely intertwined for scholars that separating them away, as Sanders claims to do (failing, in Meyer's view [Meyer 1991: 460-62]), in favor of what 'the texts' or 'the evidence' really meant seems incredibly simplistic (Sanders 1991: 475-77; cf. Sanders

1977: xiii; Gager 2000: 18-19; but cf. the approach in Oldenhage 2002: 39-69). Understanding our own contexts and reactions to previous scholarship is difficult, and we biblical scholars are rarely trained or encouraged to turn our critical gazes upon our desires and wants as categories for analysis (Oldenhage 2002: 56-59).

David's own admission of 'apostasy' from historical criticism, and my own movement into an interest in historiography and historical criticism are very telling (Jobling 1998: 282-83). But in a sense, David's work has also helped to demystify this process and made my own journey easier. The stories that Munck or Albright were telling, the 'usable memory' of what biblical scholarship had been and what it needed to be, is not my story. Their story did not require them to question the philosophical framework that informed their own writings, or the kind of argumentation they used to present their views. My own development as a scholar, and more importantly as one of David's students, requires this of me, and in some sense also requires me to become an apostate as well.

'Theory' was all well and good, but as a graduate student I *wanted* to master philology and the exegetical tradition, the 'hard' stuff that made one a 'real' scholar. I *wanted* to escape the trap of eternal theoretical confusion, and the posturing of graduate level seminars in which people discussed theories through the use of buzz-words and name-dropping. The 'objective' element was what I *craved*, wearying of memorizing the names of dead French theorists, as earlier scholars had wearied of dead German exegetes. I *wanted* to be acknowledged as a master of what one of my professors refers to as the 'really real', i.e., the things that 'really' count in gaining scholarly 'credibility', 'rigor', and of course 'reputation'. It is, after all, nice to be a 'scholar of repute', or at least be in their company.[20]

Now, as I read articles from recent graduates in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* decrying the time 'wasted' on theory in English seminars that could have been spent on literature, and Terry Eagleton writes an encomium for the 'golden age of cultural theory' (Eagleton 2003: 1), I realize that the 'telling' of the story of scholarship in the last quarter of the twentieth century has begun. The ease with which some of these rhetorical overtures to get back to 'the text' and leave theory behind are being made unsettles me profoundly, even as I have been a willing participant in this move. This is a chapter yet to be written, however, and I have no doubt that anyone who has read David Jobling's work will themselves be unable to blithely accept any totalizing 'history of the discipline' that may be told. After all 'to preserve the past as a resource for the present is to traffic with the dead' (Jobling 1998: 303). The dead are likely to respond by simply

20. This expression is one I heard repeatedly from Temple University's Laura Levitt, whose help in formulating these thoughts I would like to acknowledge. All of us have encountered scholars (still!) for whom an interest in 'theory' or 'feminist readings' indicates a lack of scholarly seriousness or is a sign of some clinical inability to learn Hebrew well enough to do 'real' scholarship.

telling us things we have already heard, or by failing to 'tell us' precisely what to do (1 Sam. 28.15-19). Especially if we have no new questions to ask them, or have pretended that legitimate authorities alone; whether dreams, Urim, or 'scholars of repute' (1 Sam. 28.6), can give us the answers we seek.[21]

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21. Goulder explicitly connects his use of Baur to 1 Samuel 28 as well. See 'Gods Ascending' (Goulder 2001: ch. 1).

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B. Ideological Criticism

The Bible, David Jobling and Ideological Criticism

Armin Siedlecki

Etymologically, ideology designates the study of ideas, although the term is rarely used in this sense. More common is its popular conception as a biased opinion, and as such it was a concept traditionally shunned by many academic enterprises, which were to represent 'value-free', objective inquiries into the nature of reality. An alternative understanding was offered by classical Marxism, which viewed ideology as a kind of ' "false consciousness" that allows both dominant and oppressed classes to perpetuate their uneven class relationships' (Straton 2000: 120). Both of these views presuppose a stable, objective form of meaning inherent in reality, assuming that there is such a thing as a 'value-free enterprise' or a 'correct consciousness', from which an ideological position would deviate. Over the past few decades, this presupposition has been largely called into question. The stability of meaning as an objective reflection of reality ceased to be viewed as existing in an ideal, neutral form which only needed to be uncovered through proper investigation.[1] Instead, meaning came to be seen as something which was continuously constructed, contested and revised. Social structures, political theories and literary texts came to be seen not as subjects of inquiry, but as discourses. Stuart Hall (1998: 1052-53) provides a useful summary of this trend and its implication.

> What emerges from this line of argument is that the power to signify is not a neutral force in society, Significations enter into controversial and conflicting social issues as a real and positive social force, affecting their outcomes. The signification of events is part of what has to be struggled over, for it is the means by which consent for particular outcomes can be effectively mobilized. Ideology, according to this perspective, has not only a 'material force', to use an old expression—real because it is 'real' in its effects. It has also become a site of struggle (between competing definitions' and a stake—a prize to be won—in the conduct of particular struggles. This means that ideology can no longer be seen as a dependent variable, a mere reflection of a pre-given reality in the mind. Nor are its outcomes predictable by derivation from the

1. Cf. Žižek (1994: 10): 'In the Enlightenment tradition, "ideology" stands for the blurred ("false") notion of reality caused by various "pathological" interests (fear of death and of natural forces, power interests, etc.); for discourse analysis, the very notion of an access to reality unbiased by any discursive device or conjunctions with power is ideological. The 'zero level' of ideology consists in (mis)perceiving a discursive formation as an extra-discursive fact.

> simple determinist logic. They depend on the balance of forces in a particular historical conjecture: on the 'politics of signification'.

In this line of reasoning ideology is neither a deviation from a 'value-free' inquiry into an objective reality, as such an inquiry is altogether impossible, nor is it a deliberately deceptive strategy employed by the ruling class to keep the masses at bay. If what Hall calls the 'politics of signification' shape the way events are perceived and interpreted, a particular ideology can certainly be used to negotiate political power and the dominance of one group over another. In this way, the traditional Marxist view of ideology is not completely ruled out, and many ideological critics (including Hall) would acknowledge the impact of Marx's view of society on their own work, although its classic formulation is perhaps overly simplistic. Ideology is not necessarily a conscious[2] attempt to distort reality for one's own benefit, but rather a specific logic that informs the perception and representation of reality in a given text, utterance or action. Particularly significant are the theoretical insights of Marxist literary critics like Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson, who read texts as cultural productions on the superstructural level, reflecting the economic infrastructure of the society that produces them.

Given the complexity of the term, it is not surprising that ideology has been understood in a variety of ways in biblical studies. An example often cited as one of the earliest applications of ideological criticism to a reading of the biblical text is Fernando Belo's *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (1981) which combines a traditional Marxian view of social analysis with the literary methods developed by Roland Barthes. An altogether different view of ideology is found in Meir Sternberg's *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (1985), which utilizes narratological criticism to uncover the singular ideology of the text itself, which is expressed through what he calls the 'foolproof composition' of the Bible, making it impossible for the reader to misconstrue or counterread the text. This position is not accepted by the majority of biblical scholars engaged in ideological criticism, who often try to read 'against the grain', seeking to uncover not a singular ideology of the text, but rather different ideologies in the text, i.e. who attempt a deliberate counter-reading to established, ideological paradigms. In addition, ideological critics of the Bible tend to view texts as cultural productions on the superstructural level, reflecting the economic infrastructure of the society that produces them. As with any superstructural product, there is a surplus of meaning, meaning which transcends the written text itself. What is at stake is the control this surplus of meaning, namely the ruling class (i.e. priests, kings, etc. in the biblical world). In the appropriation of such cultural products by later cultures, such as our own, this surplus remains, while its control is shifted

2. The idea of ideology as a subconscious factor motivating political and social views has been central to the work of several Marxist critics, most notably Louis Althusser and Fredric Jameson.

to other groups. It is this shift which has made possible the use of the biblical text to justify anything from slavery to the oppression of women or the exclusion of homosexuals from traditional religious discourses. Ideological criticism attempts to unmask this appropriation of the surplus of meaning both within the biblical text and within our own reading and application of the text by critiquing both the cultural logic that underlies the text (and its interpretation) as well as the symbolic system on the basis of which society's superstructure is organized, and which has a direct bearing on the daily lives that takes place on the infrastructural level.

The discipline of biblical studies is not known to be methodologically adventurous. The 'sanctity of the text' can become a pre-text for guarding the interpretation of the Bible from 'illegitimate' hermeneutical enterprises. On the level of religious interpretation (i.e. in religious communities), this caution is often deliberate, while academic resistance to new, critical methodologies is frequently more subtle, expressed by the still dominant historical-critical school's reluctance to accept alternative forms of exegesis as legitimate scholarship. In both cases, however, it is not the text itself that is the bone of contention, but rather the exclusive claim to the 'surplus of meaning', which is more strongly defended with respect to the biblical text than arguably any other object of study. It therefore takes time for literary, philosophical or social-scientific approaches to be acknowledged by scholars of the Bible, even after these discourses have become integral topics of debate and analysis in other departments in colleges and universities. It takes even longer for such approaches to become part of 'main-stream' biblical criticism, although from the perspective of an ideological critic, one may well wonder if such a development would be desirable or even conducive to the deconstructive goals of those who view the biblical text both as liberating and in need of liberation from established powers and structures.[3]

Of course, reading literature with regard to power-structures reflected either in the text or in their interpretive contexts is not unique to ideological criticism. The same impulse is found to post-structuralist or deconstructive criticism, and it is central to specific forms of biblical interpretation, which might draw on deconstruction or critical theory, such as feminist criticism or race-oriented criticism. One of David Jobling's greatest contributions to the field of biblical studies is his ability to build methodological bridges to facilitate a discourse of liberation about the Bible. David has resisted what one might call the 'balkanization' of theory, an insistence on methodological purity at the expense

3. Historical-critical exegesis itself developed out of an attempt to counter certain religious and political power structures supported by 'pre-critical' readings of the Bible. The suppression of early critics in this tradition, such as the expulsion of Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) from his synagogue in Amsterdam or the attempted censorship of Richard Simon (1638–1712) by Jaques-Bénigne Bossuet, Bishop of Condom (1627–1704) illustrates that historical-critical approaches to the Bible were themselves ideologically contested. For a discussion of the relationship between ideologically critical factors in nineteenth-century historical-critical scholarship, cf. Briggs (1992).

of an effective strategy of resistance to the hegemony of totalizing truth claims. Thus, David has been able to make good use of the ideological critic Terry Eagleton, while resisting Eagleton's own condemnation of deconstruction as a counter-productive form of literary theory (1996). This desire for integration rather than separation is also well expressed in two quotations by Sheila Briggs cited in the preface to *Semeia* 59 (1992: viii) edited by Tina Pippin and David Jobling (cf. Briggs 1992: 16).

> …the biblical scholars engaged in ideological criticism tend not to adopt a theoretical perspectives *in toto*. Rather they select constructs which they think will elucidate a specific textual complex or hermeneutical point. They are not really enamoured of the 'system'…

Semeia 59, published in 1992, reflected on the formation of an ideological criticism consultation at the Society of Biblical Literature in 1990. David Jobling was one of the founding members and early supporters of this consultation, which has since found a place as a full section at the society's annual meetings. In addition to this involvement, David's early commitment to ideological criticism in biblical studies is evident in publications about the interrelationship between society and texts, e.g. in his 'Sociological and Literary Approaches to the Hebrew Bible: How Shall the Twain Meet' (1987) or 'Texts and the World—An Unbridgeable Gap? A Response to Carroll, Hoglund and Smith' (1991). It is explored more fully in his own contribution to *Semeia* 59 'Deconstruction and the Political Analysis of Biblical Texts: A Jamesonian Reading of Psalm 72', (1992) or the publication of a *Festschrift* for Norman Gottwald in collaboration with Peggy Day and Gerald Shepherd (1991). More important, however, is an underlying premise of ideological criticism—evident in all of David's work—that texts are socio-cultural artifacts, which attest to political relationships shaping the world of their authors, but which also generate certain dynamics of social and political power in the world of their readers. In approaching any text, even (or especially) biblical texts, it is not sufficient merely to comment on the history of the text or its aesthetic dimensions, a responsible reader also acknowledges the political tensions within the text and responds to the ethical challenges that emerge for the modern reader. It is not enough to interpret the world, the point is to change it. It is also for this reason that David Jobling's work, albeit rigorous in its application of theory, has never made theory an end unto itself, but always a tool for liberation and transformation. This conviction is expressed in the collaborative nature of David's work and the fact that many of his publications are co-authored, as well as David's commitment to explore a variety of new interpretive methods as potentially useful paradigms for the work of a bible scholar, a commitment which echoes the call of the early critical theorist Max Horkheimer for a supra-disciplinary approach to interpretation (cf. Horkheimer 1968). An exemplification of both these factors in David's work is his participation in the Bible and Culture Collective, resulting in the publication

of *The Postmodern Bible* (1995) and his involvement in numerous other collaborative projects, both as an author and as a teacher.

Ideological criticism is suspicious of any totalizing hermeneutical paradigm, because it is chiefly concerned with the critique of closed systems. As a result, ideology is most often negotiated at the margins—of society or of the text. Ideological critics are frequently less concerned with the dominant themes of a text than with marginal motifs, as well as with questions of why such motifs are relegated to the fringes of a literary composition or of its interpreters' consciousness. In his essay on the Sotah (Num. 5.11-31), Roland Boer questions why both the biblical text and virtually all of its interpretations have focused on the issue of a woman's unfaithfulness, when the rationale given for the law by the text itself (albeit rhetorically overshadowed by concerns over the woman's sexuality) is her husband's jealousy. Linking the law to political discourse of production and the anthropological discourse of reproduction, he suggests that the law requiring a woman to drink a potion containing dirt from the tabernacle's floor and ink from a parchment is not primarily a magical ritual aimed at proving or disproving a woman's culpability, but rather a social ritual, allowing a jealous man to reassert his dominance over his wife's reproduction. David Gunn's contribution to this volume is even more concerned with meta-commentary. In his analysis of interconnections between seventeenth-century biblical interpretation and the rise of the English novel in the eighteenth century, he explores the impact of hermeneutical assumptions by biblical readers on the rise of a literary genre, which itself has brought about an academic consciousness of English literature. Volker Greifenhagen's essay in this section questions commonly held assumptions about the historical beginnings of Israel. Taking his cue from extra-biblical sources, he turns to the biblical text in search for traces of alternative versions of the origins of the Israelites and concludes that what he calls 'ideological leakage around the master narrative' reveals a deliberate suppression of Egyptian influence in the ethnic genesis of the Israelite people. Tina Pippin's essay finally is the most explicitly political contribution to this section with her ideologically critical reading of the signs of the Apocalypse. Looking at the semiotic signification of 'Empire' in the book of Revelation, and especially the resonance of these signs in the context of 'multivalent globalization and new forms of imperial sovereignty', she offers an open critique of current appropriations of the biblical text of the Apocalypse in the name of a hegemonic ideology in American Middle East policies.

All of these contributions touch on themes that have been of interest and concern to David Jobling throughout his years of publishing and teaching. True to David's own work, these essays are not value-free studies of ideas, but deeply committed and engaged critiques of both the biblical text and its interpretations. It is with great appreciation of his insights and contributions to the field of biblical studies that we present these essays in his honor.

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The Law of the Jealous Man

Roland Boer

This essay is an exercise in estrangement, or the estrangement effect. And the text on which I exercise this estrangement effect is that curious and problematically named Sotah or law of the 'wandering wife' in Numbers 5.11-31. But I find myself in a paradoxical situation, for this is already a strange and anomalous text—as will become clear. I don't need to make the text itself any stranger than it is. I do, however, need to estrange it from biblical scholarship, for critics have sought to normalize and domesticate it in various ways. The first step, then, is to break this text free from its cosy corner; only then can I make the text's anomalous status the basis for an analysis.

Estrangement

The estrangement effect, or *Verfremdungseffekt*, owes itself famously to both Bertolt Brecht and the Russian Formalists (*ostrenanie*). If Brecht sought the break our assumptions of what was normal about theatre by getting his actors to include stage directions in their lines, or to speak in complete monotones—to highlight the fact that all of this was after all theatre and not real life—then the Formalists argued for the priority of form. It is not the case that the form acts merely as a vehicle for the content, that it enables the content, but that the content is in fact the vehicle for the form. In a comparable fashion I would like to estrange some of the critical assumptions surrounding Numbers 5.11-31.

Let me begin, then, by picking up some of the undercurrents of scholarly treatments of the passage. Two stand out: somehow Numbers 5 very quickly becomes a text concerning adultery; and interpreters have an overwhelming desire to enhance the potency of the 'waters of bitterness'. As far as adultery is concerned, I am struck by the way interpreters get stuck on the issue of adultery. Before we know it, connections are made with texts that do in fact concern adultery, such as Exod. 20.14; Deut. 5.17; Lev. 20.10-21 and Deut. 22.13-29, so much so that Numbers 5 becomes the law or trial of the 'suspected adulteress' (Frymer-Kensky 1999: 475; Milgrom 1999) and not of the jealous husband.[1] The traditional title itself, 'Sotah', is part of the same problem, for it

1. Sasson comes close with 'ordeal of jealousy' (Sasson 1999: 483), as does Destro with 'Law

focuses on the woman 'going astray', or 'wandering' (*th*; even Bach falls into this pattern). Secondly, I am intrigued by the way the 'waters of bitterness' (*mê hamm r m*) somehow gain potency in the critical literature, either through their content (a mixture of holy water, dust and ink washed from vellum)[2] or through their placement within a viable (!) legal procedure.

I haven't picked these items at random, so let me focus on the question of adultery. If we look more closely at the initial framing of this trial by ordeal, we get a curious conjunction, one that is reiterated at the close of this text:

> If a man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him, if a man has had intercourse with her but it is hidden from her husband, so that she is undetected though she has defiled herself, and there is no witness against her since she was not caught in the act; if a spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife who has defiled herself; or if a spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife, though she has not defiled herself… (Num 5.12b-14; see also vv. 29-30).

The sand seems to be slipping through the fingers of the man in question. A fundamental tension quickly shows up: first the woman has in fact done the act, but there is no way of detecting, and so the law of trial by ordeal rapidly gives ground until the only basis for the man's jealousy is, well, that spirit of jealousy itself—'he is jealous of his wife, though she has not defiled herself'. Why not just state: if a woman has committed adultery, but there is no proof, then…? This is in fact the logic of the text in the verses that follow, the details of the trial by ordeal itself. But in the introduction what we get is something like a legal version of the 3 am obsessions of a jealous man, twisting in his bed, wide awake. The fourfold repetition is a dead giveaway: the act is hidden; she is undetected; there was no witness; she was not caught in the act. Each becomes ever more frenetic, ever more explicit, until the man starts to run through various lurid images of his wife: did she have to touch him just *there*? Oh no, she didn't do *that*, did she? Until he actually believes it took place—why else does he feel this way? And so in the actual description of the ritual, the woman gets swamped with guilt and innocence fades from the picture. From this obsessional perspective the whole law seems to make perfect sense: if the man is jealous, then he must deal with it. But if we shift focus to the woman's perspective, then the law makes little sense at all: she's trapped if she has and trapped if she hasn't. All that is solid melts into air. Even the item that holds the whole law together—the man's jealousy—is beginning to look decidedly shaky.

Or, to put it differently, as the one who enables the law in the first place, the man himself is outside the procedure, or rather ritual, of the law. As v. 31 points out, 'The man shall be free from iniquity, but the woman shall bear her iniq-

of Jealousy', but then, as if to exacerbate the tension (surely this is not deliberate!), the rest of her title reads 'Anthropology of Sotah' (Destro 1989).

2. Although in many respects the more recent critical literature follows in the steps of the rabbinic commentators (see Destro 1989)

uity'. Here I am tempted to invoke the Lacanian notion that the law in general is based on its exception, the act that necessarily falls outside the law is the one enables it. He is then the frame for the law and the woman gets trapped within that frame—not only in the text but also in so many interpretations that run through from the earliest efforts to the present (see Bach 1999; Destro 1989). Even though the act exists only in the imagination of the man, the verbs themselves are concrete enough—she defiles herself (*ni mâ'âh*; vv. 13, 20, 27, 30), goes astray (*tis eh*; vv. 12, 19, 20, 30) and is unfaithful (*mâ'alâ*; v. 12; see v. 27). All the man has to do is imagine and the act materializes.

Now, it may be possible that the law and its ritual fall within the cultural codes of honour and shame—it is to the man's shame if his wife has been unfaithful, so he must deal with even the suspicion that she may have done so. The catch here is that the text does not state, 'if there is talk of a man's wife having committed adultery…'. In other words, any reference to the opinion of others, the wider social context of the ritual, is peculiarly missing. The motivation comes from the man in question: he alone obsesses about potential paramours his wife may have met. Indeed, it is the solipsism of this text that makes it seem exceedingly strange.

Let me estrange the law a little further: is not the framing of a law on the basis of a feeling like jealousy—or rather, the spirit of jealousy (*rua qin'â*)—ridiculous in itself? If we can in fact have laws like this, should we not have laws that deal also with happiness, pleasure, sadness and so on? How would I go about this, were I an ancient Israelite lawgiver? Perhaps the tunic of happiness, one that became smooth and comfortable if we were happy, and rough and irritating if not? This is no more ridiculous than the law of jealousy. Indeed, what I want to do is avoid the normalization of the law that we find in arguments like those of Jacob Milgrom, who argues that it actually forestalls the lawlessness of 'mob rule, or its legal equivalent, a kangaroo court' (Milgrom 1999: 480), or Jack Sasson, who locates the law within the normalizing context of ancient Near Eastern practice, especially those of Nuzi or Ugarit and then even the Greeks and Romans (Sasson 1999), or Michael Fishbane, who locates it within the web of other laws in the Hebrew Bible (Fishbane 1999), or Destro who, although she recognizes its exceptional status, argues that the sages of the Mishnah valorized that which—woman –was outside the rules (Destro 1989), or even Bach who, like Frymer-Kensky, emphasizes the way this law does not follow the 'normal' procedures for evidence (Bach 1999: 517; Frymer-Kensky 1999).

The law begins to flip, or perhaps even double-flip. Initially the law seems to operate on the basis of adultery, or at least suspected adultery. The description of the ritual itself focuses on the question of adultery, while jealousy appears extraneous, a curious add-on in Num 5.14, 30. But then the very motivation for the law suddenly puts adultery out of the circuit, for it matters not whether the woman has done anything: all that holds the law together is the man's jealousy.

And yet—here is the third dizzying inversion—a law based on jealousy begins to look decidedly strange in its turn, an anomaly within the law code itself that breaks all the conventions of that code.

It is not for nothing that the law of the 'jealous husband' is unique, an exception within the biblical corpus of law. As Alice Bach points out, 'it is the only trial by ordeal' (Bach 1999: 505).

Question and Answer: The Everyday Life of Labour

What is this strange and anomalous text, specifically a law stipulating a ritual that is never known to have been enacted, doing in the Hebrew Bible? Here it seems useful to consider texts—and indeed other cultural products—as answers to unknown questions. We have the answer but not the question to which it was a response. To my mind this is a far more useful way to approach the vexed question of text and context, or a text and its history, than the crude theories of reflection or evidence that still bedevil biblical studies. The trick with a question-answer model then becomes one of trying to sort out what the question or problem might have been.

For Alice Bach the question is female erotic desire, which was a threat to a patriarchal social order through its erratic nature; the Sotah then becomes an answer to such erotic desire, a way of reining this desire in and keeping the phallic economy intact. I want shift the emphasis and suggest that the question to which this text is an answer may be found in the everyday life of labour, particularly that of domestic labour. But what do I mean by the 'everyday life of labour'?

Here I will need to make an excursus through some theory. And I begin with Marx's comment—which turned out to be the driving force of his work—that the key lies with the concrete life of labour. However, I wrote above the *everyday* life of labour. Here I am indebted to a theorist whose work has profoundly influenced, among other things, the discipline of cultural studies—Henri Lefebvre.[3] In his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1991), Lefebvre argued for the central role within sociology of the minute practices of everyday life that had been ignored, or rather not even noticed, by sociology. These include the mundane patterns of daily speech, the odd word or two passed without thinking in greeting and farewell, the little rituals of daily life from how you might get up in the morning to the organization of spaces for eating and defecating, or the rhythms and flows, what comes in, goes out of and circulates within domestic space (rather than thinking of them in terms of static structures and relations). But the

3. Over against the Anglo-American tendency to attribute the origins of cultural studies to the Birmingham School—Raymond Williams as the inspiration, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg who then takes it to the USA and so on—I like to invoke two characters from across the channel: Lefebvre and Certeau.

most important point of Lefebvre's work—often quietly dumped on over the side of the ship during its Atlantic crossing—is that it is precisely at the level of everyday life that ideology, class consciousness and conflict really do their work. Everyday life is the point where political economics is most potent; or, to return to Marx's phrase with a twist, the concrete life of labour *is* everyday life.

This is all very well at the level of theory, but let me return to the text. And I want to wind my way back via Louis Althusser and his brilliant 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)' (Althusser 1971: 121-73). For Althusser, the crucial problem is not merely production—the production of the basic and extraneous needs of human existence and their associated relations of production—but also reproduction. Althusser himself argues that reproduction must, along with ensuring material matters (industry, housing, infrastructure), include ideology and its apparatuses, the various institutions by means of which a society reproduces itself, ensuring that children become functional and productive members of that society. However, what Althusser largely neglects is what might be called the domestic realm of labour, or, as I would prefer, the concrete, everyday life of women's labour and reproduction. In fact, the ability to reproduce, to bear children, is but the most obvious sign of the labour of women.

It is not for nothing that the text of Num. 5.11-31 is framed by the man's jealousy concerning his wife's imagined sex life, that the content of the ritual in contradictory fashion deals with her suspected adultery, and that the focus of the ritual, especially of the 'waters of bitterness', is precisely her womb, the point of reproduction itself. Indeed, for Marx and Engels, the primary division of labour is the one between men and women: class and its ensuing conflict begins at this point.[4] And that is what the 'jealous husband' law in the end seems to answer, or at least attempts to answer: how can the labour of women be controlled? How can the threat of this division of labour, one that may in fact threaten male class consciousness, be curtailed and contained?

Althusser effectively connects economics and the nature of the family, and the two are inseparable for my understanding of Numbers 5. But now, in order to provide some social-sscientific depth to my discussion, I draw on the work of Ron Simkins (Simkins 2004, 1999) and Gale Yee (Yee 2003), more for the insight of method than a heavy reliance on their hypothetical reconstructions. Both assume that tensions in the realm of politics and economics will show up in texts, although not in some crude notion where the text reflects reality.

4. 'The division of labour in which all these contradictions are implicit, and which in its turn is based on the natural division of labour in the family and the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another, simultaneously implies the *distribution*, and indeed the *unequal* distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property, the nucleus, the first form of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband' (Marx 1976: 51-52).

Rather, these tensions show up in other ways, such as the battlegrounds of how the family is represented or in control over the sexual behaviour of women. But why these two items? This is where the main conflicts arise over labour and its division, the control and allocation of that labour, and above all over the products of that labour. Of course, one of the main products of a woman's labour is children. Hence the obsessive concern with ensuring the paternity of male children, that there will in fact be male children and the inheritance of property—all the way from the genealogical lists to the daughters of Zelophehad (Num. 36.4-11; 27.8-11).

More specifically, they argue that the family—whatever is meant by the term—was a crucial economic unit. One example will suffice: in Genesis 2–3 they find a tension between the extended family, the *bêt-'av* and *mišpa â*, and the nuclear family. Or rather, Genesis 2–3 champions the nuclear family, especially in Gen. 2.24, and so the text becomes a piece of propaganda in the hands of a centralized monarchy over against the old tribal loyalties of the extended family.[5] Keen to break the hold of the clan over the extended family, the monarchy pushed for a smaller unit whose loyalty would shift to the monarchy. Now where all this becomes interesting is in the suggestion that these differing depictions of the family signal conflicting modes of production. The tribal pattern of the extended family is characteristic of what they both call the domestic, household or familial mode of production, whereas the nuclear family is more appropriate to either the tributary mode (Yee's preference, following Gottwald), or a client–patron mode (Simkins). Now, I have critiqued these arguments elsewhere (Boer 2005), but what I take as the main point of their work is that the family is a crucial and conflict-ridden part of the economy.

Pensée sauvage

Now, it may seem as though I am trying to normalize Numbers 5 in another fashion, this time in terms of economics. In order not to lose our sense of strangeness, I want to pick up the other element that I signalled earlier, namely the 'waters of bitterness' (*mê hamm rîm*). To begin with, we find the curious effort by scholars to determine whether the water was in fact poisonous or not: Sasson decides perhaps not (Sasson 1999); for Milgrom it may cause sterility (Milgrom 1999); for Frymer-Kensky the effect may in fact be delayed by some time (Frymer-Kensky 1999); for Bach it becomes a potion, a concoction whose poison is the system itself that seeks to control women's sexuality (Bach 1999: 512-13). Now, while I want to suggest, like Burnette-Bletsch,[6] that the

5. Alternatively, the patriarchal narratives of Genesis—in which all Israel becomes descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—may be seen as an effort to break kinship ties to particular tribes and extend it to the whole people.

6. 'Because the potion imbibed by the suspected woman is fairly innocuous, the most likely

particular mixture is necessarily useless, what these efforts neglect is the very thought world in which what is nothing other than magic may operate. (And I take magic in the sense that one may influence events beyond one's control by means of entirely unconnected activity: say, carrying a good luck charm, or avoiding walking under ladders.[7]) The magic here is not just the mixture of holy water in an earthen vessel, into which some dust of the floor of the tabernacle and the writing on parchment is washed off (Num. 5.17, 23), but the possibility that this particular potion may in fact have some effect on the woman's womb, whether it is to discharge or drop down. Throw in some rituals, themselves fraught with repetition—the saying of the oath, the writing of the oath, the drinking of the water twice (vv. 24, 27), and then the grain offering which is both an offering of jealousy and remembrance—and the scene becomes nothing other than divination, directed precisely at women.[8]

This is where Lévi-Strauss's *pensée sauvage* (1966) becomes useful as a further estrangement effect of material that biblical scholars all too readily want to render understandable. Unfortunately translated as 'savage mind', *pensée sauvage* is really an effort to understand alternative science, a distinct mode of thinking, classification and organization of the world—perhaps 'thought gone wild' is better. What we have here, then, with this law and its motivation is an example of such *pensée sauvage* that makes scholars decidedly nervous. Fidgeting at their desks, they try to give the mixture some potency, normalize the law and speak all too quickly of adultery. In other words, the law must come into the realms of modern science, within 'accepted' patterns of (biblical) jurisprudence and an understandable framework (adultery).

However, I want to ask what the everyday life of labour for this particular instance of *pensée sauvage* might be. And I need to ask what the role of magic and of divination might be. Let me begin to answer by returning to the problem of repetition, for the anxieties of this text are not restricted to the fourfold duplication of the woman's imagined secrecy (Num. 5.12b-14). We also get the woman drinking the mixture on two occasions (Num. 5.24, 27), the threefold repetition of the effects of the waters of bitterness (Num. 5. 21, 22, 27), the frenetic staccato of terms for turning astray, defiling and unfaithfulness (ten in total—see above), and the recurrence of terms for womb that transla-

outcome of the trial is her exoneration. The text refers to the lack of evidence supporting the husband's allegations in four separate phrases in v. 13, and it scrupulously avoids the technical term for an adulteress. Thus, while lending a tongue-in-cheek dignity to male paranoia, the law ultimately provides an almost transparent charade to pacify the distraught husband' (Burnette-Bletsch 2000).

7. As a verifiable experiment that refutes the function of magic, I make a point of walking under ladders and have had no noticeable ill luck as a result.

8. Indeed, this is not the only time we find divination, for it appears in the practice of *urim* and *thummim*, as well as the use of the beheaded heifer.

tors are all too willing to apportion to various organs. Thus, while some but not all translate *be en* as womb, *me'e* ends up being 'body' or 'bowels', even though it can also mean womb. Of course, for Freud repetition is the sign of an unresolved trauma, and here I want to suggest that such a trauma is of the same ilk as the problem suggested by divination. In this particular instance, both repetition and the recourse to divination function as distinct responses to the fundamental division of labour between male and female. The issue here is the actual physiological reproduction of children, the sign of that whole realm of women's labour within the larger political economy. And at this point the *pensée sauvage* of magic swings into play: magic and divination become an effort to bring women's labour into the larger realm of political economy. Or, to use the terms I used earlier: this magical ritual is an attempted answer to a real question. Being magic, it is futile, but the man (and the priest) must believe that the magic has some effect in order to kid themselves that they can actually hold their world together. In the end, it really is all they have at their disposal, a last resort when all else fails, and in that respect is an effort that is doomed to failure.

Numbers 5.11-31 then becomes an effort to patch the anomaly of women's reproduction back into the apparent logic of political economics. In other words, the question that this text attempts to answer by means of the ritual of the 'jealous husband' is the problem of women's ability to reproduce and thereby of women's labour in general. The catch with all of this is that reproduction becomes an anomaly only because it is out of the control of men, out of the realm of that over which they have power. Faced with the exception of reproduction in such a political economy, an anomaly that is both beyond the control of that economy and yet simultaneously crucial to it, the ritual of the 'jealous husband' is then an ideological effort to rope such an exception back into that economy.

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The 'Good Commentator'
On Joseph Hall, Laurence Sterne, Biblical Narrative, and the Eighteenth-Century Novel

David M. Gunn

'Sometime during the eighteenth century there occurred in England one of those momentous sea-changes in reading that permanently altered the way in which books, whether sacred or secular, were understood and interpreted'. Specifically, argues Stephen Prickett, the new art-form, the 'novel', affected the reading of the Bible (Prickett 1996: 107-108).

Prickett builds his argument on a claim by Hans Frei:

> In England, where a serious body of realistic narrative was building up, there arose no corresponding cumulative tradition of criticism of the biblical writings, and that included no narrative interpretation of them. In Germany, on the other hand, where a body of critical analysis as well as general hermeneutics of the biblical writings built up rapidly in the latter half of the eighteenth century, there was no simultaneous development of realistic prose narrative and its critical appraisal (Frei 1974: 142).

Prickett agrees with Frei that the eighteenth century saw a major change in the way biblical narrative was read in England. At the century's beginning, he claims, figurative-dogmatic readings, following traditional typology and allegory, were still dominant. By the century's end, literal readings of sacred 'history' were the norm. He also agrees that in England there did not emerge (until well into the nineteenth century) the body of historical-critical literature on the Bible that built up rapidly in Germany from the eighteenth century on. But he argues, contrary to Frei, that the interpretation of biblical narrative and the development of realistic narrative (the novel) were intimately connected; indeed, the way people read the novel became the way they read the Bible.

Mrs Trimmer, who wrote for youth at the end of the century, is a touchstone (Prickett 1996: 129). In her *Sacred History* (6 volumes, 1782–85, and often reprinted) she had 'no stomach for any but the literal meaning', he observes, and was simply embarrassed by stories such as the rape of the Levite's concubine and its aftermath in Judges 19–21 (she recounts the story in vol. 2). Puzzling out '*hidden meanings* in difficult passages', as she put it in her Introduction to another book, *A Help to the Unlearned in the Study of the Holy Scriptures* (1805), was not her concern. Yet this was not the triumph of the historical method. Rather Mrs Trimmer read the narrative 'with the same

attention to character and plot as she might any secular novel', except that this was more than a secular novel, because it recounted God's dealings with humans, including what led certain people to do what they did. The Bible's narratives 'are treated as those of a novel, peopled by characters with recognisable psychological motivations and feelings. The only difference is that these are *not*, of course, fictional characters, but *real* ones, described for us by the only truly omniscient Author' (Prickett 1996: 130). Mrs Trimmer, then, exemplifies the change that took place in the latter part of the eighteenth century. 'That there *was* such a fundamental and permanent change in the way in which the Bible was read around the end of the eighteenth century is not, I think, in question. Without anyone apparently being aware of what had been happening, the new "sentimental" and novelistic way of reading the Bible had by the early nineteenth century become the accepted norm' (Prickett 1996: 131).

