The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible

edited by
J. Cheryl Exum
and David J.A. Clines

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ANVAO	Avhandlinger utgitt av det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BR	*Biblical Research*
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZAW	Beihefte zur *ZAW*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Studies
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
IOSOT	International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
KHAT	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LD	Lectio divina
NCB	New Century Bible
NKZ	*Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*
PMLA	Proceedings of the Modern Language Association
RB	*Revue biblique*
RSR	*Recherches de science religieuse*
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*

VTSup	*Vetus Testamentum*, Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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THE NEW LITERARY CRITICISM

David J.A. Clines and J. Cheryl Exum

Literary criticism, or what German biblical scholarship termed *Literarkritik*, has featured prominently in scholarship on the Hebrew Bible since the rise of the historical-critical method in the early nineteenth century. This literary criticism of the Bible had as its goal—since it was foundational for *historical*-critical study—the reconstruction of the *history* of the biblical literature. Its method was to analyse the stylistic and (to some extent) the ideological differences among the various writings of the Hebrew Bible—and especially *within* books like Genesis and Kings—in order to separate earlier from later, simpler from more elaborated, elements in the text. The magisterial four-document theory of the sources of the Pentateuch given classic formulation by Julius Wellhausen, and the still regnant hypothesis of a Deuteronomistic edition of the books of Joshua to 2 Kings proposed by Martin Noth, are showcases of the methods and results of traditional literary criticism.

The subject matter of this volume, the 'new' literary criticism of the Hebrew Bible, whatever form it takes, has almost nothing in common with that *Literarkritik*. It is not a historical discipline, but a strictly literary one, foregrounding the textuality of the biblical literature. Even when it occupies itself with historical dimensions of the texts—their origin or their reception—its primary concern is the text as an object, a product, not as a window upon historical actuality.

But exactly what is meant by the 'new' literary criticism? How new is 'new' depends upon how traditional a vantage point one takes up to begin with. To those still preoccupied with historical criticism (and they remain the majority in biblical studies), any focus on the text as a unitary object—any consideration, that is,

of its style, its rhetoric or its structure—counts as a new tendency. But to those engaged in the newest of the 'new' literary criticisms—feminist, Marxist, reader-response, deconstructionist and the like—even stylistics, rhetorical criticism and structuralism and other formalist criticisms are no longer 'new'; they are, by some reckonings, already *passé*.

Thus, in conceiving this volume, we had to decide what would count as 'new' among literary criticisms. Others might define it differently, but, for us, 'the new literary criticism' signifies all the criticisms that are post-structuralist. That is what we think is 'new' in our discipline: the theoretical approaches that have come into the limelight in literary studies generally in the 70s and 80s, and that can be expected to influence the way we read the Hebrew Bible in the present decade. It is not surprising, nor even especially unfortunate, that Hebrew Bible studies should adopt the methods of general literary criticism only a decade or two after they are developed outside our own discipline. But what is certain is that by the end of this decade approaches that may now present some degree of novelty or even shock value to traditional biblical critics will be incorporated into the daily practice of mainstream scholars (just as the language and interests of the formalist rhetorical critics and narratologists of the 60s and 70s have become part of the common professional stock in trade).

The new literary methods have already started to make their mark in biblical studies, and the editors of this volume believe that the time is ripe to present to the discipline a sampler of the kind of work that they themselves take pleasure in and believe holds promise of an upsurge of intellectual creativity in the field.

What, then, are the characteristics of the new literary criticism as it has been applied to the Hebrew Bible? If the essays in this volume can be regarded as representative—and the editors certainly think they can—the first thing that strikes one is how eclectic the new literary criticism is. While some of the essays here can be characterized as one thing rather than another, 'feminist' perhaps, or 'psychoanalytic', most of them move freely from one critical approach to another, combining materialist with reader-response criticism, psychoanalytic with ideological

criticism, and so on. In their diversity, these essays reflect the multidisciplinary nature of these new criticisms, their resistance to tidy classification (for example, in positing a woman reader, feminist criticism is also reader-response criticism, and in reading against the grain, it works like deconstruction). The experimental quality of these essays also suggests that what biblical study needs at this moment is not so much systematization as a spirit of exploration and methodological adventurousness, where every new way of looking at our familiar texts is to be eagerly seized upon and tested for all it is worth.