Prickett's thesis, that the novel provided a new model for reading the Bible, together with his premise, that there was a 'sea-change' in the way the Bible was read during the early Romantic period, has met with some approval. Prickett's case for 'a fundamental shift' from figurative reading to reading the Bible 'as an historical narrative like a novel' is 'important and well-documented' (Dally 1998: 330). 'That the notion of reading the Bible as a kind of novel [converting biblical narratives into "dialogue and description" and finding in them "emotional states"] is no older than the eighteenth-century novel itself is a challenging and persuasive one' (Giles 1997: 423; cf. Wright 1998: 237). Here, however, I wish to offer briefly some qualifications to this account of how biblical narrative was read. Frei, I suggest, is mistaken to assert that in eighteenth-century England there was no cumulative tradition of criticism of the biblical writings, including no narrative interpretation of them. Moreover, in England, interest in the emotions and motivations of biblical characters (I leave aside here the question of plot) extends back at least to the early sixteenth-century narrative interpretation of Joseph Hall and to the Elizabethan dramatists before him. Certainly this interest flourished among Bible readers at the end of the eighteenth century and into the next, and may well have been encouraged, as Prickett argues, by the growth of the novel, but it was not new.

Prickett's pivotal figure in the claimed shift is the novelist-clergyman Laurence Sterne, famous for *Tristram Shandy*, and his innovative narratorial style. Sterne was also an accomplished and popular preacher. His *Sermons of Mr Yorick* contain several expositions of Old Testament narratives, including, 'The Levite and his Concubine' (III.3 [18]) on Judges 19–20. Sterne opens his sermon with storytelling that rapidly becomes, as Prickett observes, a complex dialogue of intersecting and interjecting voices or perspectives—of preacher, commentators (implicit and personified), biblical text, characters, and 'you' the reader/listener.

> A concubine!—but the text accounts for it, *for in those days there was no king in Israel*, and the Levite, you will say, like every other man in it, did what was right in his own eyes,—and so, you may add, did his concubine too—*for she played the whore against him, and went away*. —
>
> —Then shame and grief go with her, and wherever she seeks a shelter, may the hand of justice shut the door against her. —
>
> Not so; for she went unto her father's house in Bethlehem-Judah, and was with him four whole months.—Blessed interval for meditation upon the fickleness and vanity of this world and its pleasures! (Sterne [1766] 1966: 167).

The preacher turns his gaze upon the Levite: 'I see the holy man upon his knees,—with hands compressed to his bosom, and with uplifted eyes, thanking heaven, that the object which had so long shared his affections, was fled'. But again he must interpose, not so: 'The text gives a different picture of his situation'. And he recites the text's account of the Levite's journey and his warm reception by the damsel's father.

> —A most sentimental group! you'll say: and so it is, my good commentator, the world talks of every thing: give but the outlines of a story,—let *spleen* or *prudery* snatch the pencil, and they will finish it with so many hard strokes, and with so dirty a colouring, that *candour* and *courtesy* will sit in torture as they look at it.—Gentle and virtuous spirits! Ye who know not what it is to be rigid interpreters, but of your own failings,—to you, I address myself, the unhired advocates for the conduct of the misguided, . . . How often must ye repeat it, 'That such a one's doing so or so',—is not sufficient evidence by itself to overthrow the accused? That our actions stand surrounded with a thousand circumstances which do not present themselves at first sight;—that the first springs and motives which impell'd the unfortunate, lie deeper still;—and that of the millions which every hour are arraign'd, thousands of them may have err'd merely from the *head*, and been actually outwitted into evil; and even when from the heart,—that the difficulties and temptations under which they acted,—the force of the passions,—the suitableness of the object, and the many struggles of virtue before she fell,—may be so many appeals from justice to the judgment seat of pity (Sterne [1766] 1966: 167-68).

Having made his case for a full accounting of characters' motives to those 'gentle and virtuous spirits' who do not rush to judgment, the preacher calls for pause:

> Here then let us stop a moment, and give the story of the Levite and his Concubine a second hearing: like all others much of it depends upon the telling; and as the Scripture has left us no kind of comment upon it, 'tis a story on which the heart cannot be at a loss for what to say, or the imagination for what to suppose—the danger is, humanity may say too much (Sterne [1766] 1966: 168).

Prickett finds striking the way in which Sterne has created here a play of voices that criticize and undermine a central authoritative narrative (or narrative interpretation?). This is more than the elaboration of characters. Sterne's

sermon treatments of the story of Elijah and the widow of Zerephath (I.5 [5]) or Jacob and Laban (IV.7 [22]), for example, turn a third-person biblical narrative into 'a novel with elaborate characterisation and direct dramatic speech'. But here is something additional: 'the dialogue here is not just that of the participants, but of the various critics, including our own varied responses and prejudiced opinion: Sterne has now turned the biblical commentators *themselves* into dramatic participants in his biblical epic' (Prickett 1996: 123). Prickett interprets the passage addressing 'my good commentator' as a challenge to all these commentators. Reading the text requires not 'conventional moralistic judgements' but a careful 'second hearing', a hearing in which the reader's own 'sentiment'—'the personal response of heart and imagination'—is all-important (Prickett 1996: 124).

When Prickett cites Sarah Trimmer's *Sacred History* as a measure of how the reading of the novel has, by the end of the century, influenced the reading of Scripture, he is presumably not talking about Mrs Trimmer's dialogical deployment of perspectives (that is not her style!) but rather of her engagement with biblical narrative as comprising stories with plots and, above all, characters whose motives and emotions require exposition and evaluation. She reads her Old Testament narrative, for the improvement of youth, 'with the same attention to character and plot as she might any secular novel' (Prickett 1996: 130). She also makes judgments concerning the biblical characters, as she might the characters of a novel, since she regards her histories to be stories of high seriousness.

Frei observes of the novel and historical narrative: 'Both were regarded as having great moral utility, instructing those who are capable of learning, among them especially the young and impressionable, in private virtue and public duty, and a due knowledge of human nature and character' (Frei 1974: 143). Actually, the moral utility of the novel was the subject of great debate, and Mrs Trimmer was probably one of those who criticized the fashionable gothic romance as being altogether too frivolous to inculcate sound ideals and duties. Her own standards seem to have demanded something much more straightforwardly didactic, like the 'moral tale' or dramatized 'village dialogue' in her *Family Magazine* (e.g. January–June, 1789). Nonetheless, the novel did have its moral defenders, and, as the eighteenth century ended, it had large numbers of readers who also read the biblical narratives. Mrs Trimmer's *Sacred History* for youth helped pioneer a genre that grew rapidly in the next century. Alongside it grew another popular genre, the Sacred (or Scripture) Biography. Here again, character was conceived as central to the narratives and to the edification of its readers.

Prickett's analysis highlights two features of Sterne's approach to biblical narrative. First, Sterne is deeply interested in the motivation and emotions of biblical characters. One way of displaying this interior life is to dramatize the narrative, especially by providing characters with speech and thoughts. Second,

in order to delve into, and evaluate, a character's behavior, Sterne uses shifting voices—the voices of narrator, other commentators, and characters—to explore alternative perspectives ('Not so'; 'The text gives a different picture', etc.). The preacher-novelist's goal is to encourage readers of Scripture towards a sympathetic or 'sentimental' mode of reading, towards viewing sacred history as less a recitation of narrative facts and more a rendering of the contingent life of fallible human characters.

The question is, how new is this mode of reading? How much of a change in the reading of the Bible took place in the latter half of the eighteenth century? Prickett and Frei paint too stark a picture. Sterne is one of the great innovators of the novel. When it comes to the Bible, he has his literary forbears.

The interest in biblical characters is old and goes back at least to the Elizabethan dramatists. Ruth Blackburn tells us that some fifty new plays based on scriptural stories are known to have been produced or offered for the English stage between about 1520 and the end of Elizabeth's reign. Among humanists and reformers, on the continent and soon in England, drama was seen as a way 'to teach, to delight, and to move to virtue', not least because, as Luther held, it mirrored life and depicted all sorts and conditions of men (Blackburn 1971: 7, 23-8). One such dramatization of a biblical narrative is *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe. With the Tragedie of Absalon* (registered 1594; published 1599) by Shakespeare's contemporary, George Peele. The play tampers with the biblical plot and story time, presenting originally sequential scenes as happening simultaneously, in order to point up more powerfully the ironic parallels between David's actions and those of his sons. As for character: Absalon is consumed by pride—'And heaven shall burne in love with Absalon', he vaunts; Bethsabe shows remorse and grief for her baby, sick to death, and pity for David at his end; and David's grief is not at the loss of his throne but at the treachery of his son (whom he has described as 'beautie of my bones and the counterfeit of love, the image of content'). Although English seventeenth-century playwrights mostly avoided biblical narrative, it continued to find dramatic life in poetry—as witness John Dryden's satiric transformation in *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681). By the eighteenth century, however, writers were recovering the dramatic rendering of biblical narrative, so that around the time Sterne was penning Yorick's sermons, librettist Thomas Morell was creating speech and feeling for Jephtha and his daughter, Iphis, in aid of Handel's oratorio or 'sacred drama', *Jephtha* (1751).

There is, however, a more direct literary ancestry which connects Sterne's sermon to the early seventeenth century. This line of influence incorporates both the interest in characters—including dramatization—and the switching of voices to alter perspectives. Joseph Hall (1574–1656), a moderate Calvinist, was chaplain to James I and tutored Prince Henry who died young. He later became Bishop of Exeter and then Norwich, and in turn an object of Parliament's attacks on the bishops (he was imprisoned in the Tower). Like Sterne, a

fine pulpit orator, in earlier years his satiric verse was among the first in English (*Vergidemiarum*, 1597–98) and he introduced the satiric 'character' into English prose, for which he earned Milton's scorn years later. His *Contemplations upon the Principal Passages of the Old Testament* were published early in the seventeenth century (from 1612 to 1626), and read throughout that century and the next (by Mrs Trimmer, for one); editions were still appearing in the mid-nineteenth century. Hall reads his Bible with a keen eye for narrative detail and drama, shrewdly construing motives and imaginatively supplying his biblical characters with explanatory speech and interior monologue. If his moral judgments are not always to our taste, they are cast in rhetoric that conjures admiration. And, for his times, he is a sympathetic reader.

Hall, like Shakespeare or Peele, often uses interior monologue to dramatize his characters and explore their motives and decisions. (The following examples are drawn in part from my commentary on Judges.) Says Samson, thinking on marriage to the Timnite woman, 'It is not mine eye onely, but the counsell of God that leads me to his choice: The way to quarrell with the Philistims, is to match with them' (Hall 1634: 969). Or Hall himself narrates the inner thoughts, as when Samson faces his own death: 'his renued faith tels him, that hee was destined to plague the Philistims, and reason tels him, that his blindnesse puts him out of the hope of such another opportunity' (Hall 1634: 978). By such devices Hall conveys to his reader choices the commentator confronts.

The biblical characters gain subjectivity. Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11) finds her voice through Hall. Little suspecting what danger lies in 'dutifull Triumph', she decides to make the best of her constrained condition as a young woman and to go forth to meet him:

> My sex forbade me to doe any thing towards the helpe of my Father's victory; I can doe little, if I cannot applaud it: If nature have made me weake, yet not unthankful; nothing forbids my joy to bee as strong as the victors: Though I might not go out with my father to fight, yet I may meet him with gratulations; A timbrell may become these hands which were unfit for a sword: This day hath made me the daughter of the Head of Israel; This day hath made both Israel free, my Father a conqueror, and myselfe in him noble: and shall my affection make no difference? (Hall 1634: 963).

Jael likewise (Judges 4–5) has her soliloquy and acquires agency. While Sisera doubtless dreams of battle, Jael, 'seeing his temples lie so faire, as if they invited the naile and hammer', entertains the execution.

> What if I strike him? And yet, who am I that I should dare to thinke of such an act? Is not this Sisera, the famousest Captaine of the world, whose name hath wont to be fearefull to whole Nations? What if my hand should swarve in the stroke? What if he should awake, whiles I am lifting up this instrument of death? What if I should be surprised by some of his followers, whiles the fact is green, and yet bleeding? (Hall 1634: 944-45).

In like manner she runs the gamut of possibilities. Could the murder be hidden? Could her heart allow such treachery—was there not peace between her house

and him? Had she not extended him hospitality? But are these not the idle fancies of civility? Is not Sisera at defiance with God, a tyrant to Israel? Is it for nothing that God has brought him into her tent? May she now repay Israel for the kindness shown her grandfather Jethro? Does God not offer her the honor of rescuing his people? 'Hath God bidden me strike, and shall I hold my hand? No: Sisera, sleepe now thy last, and take here this fatall reward of all thy cruelty and oppression.' Hall constructs a fast-thinking, decisive woman.

Of course, for Hall, who subscribed to a theology of divine providence, God was in charge: 'Hee that put this instinct into her heart, did put also strength into her hand; Hee that guided Sisera to her Tent, guided the nayle thorow his temples'. Yet while affirming God's sovereignty and hence primary agency, Hall at the same time affirms Jael's interior rehearsal of the possibilities lying before her. She makes a choice, even if prompted.

What does Hall discern of the Levite's concubine? (Hall 1634: 985-88) 'Perhaps her owne conscience thrust her out of doores, perhaps the just severity of her husband'. Hall is not sure, though he is certain—since he is following literally the Hebrew and English text (she 'played the whore' against the Levite)—that biblical law requires her death. At any rate, 'she that had deserved to be abhorred of her husband, seeks shelter from her father'. Yet 'why would her father suffer his house to be defiled with an adulteress, though out of his own loins?' Again unsure of the motive, Hall draws his reader to contemplate the basis of his puzzlement. Why did the father not say:

> What? Doest thou thinke to find my house an harbor for thy sinne? Whiles thou wert a wife to thine husband, thou wert a daughter to me; Now thou art neither; Thou art not mine; I gave thee to thy husband; Thou art not thy husbands, thou has betrayed his bed; Thy filthinesse hath made thee thine own and thine adulterers; Goe seek thine entertainment, where thou has lost thine honesty; Thy lewdnes hath brought a necessity of shame upon thine abettors; How can I countenance thy person, and abandon thy sin? I had rather be a just man, than a kind Father; Get thee home therefore to thy husband, crave his forgivenesse upon thy knees, redeeme his love with thy modesty and obedience; when his heart is once open to thee, my doores shall not be shut; In the mean time, know, I can be no father to an harlot (Hall 1634: 985).

Switching to his own voice, Hall declares the moral underlying the speech-not-said: 'Indulgence of Parents is the refuge of vanity, the bawd of wickednesse, the bane of children'. But if the father took another path, so too did the grievously injured Levite:

> What husband would not have said, She is gone, let shame and griefe goe with her; I shall find one no lesse pleasing, and more faithfull: Or if it be not too much mercy in me to yeeld to a returne, let her that hath offended, seeke me: What more direct way is there to a resolved looseness, than to let her see I cannot want her? (Hall 1634: 985).

Instead the 'good nature' of the Levite 'sends him to seeke for her, that had run away from her fidelity':

> And now he thinkes, She sinned against me; perhaps she hath repented; perhaps, shame and feare have with-held her from returning; perhaps she will be more loyall, for her sin: If her importunity should win me, halfe the thankes were lost; but now, my voluntary offer of favor shall oblige her for ever (Hall 1634: 986).

In Hall's own voice (as narrator) this alternative perspective on the Levite's motivation is epitomized: 'Love procures truer servitude than necessity: Mercy becomes well the heart of any man, but most of a Levite. He that had helped to offer so many sacrifices to God for the multitude of every Israelites sins, saw how proportionable it was, that man should not hold one sinne unpardonable: He had served at the Altar to no purpose, if he (whose trade was to sue for mercy) had not at all learned to practice it'. (Sterne's version of this interior insight shows up later in the sermon, converted in part to the Levite's own speech.)

Concerning the father, Hall does not see him 'make any meanes for reconciliation: but when remission came home to his doors, no man could entertain it more thankfully'. Like many other men, the father was negligent in taking action, but more than ready to accept the action taken. Such people 'can spend secret wishes upon that, which shall cost them no indeavour'. Yet for all his criticism of the father, Hall's heart is drawn to him also.

> Great is the power of love, which can in a sort undoe evils past, if not for the act, yet for the remembrance. Where true affection was once conceived, it is easily pieced againe, after the strongest interruption. Heere needs no tedious recapitulation of wrongs, no importunity of sute. The unkindnesses are forgotten, their love is renued; and now the Levite is not a stranger, but a son; By how much more willingly he came, by so much more unwillingly he is dismissed. The foure months absence of his daughter is answered with foure dayes feasting; Neither was there so much joy in the former wedding feast as in this; because then hee delivered his daughter intire; now, desperate; then he found a sonne; but now, that son hath found his lost daughter, and he found both. The recovery of any good, is far more pleasant than the continuance (Hall 1634: 986).

Less generous, however, is the close of Hall's telling. His sense of divine retribution seems to block him from endowing the woman with interiority. Excepting his initial remark about her conscience, and a final one about her too easily accepting her restoration, because she 'smarted not', he has nothing else to say about her motives or emotions, and in the end consigns her to God's 'just and even course' of retribution. Perhaps he had been too recently reading Ezekiel 16 and 23.

> This woman had shamed the bed of a Levite, by her former wantonesse; she had thus farre gone smoothly away with her sinne, her father harboured her, her husband forgave her, her owne heart found no cause to complaine, because she smarted not: now, when the world had forgotten her offence, God cals her to reckoning, and punishes her with her own sinne. She had voluntarily exposed her selfe to lust; now is exposed forcibly. Adultery was her sinne, adultery was her Death. What smiles soever wickednesse casts upon the heart, whiles it sollicits; it will owe us a displeasure, and prove it selfe a faithfull Debtor (Hall 1634: 986).

Hall's reluctant sympathy for the father's predicament was not universally shared. While the Revd Thomas Lye (1621–1684) was quick to appropriate Hall's exposition, he was not interested in mitigating the moral ('What may Gracious Parents best do for the Conversion of those Children whose Wickedness is occasioned by their Sinful Severity or Indulgence?', 1682). The puritan preacher's theme is 'That the indulgence of parents is the bane of children, a pander of their wickedness, the asylum of their vanity', which my reader will recognize ('Indulgence of Parents is the refuge of vanity, the bawd of wickednesse, the bane of children', wrote Hall). As Lye puts it, 'When the looseness of youth knows where to find pity and toleration, what mischief can it forbear?' He borrows the speech Hall ventures on the strict father's behalf, piles on the scorn, and heightens the language of sexual depravity. Where else for the errant woman to flee but 'to her own dear father's house', where no doubt this 'fond and indulgent father' will open his heart and house and bosom to her. Well, home she speeds, but does her good old father receive her?

> What! doth he suffer his house to become a brothel-house, to be defiled with an adulteress, though she sprang out of his own loins? Methinks I hear him in a just indignation thus accosting her: 'Why, how now, impudence? what makest thou here? Dost thou think to find my house a shelter for thy sins? The stews are a fitter receptacle for thee (Lye [1682] 1981: 168).

The rest of the speech continues much as Hall composed it, to the punchline: 'In the mean time, before thou art humbled both before God and man, know, I can be no father to a harlot'. But Lye has something up his sleeve. In a tour de force of gender reversal he reaches for an even more dramatic scene to expose the insidious falsity of the father's fondness:

> Thus methinks I should have heard him say; but, lo, fond father that he was! he treats and caresses her at another rate, and seems to bespeak her, as Jael did Sisera, (Judges iv. 18,) 'Turn in, my dear child, turn in to me'. He brings her into his house; covers her with a mantle; instead of water, gives her 'a bottle of milk;' yea, he 'brings forth butter in a lordly dish;' treats her at the kindest rate, and that for four whole months. And now let the most indulgent parent judge, whether this was a just dealing with this strumpet, whose crime God had long before sentenced with death. (Lev. xx. 10.) But yet, remember, that this courting Jael proved a most fatal executioner: the vile Sisera 'bowed and fell at her feet'. (Judges iv. 21; v. 25-27) For aught I know, had her father been more severe, he might have prevented her farther defiling and murder by the filthy Gibeathites. (Judges xix. 25-28.) Indulgence is a syren, that first sings and then slays; worse than Jael: her hammer and nail destroy only the body; but this destroys the soul, and that even by its lullabies, when the unhappy fondling sleeps and snores in the parent's bosom (Lye [1682] 1981: 168-89).

By now it will be apparent to my own reader that Lye was not the only one to borrow from Hall. Sterne, too, made good use of the *Contemplations*, as a comparison of the passages quoted above makes clear, and as critics have pointed out since the late eighteenth century (Hammond 1948: 1-2). Lansing

Hammond's careful scrutiny shows Hall to be one of the three authors from whom the novelist-preacher filched most freely (Hammond 1948: 125-32). (Prickett might have usefully invoked Sterne in his argument [ch. 1], stemming from a reading of Jacob's stolen birthright, for the cultural necessity of 'appropriation'.) Yet Hammond's listing of the resemblances between Hall's and Sterne's reading of the Levite's story (there are more than those obvious above) is too narrowly defined in terms of verbal parallels (Hammond 1948: 126). What is missing is the rhetorical structure of Sterne's opening gambit, using shifting voices to explore alternative perspectives on a character ('Not so'; 'The text gives a different picture', etc.). That too is borrowed from Hall. To be sure, Sterne wears his morality more lightly on his sleeve than Hall. His narratorial style is perhaps more flexible and his irony more comic. But he owed a large debt to this other clergyman of letters of an earlier era. Sterne's way of reading biblical narrative was not new.

Prickett's argument that figurative interpretation still dominated in England in the first half of the eighteenth century claims as evidence Richard Blome's handsomely illustrated *History of the Old and New Testaments*, reprinted several times at the beginning of the century. This volume, however, is a late seventeenth-century translation of a French work for youth by the Jansenist Nicolas Fontaine (1670, under the pseudonym Sieur de Royaumont) and offers as commentary a distillation of the Church Fathers. Not surprisingly, traditional figurative interpretation is central to the book. While it certainly had a long life in Britain, especially for Catholic children later in the eighteenth century (in a new translation), it is not typical of what Anglicans and Non-conformists were reading in the eighteenth century. Certainly typology continued to be appealing to Protestant as well as Catholic commentators, and the drawing of 'heavenly' lessons continued unabated. But an interest in biblical narratives read literally as 'history' was well established in England by the close of the seventeenth century. Along with that interest grew a tradition of critical inquiry into the stories and their characters. Hall's interpretations were an important part of this tradition.

Among commentators of lasting impact, Matthew Henry (*An Exposition of the Historical Books of the Old Testament*, 1708), like Symon Patrick (*A Commentary upon the Historical Books of the Old Testament*, 1702), regularly draws on Hall. Indeed Henry's first comment on Judges 19 invokes the beginning of Hall's account and his subsequent exposition shows Hall's influence. For example, the woman 'having gone away, it was a virtue in [the Levite] to forgive the offence; and though the party wronged, yet to make the first motion to her to be friends again'. Leaving Hall, but still in pursuit of motivations, feelings, and thoughts, Henry notes that the Levite 'spoke friendly to her, or comfortably, for so the Hebrew phrase of speaking to the heart commonly signifies; which intimates, that she was in sorrow, penitent for what she had done amiss; which probably he heard of when he came to fetch her back'. (If Hall had been reading

Ezekiel, Henry preferred Hosea, for in support of his interpretation he refers to Hos. 2.14 by way of analogy.) Henry then points to the father's 'extraordinary kindness' to the Levite, by which he 'endeavoured to atone for the countenance he had given his daughter, in withdrawing from him, and to confirm him in his disposition to be reconciled to her'. As for the Levite, 'to shew that he was perfectly reconciled, [the Levite] accepted his kindness; and we do not find that he upbraided him or his daughter with what had been amiss, but was as easy and pleasant, as at his first wedding-feast. It becomes all, but especially Levites, to forgive as God doth'. Of course, we are now back to Hall (1634: 985-86).

Another obvious model for reading the Bible was Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*. Very popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was translated into English several times, with William Whiston (1737) eventually emerging the winner. Josephus often modified the biblical story's plot and chronology, and, as Prickett himself notes (124), explained the feelings and motivations of the characters. Commentators generally viewed these differences as enhancements. Laurence Clarke, for example, when he recounts the story of David and Jonathan meeting secretly, in his *Compleat History of the Holy Bible* (1737), includes a long speech drawn from Josephus, which he introduces approvingly: 'The Speech, which Josephus puts in Jonathan's Mouth, upon this occasion, is very tender, and pathetick'. Thomas Stackhouse, from whom Clarke borrows copiously, also found the relationship between David and Jonathan affecting (*A New History of the Holy Bible*, 2nd edn, 1742). After David's defeat of Goliath, Jonathan 'who, being himself a prince of extraordinary bravery, was so taken with his courage and conduct in this engagement, that he contracted the tenderest and most indearing friendship with him, which lasted as long as they two lived together'. He appends a note, drawn from Symon Patrick's studious commentary, citing other ancient friendships mentioned by Plutarch, such as that of Achilles and Patroclus; none of them, however, could match the 'sacred bonds of mutual assistance and defence' of the biblical pair. 'Jonathan, in particular, through the whole story, shows towards David such a greatness of soul, such a constancy of mind, and disinterestedness of heart, as few romances can produce examples of.'

In short, Sterne not only read the Bible through the lens of Joseph Hall, but he wrote within a well-established tradition of reading the biblical 'histories' with an eye to the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of their characters. The Bible was being 'dramatized' (Prickett 1996: 126), in other words, well before the rise of the novel.

Sterne's narrator in the 'Levite and his Concubine' at one point addresses 'my good commentator'. Prickett suggests 'we should pay closest attention to that "good commentator" with whom so much of Sterne's debate seems to be conducted'. Pay attention we should, since the 'good commentator' turns out to be Sterne's inspiration. But he does not 'debate' or challenge him so much as borrow his debate—his dramatized, critical encounter with the text—and give it new

voice more than a century later. Prickett is inclined to see the commentator as proposing cliches or 'conventional moralistic judgements'. But when Hall writes 'What husband would not have said, She is gone, let shame and griefe goe with her', he is not offering his own clichéd judgment on the text but rather bringing to the inquiry what he reasonably considers the likely response of a multitude of husbands. Similarly Hall, like many others, can discover culpable indulgence in the father, and express that evaluation through another speech that might, in conventional wisdom, have been expected. Yet, as we saw, he stays with the text we have and finds a more sympathetic reading. Is that how Sterne read him?

Do the 'my' and the 'good' in 'my good commentator' convey irony? Perhaps. But I would venture a more 'sentimental' reading. Sterne learned handsomely from Hall. These two preachers shared a gift for satire and took pleasure in idiosyncrasy. They were neither of them rigid in their judgment of human foibles. They both tangled with politics and struggled against penury. Hall's eviction from Norwich and the poverty of his ending would have been known to Sterne. Of course, he leaves us guessing, but I like to think that when Sterne addresses 'my good commentator' he was indeed speaking of Hall and wryly—with some reflexive irony—acknowledging his debt to the man who, in this dramatic opening to his sermon, provided him with both words and perspectives. Reading as Sterne might, I would say then that 'my good commentator' came from the heart.

This essay is dedicated to David Jobling, 'good commentator' extraordinary, whose friendship I have valued over many years, whose early insights into the sense of biblical narrative were profoundly far-seeing, and whose subsequent writing, on texts as on theory, have never ceased to press me to the edges of my thinking.

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The Pentateuch and the Origins of Israel
Ideological Leakage around the Master Narrative

F. Volker Greifenhagen

Since by definition the cultural monuments and masterworks that have survived tend necessarily to perpetuate only a single voice in this class dialogue, the voice of a hegemonic class, they cannot be properly assigned their relational place in a dialogical system without the restoration or artificial reconstruction of the voice to which they were initially opposed, a voice for the most part stifled and reduced to silence, marginalized, its own utterances scattered to the winds, or reappropriated in their turn by the hegemonic culture (Jameson 1981: 85).

Strategies of containment are not only modes of exclusion; they can also take the form of repression in some stricter Hegelian sense of the persistence of the older repressed content beneath the later formalized surface (Jameson 1981: 213).[1]

Diversity or Singularity of Israel's Origin Traditions

Extant writings from the Hellenistic and Roman periods indicate that various differing accounts of the origins of the Jews were in circulation. The Roman historian Tacitus (ca. 56–120 CE), in an ethnographic excursus, offers no less than six variant accounts of the origin of the Jews.[2] These include their origins: (1) as exiles from Crete; (2) as colonists sent out from an overpopulated Egypt; (3) as migrant Ethiopians; (4) as refugees from Assyria, who temporarily settled in Egypt but eventually returned to live in the Cisjordan; (5) as descendants of the illustrious Solymi, a people celebrated in Homer's poems;[3] and (6)

1. I begin with these quotes from *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* by Marxist critic Fredric Jameson to not only signal the direction of the ideological critique that I attempt to undertake in this essay, but also to mark my debt to David Jobling for his part in introducing this sophisticated form of ideological critique to me in those heady days in the 1980s. While I do not frequently explicitly articulate these sources of inspiration, both of Jameson and of Jobling, they always lurk in the background of my thinking and writing.

2. At the beginning of Book V of the *Historiae* (sections 2-13; see Stern II (1980) #281, 17-63).

3. The use of *Solymi* or *Solumitai* for the inhabitants of Jerusalem became widespread among Hellenistic Jews (Stern II 1980: 34-35).

as a plague-ridden people expelled from Egypt. These, and yet further, variants appear in earlier authors. For instance, Jewish origins are closely associated with Damascus and Syria by Theophrastes (372–288 BCE),[4] by Nicolaus (ca. 64 BCE to beginning of the first century CE), historian and scholar in the court of Herod,[5] and in the historical work of Pompeius Trogus (end of first century BCE to beginning of first century CE).[6] Megasthenes (ca. 300 BCE) and Clearchus of Soli (ca. 300 BCE) place the origin of the Jews even further east, in India. However, in the extant material, the versions that appear most frequently are those that posit the origins of the Jews in Egypt. Of the six variants he lists, Tacitus clearly favors an Egyptian origin (Stern II 1980: 2), and an Egyptian origin appears in numerous earlier authors, including Hecataeus of Abdera (ca. 300 BCE),[7] Manetho (third century BCE),[8] Diodorus (first century BCE.),[9] Lysimachus (second or first century BCE?),[10] Strabo of Amaseia (ca. 64 BCE to first quarter century CE),[11] Apion (first half of first century CE),[12] Chaeremon (first century CE),[13] and Plutarch (late first century to early second century CE).[14]

4. Stern #10.

5. In the extant fragments of the *Historiae* (*apud* Josephus). See Stern #87.

6. *Apud* Justin. See Stern #137. Pompeius Trogus actually weaves together the origin of the Jews in Damascus with an account of the story of Joseph similar to the biblical rendition, and with the story of the expulsion from Egypt of a diseased people.

7. *Apud* Diodorus, through the *Bibliotheca* of Photius (Stern #11). Although Hecataeus' starting point is Egypt, he attributes the expulsion of the Jews from Egypt due to the beliefs of the 'common people' (οι πολλοι) or 'natives of the land' (οι της χωρας εγγενεις) that they need to expel the 'strangers' (ξενοι), 'foreigners' (αλλοφυλλοι), or 'aliens' (αλλοεθνοι) from their midst. Thus, it could be argued that Hecataeus indicates an origin of the Jews outside of Egypt; however, it could also be argued that he reports the usual reaction of a group that wishes to scapegoat another group that differs.

8. *Apud* Josephus (Stern #21). Manetho's preserved account of Jewish origins falls into two parts: first they are connected, if only by implication, with the excoriated Hyksos, who are described as founding Jerusalem (this connection between the Hyksos and the Jews seems to be unique in extant Greek and Latin literature of antiquity), and, second, they are identified with a company of lepers and other polluted persons who are eventually expelled from Egypt. In this second part, the Jews are clearly originally Egyptians, some even originally Egyptian priests, but they do collaborate with the ancient hated foreign enemies of the Egyptians, the Hyksos.

9. *Bibliotheca historica* I (Stern #55, 57), XXXIV-XXXV (Stern #63), XL (Stern #65). Diodorus presents two perspectives on the origins of the Jews: the more general perspective that they came as colonists from Egypt, and the more negative perspective that they originated with a group of impious and diseased peoples expelled from Egypt. In either case, Jewish origins are firmly rooted in Egypt.

10. *Apud* Josephus (Stern #158).

11. Stern, #105, 115, 124.

12. *Apud* Josephus (Stern #164, 165).

13. *Apud* Josephus (Stern #178).

14. *De Iside et Osiride* (Stern #259). Plutarch here traces the ancestors of the Jews to Typhon, or Seth, the enemy of Osiris.

In contrast to these diverse origin accounts, the Hebrew Bible, at least in the Pentateuch, seems to present a rather singular story of the origins of biblical Israel. The 'master narrative' of the Pentateuch places Israel's origins in Mesopotamia and proceeds from there in three stages: from Mesopotamia, Israel's ancestors migrate to the Cisjordan (the story of Abraham); secondly, from there they then migrate to Egypt (the stories of Jacob and Joseph); but this turns out to be only a temporary detour, for, thirdly, the family, now evolved into a people, travels back to the Cisjordan to claim their divinely sanctioned patrimony (the story of the Exodus). This three-stage narrative of Mesopotamian origins, an Egyptian detour, and a final settlement in the Cisjordan, is rarely found in ancient non-Jewish authors—Tacitus is rather exceptional in this regard in that one of the variants he presents approximates the Pentateuchal master narrative. In contrast, most of these writers seem to prefer, or are most acquainted with, an Egyptian origin for the Jews. Why? Often it is said that they are consciously attempting to defame the Jews, or are at least dependent on defamatory versions of Jewish origin accounts.[15] Or, on the other hand, they display a distorted or inadequate knowledge of what is considered to be the more ancient and authentic origin accounts found in the Hebrew Bible, particularly the Pentateuch.[16]

To this situation, I wish to pose three queries: (1) Even if some of the accounts of these authors are slanderous, or based on defamatory versions, which has been shown is not true of all of them (Feldmann 1996: 20-26), is there not, however, a possibility that these accounts were not wholly fabricated but that behind them lie traces of genuine origin traditions known not only by non-Jews but also held by various Jewish groups? (2) Are the origin accounts in these ancient authors necessarily much later than the 'master narrative' of the Pentateuch? Given that the dating of the final major redaction of the Pentateuch is tending, at least in some circles, to the later Persian and even early Hellenistic

15. As Feldman remarks, 'the prevalent scholarly view…is that Jews in the Hellenistic-Roman period were almost universally disliked' (1996: 20). A Jewish origin in Egypt is often connected with a story of the expulsion of lepers and diseased persons from Egypt. Thus, the 'leper libel' joins the 'blood libel' and the 'ass libel' as the three common attacks on Judaism by non-Jewish authors of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. However, some of these authors give an account of Jewish origins in Egypt which is devoid of slanderous notions, seeing the Jews, for instance, as colonists sent from Egypt. An example is the earliest non-Jewish account of Jewish origins, that of Hecataeus of Abdera. Feldman likewise concludes that 'a study of Stern's collection of the remarks of Greek and Roman writers shows that the majority of these comments are neutral and that there are almost as many favorable as unfavorable comments' (1996:20).

16. So Feldman, who characterizes writers such as Horace, Tacitus, and Plutarch as having to 'resort to hearsay evidence and guesses in answering questions about the origins of the Jews' and other Jewish matters (1996:20). In fact, the association of the Jews with the Egyptians, who were considered as the most ancient of peoples, actually indicates a general climate of admiration for the Jews among the intellectuals, in an age when antiquity in and of itself was deemed as crucial (Feldman 1996: 22).

periods,[17] is it possible that the origin accounts in both the Pentateuch and these ancient authors were contemporaneous? (3) Most importantly, does the Pentateuch itself posit only the one origin tradition for Israel indicated in its master narrative, or does it contain hints or traces of other possibilities? It is this latter question with which I wish to concern myself for the remainder of this essay.

Identity and Origin

Origin traditions occupy pride of place in the construction of identity and ethnicity. They help define the boundary between 'us' and 'them' by including within the boundary only those who can lay claim to the same history of origination. And yet, in this function, origin traditions tend to be largely mythical, a result, that is, of selective perception and memory in the service of particular interests, such that actual historical events of the past are obscured, simplified, caricatured, distorted and reworked.[18] That is, origin traditions function 'to make the past coincide with and support the self-identity of the group in its present situation' (Mullen 1997: 12). The rhetoric of origin traditions, therefore, aims to persuade the audience of the givenness of a particular version of their roots, usually in opposition to alternative, contending views. Origin traditions, in other words, are a vehicle for ideology, and ideology, as Fredric Jameson has described it, is a 'strategy of containment'—that 'which allows what can be thought to seem internally coherent in its own terms, while repressing the unthinkable which lies beyond its boundaries' (1981: 53). There is always a surplus, therefore, beyond the containment of ideological formations, and this surplus consists of the contending conceptions that the ideology attempts to subdue and erase. This surplus tends to leak around ideological boundaries, making it available for restoration or reconstruction.

All this has obvious implications for the interpretation of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is manifestly a document concerned primarily with the construction of biblical Israel's identity, and so one finds within it the creation of a strong sense of difference between 'us' and 'them'—more particularly, in the Pentateuch, the 'us' of Israel and the 'them' of Egypt. This antipathy comes to expression in the Pentateuch's master narrative of Israel's origins in which Egypt appears as a detour through which biblical Israel travels but never as Israel's original home. Quite to the contrary, the Pentateuch is at pains to mandate as much of a sense of separation between Israel and Egypt as possible: Yhwh himself insists quite pointedly during the plague narrative of Exodus, for example, that Israel and Egypt are to be distinct (Exod. 8.19 [23]; 9.4; 11.7).[19] Now, if the 'master narrative' of the

17. For example, see Lemche 1993, Bolin 1996, Blum 1990.

18. Thus Mullen, for instance, refers to the origin traditions of the Pentateuch as 'ethnomythography' (1997:88).

19. On the nature and forms of this distinction in the Pentateuch, see Greifenhagen 2002.

Pentateuch pinpoints Israel's origin in Mesopotamia, and if it constructs Israel's sense of identity primarily over against the 'them' of Egypt, what is this particular ideology or strategy of containment trying to exclude? Against the backdrop of the popularity of accounts of Egyptian origins for Israel in the writers mentioned above, is it possible that the Pentateuch seeks to counteract, erase or overwrite a tradition of Egyptian origins for Israel? I wish to discuss three clues or pieces of evidence from the Pentateuch that indicate that this may be so: (1) the uneasy linkage of the ancestor traditions of Genesis, which pinpoint Israel's origins in Mesopotamia, with the traditions of the exodus, which show Israel emerging from out of Egypt; (2) the ambiguous characterization of Moses, the Egyptian Hebrew, whose heroic stature as the founding ancestor of Israel is downplayed or denied in the narrative; and (3) the portrayal of pro-Egyptian sentiments as the voice of rebellion against God.

Linking the Ancestor and Exodus Traditions

It is, of course, readily recognized that the story of Joseph at the end of Genesis is qualitatively different from what precedes and follows it. This has led in the past to attempts to characterize the story as a special genre of wisdom (e.g. von Rad 1966), an idea that has been largely refuted (Crenshaw 1969), or, more convincingly, as a form of diaspora literature (Meinhold 1975, 1976).[20] At any rate, it seems that this different story has been incorporated into the Pentateuch to serve as a literary link or hinge between the ancestor traditions revolving around Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Genesis, and the Egyptian exodus traditions in Exodus and following. But does this literary link, which is absolutely necessary for the master narrative of the Pentateuch, actually work? For the most part it seemingly does, convincing interpreters of the essential givenness of the Pentateuchal master narrative. However, let us take a quick look at some indications that the link is not as smooth as it at first appears.

First, the beginning of the book of Exodus, especially 1.1-7. This prologue to the following narrative clearly functions to connect the exodus narrative with the preceding ancestral accounts in Genesis: it recapitulates in summary form a list of the sons of Israel already found in Gen. 46.8-27, and it describes the stupendous increase of Israel in Egypt with language echoing both the creation language of Genesis and the language of the promise of increase to the ancestors, also in Genesis. However, these verses present a number of serious textual difficulties concerning the place of Joseph—is he listed as a member of the sons of Israel or not?—and concerning the number of the sons of Israel who entered Egypt—is it 70 or 75?, which is itself dependent on whether Joseph's descendants are counted or not. In other words, the problem of where to count Joseph

20. Römer (1987) argues that the Joseph story was originally a production of Egyptian Judaism, meant to extol one of its primary heroes.

is deeply imbedded in the tradition, as indicated by these textual variants that are not due to mechanical errors in copying.

Why is Joseph a problem? Perhaps because Joseph is the most thoroughly Egyptianized of all of the sons of Israel—he accepts an Egyptian theophoric name, marries an Egyptian woman, becoming son-in-law of an Egyptian priest, practices divination, and is described as being like Pharaoh himself (44.18). The names he gives to his Egyptian-born sons reflect his assimilation to Egypt: the first-born, Manasseh, signifies Joseph's forgetfulness of his father's house (41.51), and the second-born, Ephraim, signifies his prosperity in Egypt. Joseph, and his offspring, in other words, are a problem to the assertion of the Pentateuch's master narrative that Israel is separate from Egypt.[21] And so there is a weakness in the link between the ancestor and exodus narratives. The narrative of the exodus, which in a separate and different context could perhaps have functioned as a tract celebrating the Egyptian origins of Israel, becomes by virtue of its placement in the context of the Pentateuch a means of asserting the opposite—that is, a non-Egyptian identity for Israel—but the fit is not perfect and the Egyptianizing Joseph is the surplus that spills over the boundaries of the ideology of the master narrative.

A second indication that the link between the ancestor traditions of Genesis and the exodus traditions of Exodus is not as smooth as it may first appear, is the literary device of the promise to the ancestors. It has been demonstrated that the promise to the ancestors, and their partial fulfillment, constitutes the overriding unitive theme or device that holds the Pentateuch together (Clines 1978; see also Mann 1988). However, various analyses have also demonstrated that this unitive literary device belongs to the latest redactional level of the Pentateuch, and that is functions to unite disparate traditions by making them fit the master narrative. For instance, Römer (1990) has convincingly argued that the ancestral triad, 'Abraham, Isaac and Jacob', in its six appearances in Deuteronomy, was added to the scroll only when it became part of the Pentateuch and needed to be explicitly linked with the ancestral traditions of Genesis; the implication is that originally the traditions in Deuteronomy betrayed no knowledge of the Genesis ancestral traditions. Tournay (1996) has made a similar argument in regard to the appearance of the ancestral triad in Exodus. Indeed, the first encounter between God and Moses in the third chapter of Exodus can be read as a attempt to convince Moses—and thus also the audience of the scroll—that a god known to the Israelites in Egypt is identical to the god of the ancestors of Genesis.[22] In other words, an origin in Egypt may have been one of the dispa-

21. An attempt is made to solve the problem of Joseph's two Egyptian-born sons by having Jacob adopt them as his own (Gen. 48:1-7).

22. Exod. 3:15, in which an explicit connection is made between the tetragrammaton and the god of the Genesis ancestors, gives all the appearance of an editorial addition or insertion: note the virtual repetition of 'thus you shall say to the sons of Israel' from v. 14—such repetitions are clues to ancient editorial activity.

rate and independent Israelite traditions which the Pentateuch subordinated to an origin tradition that begins in Mesopotamia.

The triumph, in the Pentateuch, of a Mesopotamian origin and the demotion of an Egyptian origin to the status of a temporary detour is especially signaled by the ancestral figure of Abraham. Abraham, appearing at the very beginning of the specifically Israelite origin tradition of the Pentateuch, is depicted as proleptically enacting the Pentateuch's master narrative. He comes from Mesopotamia, is called by God to migrate to the Cisjordan, but is then propelled by famine to Egypt. Egypt, while a place of nourishment and enrichment, also proves to be a place of danger, and so Abraham makes the exodus back to the Cisjordan. Shortly thereafter, his nephew Lot makes the disastrous decision to opt for the well-watered Jordan valley, which is likened to the land of Egypt. Thus, at the very beginning of the origin narrative of Israel, an ideological pattern around the term 'Egypt' is established, which influences the reading of subsequent episodes, predisposing the audience (1) to see Israel's origins as clearly non-Egyptian, (2) to see any connection of Israel with Egypt as temporary and fraught with danger, and (3) to see any yearning or nostalgia for Egypt on the part of Israel as disastrous.

That this construction of the Pentateuch's master narrative comes with the final redaction of the Pentateuch, in the process of which other origin traditions are subjugated or erased, is suggested by the late date that is assigned by some critics to parts of the Abraham narrative. Genesis 15, for instance, which explicitly mentions that Abraham's descendants will live as aliens and slaves in a foreign land for 400 years or four generations (15.13-17), has been analyzed as a late theological compendium of Pentateuchal history (Ha 1989). Even if this is not accepted, the mention of the sojourn in a foreign land is manifestly a later insertion (Noort 1995: 143). All of this suggests that the dominance of the master origin narrative of the Pentateuch is a result of the construction of the Pentateuch itself, in which the ancestor traditions of Genesis are linked to, and made the interpretational key to, the following accounts of Israel in Egypt and the exodus. Without the prologue of the ancestor accounts, and the later links established with those ancestral accounts in the structure of the Pentateuch, the material in the scroll of Exodus and following could be read much more in line with those ancient authors who suggest an Egyptian origin for Israel. In other words, the Pentateuch's master narrative seems to subjugate an alternative Israelite origin tradition that begins in Egypt.[23]

Moses, the Hybrid Egyptian Hebrew

In an Israelite origin tradition beginning in Egypt, the heroes would obviously be Israelites associated with those Egyptian beginnings, namely Joseph and Moses, in particular. And Joseph is indeed portrayed in Genesis as, at least, a

23. See also Römer (1992 a, 1992 b) on the origin accounts in the Pentateuch.

Hebrew highly assimilated to Egypt who arranges for Israel to be settled rather permanently in Egypt. But, as we have seen, this makes his very status as part of Israel suspect from the point of view of the Pentateuch's master narrative. In the end he is somewhat redeemed by a deathbed vow to have his bones transported to the promised land, which amounts to a repudiation of Egypt and an assertion of his proper roots. Even if his story was originally a production of Egyptian Judaism, in its present context it has been made into a vehicle of the master narrative in that it explains how and why Israel made its detour into Egypt. But it is Moses, who in the Pentateuch dominates the next stage of getting out of Egypt, who is especially associated with the notion of Israel's Egyptian origins.

In many ways, Moses is depicted in the Pentateuch as the greatest of Israel's leaders. The concluding encomium of the Pentateuch (Deut. 34.10-12), as well as an earlier panegyric in Numbers (12.6-8), extol Moses as unequaled in Israel. He is portrayed as giving himself in selfless service to Israel, his intercession several times averts God's wrath from Israel, and God himself vows several times to start over and make a greater nation out of Moses (Exod. 32.10; Num. 14.12). However, it is striking that Moses is never unambiguously counted as a member of Israel.

First, there is the erasure of Moses' descendants from the Levitical genealogies of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch admits to at least two sons of Moses by his wife Zipporah,[24] and yet neither these two sons nor any other descendants of Moses are listed in the genealogies of Levi in Exodus 6 or Numbers 3 and 26, even though one of these genealogies is entitled the 'lineage of Aaron and Moses' (Num. 3.1) and another ends with a double reference to Aaron *and* Moses. Only Chronicles admits to descendants of Moses, whereas the reference to a priesthood descended from Moses in Judges 18.30 is obscured by the addition of a suspended *nun* transforming the name Moses into Manasseh.[25] Thus, while Aaron lives on in his descendants, Moses genealogically disappears.

Not only is Moses not allowed any descendants, but he is himself excluded from the Promised Land, despite his heroic activity on behalf of Israel. Joshua and Caleb are the only members of the Egyptian-born generation of Israel who are allowed into the land, but their status surely pales in comparison with that of Moses. While the exclusion of Moses has been variously explained on theological grounds, I have never found any of these explanations entirely con-

24. Gershom and Eliezer (Exod. 2:22; 18:3-4; see also Exod. 4:20 where Moses packs up his sons—note the plural—in order to return to Egypt).

25. This deliberate change by the early scribes is usually explained as a means of protecting Moses' name from association with an idolatrous cult (Tov 1992: 57). However, in the context of the anti-Egyptian ideology of the Pentateuch's master narrative, it can also be seen as a deliberative erasure of any trace of Moses' lineage. Furthermore, it seems possible that in some Israelite circles Moses was indeed associated with a cultus that was regarded as illegitimate by especially the Deuteronomists; see the exalted view of Moses in Artapanus and Eupolemus (further on these figures below).

vincing. The episode at the waters of Meribah (Num. 20.2-13) as a reason for Moses' exclusion seems rather minor, even petty, especially in comparison to, say, Aaron's far more weighty transgression in the manufacture of the golden calf. Indeed, being still full of unabated vigor at age 120 (Deut. 34.7), Moses' death at the boundary of the land must be divinely caused. Furthermore, unlike Jacob and Joseph, not even Moses' bones are allowed to enter the promised land and the location of his grave is said to be unknown (Deut. 34.6).

Even while Moses lives, his stature is systematically diminished in the Pentateuch. Daniel Silver, one who has drawn attention to this dynamic of the Pentateuchal narrative, concludes that 'the editors have consciously phrased the narrative to withdraw from Moses responsibility for all that happens to Israel while he is Israel's acknowledged leader. Successive editions seem to have struggled against Moses' reputation rather than to have elaborated it' (1982: 17).[26] The usual interpretation for this diminishment of Moses is that the Pentateuch is determined to accentuate the power of God over against any human agency. In view of the Pentateuch's master narrative, I would suggest another reason: Moses is diminished so as to undercut the power of other origin traditions which stress Israel's Egyptian roots and have Moses as their major hero.

That such other traditions existed is indicated not only by the Roman and Greek authors mentioned at the beginning of this paper, but also by the writings of Jewish Hellenistic authors. For example, Eupolemus (mid-second century BCE) lauds Moses as the first wise man and inventor of writing,[27] the hellenistic Jewish poet Ezekiel (second century BCE) glorifies Moses in his drama *The Exodus*,[28] and Artapanus (mid-second century BCE) exalts Moses as cultural benefactor of Egypt *par excellence*, a military hero and thaumaturge who never meets defeat and is regarded by the Egyptians as divine.[29] The Pentateuchal master narrative clearly opposes this portrayal of Moses; yet it may itself contain residual traces of a more exalted Moses tradition. For example, Moses is twice instructed to be 'as a god', once to Aaron (Exod. 4.16) and once to Pharaoh (Exod. 7.1). The odd, yet frequently alluded to, tradition that an angel guided Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness (Exod. 14.19; 23.20-23; 32.34; 33.2; Num. 20.16; Judges 2.1-5) may be a trace of a more exalted and even semi-divine portrayal of Moses, especially if considered in light of the

26. Compare the portrayal of the other great Israelite hero, David, in the Deuteronomistic history (Silver 1982: 22-24).

27. See Holladay 1983: 113. Contrast the fragments of Pseudo-Eupolemus (Holladay 1983: 171-77) who portrays not Moses, but Abraham, as cultural benefactor. The same is also true of Cleodemus Malchus (Holladay 1983: 255).

28. See Holladay 1989.

29. See Holladay 1983: 209-25. Artapanus also knows the traditions of Abraham and Joseph, but he reserves his highest accolades for Moses. Feldman (1996: 27) doubts that Artapanus or Eupolemus are Jewish because he cannot imagine a Jew writing the things they do. Obviously, the hold of the ideology of the master narrative of the Pentateuch is strong also on modern scholars!

later tradition of the ascent and divine enthronement of Moses at Sinai (Meeks 1968). God several times threatens to start over and make a new people out of Moses alone (Exod. 32.7-10; Num. 14.12), and admits that Israel is Moses' people whom Moses has brought out of Egypt (Exod. 32.7).[30] And the fact that the golden calf is meant by the people as a substitute for Moses (32.1, 5), an interpretation supported by Moses' shining (or horned) face (34.29-35), also seems to be a residual trace of a more exalted, even semi-divine status.

Moses is a problem for the master narrative of the Pentateuch in that he is a hybrid uneasily straddling the boundary between Israel and Egypt and yet, in the tradition, he has an indispensable role in getting Israel out of Egypt and back to the land where it is supposed to be. Thus the narrative both attempts to distance Moses from his Egyptian associations and consistently undercuts alternative heroic or even mythical portraits of Moses. In these ways, the master narrative both imposes the hegemony of Israel's Mesopotamian origins and yet at the same time retains traces of alternative traditions that may have begun with Egypt.

Pro-Egyptian Traditions Framed as Rebellion

Finally, it remains to briefly examine yet one more bit of evidence that the Pentateuch is seeking to overwrite and counter alternative Egyptian origin traditions for Israel. A pro-Egyptian voice is actually heard rather frequently in the Pentateuchal narrative, and it is the voice of Israel. It is a voice that speaks with nostalgia and longing for an Egyptian home; a place of safety and stability associated with plenty of free food and water, indeed a place flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16.13-14), a good place that one is happy to live and die in.

This voice comes to expression in what is commonly called the motif of murmuring or complaint in the wilderness, found in Exodus and Numbers. In Exod. 14.11-12, the Israelites complain that Moses has taken them away from the graves of Egypt to die in the wilderness. When they are hungry, they fondly remember the fleshpots and eating of bread to satiation in Egypt (Exod. 16.3). Thirst is the complaint in Exod. 17.3, with the implication that Egypt is well watered. In Num. 11.5-6, the fish and vegetables of Egypt are contrasted with the manna in the wilderness. The goodness of the meat in Egypt is part of the complaint in Num. 11.18. The complaints turn into active rebellion with a call to return to Egypt in Num. 14.2-4. Finally, the more specific rebellion of Korah,

30. See also Moses' complaint in Num. 11:12: 'Did I myself conceive all this people? Or did I myself give birth to it?' Although the answer to this rhetorical question is meant, in the context of the Pentateuch's master narrative, to be 'no', that the question can be posed at all raises at least the possibility that Moses could be thought of as the point of origin for Israel. It is also often argued that these exalted portrayals of Moses are conscious reworkings of the Pentateuchal narrative; this argument, however, presupposes that the Pentateuch both contains the oldest and the only authentic Israelite origin tradition. Rather, it is possible that these portrayals represent alternative Moses traditions current alongside those in the Pentateuch.

Dathan and Abiram in Numbers 16 includes a description of *Egypt* as a land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16.13-14)!

The Pentateuch here engages in a very clever rhetorical strategy. Voice is given to a very positive evaluation of Egypt, an evaluation that seems to have been held by some of the audience towards which the Pentateuch was directed. But that voice is framed as a voice of complaint and rebellion against God, leading to divine wrath and punishment, thus negating its legitimacy. At issue is how Egypt is to survive in the collective memory of the people. The memory of Egypt as a good place is not sanctioned, being branded as a false recollection produced by complaint and defiance. Conversely, the memory of Egypt as a negative place of oppression is officially sanctioned and given institutional means of maintenance and perpetuation (e.g. the Passover rituals).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I am arguing that alternative versions of Israelite or Jewish origin traditions need to be taken more seriously. Consciously or unconsciously, the Pentateuch's master origin narrative has been sanctioned too easily as a normative foundation on which all other Israelite origin narratives depend, or from which all alternative versions diverge. However, origin traditions are not givens from the past, but constitute sites of contention between various conceptions of ideal identity in the present. The Pentateuch is thus a contestatory document, promoting a particular, largely anti-Egyptian, ideal of Israelite identity and origin against other views, especially more pro-Egyptian views which it seeks to creatively incorporate and subordinate. Thus, the narratives of Joseph and Moses, which on their own could stand as testimonies to Egyptian Israelite heroes, are linked in the Pentateuch to the programmatic ancestral accounts of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, making Israel's time in Egypt a temporary detour rather than a point of origin. The potent figure of Moses is diminished and his genealogical continuity in Israel is erased. And finally, any pro-Egyptian nostalgia is framed such that it can only be thought of as an act of rebellion against God. But precisely within these rhetorical strategies of the Pentateuch, that seek to contain the only legitimate definition of Israel and its origins, lie the traces of alternative traditions, particularly traditions that associate Israel's origins far more closely with Egypt, traditions more like those hinted at in the Greek and Roman authors with which this essay began.

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Signs of Empire, Signs of Apocalypse[1]

Tina Pippin

> Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever (Rev. 11.15).

In the Apocalypse of John the dream of Empire is full of signs, of war and peace, of beasts and brave witnesses, of death and eternal life. Mostly the dream of Empire is full of, well, Empire—of evil Empire in the form of the Whore of Babylon and her accompanying beasts and the imagined Heavenly state of God that descends like a Bride from heaven. Empire displaces Empire; sign (Bride) displaces sign (Whore). Whose mark (*sēma*) is on your forehead, the Beast or God (Rev. 13.16; 14.9, 11; 17.5; 19.16; 20.4; 22.4)? *Sēmeion*, semiotics, signs of the end of one Empire and the beginning of a new one. Signs and wonders from the beasts and from God and the company of angels. Knowing how to read the signs of Empire is very important. It's a life and death matter.

I want to explore the spaces of Empire in the text and the connection of Empire to signs of apocalypse and vice versa. I want to explore the ideological and political spaces of semiotics using the dream of Empire in the Apocalypse of John and in current US foreign policy in the Middle East. With Empire I mean a postmodern term that involves multivalent globalization and new forms of imperial sovereignty. From Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri I borrow the concept of Empire as a 'concept…characterized by a lack of boundaries; Empire's rule has no limits'. Empire 'rules over the entire 'civilized' world', rejecting national boundaries, it 'suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity', and Empire 'creates the very world it inhabits'. Hardt and Negri also relate that 'although the practice of Empire is continually bathed in blood, the concept of Empire is always dedicated to peace—a perpetual and universal peace outside of history' (2000: xiv-xv). The United States is not Empire, although it engages in the practices of the more global, borderless Empire.

And the US has what psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton refers to as 'superpower syndrome', the sense of the US as a 'blessed people' but nonetheless vulnerable; thus, it is necessary 'to maintain an illusion of vulnerability' (2003: 128-29). Lifton

1. A version of this paper was presented in the 'Semiotics and Exegesis Section' at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, San Antonio, 22 November 2004.

explains, 'The superpower, trapped in its syndrome, finds itself with little recourse but the endless use of force' (2003: 135). Lifton finds superpower syndrome in the arena of another syndrome, 'destroying the world in order to save it' (2003: 173). It is ultimately 'a fantasy of cosmic control, a mindset all too readily tempted by an apocalyptic mission' (2003: 188). We own death; we own history; we own Apocalypse. God is already acting on earth through 'his' appointed leaders and their armies. A totalizing version of the future is being acted out in the present. In the midst of its superpower syndrome the US engages in a pattern of 'destroying the world in order to save it' acts as the so-called evildoers it opposes. Each side is consuming the other, consuming themselves in the ritual of death, of Empire.

In all of these destructive plans is the hope for a utopia, a place that is unified and harmonious (in whatever imperial terms)—a place that is no-place. Utopia recreates Empire as Counter-Empire as Empire. Apocalyptic utopia is certainly formed by war, imperialism, racism, heterosexism, environmental ruin, and genocide. In the Apocalypse of John a grand, amazing city rises up out of the ashes signifying peace and control; the residency of the Beast/Whore is destroyed to make room for the residence of God. Crisis is followed by control. This sounds to me more like a 'dystopia'. Slavoj Žižek uses Peter McLaren's definition, 'not just the temporary absence of Utopia, but the political celebration of the end of social dreams' (2001: 9).

We're all embedded in Apocalypse, whether dispensationalist, fundamentalist Christian or historical-critical or postmodernist biblical scholar. We're embedded with the Christian soldiers, the violent angel armies and the civilian witnesses to the faith. As biblical scholars we are asked to carry the banner of Apocalypse, the sign of God's eternal Empire—and of US superpower syndrome acted out in/on the world. I no longer see how we can carry the text around as we do, lending it any measure of authority in the Christian canon. Tim LaHaye has hijacked the text, but I'm not willing to negotiate for its return to biblical scholars and mainstream Christianity.

Even as I try to discard the Apocalypse of John, I wonder if the text is written on my/our backs, as in the recently murdered Dutch director Theo von Gogh's film on women in Islam, *Submission*—the abused woman with the Quran inscribed on her back. The filmmaker was shot dead as he rode his bike in Amsterdam. Dissent is dangerous. 'I warn everyone who hears the words of prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book: if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book' (Rev. 22.18-19).

An anthropology colleague of mine now wears the red star of revolution in this post-2004-election context of the US. She says the star symbolizes her allegiance to neither the Republican nor Democratic parties as a sign of hope. Both parties have become for her signs of Empire, owned and operated by the same Masters of the Universe.

Empire of Signs

I draw my definition of Empire also from Roland Barthes. In his seminal work on Japan, *Empire of Signs*, Barthes sets out to read the signs of an imagined Japan through its cultural signs (food, face, language, writing, meaning). At the beginning of his adventure into this territory Barthes refers to the concept of emptiness in Zen Buddhism:

> The text does not 'gloss' the images, which do not 'illustrate' the text. For me, each has been no more than the onset of a kind of visual uncertainty, analogous perhaps to that *loss of meaning* Zen calls a *satori*. Text and image, interlacing, seek to ensure the circulation and exchange of these signifiers: body, face, writing; and in them to read the retreat of signs (1982: xi).

Thus the signifier has the potential to lead to emptiness, to a loss of meaning. In observing the sparsely furnished Shikidai gallery (in which the photo turned upside down leads to nothing), he notes that space is reversible and 'there is nothing to grasp' (1982: 110). In this way Barthes is critiquing the dominant Western orientalist, exoticized gaze of his time. The Orientalist gaze is full of meaning, always creating meaning, a meaning that has imperial plans. Barthes invents Japan; it becomes an *empire of empty signs*, since the dominant image of 'Japan'—its myth—is consequently an invention of the West (Trifonas 2001: 21). Peter Trifonas explains that 'For Barthes, myth distorts reality for ideological effect. It turns bias and prejudice into history. It quietly suspends the need for a questioning of representations in culture' (2001: 13). All readings of Japan are an invention, but by inventing Japan Barthes avoids traditional hegemonic readings of history.

Trifonas questions: 'Is it possible to write a history of Japanese culture without succumbing to reconstituting its Western mythology?' (2001: 22). Is a semiotic deferral of meaning, a mistrust of myth, an admittance of imperial gaze enough to displace the power relationships? For Barthes the starting point in reading the world is in the zero degree of meaning. The next steps are to map the ideological signifier. Ideology is the key here. Postcolonial theorist Chela Sandoval finds that Barthes leads us to a decolonizing, emancipatory consciousness:

> Barthes goes so far as to define ideology as the process of colonization itself: the occupation, exploitation, incorporation, and hegemonic domination of meaning—by meaning… Barthes's method recalls (into being) the very schism in consciousness that occurs when one is ripped away from legitimized order—'reality'—to be placed as outsider in a process endemic to coloniality-by-race, a chasm Barthes's method invites all readers to enter (2000: 98).

Barthes' reading of Japan is useful because he is critical of the fictions that Western readings hold up as Truth. He summarizes: 'In Japan, everything changes: the nothingness or the excess of the exotic code, to which the Frenchman at home is condemned when confronting the *foreigner* (whom he calls *the*

stranger though he does not manage to make anything very strange out of him), is absorbed into a new dialectic of speech and language, of series and individual, of body and race…' (1982: 96). Barthes is exposing Empire as a fiction, as an empty Sign.

In the biblical Empire, the kingdom of heaven is enacted through a unilateralist strategy. God acts on behalf of 'his' people—the 144,000, the souls under the altar—while the multitude is left outside the gates of Heaven. Hardt and Negri describe the iconoclastic destruction of images of power in the eighth-century Byzantine Empire. The multitude was no longer allowed to worship the images of God and Christ. 'God must be completely separate from the multitude such that the Basileus is the only link between them, the only means of salvation' (2004: 325). They call for a project of love in which the multitude loves beyond themselves into the arena of political change as they seek to create a new world (2004: 351-52). They instruct the multitude to wait for 'the moment of rupture' in the dominant culture of war and global Empire (2004: 357). They do not provide the answer for 'There is no need for eschatology or utopianism here' (2004: 357). This multitude stands outside the gates of the heavenly fortress. Or in the Apocalypse has the multitude been thrown into the Abyss and does it lurk just at its lips, ready to emerge and create a new order?

But in the textual world of the Apocalypse of John the cosmos is at One. Hardt and Negri describe this kind of imperial vision as occupying and producing 'smooth space'. 'In this smooth space of Empire, there is no *place* of power—it is both everywhere and nowhere. Empire is an *ou-topia*, or really a *non-place*' (2000: 190). Henri Lefebvre finds that space is filled with signifying practices and codes. He offers as thought: 'It might be supposed that our first priority should be the methodical destruction of the *codes* relating to space. Nothing could be further from the case, however, because the codes inherent to knowledge and social practice have been in dissolution for a very long time already. All that remains of them are relics: words, images, metaphors' (1991: 25). Thus perhaps the apocalyptic codes I'm seeking to destroy are already self-destructing, all in some illusionary puff of smoke.

Jean Baudrillard further explores these codes: 'Messianic hope was based on the *reality* of the Apocalypse. But this latter has no more reality than the original Big Bang … Our Apocalypse is not real, it is virtual. And it is not in the future, it is *here and now*' (1995: 119). Even though LaHaye and other dispensationalists see an immanent end of time and enactment of Apocalypse, they are stuck in a past story of Empire (from the Scofield Bible notes on the Apocalypse of John), a past dream that gets played out in Tribulation fiction and on the battlefields of the Middle East. There is the Empire of the Antichrist, operated by some humanitarian leader of a one-world order, and the Empire of God, controlled by none other than, well, God, with a hoard of henchmen angels. Good fights Evil; each of has a choice to be on one side or the other. There is insider and outsider (believer and non-believer), but with Empire there is only

the smooth space of inside. The private becomes public; there are no private spaces in heaven. In the Apocalypse, although the evildoers still do evil and the Abyss still provides a tear in the text, the one-world order of Heaven (as Christian Empire in the urban New Jerusalem) fills the rest of the space of the universe.

For prophecy-believers the signs are everywhere. Consider Hal Lindsey's 'news' show on Trinity Broadcast Network, 'International New Briefing', which feigns to be 'factual'. Lindsey sees Apocalypse everywhere, in every EU coin, and in every movement in Israel and Palestine. His world is a binary one, full of the battle of good and evil, waged by believers against evildoers. History and fiction (of the Rapture, Tribulation, Armageddon, etc.) are merged in prophecy belief. In some circles Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins's *Left Behind* series has replaced the Apocalypse of John. LaHaye might claim that his text is not outside the Text (Bible) and therefore has a certain shared authority with John the Revelator. LaHaye and John the Revelator—which one is real? Is any real?

The Apocalypse that prophecy-believers lead us to is void—and one to a-void. For this Apocalypse leads to American Empire, with the US Christians sharing the thousand-year reign with Christ. For example in the *Left Behind* books and films the US is presented as the good, fighting (with a few carefully chosen allies—*not* the UN, which is run by the Antichrist) the forces of evil, the Antichrist, at Armageddon, destroying all who are not Christian. Included in this destruction are two-thirds of the Jews; one third converts to Christianity. The ideology not only of premillennialist dispensationalism but of American Empire is behind these Tribulation fictions.

These fictional crises of Anti-Christ and Armageddon fuel fear. Crisis feeds on fear. Hardt and Negri explain the current global context: 'The end of the crisis of modernity has given rise to a proliferation of minor and indefinite crises, or, as we prefer, to an omni-crisis' (2000: 189). The war on 'Terror' is a boundless war, with no outside, only smooth space. The Apocalypse presents itself as anti-Empire, and Rome (figured as the Whore of Babylon) falls in grand fashion.

Semiotic Challenge

The central place of Apocalyptic Empire today is of course the Middle East. Apocalyptic signs are everywhere, from the plains of Megiddo to the Temple Mount. Israel, with the Temple Mount as ground zero, is the spot of God's Empire in the future (post-apocalypse Christian) world. Edward Said has uncovered the signs of Empire from his own Christian, Palestinian perspective. He traced the history of Palestine from its standing as a British Colony to its position as Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza, along with scattered refugee settlements. He found irony on all sides: the oppressed Jewish

people becoming an oppressive state (1948 and 1967) with its 'state terrorism', the Palestinian acts of individual terrorism (suicide bombings), and the funding of the Israeli military machine by the United States to the tune of over $3 billion (1992: xxi). Terrible atrocities, mainly against civilian populations, continue to happen on both sides. And there are a multitude of signs: rhetoric, visible 'terror', and imaginary 'terror'.

These three signs are interconnected. The political rhetoric initially serves to polarize. There are various rhetorical signs. For example, for Said, 'Israel' has served as a sign for 'a nation in search of peace' and 'Arabs' have been a sign of those who are 'warlike, bloodthirsty, bent on extermination, and prey to irrational violence, more or less forever' (1992: xiv). The 'United States' is a sign for peace broker, imperialist superpower, and so forth, depending on your point of view. Said observed that the reference to Palestinians by the Israeli government as 'cockroaches', 'grasshoppers', 'two-legged vermin', etc. have led to excesses of state violence. The sign of the Other as insect opens the possibilities and (hidden) desire of violent and total destruction, for insects are 'exterminated'. The historical irony of such rhetoric is not lost on Said. These signs of (placed and displaced) nations and people simplify the complexities of the situation, silence all Palestinian resistance by understanding them only as terrorism, and lend support to the Zionist (Christian and Jewish varieties) causes. On one of my visits to Gaza I remember standing in the Palestinian hospital in Gaza City listening to a Danish doctor as he held up a 'rubber bullet' and related the realities of this weaponry—that these bullets don't bounce off human flesh but rather penetrate it, scattering shrapnel in the body. The 'rubber bullet' is a sign that leads to repeated misunderstanding and re-understanding. And the 'rubber bullet' has numerous targets—the Palestinian children, the young pregnant woman now paralyzed, but also back again to the US factory. Behind this sign of the bullet was a case filled with boxes of the medicine used to treat the effects of nerve gas, another sign of misunderstanding (nerve gas = tear gas = minor irritation on its victims = instrument of peace). Again, for both the gas and the medicine there are factories in the US. Perhaps these signs (of peace? of war?) are like Pierce's signals—winking at me to come follow them to their various ends—hospital beds, cemeteries, factories, Knesset, Pentagon. Are these signals of the Endtime, that will occur in the wink of an eye? The erotic desire for destruction? And do I wink back knowingly at these signals? Showing my connection with the terror—part of my tax money funding the apocalypse?

The front page of the September 29, 2003 edition of *The New York* Times had a large picture of the 'wall' that Israelis are building to separate Israel from the West Bank. The *NYT* uses the term 'barrier' for the officially named 'separation fence', but the divider has also been called a 'wall', since it looks like a bit like and has been compared to the Berlin Wall. The plans for the wall are to follow the pre-1967 West Bank border, the 'Green Line', in some places making visible a previously invisible border. The result has so far been to create

several 'seam zones' in which Palestinian farms and some villages have been trapped, by living too close between Israel and the barrier wall to be considered at a safe, secure distance. Supporters of the 'fence' cite security needs; opponents claim land appropriation and further displacements of Palestinians.

This photo shows an Israeli woman walking her dog by the barrier wall. The caption reads, 'Artists painted the barrier to make it blend in with the landscape'. Here is a case of landscape as simulacrum, a copy of the real. The Palestinian town on the other side of the idyllic, rocky landscape is erased, replaced by a space of safety and control all the way out to its (implied) endless land. Is that an ancient or modern village on the hillside? In any event, the implications for the viewers are that the woman could walk right out of her contested Jerusalem suburb and into that peaceful landscape. This walled landscape 'blends in' with a certain ideology of space and belief in ownership in the land beyond the wall. The land beyond becomes reclaimed in this artificial rendering as a borderless territory. The only interruption is the steel girders sticking through the top; they jab at the sky and at any peace plans or plans for a dual Israeli and Palestinian state. What holds this landscape in place is concrete and steel, political and economic interests, the 1948 creation of the State of Israel, fear, violence, and political interests. I stare into this landscape-on-top-of-a-landscape; this fantasyland of peace and nation building meant to imply a certain seamlessness, a continuous space. I try to imagine that this palimpsest landscape is the real one; in some ways it is, since those in power have 'drawn' these many lines in the sand. Part of the ancient wall around Jerusalem has been rebuilt to keep the enemy (read, Palestinian terrorists) out. But there's a disruption; the unseen other side of the fence remains a possibility, the conflict with which to reckon.