The second noticeable feature is that, in this interweaving of methods, there appears a spirit of goodwill, cooperation even. In general literary criticism, the opposite has frequently been the case, with a whole apparatus of gurus and disciples, feuds, misunderstandings, and political manoeuvrings. In Hebrew Bible 'new' literary studies, and certainly in this volume, on the other hand, there is no bad blood, no methodological purism, no 'school' mentality, no sneers at other approaches. Why this should be so is hard to guess, whether because there are not yet enough 'new' literary critics in Hebrew Bible studies to draw up battle lines, or because they all feel they are still making common cause against a common foe, an unselfconscious historical criticism. Whatever the reason, the message these essays convey, however subliminally, is that there are no holds barred, and no automatically inappropriate angles of vision upon our texts—and that even in centres of institutional power there are no longer any arbiters of what may and may not be legitimately and fruitfully said about our texts.

A third feature of these essays is their orientation to texts. The editors invited the contributors to offer an essay that represented their current work, and not one contributor wrote a truly theoretical piece. Perhaps this is not surprising, since most of the authors are professional biblical scholars and not literary theorists. But perhaps it is noteworthy all the same that the essayists never thought it necessary to set out their exact theoretical position, to distance themselves from similar-sounding approaches, or even to attempt to justify the theory they were exemplifying. It may not always be like that in the future, and perhaps a different group of authors even at this

present juncture would do things differently; but the impression readers of this volume may quite properly gain is that the contributors decided there were so many interesting new things to say about texts from the perspectives of these new criticisms that they chose not to linger over the theoretical niceties.

A fourth characteristic of these essays is that they press beyond 'interpretation' to 'critique'. The traditional concern of biblical criticism has been understanding, interpretation, exegesis. In these essays, viewed collectively, on the other hand, there are distinct signs of the movement that biblical studies seems poised to make, that is, to evaluation of the biblical texts from standpoints outside the ideology of the texts themselves. Whether from a feminist standpoint, or some other intellectual or ethical position, biblical scholars are beginning to see the need to develop critiques of their material—in order to make their criticism truly critical. As long as we do not challenge the world views of our literature, as long as we limit our researches merely to questions of meaning and refuse to engage with questions of value, it will become increasingly hard for us to justify the place of biblical studies within the human sciences. Not all the essays here present such a critique explicitly; but it may be regarded as the tendency of the 'new literary criticism' in general, if only in its very plurality, to call into question the values embedded in the traditional scholarship. In biblical studies such values include an often unspoken privileging of the ideology set forth or assumed by the texts, which the new literary criticism will surely expose.

All the methodological diversity and eclecticism of these essays makes it impossible to label the contributions with one or another theoretical tag or even to arrange them in any logical order. What would a logical order be?, we asked ourselves. So the volume must stand as a witness to the plurality of criticisms in Hebrew Bible studies that seems now to be here to stay, a sign of the times, a marker of directions in which study of the Hebrew Bible is likely to develop in the present decade. It may, of course, for some readers signal the further fragmentation of the field that makes it impossible to 'keep up' with what is being written about these texts that we have in common. But perhaps that once laudable desire to keep up, to 'master' and 'control'

the field, is ripe for suppression, or at least sublimation, now that it can be recognized for what it is, as yet another manifestation of the academic will to power (or, alternatively, of scholarly insecurity). In a post-modern world, there is no centre, no standing-place that has rights to domination, no authority that can manage or control what is to count as scholarship. No one, therefore, need lose any sleep over the existence of methodologies that are unfamiliar, uncongenial or questionable, nor about their incapacity to participate in every new approach. Our hope rather is that some of the trends represented in these essays will prove fascinating, stimulating, intriguing, or even enraging, to readers—who will share our sense of excitement about the intellectual challenges our texts present us with at this moment in history.

Finally, since the literary criticism presented in this volume is by its own profession 'new', and the contributors would prefer to be addressing not just one another but also a scholarly audience in general that may as yet be somewhat unfamiliar with the shape of the new literary criticisms, it may be helpful to sketch here the main outlines of the theoretical positions and approaches that may be referred to as the 'new literary criticism'. But first, a word about literary approaches that we would not now classify as 'new'.