The picture has the title, 'An Uneasy Divide'. The photo introduced a story that revealed other walls in Jerusalem, the Western Wall Plaza and an outer wall of the Al Aqsa mosque. Walls lead to more walls, outer to inner, inner to outer and further out still. Walls and fences currently divide the land, barriers to maintain the tension, choose sides, keep the divisions in check, barring all from peace. The big barrier wall is made of concrete, the same material as the Berlin Wall. I remember in 1990 chipping away at that wall in Berlin and picking pieces off the ground, and crossing the 'sides' in a new way—by simply stepping over the ground. No more checkpoints, armed guards, or waiting to pass through from one side to the other. But in this photo, and its accompanying landscape, there are all the invisible artifacts of memory and knowledge about this land; sensors, ditches, barbed wire, armed military presence, conflicting claims for the land. This is the edge of Jerusalem, the edge of the Holy Apocalyptic City, claimed by many. Even though this photo shows the seam, the border, the city wall (seemingly without gate/s here) extends beyond itself, entrapping olive trees and villages on the other side as it claims more 'nation' for itself. Power and control expand outward; the edges begin to represent the city center, and the center the edges, an ever expanding universe. What does

the future hold? Eventually the New Jerusalem, the City of God, filling every nation, erasing every boundary, every space, becoming Space itself, the ever-expanding universe finally settling in for eternity.

Conclusion: The Audacity of Hope

Hardt and Negri place their utopian hopes on the multitude that can either make or break Empire, or in other words, create 'a new constituent power that will one day take us through and beyond Empire' (2000: xv). The multitude today, however, resides on the imperial surfaces where there is no God the Father and no transcendence. Instead there is our immanent labor. The teleology of the multitude is theurgical; it consists in the possibility of directing technologies and production toward its own joy and its own increase of power… The mythology of languages of the multitude interprets the telos of an *earthly city*, torn away by the power of its own destiny from any belonging or subjection to a *city of God*, which has lost all honor and legitimacy (2000: 396).

Hardt and Negri, like Roy and others, dream of democracy. Lee Quinby offers a sensible critique of such millenarian hope. In reading Hardt and Negri's *Empire* she rightly takes issue with the authors on two major points, 'feminist allegiance and Foucauldian power analysis' (2004: 232). Negri and Hardt blur resistance and violence (2004: 239), they ignore women, they romanticize the Multitude, and they found their millennial vision of democracy on 'endism and electism' (2004: 233). The world as we've known it is passing away and a new world order will replace it.

For Quinby the world is gendered, and to ignore this is to dismiss not only women but also the specific violence women experience. She asks, 'Just how far afield is the New Jerusalem from what Hardt and Negri herald as their secular telos, "the earthly city of the multitude" ' (2004: 396). 'The new Empire thus takes the rhetorical place of the whorish Other, the decadent force that warrants annihilation' (2004: 236). Quinby finds a mimetic rhetoric in Hardt and Negri's rendition of Empire, a rhetoric that mimes the Apocalypse and produces an absolute vision of a unified future.

That fence, those settlements, that singular (not shared) capital of Jerusalem must all be intact for the Final Days. These things are signs of the Endtimes. They are also signs of Empire. The wall is thus a fiction, just as Israel and Palestine are fictions. The New Jerusalem is a fiction, an imagined Empire of almost unimaginable terror. What's painted on the wall is an apocalyptic scenario, some would read Paradise in the desert. Some might read some sort of sacred scripture (divinely inspired) on the fence—the text of the Apocalypse of John? ('He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. The wall was built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel', Rev. 21.17-19). What message does this fence send? It's

what George Aichele (1997) refers to as 'unlimited semiosis', a never-ending ending. Armageddon is not open territory.

John the Revelator is omniscient about the End, or so he claims. The counter-Empire readings of Ernesto Cardenale, Alan Boesak, and Paolo Richard lead to a focus of resistance not of John to the Roman Empire but to tis contemporary equivalent, the US. There is a liberating message in these readings, a firm stance against US global power. Babylon is now Washington, DC. But for LaHaye and other prophecy teachers the US represents the armies of God. There are dangers in political and ideological readings of Apocalypse on all sides: the danger of reinscribing in the contemporary world the violence of the text (lending support texts to unnecessary wars and war machines), the danger of disappearing women, the danger of utopianism.

It's not enough to say no to the Apocalypse, to refuse its signs, resist its totalizing vision. It's not enough to say no to its imagined heavenly Empire. It's not enough to acquiesce in the end to its canonical status. (Am I declaring war on the canon? At the very least, a resistance movement.) For with this apocalyptic vision of Empire comes what Arundhati Roy calls the New Imperialism (globalization and multinational corporations), the New Racism (the few 'Others' given positions of power), the New Genocide (mass death through economic actions) (2004: 83-94). These are the contemporary signs of death and destruction, of pestilence and war, of the abyss. Saying no to this Apocalypse, this godly Empire, does it lead only to an empty 'end'? Does the End have no meaning? Isn't that always the case with Endings—meaning is incessantly deferred, even as Meaning (or Truth, *et al*.) meets its apocalypse ('Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy', Rev. 22.10-11). But Apocalypse is always 're'—revealing, reveiling—re: with its meaning of both backward and forward, rebuilding and going back. Apocalypse re-visited, repeated, re-imagined. So Apocalypse is never-ending, stuck in a constant repeat of its story. As readers of the Apocalypse we enter the dream, the visions of the End. It's unavoidable, for it's always Apocalypse time, and in Empire we live in the spaces of Apocalypse.

> Our strategy should be not only to confront Empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness—and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe (Roy 2003: 112).

So what are our options? Do we storm heaven? So do we loot the Apocalypse of John for its signs, hoping that we change the course of history in erasing the signs: the seven golden lampstands, the swords, flaming torches, jewels and pearls, fine linen, cargo, scrolls and seals, golden bowls, trumpets, harps, golden censer, golden cup, measuring rods, keys, sharp sickle, tree of life, book of life, the very altar of heaven, even the Throne itself? Do we raid the city of

heaven? What do we then do with these signs of the Endtimes? Pawn them? Burn them? Melting down the gold to make a giant golden calf? Dance around it in some glorious ochlocracy? The dance of the Multitude around the god of Democracy?

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C. Global Readings

Global Readings: Reading the Bible in Kansas and Beyond

Wesley J. Bergen

It seemed not only right but also necessary to include a section on Global Exegesis in a Festschrift for David Jobling. As a teacher, David regularly brought students into contact with perspectives from outside the Euro-American context. More recently, David has spent many months traveling to various parts of the world, teaching and listening and encouraging.

On the other hand, it now appears a bit odd to have this section edited and introduced by me, someone living in Kansas, the geographical heart of Empire.[1] The task of introducing 'Global Exegesis' in a few pages would be a daunting task for anyone, let alone a white North American living comfortably in the midst of the Evil Empire. But in the words of Bugs Bunny, 'This looks like a job for Soooperman!!! But since he's not here, I guess I'll have to do it'.

In taking on this task, I will apply a number of lessons I learned from studying with David. He may not wish to take credit for some or any of these lessons. One of the stresses of teaching is that students remember and misremember the oddest things.

I will also be pursuing an extended metaphor throughout this analysis. Professors often find it helpful to think about education in terms of teaching students to use tools. As educators, teaching involves not only the passing on of knowledge about certain tools, but also a reflection on the process and purpose of teaching and how this relates to the goals of our students. It is this reflection that enables our students to similarly reflect on the work they will be doing with the tools we pass on to them.

The tools in religious studies are often placed in categories such as 'biblical exegesis' or 'theological reflection' or 'sociological analysis'. As a category, 'global exegesis' is difficult to define since in practice it often resembles Levi-Strauss's bricolage more than a specific skill set (Levi-Strauss 1966: 17). People use the tools that are at hand and adapt them for new uses as needed. So rather than attempt to define or summarize the field, I will make a number of suggestions on how to approach both the study and the teaching of global exe-

1. Empire, of course, is becoming less geography-based and more capital-based. Yet there is still something significant in the isolation of living in a community almost a thousand miles from the nearest national border.

gesis. These suggestions will be grounded in my situation as a university professor in Kansas.[2] I will be viewing global exegesis from the vantage point of Kansas, but also be viewing Kansas from the vantage point of what I have learned from colleagues throughout the world.

A. Four Lessons Learned from David Jobling

1. *Start with theory*

I am not suggesting that all readers of the Bible everywhere do or should start with theory. This essay does not have the task of telling Christians in Ghana or Indonesia how they 'should' read their Bible. My more modest task is to make some comments on how Euro-American scholars can think and teach from a more global perspective.

The theory involved in global exegesis is diverse and often does not come in a package that looks like Euro-American theory. It often comes packaged in the form of 'this is what we did and this is what happened'.[3] Often there is a clear sense that the 'we' involved in the project is both similar to and different from other we's in the world. Gerald West will speak both of the 'we' of his small study groups in South Africa and the 'we' of African biblical studies in general.[4] Yet there is also the sense that what works in Africa may not work in Korea or Kansas.

This is, of course, key to the general theory of global exegesis. There is much to be learned from a study of post-colonial theory or sociologically informed models of teaching but there is no one-size-fits-all theory that covers all situations. On the other hand, there is much to be gained by learning from the success and failure of others. There is no point in re-inventing the wheel, especially in a situation where wheels are not particularly useful.

This is where theory relates to tools. If education involves teaching students how to use certain tools, then it might be tempting to simply show them how to use existing tools rather than show them the theory behind a particular tool. The problem with this form of education is that it assumes that one tool or group of tools works in all situations. One might think that all a carpenter needs is a hammer, saw, and a few other tools to build whatever needs to be built.

There are at least two places in this model where theory comes in handy. The first is at the local hardware store, where a carpenter is confronted with a dizzying display of different types of hammers, not to mention pneumatic nail guns and cordless screw guns. A basic understanding of the theory of hammers is very practical at this point in helping choose the best tool for the task. The second place

2. One of the assumptions of global exegesis is that all readings of the Bible are done from a particular situation—no reading is done 'from nowhere'. My colleagues on the coasts might want to suggest that if Kansas is not nowhere, it is at least fairly close. David Jobling often said something similar about his situation teaching in Saskatchewan.

3. See the many examples of this in de Wit 2004.

4. West 2004: 215; 2001: 34.

where theory becomes practical is when a tool fails to work as it is supposed to. When a saw no longer cuts, or tears up the board unnecessarily, knowledge of the theory of the saw—how it is supposed to work—helps overcome this difficulty.

The same is true in studying or teaching global exegesis. The wide variety of readings of a particular text makes sense in light of an understanding of theory, but otherwise may appear chaotic or unconnected to any theory at all. Once the student has a basic understanding of theory, they can choose to use the tools of global exegesis when they are relevant to the task at hand.

2. *Know what you are doing and why you are doing it*

While this suggestion is linked to the one above, it relates more closely to the tools used rather than the theories employed. Post-colonialism is itself a diverse field of theory, but it is even more diverse in practice.[5] The possible tools employed in post-colonial biblical study are numerous. One task for the scholar is to understand the relationship between the tool and the intended outcome. A hammer is a great tool, but is not useful when painting a picture.

This task is not unique to the various situations and tasks of the two-thirds world. Much of what Euro-American scholarship has to learn from Christians in other parts of the world is that biblical study is always situated and interested. This is as true in Kansas as in Katmandu. For the biblical scholar attempting to enter the world of global exegesis, there are two guiding questions. The first is: why am I studying global exegesis? The second: why am I studying the Bible at all?

To continue with the analogy of tools, after the student understands the theory of the various tools being used, it is also necessary to know what is being constructed. Otherwise the student will aimlessly swing hammers or drill holes, using tools skillfully but pointlessly.[6]

In the context of global exegesis, this lesson is one that is assumed by most writers. Biblical study is done in the service of people in response to real-life problems, in answer to questions that are actually being asked. Whether the problem is one of ongoing animal sacrifice, AIDS, ecological devastation, or the question of how to read the Bible as an Asian, the tools employed must usefully address real issues. As a white North American scholar I cannot truly understand this type of biblical study unless I am willing to ask the same types of questions of myself.

3. *Don't read anything more than five years old*

For much of scholarship, this statement is heresy. How can one truly understand something unless one knows its history? Global exegesis does not arise *ex nihilo*, and current authors are constantly citing older sources.

On the other hand, just trying to keep up with some of what is happening in biblical studies around the world is itself a sufficiently daunting task. In addi-

5. See Sugirtharajah 2002: 11.
6. Of course I'm not suggesting that any scholarly writing falls into a similar category ;)

tion, authors employ different theories, different tools, and are working at significantly different tasks. There simply isn't time to read the background for the dozens of types of theories being employed. Nor are the older sources always helpful, since current authors often see themselves as addressing very different situations than their colleagues addressed only a few years ago.

In this case, the tool analogy serves both as example and warning. In carpentry, new tools are constantly being developed and old ones quickly consigned to the trash bin or the bottom of some forgotten drawer. Studying the hand saw is of little use when the student will be using equipment that is several generations advanced from those of our grandparents. On the other hand, one does not need to spend much time in a hardware store to note the current fascination with the latest and greatest tools.[7] Beautiful tools have become a more significant symbol of manhood than good craftsmanship.[8] Thus the task for the scholar is to understand the current state of the question without becoming fascinated by the latest fashionable theory.

Here again global exegesis provides a response to this problem by remaining grounded in the real questions being asked by people in a particular place. Post-colonialism is a response to the ongoing realities of colonialism and its effects on the lives and thinking of people. On the other hand, Asian-American readers have different questions and develop different tools for the task of addressing these questions.[9] Yet whatever theoretical tools are brought to the task, the focus remains on the task rather than on the tool. Since the task usually revolves around the questions and lives of current readers of the Bible, old answers or old tools may not apply. You can't use a handsaw to fix an iPod.

4. *Don't forget economic analysis*

In his book about the changing face of the worldwide church, Philip Jenkins notes that the center of gravity of the church is moving south—out of North America and Europe and into Latin America, Africa, and other parts of the world (Jenkins 2002: 2). While this is true in terms of numbers and societal influence, it remains true that much of scholarship still originates from the North. The reasons for this are both historical and economic. West and Dube can write a book about the Bible in Africa, but it is still published in Europe and is priced out of the reach of many African scholars and church members (West and Dube 2001, $80). The internet is making more and more resources available, but when a seminary faculty shares a single computer, their access is still limited.

Euro-American seminaries face an interesting challenge in this regard. The influence and importance of global exegesis is growing, so there is pressure to have multinational representation in faculty. On the other hand, if this prac-

7. I think my father spends more time looking at new tools than he does actually building.
8. I don't know how or if this applies to women.
9. See all of *Semeia*, 90–91.

tice denies third-world seminaries much-needed faculty, the practice hurts the worldwide church. Yet the individual scholars may be inclined to accept work in relatively wealthy Western institutions.[10]

These are just two of many possible examples of how economics affects scholarship. What this means for the scholar is that economic analysis becomes one of the tools that is never out of reach. It becomes one of the essential tools for any task. As a tool it is not only necessary but also necessarily in good condition. Economic analysis can be done well or badly. It also requires a body of theory and some experience to be used effectively.

B. *Global Exegesis in Kansas*

If I am going to attempt a serious introduction to global exegesis in these few pages, it is necessary for me to provide a brief example of how such a study might be done within the conditions in which I live. If the tools of global exegesis are not useful in Kansas, then my study is simply an exercise in academic tourism. Yet tourism (especially as it relates to colonialism) is part of the problem that global exegesis wishes to address. Are we simply tourists on someone else's exegetical island, or are we the masters who allow foreigners to view our work of biblical expertise while not allowing them to participate? Neither option is acceptable within the framework outlined above.

My work involves teaching New Testament classes at Wichita State University. Wichita is part of the Bible Belt, so most of my students enter class already familiar with the basic contents of the Bible, though often there is a large gap between what they think they know and what they actually know. Most students also come with a basic framework from which to read the Bible—they have learned appropriate questions and reading strategies from attending church and from other avenues of Christian education.

Teaching in the heart of the empire might at first seem to limit the engagement my students would have with post-colonialism. As Americans, we are the colonizers not the colonized. Most of my students are white Christians and appear to be the beneficiaries of the system, in little danger of being exploited or subjugated. Yet, using the rules outlined above, it soon becomes clear that post-colonialism has a good deal to say to them.

Starting with theory

In the context of a basic university introductory class, I find that my students quickly bore with any extended engagement with theory. They have come to read the Bible, and usually start with the assumption that the only neces-

10. The problem is not always simply one of wealth or poverty, or presence or absence of resources. Asian churches face different economic issues from Africans. Further, there is both wealth and poverty in all regions of the world.

sary theory is 'just read it and believe'. In this context, theory makes its way into the course in the form of questions, and in the study of the social, political, and economic world of the New Testament. Once we recognize the social context of the New Testament writings, it becomes more obvious why we also look to our own social context as a starting place for an understanding of our encounter with the Bible. Students learn to look for more than just 'religious' answers when they realize that Jesus' world did not have a separate category of the 'religious'.

Knowing what you're doing and why

In the classroom, this dictum is applied both to me and to my students. As a professor, I need to understand the relationship between what I am trying to teach and how I am trying to teach it. If I lecture about the importance of the involvement of ordinary readers in biblical studies, then I am advocating one approach and modeling another. Yet the classroom is an important place for learning and unlearning. My students usually enter the classroom with a set of unexamined assumptions about what the Bible is and what it is for. So class time must be devoted to demonstrating and validating other questions and approaches.

In his study of the history of biblical studies in Africa, Justin Ukpong advocates a style of reading he calls 'inculturation hermeneutics', an approach 'that consciously and explicitly seeks to interpret the biblical text from socio-cultural perspectives of different people' (1996: 190). This form of study is essential for North Americans because of the distance between our world and the world of the Bible. Part of this distance is because of the limits that American consumer culture places on the role of the Bible. My students tend to read the Bible for 'spiritual' insight and individual moral discernment rather than economic or political insight and social morality. Inculturation includes both a study of biblical culture as well as a corresponding study of our own.

Reading new material

This is becoming an increasingly complex task in the classroom. Students are drawn to the internet as a quick and easy source for papers and for general knowledge. Yet the internet also gives the illusion of timeless and placeless 'facts', since all information is 'current' insofar as it is undated and presented without historical context.

Yet much of the material students retrieve is ideas faintly remembered from old books read or lectures heard long ago. Often old books from the library are preferable to 'new' material from a web page. At least this is true for the data and the analysis. When interpreting the Bible within the postmodern context, however, the internet becomes much more useful. Even factually incorrect material can become useful as part of the analysis of how ancient texts are contextualized in various ways.

Economic analysis

I learned very early in my time at Wichita State to avoid assumptions about the economic situation of my students. For example, this semester one class includes a number of students who live average middle-class lives, while another student is attempting to raise two children by herself on $400 per month. So when we analyze Luke's attitude toward 'the poor', some of my students think about 'those poor' while others think about 'us poor'. It also means that when I introduce the 'tributary mode of production', some of my students understand this form of economics to be operating in America today.

In this sense, my students are already well equipped to include an economic analysis of their own situation into their study of the Bible. What I provide is some background of first-century economic realities and the permission to ask the questions. Even in the heart of empire, there are many who are empire's victims rather than its beneficiaries.

Conclusion

David Jobling has long insisted that, if all readings are done from somewhere, then Saskatchewan is as much somewhere as anywhere else. It is ironic that so many students have learned to read the Bible as western Canadians from someone with a British accent. Yet this is not surprising, since it is those who come from outside our group who can best see the many things we take to be 'common sense'.

This, then, is one of the major contributions that global exegesis can make to North American biblical studies. While scholars around the world write for their particular audiences, we can use their situated readings to unsettle our own work. This unsettling involves not only an understanding of who I am, but also the attention I pay to the interests and needs of my audience(s). Writing that is from somewhere is also going somewhere. Questions that are raised are raised by someone. This means that much of scholarship involves listening, even overlistening, especially to those who still desire to write and speak from nowhere and to nowhere. In this sense, global exegesis might be better described as local exegesis.

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The vocation of an African biblical scholar on the margins of biblical scholarship*

Gerald West

Introduction

My move into biblical studies was precipitated by a number of factors. Perhaps the most significant factor was coming to faith in the turbulent 1970s in South Africa. This was a context in which the Bible was a significant text. Closely related to this factor is a second, my interest in linguistics and language.

Though I had grown up in a Christian home, I had not actually read much of the Bible, though through Sunday School, confirmation, and a church-related boarding school, I was immersed in the Bible in various ways. However, having rejected Christianity in my teens, and having pursued a range of other religious experiences, my memory of the Bible was also impacted by other texts and practices. So it was only when I had come to faith in a relatively self-conscious way that I began to read the Bible with any real interest. As an undergraduate student in linguistics at the time, it is not surprising that I read the Bible as I read most texts then, which was from my training in linguistics and language. Given the new significance of the Bible in my life and given my interest in language and linguistics, I immediately set about learning Greek and then Hebrew and my early Bibles bear the marks of my reading practice, with numerous pencil marks in the margins, attempting to make sense of the syntactic and narrative patterns.

Also not surprisingly, the local Pentecostal church to which I then belonged was not always prepared for my literary analysis and my related relentless questions. Fortunately, I was able to find another site, which John Suggit (the Professor of New Testament at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa) constructed in his classroom and in the University chapel, in which a critical reading of the Bible was done within a faith-full context. Within this context, fellow students from the black townships like McGlory Speckman (who became one of the leading black New Testament scholars) reminded us of the socio-political demands of our context, so further enriching this reading site.

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Having completed my theological training and apprenticeship in the Assemblies of God church and having completed my Honours degree in Linguistics, I worked both as a pastor and a junior-lecturer in linguistics at the local university during the early 1980s. Though I loved the combination, these two sites pulled me in different directions as both were increasingly impacted by South Africa's socio-political realities. In the Department of Linguistics and English Language I revelled in the close and careful reading of texts, but regretted that the Bible was not among them, given its significance in our context. In my church, I recognized the importance of the Bible and faith in the struggle for and against apartheid and consciously chose to side with the latter, using a careful reading of the Bible to do so, creating turmoil in my congregation.

In 1983 I was asked to leave the church. Confused, but also somewhat relieved, I was fortunately offered a full-time teaching position in the Department of Linguistics and English Language, allowing me time and space to reflect on my vocation.

It was during this period that I began to correspond with Anthony Thiselton, who was then in the Department of Biblical Studies at Sheffield University. The combination of biblical studies and linguistics in his work was a constant source of encouragement to me, and I was eager to learn as much from him as I could. He was understanding both of my socio-political and academic location, and became a supportive correspondent. He also offered me a way out, in a number of ways. He suggested I continue with my studies by combining my interests in linguistics and biblical studies, and even proposed that I apply to do a Masters degree at Sheffield. While I considered this and other options (including a return to ministry in another denomination), political repression in the Eastern Cape escalated, and I was urged by comrades to leave the country to avoid being detained. In the immediate aftermath of the systematic suppression by the apartheid state which followed the declaration of a State of Emergency in 1985, Sheffield became a viable option. Besides offering a place of 'exile',[1] it offered an opportunity to test my vocation in the field of biblical studies, without severing my commitments to the church as a site of struggle, and also provided me with time to engage with biblical texts. So in the mid-1980s I began my vocation as a biblical scholar.

Frames

The emerging literary paradigm that Sheffield did so much to pioneer through the work of David Clines and David Gunn, nuanced by the linguistic sensibilities of Anthony Thiselton and the historical sensitivities of John Rogerson and Philip Davies provided me with an important frame within which to serve my apprenticeship. Just to the left of this frame and overlapping with it were two

1. I use inverted commas here to signal that I do not want to equate my experience of exile with the many other exiles who fled much more real repression than I would have faced had I stayed.

other important biblical studies frames, the structuralist-poststructuralist frame of David Jobling, who was a visiting scholar at Sheffield during part of my time there, and the socio-historical ideological frame of Norman Gottwald, who worked collaboratively with the Urban Theology Unit in Sheffield at this time. This heady mixture was constantly shaken and stirred by a cohort of colleagues, including Mark Brett, Daniel Carroll, Stephen Fowl and Matt Wiebe.

The superordinate frame, however, remained the South African context, particularly the liberation struggle. This frame was given clearer definition by black exiles in England, who accepted me and educated me. It was in the home of Barney Pityana, in Birmingham, that I first made direct contact with the then banned African National Congress. My encounters with black South Africans in exile, at Sheffield University and Manchester University in particular, and in the home of Anglican priest Barney Pityana, made two things abundantly clear to me. First, I was embraced as a fellow South African who belonged in South Africa. I was expected to return and make a contribution. Second, my contribution would always be framed by the black struggle.

Like my black comrades, I knew that I did not belong in Britain (though my white skin and manners made my sojourn there easier than theirs), so when political, academic and personal factors coalesced some years later, I returned to South Africa. I re-entered South Africa in the aftermath of the savage state repression of the period 1985–87, but found there, amid the ruins, a vibrant Black Theology theological frame into which I was received, first by the students and staff of the Federal Theological Seminary in Imbali, Pietermaritzburg, and then by the students and staff of the (then) Department of Theological Studies in the (then) University of Natal, especially the post-graduate seminar coordinated by James Cochrane. Most significant for my work was the welcome and orientation provided by black scholars like Allan Boesak, Frank Chikane and, in particular, Itumeleng Mosala. Mosala's work, with its strong links with Terry Eagleton's and Norman Gottwald's work (see for example, Mosala 1989), not only generated the resonances I needed but also the orientation.

Mosala's work, and the work of the generation of Black theologians who have followed him, especially Tinyiko Maluleke, has remained the sounding point for all of my work. I have tried to stay true to the admonition of the black comrades I encountered in exile by locating my work, both in theory and practice (see for example, West 1995, 2003), within a black (and later) African frame. Indeed, even my moves into the realms of African Theology beyond the borders of South Africa after liberation were precipitated by this self-same shift in perspective from within South African Black Theology.

Situating myself within this primary frame is the single most important factor in my vocation as a (South) African biblical scholar. Race remains a defining feature of identity politics in South Africa, even after liberation, and so remaining in this frame is not always comfortable, nor should it be, for a white South

African. But difficult as it sometimes is to take the rebukes that come with the territory (see Maluleke and Nadar 2004),[2] the acceptance is genuine and warm and the acknowledgement of collaboration is constant. Working within this contextual frame brings with it a profound sense of being part of and contributing to a larger project that really does matter, but of which I am not in control.[3]

Working within this frame and with these people also alters my identity. While some of my black colleagues may rightly hesitate to embrace postmodern notions of identity, deconstructing as it does the long-struggled-for assertion of agency and identity among those who have been (and are) oppressed (Hutcheon 1991: 168; Marais 1993: 137; Waugh 1992: 125; West 2003: 29-31), postmodernism's less essentialist and more dynamic notions of identity articulate for me what it means to be partially constituted by my work with those who are 'other' than me (West 1999).[4] Identity is malleable, and I have allowed the context of struggle to partially reconstitute mine.

Accountability and responsibility

My primary accountability as a biblical scholar, then, is to the South African context of struggle. The struggle is not over; it continues, though our struggles have shifted to include, along with race and class, gender, culture, sexual orientation, disability, globalization and HIV/AIDS (to name the most prominent). My primary interlocutors remain the poor, the working class, and the marginalized, both directly as I work with particular communities, and indirectly through the organic intellectuals with whom I work (including especially my colleagues in the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research,[5] as well as the aforementioned Black and African theologians). It is from within this context of accountability that I do my biblical studies.

2. I have discerned three types of discourse as a white South African within this particular contextual frame. The first, characterized by the viewpoint of Tinyiko Maluleke, maintains that you are an African if you so claim. The second, characterized by the perspective of another colleague, Sipho Mtetwa, partially agrees, but insists that in addition to this self-claim, there needs to be the proclamation of your black neighbours, who own the place where you have settled. For you as a white South African to be an African, your black neighbours must also proclaim that you are indeed an African. The third discourse is the discourse among black South Africans themselves, which white South Africans are not intended to hear. Here they discuss your presence in their place in your absence. When I do overhear this discourse, I hear the ambiguity of my presence.

3. As Sharon Welch has argued (Welch 1990), the desire for control is one of the defining pathologies of white males.

4. Some of the seemingly intractable debates within South African biblical scholarship would benefit, I would suggest, by less essentialist constructions of our own and 'the other's' identity (see the debate in Masenya 2002; Snyman 2002, 2003).

5. What was previously the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB), and then the Institute for the Study of the Bible and Worker Ministry Project, has recently be renamed as the Ujamaa Centre.

Outside of this primary social location is a secondary circle of accountability—though this may be where I shift from 'accountability' to 'responsibility'; the second ring of responsibility is that of African (including South African) biblical *scholarship*. South African biblical scholarship is not one thing, bearing in its body the legacies of our apartheid ('separateness') past (West 1995: 47-59). Traditionally, and rather broadly, we would speak of white Afrikaner biblical scholarship, white English biblical scholarship, and black biblical scholarship. There always have been points of intersection between each of these and the others, but in general terms these types were distinguishable. White Afrikaner biblical scholarship was characterized by its conservative (or state) theological and political alignment, its close academic ties with Europe (particularly Germany and Holland), and its predilection for structuralist exegesis (Smit 1990: 41), though there were significant dissenting emphases, including Afrikaner hermeneutics, ancient Near Eastern studies, and Septuagintal textual criticism. White English biblical scholarship was characterized by its liberal, contextual and Black and African theological context and its progressive (or prophetic) political orientation, its academic ties with Britain, the United States, Europe and Latin America (in that order), and its preference for historical-critical and sociological biblical interpretation. While white Afrikaner biblical scholarship hardly ever moved beyond exegesis (as traditionally delimited), white English biblical scholarship almost always explicitly linked exegesis and contextual analysis and application (Draper 1989: 1). Black biblical scholarship was characterized by its overt Black (and later African) Theology context and its clearly committed liberationist political agenda, its eclectic use of European (including British) and American scholarship, and its advocacy of historical-critical and sociological modes of biblical interpretation.

The strong demands of our historical and sociological moment tended to polarize South African biblical scholarship around the role of socio-historical biblical scholarship. White Afrikaner biblical scholarship avoided socio-historical analysis of biblical texts, not only because this raised theological concerns in a conservative theological ecclesiological context, but also because avoiding it minimized the need to analyse and engage with current South African historical and sociological realities.[6] Conversely, in order to maximize the engagement with present socio-historical realities, black South African biblical scholarship and white South African biblical scholarship explicitly advocated socio-historical modes of reading the Bible. The clearest proponents of this position are Itumeleng Mosala, Gunther Wittenberg (see for example Wittenberg 1991) and Jonathan Draper (see for example Draper 1995).

6. Significantly, the few that did engage with the socio-historical dimensions of the biblical text were also those who overtly engaged with the South African socio-political context. The clearest proponents of such approaches are Ferdinand Deist (see for example Deist 1991) and Bernard Lategan (see for example Lategan 1984).

In their work, both the reading product and the reading methodology forged links between biblical text and South African context.

I have characterized these strands, admittedly rather superficially, of South African biblical scholarship in order to indicate how one's vocation as an African biblical scholar would have been shaped differently depending upon how one located oneself. As I have said, and my focus is on my journey and not that of others (who will speak for themselves), I partook of the white English and black biblical scholarly strands. My literary and linguistic interests also found me casting an occasional look at the work of white Afrikaner biblical scholarship, though its general refusal to engage our apartheid-dominated sociopolitical context made it almost impossible to engage with it in any significant way. What engagement there was was facilitated by Afrikaner scholars like Bernard Lategan and Ferdinand Deist.

These strands are our historical and ideological legacy, but they no longer represent our South African context. Liberation has shifted the ground in almost every way, including the academic, the theological, the ecclesiological, the political and even the continental landscape. New conversations, convergences and collaborations are both possible and actual (Lategan 1999; Snyman 2005). A catalyst for the crossing and breaking of inherited boundaries has been our reinsertion into Africa.

After liberation, South Africa is a part of the continent in a new way. Opportunities abound for crossing the boundary of the Limpopo River, and perhaps even for crossing the Sahara Desert (Loubser 1997, 2000). North of the Limpopo, but south of the Sahara, a hermeneutic of trust towards the Bible coincides with an inculturation, comparative scholarly paradigm. Aspects of this orientation resonate with both the conservative reformed theological heritage of white Afrikaner biblical scholarship, the socio-historical interpretative interests in English South African biblical scholarship, and the religio-cultural concerns of black South African biblical scholarship (see West 2004c, 2005b). Each of these aspects provides plenty of opportunity for scholarly transactions across the Limpopo. Quite where this potential multiple breaching of the boundaries of African biblical scholarship will take us is yet to be determined.

However, what is clear, at least to some of us South African biblical scholars, is that our responsibility as African biblical scholars now extends to the continent. Indeed, we would argue that this responsibility has priority over our responsibility to Western forms of biblical scholarship from outside the continent's borders. We would also, importantly, distinguish between those who ply their trade on the margins of the Western academy (Segovia and Tolbert 1995) and the academy 'proper', and grant the former priority as dialogue partners. So, in sum, the circle of scholarly responsibility, once it leaves the inner circle of local community accountability, moves out in concentric circles of decreasing responsibility.

Ironically, the most intense concentration of scholarly resources is located on the periphery of our African circles of responsibility, in the very sites that

have marginalized us through colonialism, imperialism, and apartheid. The vast bulk of scholarly resources, from a continental perspective, reside in western enclaves. Within the continent, South Africa is (again) a special case, having built a rich deposit of biblical studies resources during the apartheid years, primarily in the Afrikaner universities, dependent largely on the sustained ties between white Afrikaner biblical scholarship and Europe (and to some extent America). Our good inter-library loan facilities nevertheless give all of us in South Africa access to almost the full range of biblical scholarly resources. This is not the case in the rest of Africa, placing a particular responsibility on South Africa's relationship with the continent in terms of scholarly resources (Holter 1998). Those to the north of us in the continent have in the past had access to well-stocked and reasonably current libraries, and so their early religio-cultural comparative work was profoundly informed by both their local contexts and the then most current biblical research. But that was about thirty to forty years ago; now the situation is vastly different, with decimated and outdated libraries.

Given this reality, and the likelihood that things will remain the same for the foreseeable future (with South Africa possibly following suit, if current government initiatives to scale down humanities financing continues), African biblical scholarship will be forced to redefine itself almost entirely on the margins of the Euro-American biblical studies enterprise. There are signs that this is already happening in Africa north of South Africa.

But for the majority of us, we have not given up on what we perceive to be a responsibility to the discipline of biblical studies. And because the repository of the resources that constitute 'the discipline' are located in Europe and America, we still strive to remain connected. Significantly, it is precisely the prevalence of socio-historical interpretative interests in Africa that makes African biblical scholarship particularly reliant on the detailed and incremental work being done by the engine of the industry in Europe and America. The slow but steady increase of interest in literary modes of reading in Africa may make us less dependent on Western resources, though the work being done in this area in the Euro-American corridor is certainly extremely creative and suggestive, so we would be reluctant to let go of it. In this realm we do, however, have readily accessible but, as yet, relatively untapped resources in African orality/aurality.

At the moment, however, African biblical scholarship still sees itself as having some sense of responsibility to the discipline of biblical studies in its dominant, Western, forms, albeit on the far edge of its horizons of responsibility and accountability.

Critical engagement with faith

I will return to the nature of our relationship with the discipline of biblical studies below, but before I do it is important to discuss a central dimension of African biblical scholarship. Indeed, even the term 'African biblical scholarship'

causes concern to some. Chastening me for a lack of nuance in my use of this term (see Maluleke 2000: 94-95; West 1997a), Tinyiko Maluleke argues that 'there cannot and should not be such a thing as "African Biblical Scholarship" if this is envisaged in terms akin to that produced by western-type training'. As he goes on to say, 'Both African Christians and African Christian theologians have not been able to relate in any exclusive way to the Bible—as a singular collection of texts—in the way that both the historical critical and latter day sociological hermeneutics have done. Except for a small minority, very few Black and African Biblical scholars have been able to do discipline-specific textual biblical studies'.

Maluleke goes on to suggest that, like ordinary African Christians, African biblical scholars relate to the Bible as 'part of a larger package of resources and legacies which include stories, preaching and language mannerisms, songs, choruses, ecclesiologies, theodicies, catechism manuals and a range of rituals and rites' (95). We must not be misled, says Maluleke, by the overt presence of the Bible among African Christians; while it is 'one of the few "tangible" things' in African Christianity, the Bible, insists Maluleke, 'has been appropriated and continues to be appropriated as part of a larger package of resources' (95). And 'African biblical scholars' cannot escape this reality; indeed they are examples of this reality:

> Most, if not all African 'biblical' scholars operate as philosophers, missiologists and quasi-systematic theologians (e.g. Dickson, Mbiti and Fashole-Luke). Indeed, it seems that the more Mbiti insisted on the centrality of the Bible in African Theology, the more of a philosopher, missiologist and systematic theologian he became (95).