Literary Criticisms No Longer 'New'

New Criticism

New criticism stands for an attitude to texts that sees them as works of art in their own right, rather than as representations of the sensibilities of their authors. Against the romantic view of texts as giving immediate access to the ideas and feelings of great minds, the new criticism regards texts as coherent intelligible wholes more or less independent of their authors, creating meaning through the integration of their elements. And against a more positivistic scholarship of the historical-critical kind, new criticism emphasizes the literariness of literary texts and tries to identify the characteristics of literary writing.

In biblical studies the term 'new criticism' has been rarely

used, but most work that is known as 'literary'—whether it studies structure, themes, character, and the like, or whether it approaches the texts as unified wholes rather than the amalgam of sources, or whether it describes itself as 'synchronic' rather than 'diachronic', dealing with the text as it stands rather than with its prehistory—can properly be regarded as participating in this approach.

Rhetorical Criticism

Rhetorical criticism, sharing the outlook of new criticism about the primacy of the text in itself, and often operating under the banner of 'the final form of the text', concerns itself with the way the language of texts is deployed to convey meaning. Its interests are in the devices of writing, in metaphor and parallelism, in narrative and poetic structures, in stylistic figures. In principle, but not often in practice in Hebrew Bible studies, it has regard to the rhetorical situation of the composition and promulgation of ancient texts and to their intended effect upon their audience. But, like new criticism, its primary focus is upon the texts and their own internal articulation rather then upon their historical setting.

Structuralism

Structuralist theory concerns itself with patterns of human organization and thought. In the social sciences, structuralism analyses the structures that underlie social and cultural phenomena, identifying basic mental patterns, especially the tendency to construct the world in terms of binary oppositions, as forming models for social behaviour. In literary criticism likewise, structuralism looks beneath the phenomena, in this case the texts, for the underlying patterns of thought that come to expression in them. Structuralism proper shades off on one side into semiotics and the structural relations of signs, and on the other into narratology and the systems of construction that underlie both traditional and literary narratives.

The New Literary Criticisms

The literary criticisms that have been sketched above, and have been typified as no longer 'new', have by no means outlived

their usefulness, nor have they been invalidated by the appearance of the criticisms yet to be discussed. The essays in this volume are proof enough that contemporary biblical critics are delighted to have in their repertory a vast array of methods; their skill is often to know which criticisms best to deploy with a given text. For every one scholar who rigorously explores the ramifications of a single method there seem to be ten who owe no methodological allegiances. Even the historical-critical method, the precursor of them all, can have its place in the most 'advanced' work, as these essays witness. Here, however, we consider the newer literary criticisms that have been the occasion for this volume.

Feminist Criticism

Feminist criticism can be seen as a paradigm for the new literary criticisms. For its focus is not upon texts in themselves but upon texts in relation to another intellectual or political issue; and that could be said to be true of all the literary criticisms represented in this volume. The starting point of feminist criticism is of course not the given texts but the issues and concerns of feminism as a world view and as a political enterprise. If we may characterize feminism in general as recognizing that in the history of civilization women have been marginalized by men and have been denied access both to social positions of authority and influence and to symbolic production (the creation of symbol systems, such as the making of texts), then a feminist literary criticism will be concerned with exposing strategies by which women's subordination is inscribed in and justified by texts. Feminist criticism uses a variety of approaches and encourages multiple readings, rejecting the notion that there is a 'proper way' to read a text as but another expression of male control of texts and male control of reading. It may concentrate on analysing the evidence contained in literary texts, and showing in detail the ways in which women's lives and voices have in fact been suppressed by texts. Or it may ask how, if at all, a woman's voice can be discovered in, or read into, an androcentric text. Or it may deploy those texts, with their evidence of the marginalization of women, in the service of a feminist agenda, with the hope that the exposing

of male control of literature will in itself subvert the hierarchy that has dominated not only readers but also culture itself.

Materialist or Political Criticism

In a materialist criticism, texts are viewed principally as productions, as objects created, like other physical products, at a certain historical juncture within a social and economic matrix and as objects that exist still within definite ambits constituted by the politics and the economics of book production and of readerships. More narrowly, materialist criticism analyses texts in terms of their representation of power, especially as they represent, allude to or repress the conflicts of different social classes that stand behind their composition and reception.