Maluleke is making a number of related points, among which is the point that African biblical scholars have, as part of their vocation, a responsibility (even an accountability) to the wider African society, specifically the African church (both the institution and its members). While not the norm for all African biblical scholars, what Maluleke says is true for most. We are drawn out of the hallowed halls and comfortable corridors of the academy and made to contribute to the community, including the church.

Implicit in this appraisal is the expectation that the biblical scholar stands within the faith tradition of the community and of the church. African biblical scholarship, to put it bluntly, is done within the framework of faith. The barrier between the community and the academy is permeable for faith, and while most African universities have adopted a religious studies-type model, this is more informed by liberal-Western education models than by African realities. What the African reality requires (even demands) is a critical engagement from within a faith tradition. However, even those African universities that have adopted a religious studies model—which are most of the universities without and a few within South Africa—reflect the real presence of faith inside the academy. So while these universities are often not allowed to offer Christian theological

training—leading to a proliferation of confessional seminaries within a stone's throw of university walls—faith is a given (whether Christianity or Islam, though the former is far more prevalent).[7]

African colleagues unfamiliar with the socio-religious context of Euro-American biblical scholarship are, therefore, perplexed by the overt agnosticism of the colleagues they encounter at conferences, especially those who teach (unlike them) at confessionally founded institutions. Our vocation is different, and faith is a vital element.

Identity dilemmas

The previous two sections (and indeed, everything else in this essay) reflect my own personal perspectives, not surprisingly, given the autobiographical orientation of this essay,[8] and not all South African biblical scholars will feel comfortable with what I have written. For some white South African biblical scholars, political liberation has ushered in a strange new world in which they do not yet know where or how they fit. Some of us have resolutely engaged with this emerging world; others have sought to cushion its constant demands for change by retreating into the more familiar scholarly contexts in Europe and America.

Among the differences emerging from our identity dilemmas is the place of faith in biblical scholarship. We have more institutional and ecclesiological space than ever before to explore the question of our responsibility to the church and to our students, the majority of whom come from faith-based families and contexts. Almost all our 'Schools of Theology' are now 'Schools of Religion and Theology', and though this is sleight-of-hand in some cases (with church controlled theology remaining their basic business),[9] it does express a change of perception about what we are up to and to whom we are accountable and responsible. There are increasing signs of unease with doing biblical studies

7. My own view is that by failing to offer theological training in universities, the state and the educators who champion this position abdicate their place in helping to construct critical, socially engaged forms of African Christianity, leaving theological education in the hands of confessional and uncritical seminaries. And we wonder why there is so much Christian fundamentalism in Africa!

8. It feels rather self-indulgent to write such a sustained autobiographical piece, and I heed the cautionary comments of Stephen Moore in this regard (Moore 1995: 19); however, I offer this essay in the collaborative spirit in which was born, through conversations with David Jobling, in which we envisaged a project which explored how various biblical scholars understood their 'vocation', and through conversations with colleagues (including Klippies Kritzinger, Tinyiko Maluleke, and McGlory Speckman) and postgraduate students at the University of South Africa, who invited me to share my journey as an African biblical scholar with them.

9. The point I am making in footnote 7 must not be confused with my point here; I am an advocate for critical engagement from within a faith tradition, but not an ecclesiastically controlled engagement.

in a context of faith. Part of this is due to scholars shaking off the shackles of churches—mainly Afrikaner churches—which no longer wield the kind of power they used to (though there are signs that they reasserting their ecclesiastical control). Part of this is also due to the absence of any other paradigm beside the liberal Western one for working in the field of religion, particularly in a pluralistic context such as ours. And part of this is due to a withdrawal from a constantly contested context into the more familiar terrain of biblical studies as a academic discipline.

Of course, the direction of our primary gaze (whether to Africa or Europe and America) and our perspective on the place of faith in our work are not unrelated, though quite what their connecting points are is not always easy to determine. Bracketing faith during the week and the discipline on a Sunday is a feature of our context, both for scholars and their students. For those of us who give priority of place to the African context, however, bracketing either faith or biblical scholarship is irresponsible. Indeed, it is doing our work as biblical scholars in an explicit engagement with our context that integrates and reconstitutes our faith and our scholarship (West 2004a).

Contextual biblical scholarship

Prioritizing context, even above our particular religious tradition,[10] provides opportunity for a radical re-conceptualization of our vocation as African biblical scholars. While there is some circularity here, for our religious traditions play some role in how we approach context, the emphasis I am suggesting is significant.

Alongside the ideological and theoretical contribution of South African Black Theology to my vocation in the mid to late 1980s was another strand of South African biblical interpretation, that represented by the Institute for Contextual Theology and a myriad of similar community-based, activist-orientated, Non-Governmental Organizations. Though this strand did not have the close ties it should have had with Black Theology, its links with Latin American Liberation Theology, liberation theology in the Philippines, and feminist theologies formed a valuable dialogue partner in the formation of my vocation.

Though stronger in its contextual *theological* contribution than in its contextual *biblical* contribution, the community orientation of this strand became a vital element in my vocation, reinforcing the call of actual communities in my region to become engaged with them in trying to re-read the Bible—as *The Kairos Document* had urged us to do—so that it might speak a message

10. This is not the place to develop this pregnant phrase, except to say that foregrounding context and not religious tradition may provide us with an alternative way of talking about our faith in our religiously plural society (West and Sitoto, 2005).

that was relevant to what we are experiencing in South Africa then (theologians, 1986: 17).

In this strand—what was called Contextual Theology—as in Black Theology, context was foregrounded. Mosala was absolutely clear: those who are 'committed to the struggles of the black oppressed and exploited people cannot ignore the history, culture, and ideologies of the dominated black people as their primary hermeneutical starting point' (Mosala 1986: 196-97). Similarly, Albert Nolan, speaking from within Contextual Theology, argued that while the shape of the gospel remains the same from context to context, its content is determined by a particular context. There is, says Nolan, "a definite shape, certain definite characteristics, that any message would have to have in order to qualify as a true gospel, as the gospel of Jesus Christ for a particular people at a particular time" (Nolan 1988: 8). The key characteristics, Nolan argues, of the message is that it must be prophetic good news for the poor and oppressed in a particular context (Nolan 1988: 8-30). Nolan, like Mosala, grants an epistemological privilege to the poor and oppressed—the particular poor and oppressed of South Africa at that time, the vast majority of whom were (and remain) black.

Identifying the poor and oppressed as the primary interlocutors (to use Per Frostin's phrase [Frostin 1988: 6]) entails a radical reorientation on the part of biblical scholars who are guided by these two South African theological trajectories, for biblical scholarship usually has others as its primary dialogue partners. My vocation has been fundamentally formed by the ongoing process of trying to understand the parameters of this radical reorientation. The reorientation includes at least four dimensions of my vocation: whom I read the Bible with, what I read the Bible for, how I relate to the discipline, and how and what I teach in the biblical studies classroom.

Reading with

Taking my cue from both Black and Contextual Theology, my vocation as a biblical scholar begins 'from below'. Without rehearsing the extensive (perhaps excessive)[11] amount I have already written on this topic (see especially West 1996b, 2003), the work of Itumeleng Mosala and Takatso Mofokeng, together with that of Cornel West, made me conscious of the agency of the oppressed. A point of debate in Latin American Liberation Theology (Segundo 1985; 1993: 71-75; West 2003: 18-20), the agency of the oppressed has a long history in southern Africa. With Latin American Liberation Theology, South African Black Theology (and Contextual Theology, though I will return to the latter

11. In mitigation for this relentless reflection and writing, not only do I do my most creative thinking while writing, the constant community-based praxis—a cycle of action and reflection—in which I am involved through the Ujamaa Centre requires that I constantly re-think and therefore re-write our understanding of our work.

later) shares significant features with Marxism. Per Frostin identifies seven similarities between what he calls 'classical Marxism' and South African Black Theology (and Tanzanian Ujamaa Theology):

> (1) concepts such as capitalism and imperialism; (2) a methodology and conceptuality to describe conflicts; (3) an analysis of the need for changes on a structural level; (4) a correspondence between actual existence and thought, seeing society as a whole with distinct but interrelated levels (as opposed to a compartmentalized view); (5) the transient character of capitalism; (6) the affinity between the interpretation of capitalism as idolatry and Marx's analysis of the economic system of fetishism (obviously influenced by the critique of idolatry in Judeo-Christian tradition); (7) an epistemology where praxis is a criterion of truth (Frostin 1988: 181-82).

However, Frostin goes on to argue, there are also a number of common differences between these two African forms of theology and classical Marxism (and strands of Latin American Liberation Theology). First, these two African theologies (South African Black Theology and Tanzanian Ujamaa Theology) define the main contradiction in society as more complex and nuanced than does classical Marxism. 'In classical Marxism the main contradiction is analyzed in terms of classes, which are defined by their roles in production. Hence, capital and labour are the two opposite poles in the analysis of the contemporary "class struggle" ' (Frostin 1988: 182). Even though the capital–labour relationship is clearly one dimension of their analysis of the African struggle, South African Black Theology and Tanzanian Ujamaa Theology adopt a multi-dimensional analysis of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed, which includes race, gender and culture (and more recently, and therefore not included by Frostin, sexual orientation, disability, and HIV and AIDS) (Frostin 1988: 182).

Second, as has already been suggested, 'the cultural dimension of oppression is emphasized in [African] liberation theology far more than in classical Marxism' (Frostin 1988: 182), which is what unites African forms of liberation theology. Third, 'the circumstances that condition human thought are defined differently in classical Marxism than in [African] liberation theology, even though both represent a sociology of knowledge perspective'. Classical Marxism is clear that 'material production conditions human thought', while these two forms of African liberation theology are, again, more nuanced in their analysis (Frostin 1988: 182). For example, both South African Black Theology and Tanzanian Ujamaa Theology emphasize 'the creativity of the oppressed in a way that differs fundamentally from classical Marxism. The difference is especially striking when compared with the Marxist-Leninist theory of party where the cadres, the "conscious" élite, is seen as necessary tools to inculcate the masses with a revolutionary consciousness' (Frostin 1988: 182-83). In the words of the African-American public intellectual and theologian Cornel West:

> Though Marxists have sometimes viewed oppressed people as political or economic agents, they have rarely viewed them as *cultural* agents. Yet without such a view there can be no adequate conception of the capacity of oppressed people—the capacity to change the world and sustain the change in an emancipatory manner. And without a conception of such capacity, it is impossible to envision, let alone create, a socialist society of freedom and democracy. It is, in part, the European Enlightenment legacy—the inability to believe in the capacities of oppressed people to create cultural products of value and oppositional groups of value—which stands between contemporary Marxism and oppressed people (cited in Frostin 1988: 183; West 1984: 17).

South African Black Theology has viewed the poor, the working class, and the marginalized as cultural agents, though not unambiguously. Emphasizing the agency of black South Africans in the realm of biblical interpretation, Takatso Mofokeng argues that young blacks, in particular, 'have categorically identified the Bible as an oppressive document by its very nature and to its very core', and that therefore the best option 'is to disavow the Christian faith and consequently be rid of the obnoxious Bible' (Mofokeng 1988: 40). Indeed, continues Mofokeng, some 'have zealously campaigned for its expulsion from the oppressed Black community' (Mofokeng 1988: 40). However, given the Bible's resilience and significance in the black community as a 'storeroom of ideological and spiritual food', continues Mofokeng, ordinary black South Africans 'are enabled, by their physical and psychological scars, together with the analytical tools they have chosen, to discover the suppressed and forgotten stories of the weak and the poor of the Bible' (Mofokeng 1988: 41).

Similarly, Mosala, though he champions the role of the black biblical scholar as the provider of requisite critical interpretative tools, affirms that 'the largely illiterate black working class and poor peasantry…have defied the canon of Scripture, with its ruling class ideological basis, by appropriating the Bible in their own way using the cultural tools emerging out of their struggle for survival' (Mosala 1986: 184). Though neither Mofokeng or Mosala reflects much further on the agency of the oppressed, they have provided the starting point and the trajectory for my own work on black African agency.[12]

The Contextual Theology trajectory has made a complementary contribution to my contextual commitments and to how I read the Bible. In discussing elements of a worker's theology of work, Albert Nolan argues that 'a genuine theology of work will have to be a worker's theology, that is to say, a theology constructed by workers and for workers—a theological reflection of workers upon their experience of work and their experience of struggle'. 'This does not mean', continues Nolan, 'that the professional theologian, biblical scholar, or pastor will have no role to play in the construction of a theology of work but

12. My dependency on these black theologians/biblical scholars is missed by Tinyiko Maluleke and Sarojini Nadar in their analysis of my work on agency (Maluleke and Nadar 2004).

that they will have a subordinate role to play' (Nolan 1996: 213). Without the actual experience of work,[13]

> no matter how well we know the Bible and Christian tradition, we will simply never be able to see in God's word what the workers see in God's word. No matter how well we know the Hebrew and Greek words of the Bible, no matter how thoroughly and critically we study the Bible, we will always miss some of the things that a worker will notice about what is said in the Bible (Nolan 1996: 214).

Turning the normal practice on its head, Nolan argues that the appropriate partnership in constructing a theology of work is not that the professional theologian and/or biblical scholar '*makes use of* the insights of workers, but that workers *make use of* the expertise and technical knowledge of academics, so that it is, and remains, in fact, a worker's theology' (Nolan 1996: 217). What this means in practice, Nolan continues, is that 'we, the trained theologians and clergy, have to learn the skill of being used, of putting our expertise into the hands of the working class as service to them, what Jesus called "learning to serve rather than to be served" ' (Nolan 1996: 217).

This is the crux of my vocation: as long as the Bible remains an 'ideological silo', 'the haven of the Black masses par excellence' (Mofokeng 1988: 40), I am learning the skill of being used, of putting my expertise into the hands of the poor, the working class and the marginalized. As we say in the Ujamaa Centre, the structured site in which I do most of my learning, we must be born again, again. The first time was from above (John 3.3), the second time is from below (Mosala, Mofokeng, and Nolan). The majority of my praxis has been about learning just what it means to be made use of.

Reading for

Whom I read the Bible with contributes substantially to what I read the Bible for. As we say in the Ujamaa Centre, we read the Bible *with* the poor, working class, and marginalized *for* individual and social transformation. In both cases the prepositional phrases require further and fuller definition.

The first prepositional phrase, 'with the poor, working class, and marginalized', finds its definition from the particular socio-historical context in South Africa at a given time. Though contestable at its edges, there is consensus as to whom we are talking about (and therefore reading with) across a range of governmental, civil society, and faith-based sectors. As I have indicated, though the category has remained constant, the contents of this category has shifted (though not substantially) during the twenty or so years in which I have been engaged in my work.

13. And similarly, I would argue, without the actual experience of blackness we cannot do Black Theology. As a white male, I cannot do Black Theology, but I can work with 'blackness' and be partially constituted by it.

The second prepositional phrase is perhaps more problematic, particularly after our political liberation in 1994. Though we have always maintained the combined focus on both individual and social transformation, we often neglected the former in our focus on the structural sins of the apartheid era.[14] The human factor, as some have referred to a focus on the individual, has gained considerable ground more recently, though many of us would want to avoid any focus on the individual that does not take structural considerations into account. So, much of our energy is spent with the poor, working class, and marginalized in reading the signs of our current times. Global capitalism, which has even our liberation-movement government in its thrall, dominates most of the domains of our life in South Africa, and because it is more elusive than apartheid ever was, does more damage, with many of the unemployed wondering whether it is really true that it is their fault that they do not have work, despite their ceaseless efforts.

Patriarchy has been both energized by our post-liberation emphasis on the renaissance of African culture and debilitated (and delimited) by our human-rights driven national constitution and the increasingly vocal voices of African women (including the African Circle of Concerned Women Theologians).[15] African women have also been particularly insistent, as the works cited in the previous footnote indicate, on the devastating convergence of violence against women (and children) and the advent of HIV and AIDS in our midst. Again, our government has offered less leadership and intervention than might have been expected, particularly with their (mis-)management of HIV and AIDS. Perhaps facing the reality of a major new disease on our African continent was too much for our post-liberation, Africanist optimism, and so it was bracketed until we had no option but to address it.

Disability and sexual orientation, overtly addressed by our constitution, are currently receiving attention in our communities, though the latter is still deeply contested. And race and class have not disappeared, only assumed new guises, so that reading the signs of our times is a complex process, demanding careful analysis.

But the shape of our task remains the same, granting an epistemological privilege in such analysis to those who carry in their bodies the damage done by these forces of domination and destruction. Like Latin American Theology, we too have shifted, at least partially, from talk of liberation to talk of life in the face of the forces (or idols) of death (to use a phrase coined by Franz Hinkelammert [1986]). We read the Bible, then, for life; indeed, we read the Bible for individual and social transformation so that the poor, working class, and marginalized might 'have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10.10).

14. In their work, both Nolan (see Nolan 1988) and Mosala (see Mosala 1989) emphasize the structural dimension.

15. Among their recent publications, see Dube 2001; Dube and Kanyoro 2004; Njoroge and Dube 2001; Phiri, Govinden and Nadar 2002; Phiri, Haddad and Masenya 2003.

Reading and the academy

As I have already indicated, I locate myself within the ambit of responsibility to my discipline, biblical studies. Among the resources and expertise I bring among the communities I work with are the tools of my trade as a biblical scholar. However, what I draw on from the discipline and the way in which I prioritize its tools is shaped by the communities with which I work, as is what I take back and give back to the discipline.

When I read the Bible and biblical scholarship I am constantly vigilant for readings and resources that may be potentially empowering for poor, working class, and marginalized communities. Though most biblical scholarship elides or hides its agendas and for whom it is reading, I do not. I bring the agendas of our context to the Bible and biblical scholarship, struggling with them until they bless us.[16] I am able to glean significant resources from biblical scholarship, even though generated for another audience, for the contextual Bible study process that is the staple of our work in the Ujamaa Centre.

The contextual Bible study process acknowledges and uses both the reading resources of socially engaged biblical scholars—biblical scholars, who besides their role as biblical scholars, are already engaged with local communities in particular projects—and the 'reading' resources of local communities of the poor, working class, and marginalized (West 2000a), bringing them together in a Bible study format in which community consciousness frames the participation, forming the starting and ending points, and in which critical consciousness (the resources of biblical scholarship) intervenes to provide the text with a voice. While a range of biblical scholarship is of use in this process, literary resources are particularly useful in providing a relatively egalitarian initial critical engagement with the text.[17] So, for example, the question, 'Who are the major characters and what are the relationships between them in Mark 11.27–13.2?', enables a constant return to the text, in a collaborative interrogation. In exploring the textual dimensions of this question, participants often offer or request socio-historical information, probing the world behind the text and/or the world that produced the text. So, by way of example, readers engaged with this text will want to know who the Herodians are, what the relationship between them and the more familiar scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees was, and how these and the other characters mentioned in the narrative related to the temple (for an example of this reading process see West 2000b).

16. The imagery here is derived from Genesis 32, and emerged from a conversation I had with Bob Ekblad, who does similar work to me, but in a very different context (Ekblad 2004, 2005), as we reflected on our interpretative orientations.

17. Most of what I say here is more fully substantiated elsewhere (see especially West 1995, 2003).

It must be stressed that this collaborative reading process is not research. It is part of the praxis of the Ujamaa Centre—a process of action and reflection. The reflection that follows and finds its way into publication is re-presented by me—though always in dialogue with my Ujamaa Centre colleagues. However, only in exceptional circumstances is our work constructed as research (see West *et al.* 2004). The concerns we address and therefore the Bible studies that are constructed to engage with these concerns come from the community, and the community controls the final product. We reflect on the process, among other reasons (see West 2003: 142-57), primarily in order to reconceptualize our action. And so the process of action and reflection continues.

Though we always work with the generative themes (Freire 1970) of the community, and though we sometimes do work with the texts the community chooses, we see one of our contributions as being to bring into the community unfamiliar texts—those texts neglected by their particular tradition. So, for example, we regularly use 2 Samuel 13 to engage with the community driven concern of violence against women (and children) (see West and Zondi-Mabizela 2004). In our experience we have yet to find a community for whom this is a familiar text. The particular power of unfamiliar texts is that they are relatively free of a reception history, enabling engagement with the texture of the text itself. As biblical scholars we read the whole biblical text and so we are able to return to the community those texts that the missionaries, churches and lectionaries have neglected. Unfamiliar texts have considerable potential to create space to give voice to embryonic, incipient, and inchoate local theologies (Cochrane 1999; West 2005a).

Another of the resources socially engaged biblical scholars bring to the contextual Bible study collaborative reading process is our interpretative tools, as I have already indicated. The potential of our tools, in the hands of particular poor, working-class, and marginalized interpreters of the Bible, is that they enable a structured and systematic engagement with the biblical text, and this is particularly important when we read familiar texts. They enable familiar texts to be read in unfamiliar ways. So, to return to my example above, Mark 12.41-44 is usually read as a text about faithful, even sacrificial, giving. However, when read in the literary context of Mark 11.27–13.2 and the socio-historical context of first century Palestine, this section takes on unfamiliar meanings. One of the skills of the scholar's contribution to the contextual Bible study process is to frame questions which provide the tools for such readings.

Both our exposure to the breadth that is the Bible and our interpretative tools have the potential to be of use to the community, if offered in a participatory process, such as that constructed by the contextual Bible study process (see also West 1993). The difficulty, which is where conversion from below comes in, is in being led by the concerns of the community and in letting go of the resources we offer. Our resources in themselves have empowering potential, and the current creativity in biblical scholarship means that there is plenty of material out there, though it is often located on the margins of the discipline.

Bringing the resources of biblical scholarship to the community is, however, only one dimension of my vocation. Another aspect of my vocation is to take the questions of the community into the field of biblical scholarship. In our experience, the contextual Bible study process often generates questions that biblical scholars have not asked. This is not surprising, because most biblical scholars are middle-class and male and therefore tend to address the questions of their class and gender. Those we read with are quite different, and so are their questions. For example, in attempting to read the so-called Lord's Prayer (in Matthew 6.9-13) in an unfamiliar way (see West 2005a), the question poor communities ask us is of the significance of the petition for daily bread. The commentaries of those who have never had to worry about 'bread for today' (or, later in the prayer, being released from a system of debt slavery) are not always helpful (but see Brown 2004), but it is a good and important question, dripping with theological and socio-political implications. As is the question asked by people who come from a cattle-culture as to why the book of Jonah concludes with a strange clause about God being concerned about the Ninevites' 'many cattle'.

The communities, then, mandate us to make their questions our questions and to take these questions into the academy for answers, thereby directing our research. The praxis cycle of action and reflection is not research 'proper', but it does lead to a form of research more familiar to the academy (West 2004d; West and Zengele 2004; West *et al.* 2004), though the questions do not derive from scholarly dialogue partners but from those whom we read with in local communities of the poor, working class, and marginalized.

Reading and the classroom

All that I have said above impacts my pedagogy. My work in the Ujamaa Centre has led and continues to lead to a constant re-conceptualization of what I do in the classroom, why I do it and how I do it. It provides the framework for my pedagogy.

I begin, quite overtly, with what students bring into the academy, which in a context like ours is quite substantial. We begin, for example, in Biblical Studies 210, 'Text, Interpretation and Culture', with a participatory exercise. Before students even get a module outline, they are divided into mixed linguistic/cultural groups and given one of three case-study exercises, one of which is the following:

> Design and present a Christian burial service for someone from Pietermaritzburg who died from an AIDS-related illness. Be explicit about the use of the Bible in the service (that is, identify which text you would use and how you would interpret it). Your presentation should be no longer than 10 minutes.

Students dramatically present this task in the classroom and then field questions from staff and students about their analysis and presentation. Significantly, this exercise gives some indication of what interpretative resources students bring with them and how they engage these resources with an important issue in our

context. The diversity within their groups also alerts them to the impact their culture has on their interpretative activity.

This exercise is followed some weeks later by an actual Bible study in the classroom, facilitated by the Ujamaa Centre, which provides a common class experience for exploring together how the tools and resources we have gathered in our academic training so far might be used in collaboration with the reading strategies ordinary Christians in their churches already have. The text we use for Bible study is usually an Old Testament text, often 2 Sam. 21.1-14, the story of Rizpah and David (West 1997b).

We return to this text in the second semester in a section on 'Kings and Prophets' within Biblical Studies 220 ('Introduction to Critical Tools'). Here we read the whole story of David's rise to the monarchy and the bloody succession that follows, carefully noting the pivotal role in the plot of this story of the rape of both Bathsheba and Tamar and of other instances of violence against women. Violence against women and the relationship between gender violence and HIV/AIDS are overtly discussed in the classroom. But the discussion does not remain in the classroom, for in this module, as in Biblical Studies 210, students are required to go outside the classroom.

In each case, students are required to plan, organize, facilitate and report on a contextual Bible study in a local community. Working in groups, the students conduct a Bible study on economic justice issues in the first semester (under the auspices of the Ujamaa Centre's Worker Sunday Campaign) and a Bible study on violence against women in the second semester (under the auspices of the Ujamaa Centre's Tamar Campaign). In their reports, students have to describe, analyse and evaluate their entire experience, both in terms of their academic work and in terms of the impact on the community and themselves.

These experiences generate rich sharing and discussion in the classroom and become integrated into the 'normal' teaching and learning rhythm. Because most of the students who do Biblical Studies 210 also go on to do Biblical Studies 220, there is an opportunity to learn from their experience and to deepen their engagement both with the academic and community resources they have encountered (West 2004a).

But my biblical studies teaching is not simply a series of contextual Bible studies, though students often ask me, once having been exposed to the work of the Ujamaa Centre, why not! My vocation, in the classroom, as distinct from the community, includes other important elements. I see myself as being accountable to the communities of the poor, working class, and marginalized, from which most of our students come, in training organic intellectuals not to be intimidated by biblical scholarship, to be able to navigate biblical scholarship, and to engage with biblical scholarship, so that they can make their own choices about and contributions to biblical scholarship. I will not restrict them to the paths I have taken. This commitment requires that I train them in all the basic tools and techniques of the discipline.

However, the way in which I do this follows the contours of what I have learned in my work with the communities. We begin with their resources, move through the literary (in its broadest sense) resources of biblical scholarship, appropriating as we go along their residual oral resources for interpreting 'text', and then move into the historical and sociological resources, as these emerge from our close and careful reading of the text. So, for example, in my introductory Old Testament module in the first year I start with an assignment that encourages a careful and close reading of the Pentateuch as a whole, using two guiding questions, namely, 'Does the Pentateuch tell a coherent story? Try to sketch the basic plot of the Pentateuch', and 'Is the story of the Pentateuch interrupted or disrupted in any way? If so, how and where?' Together we analyse their responses and then consider some of the explanations that scholars have put forward to account for the kind of reading experience they have had. Their own questions merge, to some extent at least, with the kinds of questions that drove the development of the discipline, generating some sense of empathy with the project of biblical scholarship.

Fortunately I am able to collaborate with a colleague like Jonathan Draper, who is steeped in the tools of historical-critical and sociological scholarship, allowing me to concentrate on the literary dimensions of the biblical text. But just as I have learned in the local communities with which the Ujamaa Centre works of the significance given to socio-historical resources (West 1998), so too I recognize the importance of providing my students with an understanding of both the connections and tensions between literary and socio-historical orientations (West 2004b).

My teaching does not avoid the ideological dimension so evident in my work with the Ujamaa Centre. Context is foregrounded in every aspect of my pedagogy, and not only the community-based components. I am convinced that it is context that enables the engagement students bring with them to the study of the Bible ((Meyer 2002) to be integrated with the critical distance of the academic discipline of biblical studies (West 1992, 1996a, 2004a). By keeping our students constantly in dialogue with context, particularly the contexts of the poor, working class, and marginalized, we provide the means of dialectically integrating engagement and critical distance. In the words of one student in Biblical Studies 220 who had facilitated a contextual Bible study on the story of the rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13) in her local church,

> I have often found that I keep my academic work very separate from the rest of my work and seem to avoid including anything too personal in my university assignments and avoid anything too academic in the work I do for the church. However, I did not have too much option in this case…. So, I was forced to use my academic knowledge (of biblical studies in particular) to run a very personal workshop. And, I have had to learn to incorporate what was a very personal and learning experience into an academic assignment. I have found writing this report a very cathartic experience in itself in that it is putting into some form of order the two things I have always tried to keep separate.

Not all our students are from communities of the poor, working class, and marginalized, though most are; but irrespective of their community background, I teach from and for the margins. So when I teach about J, E, D, and P, and I do, I do so not only to familiarize them with what they will find in the books in our (and most other) libraries, nor only to enable them to transact with other biblical scholars, but also to alert them to the kinds of strategies that are used to construct texts and traditions. That the biblical texts embody multiple, often contending, voices is a central tenet of my teaching. Discerning, identifying, and interpreting these often divergent voices is what I hope to give them the skills to do. Given our history in South Africa, those who come from the margins know that texts need to be interrogated, though they are more comfortable and more conscious about doing this with texts other than the Bible. So I try to integrate their struggle-trained eyes (to adapt a phrase from Mosala [1986: 196]) with the kind of work David Jobling has done, from a literary perspective, in identifying a Deuteronomic version of the book of Judges. We follow Jobling as he argues that the narrative of Judges continues into the book of 1 Samuel, in which 1 Samuel 1–12 formed a part of the Deuteronomic book of Judges, and where Samuel is the apex of this form of leadership—he is the most complete judge; he is the best example of what this form of leadership has to offer (Jobling 1998). We continue with Jobling as he argues further that later editors, who did not share this high opinion of the charismatic and community-based form of leadership typified in the leadership of the judges, and who wished to promote kingship as the preferred form of leadership, modified the Deuteronomic book of Judges, ending it at its present canonical place with a negative assessment of the period of the judges: 'In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes' (Judg. 21.25). We also track Jobling's moves as he discuses the present location of the book of Ruth, arguing that in order to emphasize their ideological position, these pro-monarchy editors then inserted the book of Ruth after the canonical book of Judges because the book of Ruth begins with a potentially negative interpretation of the time of the judges: 'In the days when judges ruled, there was a famine in the land…' (Ruth 1.1).

By this time their struggle-trained eyes have no difficulty in understanding how what was the highpoint of the period of the judges, the judgeship of Samuel, has been co-opted as a prologue to what might have been another Deuteronomic book dealing with kingship (1 Samuel 13–2 Kings 25). This accomplished the propaganda purposes of the editors, who were clearly pro-monarchy. Samuel, instead of representing the climax of a tribal and charismatic form of local leadership, is now made to appear to represent a transitional form of leadership leading up to the pinnacle of leadership forms, which in the view of these editors is the monarchy. All of this Jobling detects and reconstructs on the basis of a close and careful reading of the narrative, and my students have no

difficulty in following him or in appreciating the implications of the ideological contestation that may lie behind this kind of textual re-ordering. Similarly, though more difficult to follow, the kinds of moves John Van Seters makes in arguing that the Court History deliberately imitates the Deuteronomistic History in order to contend with its portrayal of the story of David (Van Seters 2003) make sense to my students who are used to having to adopt the discourse of the dominant in order to contend with it in the infrapolitical realm (see Scott 1990: 19).

Similarly, my students marvel at the work done by Phyllis Trible and Carol Meyers in their rereading of Genesis 2–3 (Meyers 1988; Trible 1978) and are changed by it, though the male students initially react rather defensively of their culture. In each of these cases there is not only a general sensitivity to the multiplicity of voices in the biblical texts, but a particular sensitivity to the voices of the margins. Though those from the margins and those in solidarity with the margins have struggle-trained eyes, additional training is required to do readings such as these, and providing this training is an important part of my training. The tools that Jobling, Van Seters, Trible and Meyers employ have a particular history, but they are not tied to this history; they can be appropriated, re-tooled if necessary, and used in the struggle for life against the forces of death.

As the above examples demonstrate, I am not adverse to drawing on the resources of respectable and relatively mainstream scholarship, though in the cases cited their ideological orientation makes pedagogical appropriation of their work that much easier. Even hard-core, old-fashioned, historical-critical biblical scholarship can yield up important pedagogical resources, even if some of its authors would baulk at the use to which their work is put. For example, recent work which re-evaluates the Masoretic text as the basis for our readings of the Hebrew Bible and related initiatives to construct a composite Old Testament, to which South African scholars have made a significant contribution, not only raises questions about a stable text, it also makes us aware of the multiple communities that have sought to 're-member' the Bible. The rich socio-historical and cultural resources of Ancient Near Eastern studies, to which, again, South African scholars have made important contributions, are especially valuable for my students. The comparative paradigm, in which the socio-political and/or religio-cultural realities of the contexts that produced the Bible are juxtaposed with current African contexts, is the dominant paradigm of African biblical scholarship (Holter 2002: 88; Ukpong 2000; West 2005b), and so this kind of research resonates with African students.

But of special value to my students is observing the tools of the biblical studies trade in the hands of others like them. From them they learn what it means to make these tools their own. They learn from the work of feminist, womanist, mujerista, bosadi, and other forms of women's interpretation, as they do from the resonant readings of African-American and Latin-American

biblical scholarship. The contextually quite different biblical scholarship of Dalits, Adivasi, Tribals, and Asian biblical scholarship generally, and the contributions of indigenous scholarship in Australia, Latin America, Canada, the USA and Taiwan also make a contribution to their confidence with the tools, as does the biblical scholarship of those who interpret from the experience of disability. Even queer readings, uncomfortable though they are for most of my students, are of value in demonstrating what others from the margins do with the resources of biblical scholarship. But above all, it is other African scholars who vitalize them, and therefore the threefold cord of my pedagogy: engagement with the Bible, critical distance, contextualization.

Conclusion

I have used the word 'vocation' because I do believe that there is a sense of calling to what I do. I use it also because I will not allow conservative sectors to control this word or the practices that it implies. God's call is not the sole mandate of what *The Kairos Document* called 'Church Theology' (theologians 1986). Those of us who stand within what *The Kairos Document* called 'Prophetic Theology' are also called.

The product of theological activism and reflection in the wake of the 1985 State of Emergency, *The Kairos Document* 'came straight out of the flames of the townships in 1985', in the words of the Dominican priest, Albert Nolan (Nolan 1994: 213). In the words of *The Kairos Document* itself, 'The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months to come. It is the KAIROS or moment of truth not only for apartheid but also for the Church' (theologians 1986: 4).

In its profoundly insightful but deeply controversial analysis, *The Kairos Document* identified three kinds of theology in the church. The bold assertion that there was more than one theology in the church was in itself a massive contribution, changing forever how South Africans (and others) have viewed the church. The characterization of these three kinds of theology took the analysis further and marks *The Kairos Document* as one of the most profound theological statements to emerge from Christian sectors in South Africa's long history of engagement with Christianity.

The Kairos Document named these three theologies as follows: State Theology, Church Theology, and Prophetic Theology. Briefly, 'State Theology' was the theology of the South African apartheid State which 'is simply the theological justification of the status quo with its racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. It blesses injustice, canonizes the will of the powerful and reduces the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy' (theologians 1986: 3). 'Church Theology' is in a limited, guarded and cautious way critical of apartheid. 'Its criticism, however,

is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation' (theologians 1986: 9). *The Kairos Document* moves towards a 'Prophetic Theology', a theology which 'speaks to the particular circumstances of this crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand' (theologians 1986: 18).

While *The Kairos Document* had a number of shortcomings, especially its failure to engage overtly with South African Black Theology, it did make a massive impact on how we thought about religion, particularly Christianity, during those years of struggle. Roundly and publicly condemned by the apartheid state, *The Kairos Document* was also rejected by many of the institutional churches, including the so-called English-speaking churches. The initial wave of responses from the churches questioned the process of the theological analysis contained in *The Kairos Document* (van der Water 2001: 36-43). Theology that was made in the streets rather than in ecclesiastically controlled sites could not be proper theology, they claimed. Subsequent responses were more considered, but their spokesmen (mainly) still found it difficult to acknowledge that the theology of the church had failed to read 'the signs of the times', a key concept in *The Kairos Document.* That their 'Theology', with a capital 'T', was merely a contextually bankrupt form of either State Theology or Church Theology, struck a nerve, and the palpitations have not yet subsided.

No sooner had we achieved our liberation, than one of our most prominent church leaders, himself a veteran of the struggle, declared that Christians involved in the struggle could now 'go back to being the church'. The echo of *The Kairos Document* in this statement is unmistakable. Unmistakable, too, has been the stampede to return to Church Theology. The church in South Africa has by and large settled back into various forms of what *The Kairos Document* would have called Church Theology. A Prophetic strand continues to strive to read the signs of our times and to do theology with those who are victims and survivors of the injustices of our times, but once again we are in the minority. Almost everyone, it would seem, is content with Church Theology.

Ironically, our democratic government, which includes large numbers of theologians who drafted or supported *The Kairos Document*, exerts considerable pressure on the religious sector to stay within the confines of Church-type theology. The whole moral regeneration movement is an excellent example of this. Morality is narrowly defined as about condoms, crime, and corruption, and faith-based organizations are told to remain within this terrain. We are rebuked if we argue that our government's economic and HIV/AIDS policies may be immoral. It is not our place, we are scolded, to be prophetic about matters like these.

But it is not only the state that prefers the current predilection for Church Theology. Conservative forces in the churches are revelling in the space that an unlikely consensus over the preference for Church Theology is providing. Church leaders who were vocal proponents of Church (and even State) Theology in the 1980s now share platforms with government officials, nodding their heads together and looking pious and worried about the moral state of our nation (and they do not mean the neo-liberal capitalist Growth, Employment and Redistribution economic policy [see Terreblanche 2002] or the mismanagement of HIV and AIDS).

Civil society, too, seems content to see religion almost exclusively within the ambit of Church-type theology. Celebrating the demise of State Theology and its hold on civil society, civil society has relegated all religion to the margins. Though not surprising, given the evils of Christian National Education and other heresies, the bracketing of religion —or being embarrassed by religion—in a society like ours simply compounds the problem, relegating it to the sphere of Church-type theology.

Even the academic sector is feeling the attraction of Church Theology. There are growing indications that the churches are wanting to reassert their control over those university departments that have traditionally served their constituency. There is even talk of a new reformation in the corridors of the academy, signalling a return to a piety-centred Church Theology.

Just as *The Kairos Document* was a sign of its times, so the passing of its twentieth anniversary (as I write this) with little notice is a sign of these times. We have all, it would seem, settled for a benign, cloistered form of Christianity and biblical studies. But Prophetic Theology is not dead. Indeed, there are clear signs that the struggle against HIV and AIDS and global capitalism is awakening many from their slumber. Church Theology does not have the resources to deal with these signs of our times. Those who are infected and those who are unemployed know that it is bankrupt. Uncomfortable as it may be for the state, the church and civil society, Prophetic Theology may be regaining its voice. And if it is to, I must play my part by fulfilling my vocation as a biblical scholar.

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Whoring Dinah: Poly-nesian-reading Genesis 34

Jione Havea

It matters little to the oppressed who authored scripture; what is important is whether it can serve as a weapon against oppressors.
James Cone 1990: 31

When faced with colonial interpretation, the colonized resorted to two discursive practices—resistance and assimilation.
R.S. Sugirtharajah 2001: 74

Unrolling a polynesian story-mat

Fofola e falá kae fai e tâlanga[1] ('roll out a mat and let stories tell') is a popular call in Tongan communities and likewise in Polynesian circles, for people to sit together and exchange stories, memories and ambitions; *Fofola e falá kae fai e tâlanga* is a call for *telling stories.*

It is of course one thing to roll out a mat and another for the ones who gather to experience the unrolled mat as a safe space for telling stories. I have sat on story-mats where people also threw punches at one another; and on the same mats at other times with the same people moving one another to tears by the *telling stories* they shared. A story-mat may also be a wrestling mat and I have learned that a wrestling-mat becomes a safe space when people are gathered by stories that tell something about from where they come. This may be in terms of place—such as naming one's island, reef, burial ground, village-mark, and so forth—or in terms of heritage—such as naming one's ancestors and how they came to be who and where they are now. The latter often includes stories about beliefs and convictions, values and biases.

In unrolling the metaphorical story-mat on which I revisit Genesis 34, I share two *telling stories,* two presuppositions behind the exchange I encourage in this

1. The Tongan word *tâlanga,* which combines the words for hit/cut (*tâ*) and build/uplift/raise/dig-up (*langa*), is difficult to pin down. It can refer to a storytelling event in which memories exchange, and also to a community gathering to act on a controversial complaint or plan a demanding task. A *tâlanga* event can be joyous and stressful, healing and hurting, in other words, a *tâlanga* event may both cut (*tâ*) and uplift (*langa*). In translating *tâlanga* as an event in which 'stories tell,' I stress the complexity of the event.

chapter: first, I presuppose that no cultural study of biblical texts,[2] especially this study, is free of some form of ethnocentrism[3] and second, I presuppose that no native culture, whether secular, religious and/or popular,[4] especially the cultures from which I unroll my story-mat, is free of coercions by foreign cultures. Ethnocentrism is both unavoidable (because there is no unattached, de-gendered and ethnic-free reader) and impossible (because cultures are alive and dynamic, always already transforming through contact with other cultures). There is no pure, un-coerced, native culture. Accordingly, cultures, including biblical cultures, are, so to speak, half-castes and bastards.[5]

I resist presuming that 'no culture is an island', implied in Peter Miscall's claim that 'no text is an island' (1992), because such a claim is insensitive to the complexity of island space and cultures. I welcome the invitation to read intertextually, as I do with cultures, for I *cross* cultures, but I refuse the specter of globalization that creeps in at the underside of intertextuality, because texts and cultures are not all equal. There are overpowering texts and cultures, and the call for intertextuality can result in shutting up, silencing, weaker texts and cultures. This chapter, another tribute to David Jobling who has jogged and swam Polynesian oceanic-island-spaces, is about doing intertextuality in a way that opts for weaker subjects and cultures. I too favor subjects who have been denied access to rewrite traditional scriptures which validate discrimination against them.[6]

2. I too prefer 'cultural study' over 'cultural criticism' out of respect for '[…] the flesh-and-blood reader: always positioned and interested; socially and historically conditioned and unable to transcend such conditions—to attain a sort of asocial and ahistorical nirvana—not only with respect to socioeconomic class but also with regard to the many other factors that make up human identity. As such, it is a development that carries the ongoing process of liberation and decolonization in the discipline a step further, from enormous diversity in the realm of theory and methodology to enormous diversity in the sociocultural realm' (Segovia 2000: 30; see also Exum and Moore 1998).

3. By *ethnocentrism* I refer to ideologies that are prejudiced toward particular ethnic identities, against other ethnic identities, as a consequence of their cultural contexts and placements.

4. The distinction between *secular, religious* and *popular* cultures is heuristic; these overlap and interpenetrate in my cultural context. Moreover, what may be called *popular cultures* is not always separable from *traditional customs*.

5. Since a culture is always cross-cultural, by might and/or by necessity, I refer to half-caste and bastard cultures out of respect, and in submission, to their multiple heritages. The fact that cultures are bastards is obvious to subjects who have suffered under the arms of foreign imperialism (cf. Dube 2000). Our cultures are not ours alone, nor are our lands; our cultures are more than who we are, so are our lands. In this regard, I invite subjects who read and study cultures to account for the intersecting, for the crossing, the transgressing, of cultures, lands and natives, most of whom are present but invisible, vulnerable and untouchable.

6. Though my readings are critical of biblical texts, for I resist scriptures that sanctify, normalize and justify hierarchical and discriminative systems, I value the bible as a medium for understanding God and ancient cultures. The bible is also a source of power and comfort in moments of crises both personal and communal.

This chapter unpacks the absurdity of representing cultures not because they can't be represented but because a representation can't capture them. Cultures are more than people, more than language, more than space and context, more than land and ocean, more than ideologies and representations, so they must be represented *in other words* (Levinas) *and at once* (Derrida) with the worlds of others, including the words and worlds of Polynesian islanders. Herein lies one of my dilemmas: I should *not* write *of* Polynesian cultures because they have not stopped changing, altering, so I do not know what they are really all about. But I write *from* Polynesian cultures because they etch the subjectivity on my face; they are the cultures that inform and deform my readings. Such is the paradox that this chapter brings: it is both absurd and necessary to be ethnocentric.

Charting poly-nesian-reading

The grip of biblical cultures upon Polynesian pacific island cultures is astonishing, to the extent that they outlawed some of our traditional and traditioning identity markers. Bloom's (1994) claim that literary works become canonical because of their foreignness and strangeness and their ability to present the world in new ways, explains how the bible, a non-Pacific book, became authoritative among our people (cf. Alter 2000: 60f.). The bible offered a *new* world and it thereby became a tool for ideological coercion, the notion of 'canon' Bloom (1994) was writing against.

A foreign book, an *altering* text, to our liquid continent has been accepted as canon, manifesting Alter's idea that '[a] canon is above all *a transhistorical textual community*' (Alter 2000: 5; my italics). It is *trans-historical* in two ways: by *crossing* (bringing) other cultures into ours and by *transgressing* some of our cultural identities. In the early days, the upshot of the bible's trans-historical passage was one-sided: our people learned to swallow whatever biblical cultures shove down our throats. But recently, seeing that the bible is 'not a timeless inscription of fixed meanings' (Alter 2000: 18), Polynesian pacific islanders are learning to spit out the parts of this canon that gag us.[7] It is not that we have finally learned to be selective readers (cf. Alter 2000: 69), for we have always been selective, but that we have become critically conscious of our cultural interests. What remains to be seen is, so to speak, whether the bible can swallow the things we shove down its throat.[8] This is a romanticized expectation, but I am encouraged insofar as the bible is still being written. Of course, the bible came together with Christendom so it is unfair to lay all of the blame

7. This did not happen earlier because the bible has been inaccessible to natives (cf. Sugirtharajah 2001: 47-49), who also had to learn foreign modes of reading if they were to get the 'right meaning' of the book (cf. Sugirtharajah 2001: 61). Our native customs and manners were seen as undermining both the bible and the colonial project.

8. Remaining to be heard, also, are other native critics from the Pacific islands, and beyond, to enrich and complicate my representations of our cultures!

on the book and none on its bearers and their mission (see also Havea 2005; Sugirtharajah 2001).

Complementing the foreignness of the bible is the realization that Pacific islanders too, the natives, are not all indigenous to our island spaces. Polynesians, for example, who are scattered between, roughly, Aotearoa-New Zealand, Hawai'i, and Easter Island, are said to have voyaged from the 'East Indias' (according to James Cook; linguistic and Lapita evidences support this claim), from Melanesia (on linguistic grounds; also, Melanesia links Polynesia to Asia), and from the Americas (an unexplored support for this claim is the presence of *kava,* commonly used in Polynesian ceremonies, in South America). It is in the nature of *being polynesian* to be of multiple origins, to swerve on the waves of arriving voyagers, to be less rooted and more routed.

Transnationalism continues as contemporary Polynesians cross national borders in pursuit of opportunities (in other Pacific islands and beyond), which they ship home along with the ideological baggage of their host countries. Modern transportation and communications enable the flow of people, goods and money, as well as contested ideas like rights and nationhood, creating what Arjun Appadurai calls 'mobile sovereignties' (cited in Chappell 1999: 278). This is to say that Polynesian pacific islanders continue to be *polynesians* (*poly* + Gk *n sos*), to be many islands, many *nation*alities, bearing in mind that the Latin-derived 'nation' originally referred to foreign-born groups of 'others' (Chappell 1999: 278), who are, so to speak, half-castes and bastards. Drawing upon the complex *polynesian multiple-origin and make-up* with its *trans-historical* and *trans-cultural* voyaging nature, I propose *poly-nesian-reading* as a *poly-textual encounter* that is both *polyvolent* and *transgressive.*

When this chapter was first imagined,[9] I wanted to focus on Genesis 34, the story of the rape of Dinah and the circumcision and killing of the men of Shechem. But then my poly-nesian leanings drew me to Exod. 4.24-26, another circumcision story in which a woman, Zipporah, cuts the foreskin from, to uncover, a male penis (cf. Rashkow 2000);[10] in the next section I seat these telling stories on my unrolled *poly-nesian-reading* mat.

Zipporah's bloody husband, Dinah's lethal look

Failing to turn down Yhwh's call (Exod. 3.1–4.17), Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey to go back to Egypt. He explained to Jethro that he

9. This chapter grows out of a paper coauthored with Monica J. Melanchthon, 'Bastard Cultures: Bible, Dalits, Islanders,' for the meeting of the Bible and Cultural Studies section of the Society of Biblical Literature (Toronto, 2002).

10. Note Alter's verdict: '[…] the imaginative power of biblical literature could energize a writer in the very act of his rejecting its ideological values' (Alter 2000: 52-53). Moreover, '[o]ne should keep in mind […] the truism that every parody involves a covert admiration for the work parodied' (Alter 2000: 173).

returns to see whether his kindred were still living (Exod. 4.18). Up to this point Moses has not said if he accepts Yhwh's mission. He doesn't say; he just goes. And he drags his family along.

On their way, and not before, Yhwh bleeds his mission: '[…] say to Pharaoh, "Thus says Yhwh: Israel is my firstborn son. I said to you, 'Let my son go that he may worship me'. But you refused to let him go; now I will kill your firstborn son" ' (Exod. 4.22-23).[11] Blood will spill. Yhwh will kill another's son in order to free his own.

Yhwh is cunning. He unpacks the mission in parts, waiting until Moses is on the way before he reveals the bloody side of the mission *as if* Moses might not have departed if he knew that the mission will involve killing a firstborn in the house from where he fled.[12] Moses is told to return to a land in which blood has been shed, the blood of baby boys (Exod. 1.15-22), and how can he, with a rod—a phallic symbol (so Rashkow)—in his hand convince Pharaoh to let Israel go? Yhwh's mission is oppressive at several levels: on Moses and his family, and on Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

With Moses holding a rod, Yhwh speaks of secreting blood. Zipporah was probably not privileged to the new development in their journey, but I suspect that she would be curious about Moses's new toy, Yhwh's rod.

On the way, in between two places, where they stopped, and in between two days, in the darkness of night, while they stopped, Yhwh approaches [*pgš*] and tries [*bqš*] to kill him. They stopped, disrupted their journey, delayed in-between; Yhwh moves, draws near, creeps in, in order to kill. Yhwh's target is a 'him' who is not named in the story but I assume with most readers that it is Moses (Ackerman 2002: 73-74).[13] What happens next taunts readers. Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched *his feet* with it[14] and said, 'Truly you are a bridegroom of blood to me!' So he let him alone (4.25-26a). Readers are quick to conclude that Zipporah touched Moses's feet with the foreskin (so NRSV), but it's difficult to explain why Yhwh would as a consequence release Moses. She touched Moses's feet, and Yhwh lets go of Moses? It is equally difficult to explain why Yhwh would release Moses if it was the feet of her son that she touched, unless the son was in Yhwh's way (*as if* the son

11. I read the story in its received form, without denying the possibility that 4.18-20 may have been a later addition.

12. Compare Exod. 4.18-20 with Exod. 3.19-20, in which Yhwh speaks of 'striking' Egypt with a mighty hand, which does not necessarily mean that blood will be shed. Moreover, Exod. 3.21-22 pacifies the command by adding that the 'strike' will result in the Egyptians being favorable to the Israelites. The only indication of blood in the call narrative comes in Exod. 4.9, water turning into blood, but the element of violence is not contained in that sign.

13. Moses was not the only 'he' in this journey. His sons and maybe someone like a servant, as in Judges 19–21, also went along with them.

14. 'Feet' may be taken as a euphemism for Moses' genitalia, as if what Zipporah did was to actually or symbolically circumcise Moses (Ackerman 2002: 74).

was a mediator, an intercessor, who interrupts; cf. Moses' role in Exod. 32.7-14 [note, however, that Moses made things worse in 32.15-35]). The story begs letting go, releasing.

Who let go of whom? That Yhwh approached Moses does not necessary mean that Yhwh was winning. Moses could have had the upper hand in their encounter (cf. Gen. 32.25); if so it was Moses who let go of Yhwh. Circling back to the feet Zipporah touched, there is a third alternative: what if she touched Yhwh's feet with her son's foreskin? Not only did she touch Yhwh's feet but she also said [to Yhwh], 'Truly you are a bridegroom of blood to me' (4.25). Moses is her husband; Yhwh is her 'bridegroom of blood'. This would make more sense of why Moses lets go of Yhwh.[15]

This reading would also make sense of the popular assumption that Yhwh had the upper hand in the struggle. Yhwh releases Moses when his wife touched Yhwh's feet and announced that he [Yhwh] is her bridegroom of blood. However we read the ambiguous 'he let him alone', whether it's Moses who releases Yhwh or Yhwh who releases Moses, it makes more sense to read Yhwh as the one to whom Zipporah spoke and touched. Moses heard Yhwh's voice and holds Yhwh's rod, but Zipporah touches Yhwh's feet.

Zipporah introduces circumcision[16] into the exodus story and opens it toward polyandry, as suggested by the RSV translation: 'Surely a bloody husband [*ḥ^{a}tân-damîm*] art thou to me!… A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision'. Moses is still her husband, and Yhwh has become her 'bloody husband'. Circling around penis and blood, feet and touch, cutting and embrace, death and letting go, Zipporah's story leans back toward Dinah's story.

Dinah went to see (*r'h*), 'to look' at, the women of the earth (*'rṣ*) and she was seen (*r'h*), taken (*lqḥ*), laid (*škb*), and forced (*'nh*) by Shechem, prince of the earth (*'rṣ*) (Gen. 34.1-2). Away from home, as was Zipporah, Dinah was pierced by the uncircumcised penis of a prince; whereas Zipporah cut a foreskin, Dinah was cut by a foreskin-covered penis. The son of a king forces the daughter of Leah, turning the explorer into a piece of meat (cf. Moore 1996). Later, Shechem was drawn to Dinah. He loved and spoke tenderly to her (34.3). But his tenderness disappears when he spoke to his father: 'Give (*lqḥ*) me this female child to be my woman' (34.4; compare Rashkow 2004: 63f.).

This is the kind of story that sets feminists on edge. It tells a violent and penetrating event. Without endorsing the rapes (cf. Rashkow 2004; compare van Wolde 2002) of a woman nor the rape of a man or justifying chauvinism, I am

15. This would also explain the regulation about a woman who touches the feet of a man during a struggle (Deut. 25.11-12).

16. The rabbis teach that circumcision, which identifies both Jewish ethnicity and what it means to be fully male, is a task for and an obligation of fathers. In circumcising her son, Zipporah thus illustrates the fluidity of gender and ethnicity in rabbinic literature; so does Mordecai when he 'nurses' (obligation of a mother) Esther (see Kessler 2005).

torn between a woman victim, who came to look, to explore women, and a 'man of the earth', of the land, a native, who ends up wanting to make the visitor his woman; I am torn between a foreign woman (Dinah) and a native man (Shechem). My reading *tears* (Derrida).

Yhwh came to kill Moses; Dinah came to see women. By sitting these stories together on the same story-mat, 'the look' (Foucault, Said) becomes invasive and can be lethal. I too am sorry for what happened to Dinah, but I am also sympathetic for the women on whom she came 'to look'. I am torn between women, between a foreign woman (Dinah), who in coming 'to look' seems to be whoring around other women, and native Shechemite women, the objects of Dinah's look. So I turn back the words of Dinah's brothers[17] upon readers who read over the native women of Shechem: 'Should our sisters be treated [and looked upon] as whores?' (cf. 34.31).

Yhwh came to kill Moses; Shechem came to force Dinah (see also van Wolde 2002). Shechem was not dumb, for he speaks later (34.4), but he acts as if Dinah was deaf. So did Jacob and her brothers, who dealt with Hamor without asking for Dinah's opinion. The men in her story removed the chance for Dinah to hear and utter words, as if what matters to them was her vagina, which was ravaged and excessively revenged. What her brothers suggest was also insulting. How can the circumcision of the Shechemites mend the violence done to Dinah? How may a raped virgin be un-penetrated? The brothers anticipated intermarriage as if to overlook, to ignore, the violence already executed.

The killing of Moses was prevented by the cut, touch, and words of Zipporah, which are linked to the penis of her son; the exploration and exploitation of native Shechemite women was prevented by the eyes, hands and penis of their prince. In this regard, I am torn between two penises, one that saves, by being uncovered, circumcised, and one that violates, while being covered, uncircumcised. And I am disturbed that the uncovering of Shechem's penis, and those of other Shechemites, was an opportunity for Simeon and Levi to kill them (34.13-31), in the name of their religion and their sister (see also Rashkow 2004: 72-76). The circumcision of Zipporah's son brought release, letting go; the circumcision of the Shechemites brought a different kind of release, death.

Moses lets Yhwh alone after Zipporah touched his feet with a foreskin; Shechem looses Dinah after his foreskin and life were cut. As if in anticipation of Zipporah after her, Dinah is left with a 'bloody husband', thanks to her brothers, who metaphorically *raped* her by taking her from Shechem's house (cf. Rashkow 2004: 76). Whereas the traveler prevails in Exodus 4, the natives of the earth/land are killed in Genesis 34.

17. The text is ambiguous concerning the subject whom Simeon and Levi addressed and accused. Most readers assume that they were speaking against Shechem. Hyman (2000) adds the possibility that Simeon and Levi, addressing their brothers, were accusing their father, Jacob, because in not doing anything for Dinah he allows their sister to be viewed and treated as a whore.

The men of Shechem receive double cuts; Dinah and the native women are cut from the story. In this reading, the 'rape of Dinah' (which stopped her 'look' on/upon native women) corresponds to the 'circumcision of Shechem' (which stopped his foreskin from again entering Israelite daughters). This *poly-nesian-reading* overturns several lines of allegiance: from women and the house of Jacob to natives and the house of Shechem. The story assaults ethnic biases, for the natives in this story are non-Israelites. But a reading that is sympathetic of natives needs also to account for the violence that natives bring upon the sojourners among them.

This *poly-nesian-reading* seats, crosses and *tears* two *telling stories* together and in the process liquefies gender and ethnic boundaries. Such a reading might unsettle readers who prefer to control texts and colonize textual encounters (see also Fewell and Gunn 1991) but it is a mode of reading that embodies the playful nature of island space. It is a sort of reading that ebbs and flows with textual waves and sinks to edge what lurk under the lines drawn on the surface of the text. It allows edges to meet, to tickle, and it sinks into the sandy text as one wave recedes while anticipating the next wave's arrival. That next wave is the *telling story* of Tamar.

Dinah's silenced right, Tamar's silencing right

Whereas Dinah's right is silenced, Tamar's righteousness is announced (Gen. 38.26) but Judah does not admit that he wronged her. In *poly-nesian-reading* these stories I seek to expose how wrongs against women are often unacknowledged (cf. Parsons 2002). I limit this reading of Tamar's story to Gen. 38.20-23 (see also Havea 2003: 157-80).

When Judah finally tries to recover the pledge he left with Tamar, his friend could not find her. Part of the problem was that Hirah asked for *haq^{e}dešah* but Judah left the pledge with a woman he took to be a *zonah* (38.15). Hirah's question could be understood in two ways: *haq^{e}dešah* could be heard as 'the holy woman' or 'the temple prostitute'. He was doomed to fail because he asked for a different woman from the one Judah thought he encountered, and he asked for a woman who could be two different persons.

The townspeople's response is understandable. Taking *haq^{e}dešah* (root: *qdš*) as 'the temple prostitute', why would they tell a stranger that there is a prostitute in their town? Save face! They imply that their town is *clean* so Hirah should not ask for a prostitute there. *Tapu ia he kolo ni* (Tongan: 'that's *tapu* in this town')! Since *qdšh* can be read in two ways, noting that Hirah came with a kid as if he was also coming to offer a sacrifice, the townspeople disallowed the chance for confusing a prostitute with a holy person. Their response denies the chance for a woman to be a 'holy person', a *tapu* person,[18] which the announce-

18. In Tongan *tapu* refers to a place that is off limits, a prohibited area, as well as a place felt to be sacred, such as places of worship and burial grounds.

ment of Tamar's righteousness problematizes (38.26). There was no *qdšh* in their town, but there is a woman who is *more right* than a man in this story.

Hirah returns and reports to Judah: 'I have not found her; moreover, the townspeople said, "No *qdšh* has been here" ' (38.22). To which Judah replies, giving Hirah a share in the shame, 'Let her keep the things as her own, otherwise *we will be laughed at;* you see, I sent this kid, and *you could not find her*' (38.23, NRSV; my italics).

Judah stops searching for the woman out of concern for his image, thinking that he would be laughed at, but the text does not justify why he gave up so soon. Did he think that his image was separable from his seal, cord, and staff? Did he think that he would be shamed if it is known that he laid a prostitute? that he did not pay her? that he was in debt to a woman? that he was a property claimant? and/or if it becomes known that he was reclaiming the equivalent of his passport, driver's license, and credit card (Alter 2000) from a woman whom he does not know? How stupid can Judah be!

I faulted Judah for giving up so easily in another reading (Havea 2003: 175-78) but in this *poly-nesian-reading* I offer a more understanding reading. As I was sympathetic for Shechem in the previous section without justifying what he did to Dinah, so can I understand Judah here without justifying his action either.

One of the behaviors Pacific islanders chastise is what we call in Tongan *fakamäu koloa,* roughly translated as 'property-claim'. One is respectable in our cultures if s/he is not scolded, *tuku ho'o fakamäu koloa* ('stop your property-claim').[19] It is shameful when an individual claims a property. This is not because we do not value it, but because property is owned communally and one's responsibility to one's extended family is usually taken to be more important than the property one claims.[20] Property is not for an individual to claim but for the extended family to own; communal ownership undermines individual claims and control.

It is properly (awkward) for this reason that not many Pacific islanders make property and land claims (there are exceptions, of course), even in this postco-

19. Note that *fakamäu koloa* also translates as 'ordering or organizing property'. What is scolded is making claims, but not organizing and ordering property!

20. When there is a feast, for instance, the extended family contributes something, each bringing food. It is at the end of that gathering, when people clean up and gather what remains of their contribution that you often hear *tuku e fakamäu koloa* uttered, directed at those who try to take everything back. 'It indicates the worldview of Tongans that property is valueless in comparison to fulfilling one's duties and obligations to family and society. If you bring your plates of food to a village celebration, the important issue is fulfilling your duties; the plates (which you may later try to claim or find) are mere tools to fulfill one's duties. Therefore, in the eyes of the Tongan public, there is a negative view of those who claim properties, at least publicly, and this view in turn shapes the lengths of the "claims" people do with properties' ('Ungatea Fonua; e-mail on November 6, 2002).

lonial age. Similarly among the Aborigines of Australia, whose call for reconciliation is not so much about seeking the return of their property, as if they are claiming mother-earth as their property, and as if the severe damage to the lost generation could be undone, but about recognizing their presence and wanting [the descendants of] settlers to 'say sorry'[21] for what they [and their forbears] have done to the native people of the land. The Aborigines relate to the land differently, as reflected in Yothu Yindi's song *Gone is the land,* which closes with these lines:

> Gone is the land
> To the man of the mine[22]
> Can't you see what you have done to me
> Changes coming, changes they go
> The land is here for us
> To have and to hold
> It's not forty thousand dollars or more
> But forty thousand years of culture here.

If Judah was Polynesian or Aborigine it would be easy for me to understand why he stopped trying to recover the pledge left with Tamar. It is not because she was a woman, a temple prostitute, a holy person, or a whore, but because it is shameful to reclaim one's property. But Judah was no islander, and though I feel for him, he still wronged Tamar. It is at this point also that Dinah's story *crosses* Tamar's story.

Dinah had a story to tell of how she was wronged, a story which could be heard or silenced, while Tamar had Judah's pledge, which stopped her body from turning into ashes (38.25). Dinah's story involves experiences with which islanders are familiar, rape and invasion, the kind of events that produce half-castes and bastards. But this was a rape that prevented another kind of rape, cultural rape, in which natives are vulnerable to 'the look' of explorers. Nonetheless, Dinah had something that Polynesians value, a story, which has the potential to disseminate in its telling; Dinah had a *telling story.* Polynesian islanders would therefore retell Dinah's story for her sake and at once with sympathies for the natives of Shechem, as the *polynesian-reading* above sug-

21. 'Saying sorry' is relational. It involves accounting for the wrongs committed in the past as well as acknowledging the subjectivity of the wronged. The current government of Australia however refuses to 'say sorry', I presume, at the ideological level, for economic reasons, fearing the compensatory consequences of admitting past wrongs, and for a worldview in which one generation is not responsible for the behaviors of previous ones. The latter is rooted in a nuclear family culture, whereas Aboriginal cultures are extended-family oriented.

22. Allow me to make a *poly-nesian-reading* observation: with 'man of the mine' the songwriter was probably referring to how the land has been lost to miners, as ones who excavate and profit from the natural treasures of the land. But 'man of the mine' could also be read as referring to possessive owners, ones who come and say 'this land *is mine'.* They too are 'men of the mine'.

gest. We are sympathetic of both, maybe because we are retelling a story that is both ours and not ours. It is ours because we can identify with both the [foreign] woman-victim and the native-victims, but it is not ours because it comes in a foreign book.

Dinah had a story, while Tamar had what islanders are reluctant to claim, a pledge, property, whose testimony is incorruptible. Similar to the foreskin in Zipporah's hand, Tamar held something that saved her life. In this regard, Polynesian islanders have a lot to learn from Tamar: for some people, and in some cultures, property and stuff matter more than *telling stories*.

Dinah's brothers tried to correct the wrongs done to her, while Tamar's father and brothers fail to speak or act, as if they have been silenced and restrained, on her behalf. But Tamar did not need a man's help because she had something that can't be rejected—Judah's seal, cord and staff—prefiguring Yhwh's rod in Moses's hands. Tamar submitted Judah's pledge into communal ownership; it is not Judah's alone, but theirs together: 'Take note', she said, 'whose these are, the seal and the cord and the staff' (38.25). They were Judah's, of course, but they now are Tamar's also, and not just because he did not recover them. By sending the pledge to Judah for inspection Tamar made them hers also. For it is in letting go, in releasing, rather than in claiming, that property is owned, not by an individual but by the 'extended family'. This is a perspective that these telling stories need to learn from Polynesian islanders.

Dinah's brothers acted because their sister was wronged, treated as a whore, whereas Judah declared concerning Tamar that 'she is more in the right than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah' (38.26).[23] This reading invites unsettling resolutions, the stuff of *poly-nesian-reading*. On the one hand, from island space, Dinah was wronged but I can't say that she was right (as far as the narrative goes, she came 'to look', uninvited). On the other hand, Tamar was *more right* but it is not enough to say just that. It is also necessary to declare that she was wronged. Polynesians are shamed from claiming properties but here I demand that wrongs be acknowledged and reconciled. It is not just the rights that matters but the wrongs also, both of which come together in what Claudia Camp calls 'storied space' (Camp 2002; see also Havea 2005). In seating together the *telling stories* of Zipporah, Dinah and Tamar, the *wrongs* and *tears* in them tell, cross and expose.

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Looking into Vision: See-Sawing in Prophetic Books[1]

Ed Conrad

Introduction

One of the advantages of being 'vertically challenged' as a child was that the see-saw was a much more interesting piece of playground equipment than it would have been if I had been vertically unchallenged.[2] It gave me, more than most, the unusual opportunity to see things differently from an elevated position—at least momentarily. From the higher perspective of the see-saw, things appeared in new ways.

When I look at prophetic books, I often get that see-saw feeling. My interest in prophetic books originated from what appeared to me, then, as the lofty heights of my civil rights involvement. I shared Martin Luther King's view from the top of the mountain. While participating in his memorial service in Memphis, Tennessee, I felt as if I were looking down into the depths of the Old Testament as Ralph Abernathy brought alive the Old Testament stories relating to the Exodus. It was at that time that I decided to take the academic see-saw to what I thought were heights that would allow me to peer more deeply into prophetic texts.

I have discovered since that time that prophetic books are like see-saws in one other respect. At one moment readers are peering from a height so that things come into view rather clearly, but suddenly we come back to earth rather abruptly as the see-saw descends so that the view is seen from a less expansive perspective. In short, we only have fleeting glimpses of the world seen from a different perspective.

What I want to do in this essay is to take a look at 'vision' in prophetic books. In preparing this paper I felt at times as if I had been at the top of the see-saw when the person at the bottom decided to stand up - and I came back to earth rather abruptly. So welcome to my playground.

1. I would like to offer my appreciation to Rick Strelan, Julia O'Brien, Perry Troutman and Irvin Batdorf who read the essay and made helpful and valuable suggestions.

2. Due to illness, Ed Conrad was unable to edit this paper for a final draft. Editing was done by Wes Bergen, who accepts responsibility for any remaining mistakes or rough construction.

Vision Is Often Discomfiting

Vision is one of those words we use in English, often without conscious consideration, in our discussions about the Bible. However, when we stop to reflect on what the word means, our casual use of the term turns out to be overly simplistic. That vision has received scant coverage in the secondary literature is evident from the fact that it is sometimes missing as a topic in our dictionaries on the Bible. There is no entry in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (1993), and *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* refers the reader to the articles on 'Prophecy' (1992: VI, 859), where it receives little notice (1992: IV, 447-502),[3] and 'Mysticism', where we are told primarily what prophetic vision is not—introspection (1992: IV, 945-46). A search through a database such as ATLA for 'vision and the Bible' gives a very meager return.

In a recent article 'A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Vision', Michael Stone outlines the reluctance of scholars to examine vision in their study of pseudepigraphic literature (2003: 167-80). He says,

> …scholars studying these writings deal with their composition, date, and coherence by basing themselves on the 'more objective' criteria of literary form and tradition criticism; on historical grammar (if applicable); on translation characteristics; on the extent of the vaticinium ex eventu in historical overviews; on insights yielded by other, more recent methodologies; and so forth. In these studies, the religious life and experience ascribed to the pseudepigraphic authors are rarely taken into account (2003, 168).

He goes on to say that '[t]his is true, mutatis mutandis, of scholarly attitudes to vision experiences in the field of biblical studies' (2003: 168).

Stone suggests that this is the case. He says,

> In discussions with colleagues, I have raised the question of how religious experience is to be handled by students of ancient texts and have frequently been told that the prophet's experience or state of mind is too difficult to ascertain. It is not a verifiable factor and should be used in sound scholarly argument as a last resort, if at all. Even Eichrodt and Zimmerli, who accept that Ezekiel did experience the vision, nonetheless do not incorporate this factor into their understanding of the prophet's activity. Instead, they isolate it and stress its uniqueness. This aspect of biblical prophecy causes discomfort (2003: 169).

Why this reticence to write about vision? Is it an embarrassment because it does not fit into our present perception of the real world? Do we ignore it in our interpretation of prophetic books because it is so strange and alien and makes us feel uneasy? Whatever the reason for neglecting to look more closely at vision as an important reality in the world of prophetic books, I think that much can be gained by taking another look at vision. While it is difficult for us to see

3. None of the sub-headings in any of the articles mentions vision.

in vision a reality that makes sense in our world, the realities associated with vision in prophetic texts can offer readers new perspectives.

Vision in the Old Testament

The English word, vision, has been used by commentators as a label for a plurality of different kinds of seeing in the Old Testament, perhaps because the vocabulary in the English language for seeing and vision is limited. Vision is used to translate two different words in prophetic books: חָזוֹן[4] and מַרְאָה. For example, the beginning of the Isaiah scroll reads,

חֲזוֹן יְשַׁעְיָהוּ בֶן־אָמוֹץ אֲשֶׁר חָזָה עַל־יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלָ͏ִם בִּימֵי
עֻזִּיָּהוּ יוֹתָם אָחָז יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ מַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה׃

The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

In this passage, Isaiah's vision (חָזוֹן) is singular and refers to something that he saw (חָזָה) over a period of time covering the reign of four kings (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah).

The Ezekiel scroll begins also by making reference to vision. But there are differences:

וַיְהִי׀ בִּשְׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה בִּרְבִיעִי בַּחֲמִשָּׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ וַאֲנִי
אֱלֹהִים׃ בְּתוֹךְ־הַגּוֹלָה עַל־נְהַר־כְּבָר נִפְתְּחוּ הַשָּׁמָיִם וְאֶרְאֶה מַרְאוֹת

In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, when I was in the community of exiles by the Chebar Canal, the heavens opened and I saw visions of God.