Psychoanalytic Criticism

A psychoanalytic criticism can take as its focus the authors of texts, the texts themselves, or the readers of the texts. Since authors serve their own psychological needs and drives in writing texts, their own psyches are legitimate subjects of study. It is not often we have access to the psyche of a dead author, but even if little can be said about the interior life of real authors, there is plenty to be inferred about the psyches of the authors implied by the texts. Just as psychoanalytic theory has shown the power of the unconscious in human beings, so literary critics search for the unconscious drives embedded within texts. We can view texts as symptoms of narrative neuroses, treat them as overdetermined, and speak of their repressions, displacements, conflicts and desires. Alternatively, we can uncover the psychology of characters and their relationships within the texts, and ask what it is about the human condition in general that these texts reflect, psychologically speaking. Or we can turn our focus upon empirical readers, and examine the non-cognitive effects that reading our texts have upon them, and construct theoretical models of the nature of the reading process.

Reader-Response Criticism

The critical strategies that may be grouped under the heading of reader-response criticism share a common focus on the reader

as the creator of, or at the very least, an important contributor to, the meaning of texts. Rather than seeing 'meaning' as a property inherent in texts, whether put there by an author (as in traditional historical criticism) or somehow existing intrinsically in the shape, structure and wording of the texts (as in new criticism and rhetorical criticism), reader-response criticism regards meaning as coming into being at the meeting point of text and reader—or, in a more extreme form, as being created by readers in the act of reading.

An obvious implicate of a reader-response position is that any quest for determinate meanings is invalidated; the idea of 'the' meaning of a text disappears and meaning becomes defined relative to the various readers who develop their own meanings. A text means whatever it means to its readers, no matter how strange or unacceptable some meanings may seem to other readers.

Reader-response criticism further raises the question of validity in interpretation. If there are no determinate meanings, no intrinsically right or wrong interpretations, if the author or the text cannot give validation to meanings, the only source for validity in interpretation has to lie in 'interpretative communities'—groups that authorize certain meanings and disallow others. Validity in interpretation is then recognized as relative to the group that authorizes it.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction of a text signifies the identifying of the Achilles heel of texts, of their weak point that lets them down. As against the 'common sense' assumption that texts have more or less clear meanings and manage more or less successfully to convey those meanings to readers, deconstruction is an enterprise that exposes the inadequacies of texts, and shows how inexorably they undermine themselves. A text typically has a thesis to defend or a point of view to espouse; but inevitably texts falter and let slip evidence against their own cause. A text typically sets forth or takes for granted some set of oppositions, one term being privileged over its partner; but in so doing it cannot help allowing glimpses of the impossibility of sustaining those oppositions. In deconstruction it is not a matter of

reversing the oppositions, of privileging the unprivileged and vice versa, but of rewriting, reinscribing, the structures that have previously been constructed. The deconstruction of texts relativizes the authority attributed to them, and makes it evident that much of the power that is felt to lie in texts is really the power of their sanctioning community.

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GOOD TO THE LAST DROP: VIEWING THE SOTAH (NUMBERS 5.11-31) AS THE GLASS HALF EMPTY AND WONDERING HOW TO VIEW IT HALF FULL*

Alice Bach

> R. Joshua b. Karhah said: Only two entered the bed and seven left it. Cain and his twin sister, Abel and his twin-sisters. 'And she [Eve] said: I have gotten a man...' R. Isaac said: When a woman sees that she has a child she exclaims, 'Behold, my husband is now in my possession'.
>
> *Bereshit Rabbah* 22.2

> It is important for us to guard and keep our bodies and at the same time make them emerge from silence and subjugation. Historically, we are the guardians of the flesh; we do not have to abandon that guardianship, but to identify it as ours by inviting men not to make us 'their bodies', guarantors of their bodies. Their libido often needs some wife-mother to look after their bodies. It is in that sense that they need a woman-wife [*femme*] at home, even if they do have mistresses elsewhere.
>
> Luce Irigaray, 'The Bodily Encounter with the Mother'