Here the word מַרְאָה is used in the plural (מַרְאוֹת); but, unlike the singular חָזוֹן of Isaiah dated over a period extending to the reign of four kings, Ezekiel's plural מַרְאוֹת of God are dated to a specific day ('in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month'). From a semiotic perspective, the question that these two texts raise for the reader is, 'What is the knowledge that the authors of these texts assumed their readers would understand about the respective meanings of חָזוֹן and מַרְאוֹת?' Are חָזוֹן and מַרְאָה interchangeable words in Hebrew so that their meaning can be clearly carried by the one English word 'vision?' Or, do these two words refer to two distinct realities in the world of perception as it was constructed in the cultural world of Isaiah's and Ezekiel's readers?

We frequently use the word 'vision' to talk about other ways prophets recount what they see. For example, Jer. 1:11-12 is often referred to as a vision.

4. Other related words often translated as vision are: חָזוּת (2 Chr. 9.29); חָזוּת (Dan. 8.5, 8; Isa. 21.2; 28.18; 29.11); חִזָּיוֹן (2 Sam. 7.17; Isa. 22.1, 5; Job 3.1; 4.13; 20.8; 33.15; 1 Chr. 17.15).

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר מָה־אַתָּה רֹאֶה יִרְמְיָהוּ וָאֹמַר
מַקֵּל שָׁקֵד אֲנִי רֹאֶה:
לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי הֵיטַבְתָּ לִרְאוֹת כִּי־שֹׁקֵד אֲנִי עַל־דְּבָרִי

The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?' And I said, 'I see a branch of an almond tree'. Then Yahweh said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it'.

Here what Jeremiah sees, unlike the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, is undated; nor is either of the Hebrew words, normally translated as 'vision', used. What Jeremiah sees is something in his world, an almond branch, which is something apparently also in Yahweh's view, since it becomes the basis for the conversation between them. This 'vision' of Jeremiah is similar to the so-called 'visions' of Amos (see chapters 7 and 8).

We also speak of Isaiah's vision (Isaiah 6) and Micaiah's vision (1 Kings 22), but what these prophets see is Yahweh himself, not something that the prophet and Yahweh are simultaneously observing.

עָלָיו מִימִינוֹ וּמִשְּׂמֹאלוֹ: רָאִיתִי אֶת־יְהוָה יֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסְאוֹ וְכָל־צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם עֹמֵד

I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him to the right and to the left of him (1 Kgs 22.19).

וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־אֲדֹנָי יֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא רָם וְנִשָּׂא וְשׁוּלָיו מְלֵאִים
אֶת־הַהֵיכָל:

I saw Yahweh sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple (Isa. 6.1).

Of course there are differences between Micaiah's vision and Isaiah's vision. For example, Micaiah also sees all Israel scattered on a mountain (the future destruction of Ahab's army) and hears Yahweh speaking with those around him. While Isaiah, like Micaiah, hears Yahweh speaking, a dialogue eventuates between Isaiah and Yahweh that did not occur in the Micaiah incident.

It is also common for us to speak about Zechariah's visions as specifically night visions (מַרְאוֹת־הַלַּיְלָה),[5] although this phrase does not occur in Zechariah.

רָאִיתִי הַלַּיְלָה וְהִנֵּה־אִישׁ רֹכֵב עַל־סוּס אָדֹם וְהוּא עֹמֵד
בֵּין הַהֲדַסִּים אֲשֶׁר בַּמְּצֻלָה וְאַחֲרָיו סוּסִים אֲדֻמִּים שְׂרֻקִּים
וּלְבָנִים:

In the night I saw a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen; and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses (Zech. 1.8).

What are we to make of what is seen as happening at night? Does that qualify the seeing in some way? Also, at least in this instance, what Zechariah sees

5. The phrase חֶזְיוֹן לַיְלָה occurs in Isa. 29.7 and חֶזְיוֹן לַיְלָה occurs in Job 33.15.

appears to be something in his world that may be as commonplace as an almond branch or a basket of summer fruit; Zechariah sees a man riding on a red horse.[6] The meaning of what he sees in his world, however, does not entail a direct response based on a word play, as is the case with Jeremiah and Amos. Rather, a conversation ensues between Yahweh and the messenger who spoke with Zechariah, when the messenger asks Yahweh a question.

The Problem

Many other references to what are labeled as vision in the prophetic literature could be cited, and the similarities and differences among them compared. However, by drawing attention to these familiar examples of vision, I wanted to show that our one English word 'vision' labels quite different circumstances as described in prophetic texts. I am proposing in this paper that our singular word 'vision' obscures the plurality of ways the world was observed by the audience of readers for whom the prophetic scrolls were composed. To group all of these references together as a singular idea we call 'vision' obscures a more complex way of constructing the real world of this other time. The knowledge that the authors of these texts expected their readers to bring to the reception of the texts, I suspect, has been long lost. We may need to consider what may have been a much more complex way of seeing than can be covered by our one word 'vision'.

I want to make it clear here that, when I speak about the realities associated with the ancient world of prophetic literature, I am not suggesting that any of these things actually occurred. I don't think that we can know any more about the actuality of the prophets than that they exist as characters in the text. I certainly do not want to claim that I can somehow gain a clear insight into these different ways of seeing or that these events of seeing actually took place. It is not possible to read these texts and experience the world as ancient readers did.

The world of vision referenced in prophetic books is as alien to me as the one I encountered when I was a young university student having a conversation with a fellow African student at an orientation social. He recounted to me the story about how he had spoken to his grandfather on the way to his grandparents' home one morning where he had heard people crying. After speaking with his grandfather and on arriving at the house, he was told that his grandfather had died the night before. What made that experience so strange to me was that it was told to me in a casual conversation. For my friend the event was recounted as quite ordinary; it was not related as an uncommon experience. In that conversation, I encountered a world where perceptions of the real world were significantly different from my own. That is the see-saw feeling I get when I read

6. It is difficult to know how common it was to describe a horse as 'red'. The only other red animal mentioned in the Hebrew Bible is the heifer in Num. 19.2.

prophetic books. Just when I feel I understand, it becomes all too evident that the world of prophetic books is as foreign to me as the world of my African friend. And, I might add, as my Western way of constructing the world was to my African friend.

Strategies of Interpretation

I want to take another look at some of these instances in prophetic books that we label vision. However, before doing that I want to clarify the strategies of interpretation that are guiding my inquiry. This approach grows out of the insights of semiotics, particularly those of Umberto Eco in his book, *The Limits of Interpretation* (1990).[7]

Texts do not mean things on their own. Meaning emerges in the interaction between a text and a reader. Meaning, therefore, is dependent on information the reader brings to the text. However, that is not to say that texts lack limits or boundaries of interpretation. These limits are associated with what Eco calls 'the intentionality of the text'. Texts are shaped or designed to convey meaning using shared literary and rhetorical conventions or codes. The author expected the model reader to bring these codes to the text, which allows successful communication to take place. Eco refers to this shared information as 'encyclopaedic knowledge' (1990: 8). The intentionality of a text such as a prophetic book is very complex and cannot be reduced to a singular definition. With texts such as prophetic books, I don't think that we will ever be able to read them as the model reader assumed by the author (or scribal redactor). I think we will always in some way be involved in aberrant decoding, and the meaning of a prophetic book will always remain indeterminate and plural.

However, as a reader of these ancient texts, I am assuming the 'intentionality of the text' designed for ancient readers. In a sense a prophetic book is like an artefact from the past, and for me, what is open for study is the book as it is, not its production through time. To ignore the limits that a text sets is to be involved in a radical reader response approach, in Eco's sense of beating the text into whatever shape we want it. It is my aim to read a prophetic book in the form in which I encounter it as a reader. What it means is dependent on information I bring to it in my reading. The information I am concerned with in this paper is the 'encyclopaedic knowledge' that might be listed under the category of seeing.

What I am attempting to do is to understand the intentionality of the text as it unfolds before me as a reader. I am not trying to get inside the head of a redactor or to uncover what might have been the history of the text. By focusing on

7. In this book he argues that his reader response approach (which he developed in his *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* [1981]) was not meant to exclude the notion that there are textual limits in interpretation.

textual intentionality, my aim is to 'construct' the encyclopaedic knowledge the model reader might have brought to a prophetic book—by making inferences from the text I encounter.

While setting as my goal the construction of the encyclopaedic knowledge of a reader of prophetic scrolls, I don't believe that I will ever achieve my aim, and even if I somehow managed to do that, I would have no way of knowing that I was successful. It is a pleasure, however, to be on a see-saw getting a fleeting glance at a world that looks different than at ground level. The only measure of success of which I am aware is a pragmatic one. If it works, it has some value. The discipline of inquiry into the meaning of biblical texts requires that we live with lots of little and often contradictory successes rather than the more monolithic solutions that characterized the past. This is not to denigrate the past but simply to recognize that we now '*see'* the world differently than those who preceded us in the past.

In the remaining part of the paper I want to address the following questions:

1. How might ancient readers have understood חָזוֹן and its place at the beginning of a scroll such as Isa. 1.1?
2. What did an ancient author expect his readers to understand by מַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים?
3. What did ancient readers imagine was happening in a world where one can see Yahweh sitting on a throne?
4. Where was the almond branch in Jeremiah's world, and what is the significance of Zechariah seeing at night?

I will begin by defining the 'knowledge' on seeing, often classified as 'vision' in the primary literature, which I bring to my reading of prophetic texts. I will then indicate how I arrived at this 'knowledge' in my reading. Finally, I will comment on the significance of this way of reading for understanding prophetic books.

I understand the words and phrases we have commonly identified as 'vision' in the following ways:

The Hebrew word חָזוֹן commonly translated as 'vision':

1. As presented in the text, it is a normal way that Yahweh communicates with prophets in ancient Israel.
2. The communication conventionally occurs in the temple at night when the prophet sees and hears Yahweh enthroned and carrying on 'business' with his entourage.
3. The words of Yahweh that result from this way of seeing are written down so that חָזוֹן is also a word that can be used for the words written in a סֵפֶר and communicated to the king and others in the community through reading. This writing is sometimes referred to as a מַשָּׂה.

4. This single instance of writing might encompass a compilation of writings all of which had been derived from a prophet's seeing and hearing Yahweh in the temple on multiple occasions.
5. What the prophet sees and hears concerns the future. This future may be the near future or it may be a time seemingly unconnected to the present. One often must wait for the prophecy to be fulfilled.

The Hebrew word מַרְאָה commonly translated as 'vision':

1. This is the noun that can describe what anyone sees, including Yahweh.
2. The phrase מַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים refers to the things God is seeing, 'God's visions'.
3. When a prophet has מַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים, he is seeing what God is seeing. The extraordinary thing is that this is happening *outside* the temple.

The Hebrew phrases אֲנִי רֹאֶה or הֶרְאַנִי commonly associated with what have been labeled as 'vision' in Jeremiah and Ezekiel:

1. I see something or something is shown to me in my everyday experiences of seeing the world.
2. When Yahweh communicates by means of these things in my world, he is seeing what the prophet is seeing.
3. The extraordinary thing is that Yahweh is communicating his words not as a חָזוֹן in the temple but outside the temple in the prophet's world.

The Hebrew רָאִיתִי הַלַּיְלָה normally understood as referring to Zechariah's 'night visions':

1. This phrase simply means that someone saw something at night.
2. That it happened at night takes on significance only when that is coupled with the notion that Yahweh speaks to prophets at night in the temple.

The 'Vision of Isaiah' and Other Prophets

In his commentary on Isaiah, Otto Kaiser makes the following comments on חזון in Isa. 1.1:

1. In its present setting, this heading is *meant to refer to all the sixty-six chapters of the Book of Isaiah*. In the form in which it occurs, it may be due to the most recent editor, to whom we owe the final compilation and redaction of the book.
2. …the present heading must go back to the redactor who gave the chapter its present position, *because he found it possible to use this chapter as a programmatic summary of the whole preaching of the prophet*… it is not impossible that he chose it for the whole book as it stands…

3. Whereas Isaiah himself explicitly mentions a vision only in one passage, 6.1ff, *here his whole preaching is described as 'the vision'* (1972: 1).

The words that I have italicized call attention to the importance of חָזוֹן for understanding the whole. Yet, Kaiser does not pursue in any great detail what 'vision' might mean for the whole other than to suggest that it was a late term referring to 'the reception of prophecy solely in the form of words' (1972: 1-2).

I find these words of Kaiser extremely interesting despite the different strategies of interpretation I bring to a text such as the scroll of Isaiah. I do not believe a written text alone provides enough information for identifying unspecified redactors, let alone their intentions. Furthermore, I do not consider that a text alone can demonstrate that there was an actual Isaiah, let alone uncover his intentions. However, the beginning of Isaiah, which labels it as 'the חָזוֹן of Isaiah' is of fundamental importance to me as a reader. In Eco's terms, I understand חָזוֹן as encoding information the author/redactor has provided the model reader for determining the meaning of the words that follow.

I agree with Kaiser that in Isa. 1.1 'the vision of Isaiah' (חֲזוֹן יְשַׁעְיָהוּ) refers to the entire sixty-six chapters. Indeed, I think the phrase refers primarily to a writing as in 2 Chr. 32.32,[8]

וְיֶתֶר דִּבְרֵי יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ וַחֲסָדָיו הִנָּם כְּתוּבִים בַּחֲזוֹן יְשַׁעְיָהוּ
בֶּן־אָמוֹץ הַנָּבִיא עַל־סֵפֶר מַלְכֵי־יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל׃

> Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his good deeds, are written in the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

Other prophetic writings (סְפָרִים) are identified at their beginnings as חַזוֹן.

> 'The vision of Obadiah' חֲזוֹן עֹבַדְיָה (Ob. 1.1).
> 'The oracle of Nineveh, the vision writing of Nahum' מַשָּׂא נִינְוֵה סֵפֶר חֲ°זוֹן נַחוּם (Nah. 1.1).

Habakkuk is told by Yahweh to write down the חָזוֹן (2.2) when Yahweh answers him:

יְרוּץ קֹרֵא בוֹ׃ וַיַּעֲנֵנִי יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר כְּתוֹב חָזוֹן וּבָאֵר עַל־הַלֻּחוֹת לְמַעַן

> Then Yahweh answered me and said, 'Write a vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a reader[9] may run with it'.

Finally, the reference to a sealed vision as in Isa. 29.11, 'the vision of all this has come to you like the words of a sealed document' (וַתְּהִי לָכֶם חָזוּת הַכֹּל כִּדְבְרֵי הַסֵּפֶר הֶחָתוּם) suggests a book sealed to be read at a later time. (See also Dan. 8.26 [סְתֹם הֶחָזוֹן]; 9.24 [וּלַחְתֹּם חָזוֹן וְנָבִיא].)

8. See also 2 Chr. 9.29 which refers to the 'visions' (בַּחֲזוֹת) written (כְּתוּבִים) by the prophet Iddo.

9. The NRSV curiously translates the phrase 'so that a runner may read it'.

A חָזוֹן, then, as it is used in Isa. 1.1, is a writing; but it also refers to the experience of the reception of these words by a prophet and in this way carries other information for me as a reader that is important for understanding. A חָזוֹן is:

1. *Received at night by a prophet in a temple*
The classic example of the reception of a חָזוֹן is the well-known incident involving Samuel in 1 Sam. 3.1-21. The passage is introduced by describing the time when Samuel was ministering to Yahweh in Eli's presence: 'the word of Yahweh was precious (יקָר) in those days; חָזוֹן was not being spread widely (נִפְרָץ)'. The communication took place with Yahweh when Samuel was 'lying down in the temple of the Yahweh, where the ark of God was' (שֹׁכֵב בְּהֵיכַל יהוה אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם אֲרוֹן אֱלֹהִים). Other passages indicate that Yahweh communicates to a prophet by means of a vision that occurs at night. For example, we are told in 1 Sam. 7.4//2 Chr. 17.3 that the word of Yahweh came to him at night and later on in the passage we are told that 'according to all these words and all this חָזוֹן Nathan spoke to David' (כְּכֹל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וּכְכֹל הַחִזָּיוֹן הַזֶּה כֵּן דִּבֶּר נתן אֶל־דָּוִד) (1 Sam. 7.17//2 Chr. 17.15). Another example is Mic. 3.6, which warns that in the future the night will *not* bring vision, implying that vision is associated with night.

לָכֵן לַיְלָה לָכֶם מֵחָזוֹן וְחָשְׁכָה לָכֶם מִקֶּסֶם
וּבָאָה הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ עַל־הַנְּבִיאִים וְקָדַר עֲלֵיהֶם הַיּוֹם׃

> Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without revelation. The sun shall go down upon the prophets, and the day shall be black over them.

Other passages compare a חָזוֹן with a dream (חֲלוֹם),[10] suggesting its association with night: Isa. 29.7 'like a dream, a vision of the night' (חֶזְוֹן לַיְלָה כַּחֲלוֹם) and Dan. 1.17 which speaks of Daniel as being skilled in understanding 'all vision and dreams' (הֲבִין בְּכָל־חָזוֹן וַחֲלוֹמוֹת). See also Job 20.8 and 33.15.

Many passages link חָזוֹן with specifically with prophets. See for example, Hos. 12.10 where Yahweh says that he has multiplied vision (חָזוֹן) for the prophets (נְבִיאִים); Ezek. 7.26 where reference is made to those who seek חָזוֹן 'from a prophet' (מִנָּבִיא); and Lam. 2.9 where it is said of Jerusalem that 'her prophets (נְבִיאֶיהָ) are no longer able to find חָזוֹן'.

2. *About the future, sometimes a distant future, often requiring a period of waiting for it to come about*
A clear example is found in Hab. 2.3, which follows Yahweh's command to Habakkuk to write down the חָזוֹן:

כִּי עוֹד חָזוֹן לַמּוֹעֵד וְיָפֵחַ לַקֵּץ וְלֹא יְכַזֵּב
אִם־יִתְמַהְמָהּ חַכֵּה־לוֹ כִּי־בֹא יָבֹא לֹא יְאַחֵר׃

10. The exact relationship between a חָזוֹן and a חֲלוֹם is not particularly clear although we should note the phrase in Num. 24.14, 16 that speaks of one who 'sees a חָזוֹן of the Almighty with his eyes wide open' (מֶחֱזֵה שַׁדַּי יֶחֱזֶה נֹפֵל וּגְלוּי עֵינָיִם).

> For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.

Other passages suggest that חָזוֹן concerns the future. The implication that חָזוֹן is for a distant future is evident in Ezek. 12.23:

הֶחָזוֹן אֲשֶׁר־הוּא חֹזֶה לְיָמִים רַבִּים וּלְעִתִּים
רְחוֹקוֹת הוּא נִבָּא

> The vision that he sees is for many years ahead; he prophesies for distant times.

The proverb quoted in Ezek. 12.23 also suggests that vision concerns the more distant future as is clear from Ezek. 12.27:

יַאֲרִכוּ הַיָּמִים וְאָבַד כָּל־חָזוֹן

> The days are prolonged, and every vision comes to nothing.

Dan. 8.26 also speaks about a vision (a writing) to be sealed for the future:[11]

סְתֹם הֶחָזוֹן כִּי לְיָמִים רַבִּים

> Seal up the vision, for it refers to many days from now.

3. *Reception of חָזוֹן entails both seeing and hearing*

Those who report a חָזוֹן speak both of what they have seen and of what was said. What they have seen is sometimes referred to as a מַרְאָה, also often translated as 'vision' as in 1 Sam. 3.15 where Samuel says that he was afraid to 'report the vision to Eli' (מֵהַגִּיד אֶת־הַמַּרְאָה אֶל־עֵלִי). The way in which מַרְאָה is used to refer to what is actually seen in a חָזוֹן is more clearly evident in Dan. 8.15-17:

וַיְהִי בִּרְאֹתִי אֲנִי דָנִיֵּאל אֶת־הֶחָזוֹן וַאֲבַקְשָׁה בִינָה וְהִנֵּה עֹמֵד
לְנֶגְדִּי כְּמַרְאֵה־גָבֶר׃ [16] וָאֶשְׁמַע קוֹל־אָדָם בֵּין אוּלָי וַיִּקְרָא
וַיֹּאמַר גַּבְרִיֵּאל הָבֵן לְהַלָּז אֶת־הַמַּרְאָה׃ [17] וַיָּבֹא אֵצֶל עָמְדִי
וּבְבֹאוֹ נִבְעַתִּי וָאֶפְּלָה עַל־פָּנָי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הָבֵן בֶּן־אָדָם כִּי
לְעֶת־קֵץ הֶחָזוֹן׃

> When I, Daniel, had seen the *vision*, I tried to understand it. Then someone appeared standing before me, having the appearance of a man, [16] and I heard a human voice by the Ulai, calling, 'Gabriel, help this man understand the *vision [what he is seeing]*'. [17] So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I became frightened and fell prostrate. But he said to me, 'Understand, O mortal, that the *vision* is for the time of the end'.

This passage in Daniel indicates that the reception of a חָזוֹן involves not only seeing but also hearing. Often there is someone in the vision who explains what is seen and this seeing is a scene from the future. Such a situation is evident in what we call the visions of Micaiah (2 Kings 22) and Isaiah (Isaiah 6).

11. The entire context of this verse in Daniel 8 supports this point.

Much of what I have been arguing here about the meaning of חָזוֹן parallels what A. Jepsen says in his article on חָזָה in *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (1980: 280-90). I have treated with greater emphasis the more central role of the temple and the importance of seeing than Jepsen did in his article. My main divergence from Jepsen as well as from Kaiser, whom I cited earlier, is how this information associated with a חָזוֹן is to be used for determining meaning. Both Jepsen and Kaiser understand the use of חָזוֹן in Isa. 1.1 as providing insight into the intentions of the redactor associated with the latest stages of the editorial history of Isaiah. I am interested in the significance of this word in Isa. 1.1 as a term used by the author (scribal redactor) for the model reader encoding information for determining the intentionality of the text.

Reading חֲזוֹן יְשַׁעְיָהוּ

When I read the scroll of Isaiah as a חָזוֹן, some of the problems and solutions that have traditionally been associated with the book can be seen in a very different light. The writing can be read as a collection of Isaiah's חָזוֹן that he saw during the reign of four kings. What he saw concerned the future. That future concerned not only the immediate future of his own time (the eighth century BCE) but a more distant future involving Babylon and return from exile. Indeed, the narratives in the book portray Isaiah as waiting for the future events to come about. He and his 'disciples', like Habakkuk, will wait for Yahweh who is hiding his face (Isa. 8.17). Binding up the testimony and sealing the instruction with his disciples can be understood as a written חָזוֹן. And what he sees cannot be seen and understood by the people of his own time because it is about a more distant and unknown future (Isa. 6.9-12). To read Isaiah this way means that we need to reconsider our notion of the prophets as 'forthtellers'. They were foretellers and spoke about the future. However, for a prophet to be envisaged as foretelling the future rather than speaking forth in the present social situation makes it more difficult to fit what we are reading in that ancient text into the real world as we have constructed it. We question and discredit those who see the future before it happens. However, to get over that embarrassment by inventing a second prophet, Deutero-Isaiah, is to read Isaiah in such a way as to make the book fit our world. It is akin to the other nineteenth-century notion that Jesus walked on stones, not on water. A world where people walk on water is just as alien to me as a world where prophets can see the future two centuries later. However, to re-create the literature in order to minimize the embarrassment is to radically beat the text into a shape in an attempt to make it fit more comfortably in a world where חָזוֹן is an alien way of perceiving the real world.

Looking at Isaiah this way radically changes the perspective that first generated my interest in studying the prophets. At that initial stage of my study I

was drawn to the prophets who were described to me as *forthtellers* speaking out against the injustices of their social world. I thought, when I read them, that they would be soul mates, who were trying to radically reshape their world, as I was trying to support sweeping changes in my own world to ensure equal rights for Afro-Americans. Now when I peer into prophetic books, I see a more alien world than I originally thought I would encounter. Furthermore, I do not know what to make of it for my own present world where the reception of חָזוֹן makes no immediate sense to me. As an actual reader of the scroll of Isaiah, I feel as detached from the real world of the model reader as I did as a conversation partner with my fellow student so many years ago when he described having met and talked with his grandfather several hours after he died. In both situations a text (one written and one oral) was presented to a reader/hearer by an author/redactor as if it would non-problematically fit the reader's lived experience of how things happen. As the actual reader/hearer in both of these situations, I have difficulty comprehending the world presented to me.

Like Michael Stone, I think that 'vision' was understood in the world where the scroll of Isaiah emerged as something that actual prophets actually experienced. I don't think the model reader of this text would have had any problems grasping what was meant. But as an outsider to that world, vision is not something I can understand from an emic perspective. Because knowledge inscribed for the reader is assumed, it is probably impossible for me to fully comprehend a world where חָזוֹן is understood as a given.

The Temple and Prophetic Experience

From my reading of prophetic books it has become clear to me that the temple plays a much more central place in the prophetic reception of Yahweh's words than I had previously thought. Because Isaiah has access to the temple, he has access to חָזוֹן. In this sense I think that Isaiah is portrayed as a prophet in what would be perceived as a much more conventional manner for his time than either Jeremiah or Ezekiel (or even Amos who is speaking from outside a temple). Jeremiah and Ezekiel are assuming the non-conforming role of prophet in the extraordinary times in which Yahweh is about to, or has left, the temple. For that reason both Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak with confidence about the prophets who give 'lying or false vision (חָזוֹן)'. This חָזוֹן in which a prophet sees and hears Yahweh's deliberations about the future is not possible for a prophet, according to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, because it is the extraordinary time when Yahweh has abandoned the temple. See, for example, Jer. 14.14:

> And Yahweh said to me, 'The prophets are prophesying lies (שֶׁקֶר) in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision (חֲזוֹן שֶׁקֶר), worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds'.

In Ezek. 12.24, a passage about the temple as a rebellious house, Yahweh says that 'there shall no longer be any false vision (חֲזוֹן שָׁוְא) or flattering divination (מִקְסַם חָלָק) within the house of Israel'. See also Jer. 23.16; Ezek. 12.24; 13.16; 21.29, 34.

The non-conventionality of Amos as a prophet without access to the temple is evident from the account of his encounter with Amaziah (7.10-17). This narrative, which comes in the midst of Amos's 'visions' of natural imagery, like that of Jeremiah, highlights that Amos receives words from Yahweh, like Jeremiah, outside the temple from which he is barred.

From this perspective it is Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Amos who defy the conventions. Jeremiah is barred from entering the temple, Ezekiel is in Babylon where he does not have access to the temple, and Amos is in the northern kingdom where he is not welcome in the temple. None of them is in a position to receive חָזוֹן. For this reason the portrayal of the way they receive vision is bizarre given the protocols of their world. Jeremiah's, Ezekiel's, and Amos's claims as prophets would, given the normal prophetic activity, appear as lying words. They do not have access to the temple where a prophet receives חָזוֹן. To put their own case, they portray the more conventional prophets as lying and deceptive while at the same time making the astonishing claim that Yahweh has abandoned the temple leaving the prophets to speak only delusions of their own minds. As I have shown elsewhere,

> …the verbal form of the root **נבא** ('to prophesy') …is not evenly spread throughout the so-called Latter Prophets. It occurs once in Joel (3.1) and twice in Zechariah (13.3-4). In both cases it has to do with prophesying in the future and does not relate to the activity of either Joel or Zechariah. All the other references are found in three books: Jeremiah (over 40 times), Ezekiel (over 30 times) and Amos (six times), and each of these 'books' uses the verb to emphasize that Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Amos are prophesying. The verb **נבא** is not used in any other of the Latter Prophets. Only in these three prophetic books is the point emphasized that these three individuals are prophesying. In the other prophetic 'books' prophesying appears to be taken as a given.
>
> This concentration of the verb 'to prophesy' is significant for understanding the encoded information available to readers of the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Amos. It is significant that each of these superscriptions—and only these superscriptions—makes the point that the figure mentioned is associated with a group *other* than the prophets. Amos's origin was 'among the shepherds (בנקדים) from Tekoa' (1.1), Jeremiah was 'from the priests (הכהנים) who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin' (1.1), while Ezekiel was 'among the exiles' (בתוך־הגולה) and was 'the priest (הכהן), the son of Buzi' (1.1-3). In short, in each book the superscription emphasizes the non-conventional origin of the figure and each book itself repeatedly emphasizes that each of the individuals it refers to (Amos, Jeremiah or Ezekiel) is prophesying.[12]

12. See my *Reading the Latter Prophets: Toward a New Canonical Criticism* (2003: 147-48).

How Jeremiah and Amos See

The scroll of Jeremiah is about his דִּבְרִים; it is not about his חָזוֹן.

דִּבְרֵי יִרְמְיָהוּ בֶּן־חִלְקִיָּהוּ מִן־הַכֹּהֲנִים אֲשֶׁר בַּעֲנָתוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ
בִּנְיָמִן: אֲשֶׁר הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלָיו בִּימֵי יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ בֶן־אָמוֹן
מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה בִּשְׁלֹשׁ־עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לְמָלְכוֹ׃

The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of Yahweh came in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

The claim of this writing is that these words of Jeremiah are indeed Yahweh's words. The only mention of what we might call 'vision' occurs outside the temple in the mundane world.

The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see מָה־אַתָּה (רֹאֶה)?' And I said, 'I see (אֲנִי רֹאֶה) a branch of an almond tree'. Then Yahweh said to me, 'You have seen well (הֵיטַבְתָּ לִרְאוֹת), for I am watching over my word to perform it'. The word of Yahweh came to me a second time, saying, 'What do you see (מָה אַתָּה רֹאֶה)?' And I said, 'I see (אֲנִי רֹאֶה) a boiling pot, tilted away from the north'. Then Yahweh said to me: 'Out of the north disaster shall break out on all the inhabitants of the land'.

What Jeremiah sees appears to be quite ordinary. What is extraordinary is the claim that in this kind of seeing Yahweh is communicating to an individual who also maintains that he was destined to be a prophet before birth and that all the prophets who are reporting חָזוֹן are lying and deceitful. Perhaps this mundane way of seeing fits more easily into our contemporary understandings of prophecy as a challenge to those in authority than does חָזוֹן . But this world of Jeremiah is still a strange world. The certainty of his claim that he is speaking for God is troubling from a contemporary perspective because in our own world it is fundamentalist Christian and Islamic speakers who assert with Jeremiah-like confidence that they are speaking for God.

In a similar way the writing of Amos begins by identifying it as 'the words of Amos …which he saw' (דִּבְרֵי עָמוֹס … אֲשֶׁר חָזָה). When Amos speaks about receiving words from what he sees, the transmission of divine words is also from imagery in this world as in Amos 8.1:

He [Yahweh] said, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A basket of summer fruit'. Then Yahweh said to me, 'The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass them by'.

וַיֹּאמֶר מָה־אַתָּה רֹאֶה עָמוֹס וָאֹמַר כְּלוּב קָיִץ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה
אֵלַי בָּא הַקֵּץ אֶל־עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־אוֹסִיף עוֹד עֲבוֹר לוֹ׃

Visions of God

The phrase 'visions of God' (מַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים) is unique in Ezekiel (1.1; 8.3; 40.2). Indeed, the plural form מַרְאוֹת occurs in only two other places: in Gen. 46.2 'night *visions*' (בְּמַרְאֹת הַלָּיְלָה) and Exod. 38.8 בְּמַרְאֹת הַצֹּבְאֹת where it is normally translated as 'women's *mirrors*'.

What is Ezekiel seeing? The phrase מַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים in 8.3ff. refers to what Ezekiel is seeing in the temple in Jerusalem, not to seeing God; and in like manner the phrase מַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים in 40.2 refers to the activity Ezekiel sees associated with making measurements for the construction of the temple. In the light of these two passages, I think that the phrase in Ezek. 1.1 'I saw visions of God' (וְאֶרְאֶה מַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים) should be understood to mean that Ezekiel was seeing God's visions or the things God was seeing. In the same way that 'the vision of Isaiah' (חֲזוֹן יְשַׁעְיָהוּ) refers to something belonging to the experience of Isaiah so I think that 'visions of God' (מַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים) refers to something belonging to the experience of God. Ezekiel is peering at the world from God's perspective; he is perceiving what God sees. He is not seeing and hearing God like a prophet who is experiencing a חָזוֹן in the temple; but he is seeing what God is seeing by the river Chebar in Babylonia; Ezekiel is receiving a divine view of the world. What is described in Ezek. 1 is a description of how Yahweh moves in the heavens and over the earth. Ezekiel sees what God sees when he rides in the 'El-mobile'.

To understand the 'visions of God' in Ezekiel in this way helps explain how a prophet who is bound hand and foot can move around and see things in Jerusalem while being immobile in Babylon. In this sense Ezekiel is experiencing the world as a prophet far removed from the conventional. The claims he makes that he is seeing what God is seeing is even more extraordinary than claims made by Jeremiah. The scroll of Ezekiel goes to extraordinary lengths to persuade the reader by informing us over and over again that Ezekiel is indeed a prophet. As I pointed out above the verb נבא is used 30 times to identify that what Ezekiel is doing is indeed prophesying. The interesting question for which I have no answer is: Did the author/redactor of this text expect the model reader to accept Ezekiel's claims? This is clearly a claim about visionary experience that fits uneasily into our world of experience. Would the readers for whom the book of Ezekiel was intended have had a similar difficulty accepting Ezekiel's assertion that he had 'visions of God'?

Zechariah Sees at Night

As I read prophetic books, I understand that the temple was an essential place for the reception of Yahweh's words in a חזון. Our present prophetic corpus does not present us with much detail about this process because the bulk of

the material collected concerns the extraordinary times in which Yahweh was announcing his absence from the temple. In Jeremiah and Ezekiel we are confronted with prophets who announce God's departure. To support their claim both prophets appeal to ways of seeing Yahweh's words that are clearly different from Samuel's or Isaiah's ways of seeing. With Zechariah, the reader of the Latter Prophets has come full circle. Zechariah sees at night like those who receive חָזוֹן, and there is a messenger (מַלְאָךְ) present to explain what he is seeing. I have argued elsewhere (1999) that what Zechariah was seeing was the temple under construction and, in the course of that seeing, he, like Isaiah and Micaiah, sees and hears Yahweh in his deliberations (Zech. 3.1-10).

Conclusion

When the prophetic books refer to what we have broadly understood to be 'vision', they are relating to us a way of experiencing the world that is alien to us. Their world is one in which individuals see the future; they can see into God's world and his plans. This portrayal of prophets does not easily fit into our world where it is more comfortable to view prophets as forthtellers, proto-Protestant preachers. Prophetic seeing took place, according to my reading of the texts, as a matter of course and was associated with God speaking at night to prophets who recorded their words in written form for proclamation. This חָזוֹן was collected on scrolls such as the חָזוֹן of Isaiah (Isa. 1.1; 2 Chr. 32.32). The prophetic writings that are now part of the prophetic corpus, however, contain material that is far from routine, especially the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Amos. These writings portray the prophets engaged in seeing Yahweh in ways that I suspect was extraordinary even for the model readers for whom these texts were intended. God sees what Jeremiah and Amos are seeing, and Ezekiel sees what God is seeing. This world (both the ordinary and the extraordinary) is foreign and not easily accessible to many of us in the contemporary world. I sometimes seem to see and understand that world; but when I reflect on what I saw, the picture quickly escapes me.

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What kind of God would destroy Earth anyway? An ecojustice reading of the flood narrative

Norman Habel

Introduction

The covenant with creation, symbolized by the rainbow, is a popular text with ecotheologians. God makes a covenant with Noah, his sons and the animals that leave the ark alive. That covenant is summarized by the famous promise that a flood would never again cut off all flesh or destroy Earth.

Theologians discern in this promise an indication that God not only has a personal covenant relationship with human beings on Earth, but also with other living creatures and with creation as a whole, symbolized by Earth. This covenant is viewed as an indication of God's love for all creation. The covenant, according to Carol Robb, for example, is extended to embrace all species. The natural world is included in the history of salvation. This extended covenant is grounded in a theology that views people as 'a new humanity participating with God/ess as co-creators of the universe' (Robb and Casebolt 1991: 18-21).

Read from the perspective of an ecofeminist, however, the force of the covenant symbol may be challenged. Heather Eaton writes,

> The limitation I see is that the covenant tradition has not, thus far, precluded misogyny, so how can it prevent ecological destruction? (Eaton 1996: 85).

What happens when we take another critical step and read the message of the covenant with Noah not only in the context of the flood narrative but also from an ecojustice perspective?

The principles and process of the ecojustice hermeneutic are articulated in chapters 1 and 2 of *The Earth Bible*, Volume 1 (Habel 2000). For our purposes in this brief study let me focus first on the principle that the universe, Earth and all its components have intrinsic worth. The correlative of this principle is that Earth and its components are not created for utilitarian purposes—functioning simply to meet human needs or as divine experiments.

The foundations of an ecological hermeneutic were explored as part of a Consultation on Ecological Hermeneutics commencing in the 2004 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Antonio, Texas. The basic approach presented is one of suspicion, identification and retrieval. Reading from the perspective of Earth, the reader suspects that there is an anthropocen-

tric orientation to the text. To further appreciate the role of Earth in the text, the reader may identify with Earth, members of the Earth community or forces of nature that are present in the text, often as victims. Finally, the reader seeks to hear the voice of Earth or the Earth community and retrieve the suppressed story of the non-human world in the text (Habel 2004).

The problem we face when we reread the covenant with Noah is that God promises never again to destroy Earth and all life on Earth. What are the implications if we read the text from Earth's perspective? What if we identify with Earth as a character in the narrative? Is it reasonable for God to destroy Earth once, but never to do it again? It sounds like an oppressive spouse saying: I will never abuse you again, my darling, I promise!

Earth was not only abused, but spoiled, corrupted and destroyed (*shachat*). It would seem logical, therefore, to explore the context to ascertain, from Earth's perspective, the reason for this divine act of destruction.

Two Rationales for the Flood

a. *Sinful Humans*

Two discrete introductions to the flood narrative offer two quite different versions of the rationale for the flood. The first, in Genesis 6.5-8, depicts God surveying the behaviour of human beings on Earth. Their minds, it seems, have become obsessed with wickedness, or as the narrator says, 'every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually' (6.5). Understandably, this scenario causes God grief and anguish of heart. The Lord, continues the narrator, 'changes his mind (*nacham*) that he made humankind on the Earth'. The human experiment has failed!

The narrative has followed a logical and balanced progression to this point. The expected outcome of God's distress is that God would punish humankind, in this case by using a flood. There is, however, an unexpected development, a subversive dimension to the story that may alert the reader to consider another agenda. God decides not only to obliterate all people on Earth because of their evil ways, but also the animals, birds and reptiles created along with humankind. In this plan, usually attributed to the J source, human beings are obsessed with sin and must be cleared from their earthly home. But the rest of the Earth community is likewise condemned to oblivion.

Why? The animals and birds have done nothing wrong. The various living species of the wild are totally innocent. Yet they too will die. Nothing on Earth seems to have intrinsic worth in God's eyes. God seems to be obsessed with human beings and their ways. All living things are apparently disposable, part of the human experiment. The implied author seems to be asking, quite subtly, What kind of God is this?

The fact that representative species are finally rescued in the ark hardly exonerates God for killing all non-human life on Earth because the human experi-

ment was a failure. All fauna and flora are relegated to oblivion because God is ready to obliterate one species—human beings.

b. *Corrupt Ways*

In the second introduction (6.11-13), the portrayal of conditions is very different. In this scenario Earth is seen as 'corrupted' or 'spoiled' (*shachat*) and filled with 'violence' (*chamas*). According to this version all flesh has become corrupted, not just human flesh.

The corruption, however, is not caused by Earth itself, but by all flesh corrupting its way on Earth. In this version, other life than human life has also become corrupt.

The enigmatic expression employed here is 'corrupting its way'. In the wisdom language of Proverbs and Job, the way (*derek*) of something is its driving characteristic, that which makes it act according to its essential nature. The way of a hawk is to soar, spy and dive from the sky. The way of the ant is to store up food for the winter (Prov. 6.6-8). Strangely, according to this version, humans are not being genuinely human, hawks are not being hawks and ants are not being ants. The natural order of things has broken down; violence fills Earth.

The logical divine verdict, in the light of this chaotic situation, may be to destroy all flesh on Earth and start again by giving each creature a new 'way' that is not so easily corrupted. But once again, the forces of divine destruction reach beyond the culprits and include the innocent. God explicitly plans to destroy all these corrupted creatures 'along with Earth'. Earth, the home of all flesh, will be destroyed with its inhabitants. Earth is destined for destruction even though Earth has not been the cause of the disorder. Earth seems to have no intrinsic value; it can be annihilated willy-nilly with the rest of life.

We may well hear the voice of Earth asking why!

While the pre-flood worlds portrayed in each of these rationales are very different, they have one significant feature in common: the divine hand of destruction reaches beyond the guilty to embrace an innocent party. In the first scenario the innocent are the living creatures of Earth, in the second it is Earth itself that suffers unjustly. We may well ask what kind of God is being portrayed here? Is the narrator also asking this question?

Two Compensations after the Flood

a. *No more curses*

The gory and glorious details of the flood event itself are not our concern at this point. Our concern, as advocates of Earth, is to ascertain how God, after the flood, deals with what God has done to all life on Earth, and Earth itself. Do the innocent have a voice?

The flood itself, at least in the P version of the story, is a return to the pre-creation scene where Earth is submerged under the primal waters. The cosmic

waters above the sky descend and the subterranean waters of the deep return to submerge everything. Earth, as we know it, is destroyed and returned to its primal state—with the exception that in place of a hovering spirit on the face the deep there is a bobbing boat.

The closure of the flood narrative that corresponds to the first of the two introductory rationales is found in Gen. 8.20-22 (J version). Noah responds to his release from the ark with a grand and glorious sacrifice. He kills one of each clean animal and bird; all clean species, it seems, are represented on the altar of thanksgiving. God, in turn, responds to the overwhelming aroma of this event and starts talking to the divine self.

This response recalls the close of the flood narrative in the Gilgamesh epic where the famished gods gathered 'like flies' around the sacrifice to refresh themselves with animal aroma. The delighted Lord, according to the biblical narrator, says to the divine self, 'I will never again curse the ground because of humankind'. Why? 'Because the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth!' And the divine soliloquy continues, 'I will never again destroy every living creature as I have done' (8.21).

There are several significant confessions in this soliloquy. First and foremost, God confesses that God's cursing of the ground was, in fact, because of human sin. The ground was the innocent victim; the ground suffered at God's hands because of what humans did.

God cursed the ground; the curse was not confined to the human culprits. While the context suggests that the flood is the immediate curse in question, there seems to be an echo of Genesis 3.17 where it is specifically the ground (*adamah*) rather than Earth that is cursed because of Adam's sin. In effect, God is confessing that Earth, and—in particular the ground—has suffered innocently at God's hands. Or at least, the narrator places a confession of guilt in the mouth of God and thereby seems to be sympathizing with the ground/Earth.

Following the lead of Shirley Wurst, it is possible to discern in the Genesis 3.17 reference an allusion to Earth as a mother willing to assume the curse on behalf of her children:

> The ground-mother can see another way—but it has a cost for her. This generous 'Earth' mother, who acted with God to produce humans, now acts to protect their precious creation. The *'adamah* asks to take the brunt of the curse on herself, and diminishes the ripples by grounding the curse in herself. God agrees. The ground, like other mothers in Genesis, wears the curse of the children's destructive behaviour (Wurst 2000: 100).

In this version of the flood narrative, the curse of the ground does not save the creatures she has spawned. All but a few drown in the flood. God has cursed the mother with the children.

A divine retraction follows. God is willing to retract the curse on Earth. Was it a mistake? The confession is not explicitly an admission that Earth was innocent, although indirectly that seems to be implied. God promises that the

ground will not suffer unwarranted curses at God's hands again. Or in the language of the abusive spouse: I promise I will not curse you again, my darling.

The confession, however, has another twist. God recognizes that God is faced with an apparently irreconcilable problem. Humans are obsessive creatures—they love to sin. If God were to perpetuate his curse policy, Earth would be endlessly under threat because humans are always bent on evil. Earth gets a reprieve, a kind of backhanded declaration of innocence.

The form of this reprieve is a promise that the seasons of the year will not be disrupted by curses like the flood. The cycles of life can continue with the cycle of the seasons. The animals also get a reprieve. God promises that they too will never again be the innocent victims of a flood at God's hands.

God, in this version, clearly comes to the realization that the human experiment needs to be modified. God must take into account the human propensity to sin. Does God really say sorry to Earth, the ground and all living creatures for the curses they suffered unfairly? Does God hear the cries of the innocent calling from beneath the flood waters—including the voice of Earth? What kind of God is portrayed here? The cries of the innocent rise from the waters of the flood. Where is God's compassion?

If we allow for the suppressed voice of Earth to be heard, remembering that Earth mediated the innocent voice of Abel's blood (Gen 4.10), what kind of cry might we discern? I suggest there are two options that reflect the sin–judgement–grace orientation of the so-called Jahwist version:

> (a) As the mother and co-creator of humans and the Earth community, I, Earth, will continue to take care of my own. I will be their custodian and suffer with them at God's hands, even if I have no part in the wrongs that provoke God to action. I will cry out against all injustice to me or the creatures in my care.
>
> (b) As a victim of God's unjust curses, I must warn all creation. The God of the flood narrative has been willing to curse innocent parts of creation as if they were worthless objects. I ask that God live up to God's promise never to curse innocent parts of creation again. I leave it to you to decide whether God kept that promise in the course of Israel's history.

b. *No more corrupting*

The second conclusion to the Flood narrative has a decidedly different focus. The emphasis is on corruption rather than curses, the human role rather than the natural order.

The narrator begins the second closure by taking us back to the mandate to dominate based on the *imago Dei* of Genesis 1.26-28. That mandate includes three main features: to multiply as human beings, to rule over living creatures and to subdue Earth. After the flood the mandate is repeated with modifications. Humans are to continue multiplying and filling Earth. Their relationship with living creatures, however, changes. All living creatures will now be terrified of their human overlords. Listen to the edict:

> The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, and on everything that creeps on the ground and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered (9.2).

Increasing the alienation between humans and other living creatures seems decidedly unfair. Why should these creatures suffer additional anxiety in their relationship with humans? Humans were the primary source of the corruption of life that led to the flood. Yet, in the wake of the flood, the relative worth and standing of non-human creatures has dropped even further. From the perspective of the wider Earth community this mandate seems, once more, to be an unjust decree of God. The hierarchy of relationships established in Genesis 1 now becomes entrenched. God is really concerned about humans rather than non-human creatures. The mandate to dominate from Genesis 1 is given a final seal of approval, or so it seems.

The most widely hailed divine pronouncement of the post-flood scenario is, of course, the promise of God to establish a covenant. There is a significant progression in the apparently repetitive announcement of this covenant. First, God promises a covenant with Noah's family, his descendants and all living creatures. Second, God incorporates in this covenant a promise that God will never again destroy all life with a flood nor will there be a flood to destroy Earth. Third, a rainbow is introduced as a sign of this covenant that is now extended to 'a covenant between me and Earth'. And finally, God promises to use the rainbow as a sign to remember his covenant never to send another flood to destroy all flesh. Or in the words of our penitent spouse: Look, my darling, I now have something to remind me not to abuse you again.

A key term throughout this version of the flood narrative is the verb *shachat.* This verb is the same verb that appears in the opening of this version. The Earth was declared corrupt (*shachat*) because all flesh had corrupted (*shachat*) their ways on Earth. God then does the same thing that all flesh has done. All flesh has corrupted its ways on Earth, so God corrupts (9.11) all flesh and Earth. God completes the corruption process.

Is this a case of the punishment fitting the crime or something else? Patrick Miller, discussing this verb, says,

> God brings upon all flesh the appropriate punishment. Those who spoil and ruin the way God intends them to go shall be spoiled and ruined… The story of the flood is thus encapsulated in the word *shachat* and indeed all that it is capable of meaning. By it the narrator conveys the terrible and widespread behavior of the human community. Ezekiel uses the same word to speak of the harlotry of Oholibah in Ezek. 23.11… But for the narrator the same verb serves to indicate the divine response and to make the reader and hearer immediately aware of why it is that God punishes all flesh. Divine justice is rendered appropriately for the offence (Miller 1978: 34).

Miller quite rightly focuses on the thematic force of this verb. It seems beneath God, however, to punish humans and all of life with the very corruption that

God condemns. God, it seems, stoops to a human level of corruption! What Miller omits, quite understandably 25 years ago, is that God admits corrupting Earth itself, not only all flesh on Earth. Earth has been corrupted by human violence, not by its own ways. Why then should God go even further and corrupt Earth with the forces of a primordial flood? Why is Earth, the innocent party, treated so badly by God? Surely, we hear Earth asking why!

The only compensation for Earth is a promise that God will never again corrupt Earth, a promise that embraces a divine admission that God was the culprit. As with the previous ending of the flood narrative, the narrator does not actually have God admit that Earth was innocent and the divine act of corruption was unjust. God's generous covenant with all creation seems to function as a way of exonerating God for God's less than generous treatment of Earth.

If, however, we again allow the suppressed voice of Earth to be heard, what kind of cry might be audible at the close of this version of the flood narrative? I suggest the following is consistent with the perspective of this narrative:

> (a) It is painful to experience being corrupted and spoiled by human violence. It is even more painful to get the same treatment from God. I implore God to find ways to redress wrongs that do not involve such massive collateral damage. Why should all creation be corrupted by God because humans have become corrupt?
>
> (b) I am happy to provide a rainbow to keep reminding God of God's covenant with me and all creatures. This covenant is only right; all creation has intrinsic worth and should be protected by God. I certainly do not want to be destroyed again. Then again, why should God need a rainbow as a reminder not to destroy something God supposedly loves?

Conclusion

From the perspective of Earth, what kind of deity is depicted in the flood narrative? In the first version God seems to have genuine feelings for humans and life on Earth. But with the failure of the human experiment this deity, despite some inner anguish, is ready to start all over again by destroying all life. After the flood, moved by Noah's response, this deity reverses his decision, retracts the curse and promises an unbroken life cycle.

In the second version, the deity is much more distant and ready to complete the corruption of all creation begun by humanity. One righteous human provides him with a justification to rescue a few humans and other species. After the flood, this deity reinforces the hierarchical structure of creation and promises never to go all the way and corrupt all creation again. With this promise, the deity seems to compensate for his overreaction in destroying all of Earth.

From the perspective of an innocent Earth, neither portrayal seems to be happy—neither version upholds the intrinsic value of Earth.

When we identify with Earth as a key character is this story we realize we are identifying with an innocent victim. And we cannot but wonder: What kind of God is this?

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Afterwords

Personal Reflections

Christopher Lind

I worked with David Jobling for 17 years, first as a member of the same St Andrew's College faculty, then as his supervisor in my role as College President, always as a colleague. I knew him as an Anglican, then as a United Church member, married to a Lutheran. I knew him as a British ex-pat, former American resident and also as a Canadian.

When I studied for my first theological degree thirty years ago, biblical study was dominated by the historical–critical school of interpretation. My academic field is Christian Social Ethics and I found this approach of little interest. I knew it was necessary but I experienced it as boring. In my time working with David I re-learned how to study the Bible. I learned to value and study the whole Bible, not just the newer testament and I learned literary and postmodern approaches to it. I learned to trust my instincts when reading and I learned to be suspicious of how the lectionary was created and what parts were left out. Indeed, one of David's accomplishments was to re-write the lectionary for seminary chapel use. He preferred whole stories to the modern fashion of thematically linked snippets. He was especially attracted to sections that were not uplifting. In justifying the inclusion of the whole of chapters 4, 5 and 6 from the prophet Jeremiah, David wrote 'It is perhaps the greatest poetry in the Bible, but the unrelieved doom is harrowing'!

David was always searching for new insights into Scripture and his approach to the text didn't disappoint. In 1996 he explained his approach to the new lectionary this way:

> To what shall I liken the Common Lectionary? It is like a hostess arranging her tables, who puts together old friends who are comfortable with each other, but have run out of new things to say to each other.
>
> But the St Andrew's Lectionary is like a hostess who brings together people not well known to each other, risking embarrassment in the hope that new and exciting conversations will happen.[1]

1. The sermons from which I quote are unpublished. I have identified them only by date. I thank Esther Cherland for providing me access to them through surreptitious means!

I watched as students became invested in this kind of biblical study and a spark turned into a flame of intellectual inquiry.

In order to reach that stage of combustion, however, students had many obstacles to overcome. David adopted a traditional lecturing style in his introductory courses and many students were intimidated by his terse comments and lack of classroom affect. I sometimes thought of his classroom style as borrowing from classical Greek dramas. It was as if he were wearing a mask that exaggerated Divine judgment. By contrast, when I looked at him from the back, he projected the image of a little boy. This was especially true on a day when he had just had his hair cut.

The reference to David as a little boy is no accidental allusion. It reflects his own self-revelation. During this period at St Andrew's it was customary to have daily worship in the College Chapel during the term. All students and faculty would take turns leading worship and preaching, including David. His sermons were pithy, provocative and revealing. He often used examples from his childhood to illustrate a point or set a scene. In November 1993, to begin a reflection on Isaiah 40.1-2, he wrote:

> May 8, 1945, and a little boy of about 3 and 3/4 is trying to figure out what is going on. What is going on is V.E. Day, Victory in Europe, and the celebration of that day in Britain—people pouring out into the streets, singing and dancing, writing slogans on the walls, living it up in every way. I expect you know who the little boy was.
>
> That day still stands out as the most conspicuous example in my life of a day when the world changed for the better, and everyone knew that it had. 'Comfort my people! Speak to Jerusalem, cry to her, that she has served her term'. People comforted *me* that day, explained to me as well as they could that I, along with them, had served my term. Served my term of being dragged out of bed during the night, to rush for shelter from sudden death that dropped from the sky. Served my term of having no father that I had ever met.
>
> Even so obvious a historical moment as that one did not have its full effect all at once. The bombs no longer fell; we could live at home, instead of being evacuated to a strange place. But my father did not return for several more months, and I struggled to understand the delay. Even when he did come back, the postwar world was far from perfect, with food rationing, ill-equipped schools, shortages of more or less everything. Reality did not live up to the promise of V.E. Day. Still, whenever anyone thought of the world as it had been before that day, they thanked God for it—even people who otherwise thought little about God.

David was a war baby and that meant he and his father didn't meet until he was almost four. This had a profound effect on him which I think he continues to try and understand.

In 1987 David preached on Genesis 23, the part that deals with the death of Abraham's wife Sarah. To begin the sermon David opened another personal door:

> My grandmother, my mother's mother, was called Sarah. Along with two other women, my mother and an aunt, she brought me up for the first four years of my life, when there were no men around. When I was fourteen, she died, at just half the age of biblical Sarah; not an old woman, but worn out. She was the first person I ever saw dead.

The Bible has many biographies within its stories and David's background in literary criticism encouraged his notion of the Bible as biography. However, in his book on 1 Samuel, David not only unfolds the biography of the biblical King David and the biography of the nation of Israel, he also organizes the book as an autobiography. In his extraordinary introduction to that book, he declares his realization that he had organized the contents in a way that mirrored his own intellectual development, moving from structuralism to feminism to poststructural and ideological criticism through the new historicism to psychoanalytic readings of the Bible. It is this last approach that gives legitimacy to the self-revelations I know to be part of his preaching and his everyday style (though he is slightly less forthcoming about the psychological connections between the biblical King David and the biblical scholar David). In that introduction he wrote:

> The need for professional readers of the Bible to be self-analytic in our work is made the more urgent by the enormous impact the Bible has on our culture, its immense potential for good or ill. If I remain unconscious of my motivation I am the more likely to do foolish and even dangerous things with the Bible (Jobling 1998: 13).

In my observation, David's biblical research was often driven by the dynamics of his classroom. Most but not all (*pace* Gail) students in our classes were studying for ordained ministry. They were training to use the Bible in public worship and as a pastoral resource. But many of our students were wary of the Bible. They were afraid of its power because it had been used to oppress and even abuse them. As David has written, his approach was to enable them to regain power *over the Bible* so they could find power *in the Bible* for their ministerial work. David's ideological criticism of the Bible was a critical approach to power and how it was used but the Bible was not the only text he criticized. In a sermon from 1997 David said the following:

> Sometimes, I hear from the pulpit something like this: 'I'm not a scholar, but the scholars say thus and so'. I hear it from trained ministers, people I have trained. I don't believe that you can ever get power right if you start from a place like that. Your job is to discern the right word and to speak it with authority. But to do so knowing that even if you get it right this week, there is no guarantee that you will next week. To be ready if next week the right word is spoken by someone unexpected, someone perhaps who seems quite disempowered, to be ready to discern that word and use its power.

I agree with David on this point, even if I have heard him say while preaching 'I'm not really a preacher; I'm a professor and I'm used to giving lectures'!

Some people who only know David Jobling from academic conferences on biblical literature may be surprised to hear that his closest working colleagues consider him, and he considers himself, to be a theologian. He was and continues to be concerned about sin and grace, hope and despair, forgiveness and salvation. That may not come across in his essays but it came across in faculty discussions and it comes across in the sermons from which I have been quoting.

In 1988, ten years before he published his book on 1 Samuel, he preached a sermon to a United Church Congregation in Calgary on 1 Samuel 3.1-18. In that sermon he was trying to justify reading beyond the lectionary ending which closes the story with Samuel saying to Yahweh 'Speak, for your servant is listening'. He acknowledged that what follows is the recognition by Eli that he will be surpassed by Samuel and so the story does not seem hopeful. Yet David's *theological* interpretation is as follows:

> Must we, then, give up the familiar, likable story for one of doom and gloom? That is not the conclusion I would draw. This is a positive story, a story of hope, though it passes through negativity and despair. To try to have the hope without the despair is not an authentic response to the Bible; the authentic response is to pass through despair to hope.

In another sermon from 1992 he discusses Martin Luther's idea (from Zechariah through Paul) that Christians are simultaneously righteous and sinners. At that time he said:

> We are sinners, as our ancestors were. As individuals, but also as churches and as nations, we all look back on past follies and past evils, our own and our ancestors', and we perceive their consequences, reaching into the present. We want to do better. Sometimes we succeed and sometimes we don't, but being what we are we will not get away from follies and evils, as long as we live, as long as humanity lives.
>
> But we are at the same time righteous, which means *radically forgiven*. Which means, God works for our future in ways that don't depend on our past. This is a mystery—how can we imagine a God who lets us suffer the consequences of our past, but at the same time works *for* us to set a limit to the consequences of our past, to give us ever new beginnings? It is a mystery, but this much we can say: the way into God's future is not through *forgetting* the past. It is through remembering, finding ways of taking up the past, with all its pain and all its hard-learned lessons, into the fabric of who we are and who we will be…
>
> Let me just say that I speak to you in this way conscious of a personal past that includes a divorce and similar experiences that are hard to come to terms with; conscious of being part of a church which is divided, by things like the ordination of self-declared homosexuals; conscious of being part of a nation which is having to change the way it looks at its history—English and French, white and native—and is finding this hard to do. In the face of all this, do I, do you, believe that in *everything*—past, present and future—God is working for good alongside those who love God?

These are the words and thoughts of a theologian. They are also the reflections of a person of deep faith—perhaps another surprise? Do readers who follow his trenchant essays, making use of all the latest in postmodern criticism regardless of their source, realize that David Jobling was one of the most faithful faculty members of the Seminary Chapel congregation? Do they realize that he faithfully led prayers, preached and coordinated services in the best Protestant tradition? Do they realize he was an evangelical convert in his youth? Do they realize that the key biblical figure for him was not King David but Saint Paul? In a 1997 sermon he said the following:

> Along with others, I have become distanced from Paul somewhat. By issues of feminism, issues of Christology, other issues. But I can never forget that it was with Paul that my own faith began. Not with the gospels that we seem to prefer now. Not with the Jewish Bible to which my faith is now more attuned. It was Paul who reached over the centuries and claimed me. And I have never lost my love for him, even when he gets me mad.
>
> What is it that I love? Most of all, I think, that with Paul, what you see is what you get. He has no ability to conceal himself, to cover his tracks. His unconscious seems very near the surface. Whether his argument is working well or not, he pushes it stubbornly through, you see all the nuts and bolts. You see the *process* of working out theological problems which literally no one has ever thought of before. You see him inventing your faith.

In the latter paragraph I think there is a second kind of self-revelation going on. Not only is he declaring his love for St Paul, the words he uses to describe Paul could be used to describe David. He does not conceal himself, except to himself. His unconscious is very near the surface. He is stubborn in his arguments. You see his processes and his resolutions of problems are often unique. For others who watch this process, he sometimes invents their faith.

David is a person attracted to contradictions and these contradictions are precisely what he tries to attune himself to in his reading of biblical texts for the new insights they might generate, for what might be revealed in the cracks. He is also a person of contradictions. He is a male feminist biblical scholar raised by women and criticized by women. He is an intimidating intellectual with a very dry sense of humour. He is a literary critic who undertakes imaginative reconstructions of biblical stories and who would often dress in women's clothes as part of a seminary satire in the best English music hall tradition. He is a traditional pedagogue who helped pioneer a new psychoanalytic method for using biblical texts in pastoral ministry case studies that help ministers deepen their self-understanding.

When I first met David Jobling he wasn't very interested in publishing books because he said he didn't believe in the idea of 'the book'. Since then, as part of the Bible and Culture Collective, he helped write several books, *The Postmodern Bible* and the *Postmodern Bible Reader*, that have redefined the field.

As I think back on those 17 years I give thanks to a merciful and compassionate God for the opportunity to work with David Jobling, to worship with him and to learn with him.

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A Personal Tribute to David Jobling, Fearless Frontiersman

Norman K. Gottwald

I first became aware of David Jobling in the 1970s through some of his earliest articles published in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* (1978b, 1979) and *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1976). At the time I perceived an incisive mind and a felicitous writing style but my interest was not awakened, principally because I was engrossed in social-critical methods while David was focused on literary-critical methods. By the early 1980s, however, it became ever clearer that the two types of biblical criticism need not be sworn enemies or alienated strangers but just might have something to contribute to one another - although it was far from evident what those contributions might be!

Having just published *The Tribes of Yahweh* (1979), I felt free to play 'catch-up' in the field of literary criticism. Structuralism in literary criticism immediately connected in my mind with structuralism as practiced in the social sciences. Not only did I pore over writings of the secular literary critics but I quickly fastened on David Jobling as one of the relatively few scholars who were applying structuralism in biblical studies. Moreover, whereas the work of some structuralists was steeped in unexplained jargon, David made his method clear enough that I could understand most of what he had to say in the six structural studies published in volumes I and II of *The Sense of Biblical Narrative (*1978, 1986*)*. I was particularly struck by his application of Greimas's actantial model to Genesis 2–3. This application showed that the 'no-win/double-bind' into which both God and the human couple are locked is a feature of the 'deep structure' of the story that no amount of exegetical wizardry can erase. It was fascinating to see how this structural analysis in literary terms came to much the same conclusion as did the exegesis cast in theological terms. The enigmas of the latter were the age-old debates over the rubrics of divine power and justice, on the one hand, and human freedom and rebellion, on the other. In my judgment the structural analysis made it clear that those theological debates can never be concluded on the basis of a text that is fundamentally self-contradictory as to the intentions of the deity and the responses of the human couple.

In the same study, David also engages in dialogue with Phyllis Trible's feminist exegesis of the garden story, indicative that early on in his teaching career the struggle for ordination of women in his denomination engaged him and subsequently honed his eye for social injustice in its many forms. In fact, his affin-

ity with liberation theologies of various stripes runs throughout the corpus of his work in pieces such as 'Writing the Wrongs of the World' (1990) and 'Feminism and "Mode of Production" in Ancient Israel' (1991a) and reaches its acme in his major study *1 Samuel* (1998).

By this time I was meeting and talking with David in the various SBL working groups in which we both took an interest, namely, the sections on Structuralism/Semiotics, on Narrative Research, and on Ideological Criticism. I was pleased to find him as deliberative in person as he was in writing. Interacting with David and other literary critics such as Robert Culley, Robert Polzin and Daniel Patte gave me courage to attempt a reading of the 'Marvel or Problem Resolution Stories in the Elijah–Elisha Narratives' making use of Vladimir Propp's analytic method in *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968). This paper was presented in a graduate seminar in 1975 but not published until 1993. Articles, unlike books, frequently do not engender responses. Thus, to date my weaknesses in this foray into literary criticism have not been challenged.

A defining moment in my relationship with David was his critical assessment of my textbook, *The Hebrew Bible–A Socio-Literary Introduction* published in 1985 which appeared within a year of the book's publication. In 'Sociological and Literary Approaches to the Hebrew Bible: How Shall the Twain Meet?' (1987), David was exceedingly generous in applauding my efforts to interface the social and literary methods, considering that few scholars were making such efforts. His major criticism was that regrettably I had written the text in the wrong chronological sequence, that is, from the beginning to the end of biblical Israel's history! I should, he said, have started with the postexilic age when the canon was created and worked backward through the monarchy to premonarchic Israel. His rationale for this approach was that we knew so much more about postexilic Israel than we did about premonarchic Israel. So he concluded, because my social-critical method had more to work with in the postexilic age, that was the best place to start my inquiry, proceeding as it were from the better known to the lesser known. And, true to form, that is precisely the way in which David used my text in his classes, working 'backwards' or 'upstream'. David could not have known at the time—and I am not sure that I have ever told him—that I had thought long and hard about organizing *The Hebrew Bible* in precisely the way he preferred. One might say that I 'chickened out' because I was not sure that instructors and students would be able to adjust to such an 'unorthodox' organization. Even so, I have sometimes followed David's example in teaching from my text by starting with postexilic canonization. In my more recent *The Politics of Ancient Israel* (2001), I have taken David's counsel to heart by organizing much of my argument by reading political Israel backwards.

What, you may ask, was 'defining' about that moment? To me it meant that, though in the main following different methods, we were 'on the same page' in discerning how Israel's social and literary histories should be approached.

Supportive but gently chiding, David has given me many insights which frequently emerge as questions that might not otherwise have occurred to me. David was definitely one who gave me courage to fashion *The Hebrew Bible* so that it attempted to absorb and process structural and poststructural methods as major 'new' contributors to a field long dominated by historical-critical methods. In later years, I have often returned to David's compelling studies on Solomon (1991b) and Psalm 72 (1992). Although principally cast in a poststructual mode, these studies make crucial use of social-critical methods and send off exegetical sparks as they demonstrate that the two sets of methodologies can work together compatibly, even when they do not altogether converge and, by the nature of the case, probably never will with complete satisfaction. In the case of these two studies, it is evident that a social-critical reading of monarchic Israel serves to echo and corroborate David's literary readings. In return, David has been a close reader of my work, appropriating it accurately while often setting it in new contexts arising from his literary work and from his reading of the social world in which we live. I was delighted to have David as editor-in-chief of *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis*: *Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday* (1991) and took great pleasure in his exciting essay in *Tracking the Tribes of Yahweh: On the Trail of a Classic* (2000), the volume that more or less coincided with the twentieth anniversary reprint of *The Tribes of Yahweh* (1999).

A second memorable engagement with David came in 1987, when he invited me to co-lead a week-long seminar on the theme of 'The Bible and Prairie Canada'. Participants included some faculty and students in their last year of training after spending a year off campus in field assignments. The main thing I recall from that week was the energy and exuberance of the students as we interfaced the social realities of ancient Israel and contemporary Canada. Of course I had a lot to learn about life in prairie Canada. One of my learnings at the start of the week was an arranged visit to an outlying small town where I attended church and afterward was able to eat and talk at length with two farming couples. I learned a great deal, not only about the positive side of farming in Saskatchewan, but also about the real plight of farmers. Our announced topic was whether the Bible had anything to do with their social and political outlook. One couple was confident that it did and the other couple was just as certain that there was little connection, even though they were confirmed churchgoers. I experienced this difference of outlook as a telling lesson about how important it is to try 'to walk in the shoes' of aggrieved folk before we pontificate about what they should do or not do and how we should 'help' them.

This incident was particularly important because the field experience of the theological students I was about to co-teach had been scattered over the vast, seemingly endless, Canadian prairie, working for the most part with people of the sort I had fellowship with on the weekend before the seminar.. The students I was addressing had directly experienced a year's worth of service such

as I had tried to savor in one brief visit but that was one more immersion than I often get in the local cultures where I speak. It has mainly been venues abroad (such as South Africa, Latin America, Korea and New Zealand) that make a point of giving me at least some immersion in local culture. It makes me ponder how little familiar we are likely to be with the life conditions of those we are addressing. There seems to be a wide-spread assumption that 'one message fits all', a notion that for me was drastically subverted by my time in Saskatchewan and subsequent visits to the lands mentioned above.

One of the significant ways in which David has influenced biblical studies is in his editorship of the highly regarded journal *Semeia: An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism,* a position he has held with distinction from 1998 to the present (the journal is henceforth to be titled *Semeia Studies*). Since 1974, this journal has pioneered in publishing 'far out' articles in the several 'new' methodologies that have emerged in biblical studies. The editor of this journal needs to be practiced in one or more of the 'new' methodologies and, above all, s/he needs to be open to publishing solidly argued articles with which s/he may frequently disagree. I was one editorial board member who strenuously argued for David as the next general editor of *Semeia.* David has admirably fulfilled this role for eight years, happily presiding over an editorial board whose members, like himself, are working in unconventional ways at the very forefront of biblical studies. In addition to single articles in *Semeia*, he has co-edited two volumes of the journal. David was also one of ten members of the Bible and Culture collective that produced *The Postmodern Bible* (1995), an innovative collaboration of Hebrew Bible and New Testament scholars, in which the primary methodological currents in biblical studies are both surveyed and critically assessed. So closely did the authors work together, each of them reviewing all of the final chapters, that in the end they chose not to claim individual credit for the parts of the book for which they had prepared a first draft. Nonetheless, I think it is possible to detect David's hand in several parts of the book.

I want to conclude with David's 1998 book *1 Samuel*. I have to say at the start that it is a wonderful culmination of David's work to date. Even if he writes nothing more (highly unlikely), this volume represents a high water mark in his long process of intellectual and professional maturation. Absent a subtitle, I naively thought that he had written a commentary on 1 Samuel. Before I could obtain a copy that is certainly what I expected, even though I had trouble picturing David conforming to the obligatory strictures of the commentary format, plodding verse-by-verse through the biblical text. But it is definitely not at all a commentary in the accepted sense. Actually it is so much its own concoction that it is difficult to assign it to a particular genre. I note that some reviewers have simply not known what to make of this 'genre-exploding' work. I have a hunch as to how we might regard *1 Samuel* as a literary production, but first let me say a bit more about the book for the benefit of readers who have yet to grapple with it.

I Samuel is a surprising potpourri of genres that are effectively joined and animated with David's exegetical and theoretical zest. It is both an intellectual autobiography and a series of penetrating probes, at points virtually meditations, on the way crucial matters of class, gender, and race emerge in 1 Samuel and how those social markers present themselves, both as they functioned in ancient Israel and as they presently perform in our social environment. I am inclined to describe the book as a treatise on social ethics in memoir form, entailing both the ethics of biblical writers and the ethics of biblical readers. As David circles round and round the biblical text, rather like a determined hunter stalking his prey, teasing out its issues and import from one angle after another, he lures the reader to step into the interpretive 'spaces' of the biblical text and of his own text. He wants his own strong readings to be answered by readings just as strong as we, his respondents, can muster. David appropriately entitles his introduction, 'Samuel's book, My Book, Me, and You'. Here is a quote that neatly catches up the author's distinctive trademark of gentle passion:

> I offer my readings passionately because I feel them passionately but at the same time I want them to stimulate your readings, which will be different. I often leave my readings unfinished, or barely sketch possible alternatives to them, so that there will be work for you to do. Can these two aims be brought together? How can I passionately feel the rightness of my readings and yet leave you the same freedom that I claim for myself? It is a paradox. It is the paradox of all teaching (1998: 27).

David, we are eagerly awaiting *I Samuel*'s successor which, provided an editor does not persuade you to change the title, will be called *No King in Israel: Poststructural Essays on the Bible.* We have good reason to believe that, no matter what form it takes, the forthcoming book will be working the frontiers in precisely the manner you placed yourself amid a generation of pioneers who '*…took to the hill country, not knowing if we would survive there, not sure about our neighbors there. I have a fantasy of the different issues of* Semeia *as so many separate settlements in that hill country…*' (2000: 15). Now that is the voice of an untamable frontiersman!

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