The most tempting aspect of producing feminist readings of biblical texts is to implicate readers in the act of resisting a stable set of attitudes about male representations of women as constructed in the literature of ancient Israel. The strategy I am adopting comes from one of the generals of the French Resistance: Jacques Derrida. His model of reading is undergirded by a desire to resist two complementary beliefs about

* I am grateful to my colleagues, Arnold Eisen and Howard Eilberg-Schwartz in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford, for reading successive drafts and encouraging me toward writing the article I wanted to write. A.J. Levine of Swarthmore College offered much food for thought and diet soda.

texts: (1) a text has identifiable borders or limits; (2) a text exists within a stable system of reference to other texts of 'information' (its context) that can be represented, for example, by appending scholarly notes.[1] Much biblical critical theory has remained tightly locked within the borders of texts that are determined by constructions of provenance, dating and canon, and any other limits that scholars have assigned to the work.[2] Limits are considered here as 'everything that was to be set up in opposition to writing (speech, life, the world, the real, history, and what not, every field of reference—to body, mind, conscious or unconscious, politics, economics, and so forth)' (Derrida 1979: 257). By selecting a pre-text[3] or source whose central concern is the control of women's sexuality, Num. 5.11-31, the ritual of the Sotah, I intend to focus the reader's attention upon traditional readings that have preserved patriarchal values while containing woman as the object of male anxieties. The Sotah narrative invites a departure from traditional interpretations, which figure the woman as social and material reproducer of children.

The challenge here is to stir up a new brew, where men's attempts to control women's bodies are reread as male vulnerability—the fear of woman engorging male power through her enveloping sexuality. The mysterious water that the woman is forced to drink is contained within a vessel handed to her by the priest. This ritual vessel is metonymic for the womb containing semen, for a sexually pure wife guarantees her husband

1. Kamuf's introduction (1991: 255) to Derrida's article, 'Living On: Border Lines', which I have quoted here, serves as a description of biblical institutional resistance to deconstructive thinking. Derrida's article invites readings that overflow the possibilities of borders and of complete reference. Thus, I follow the leader in resisting biblical critics' concern with staying within con/textual limits, canonical, linguistic, temporal.

2. For an article that suggests one way in which indeterminate readings of the deconstructive kind may be applied to biblical texts, see Greenstein 1989.

3. I adopt this term from Bal, who suggests that a text's 'double meaning keeps reminding us of the active work on preceding texts, rather than the obedient repetition of them' (1991: 430). This article owes much to the genie-like character that drives the work of Bal, who refuses to be content inside the container of biblical literary convention.

a womb vessel filled solely with his seed. This ritual is necessary because the purity of the womb vessel is in doubt. Similarly, on a literary level, readings have been contained within institutional 'vessels', or canons, immobilizing feminist readers as surely as the liquid in the Sotah vessel maintains the wife under the husband's control.

Encamped outside traditional textual borderlines, I have escaped the boundaries of Num. 5.11-31 and its mishnaic expansion, Tractate Sotah, into modern commentaries, creating a narrative of Sotah, a text that permits a husband to accuse his wife of adultery, without having the two witnesses traditional in Israelite law in cases of capital crimes. My text presents additional characters: ancient sages, who made no pretense of covering up their desire to inflict pain upon errant women, assuming the guilt of the woman brought before the priest, and recent interpreters of the ritual, who share an agenda of normalizing the text. My Sotah text reflects a Derridean concern with the relation between texts once their borders have been blurred. A borderline perspective allows the reader to pose questions that historical investigations have not asked about the impact of these texts upon a woman reader.[4]

To further blur borders, to demonstrate how one part of a text may be relevant to others, I have added con-texts of biblical sexual politics: Genesis 39, a narrative in which a woman attempts to initiate sexual activity with the male hero; Proverbs 5 and 7, texts of warning in which an *'ishshah zarah* stands

4. Perhaps it would be helpful to remind the reader that my reading is not intended to replace or dominate earlier interpretations. Rather I pose different questions. The case is analogous to a gendered reading of *Cinderella*. In analyzing the folktale, tradition critics would focus upon the ritual of the prince placing the glass slipper upon the woman's foot (is the slipper always glass? is the incantation formulaic?); archaeologists might provide the shape of the slipper and suggest it wasn't glass but linen; philologists will attempt to provide a link between the ancient word *xxx*, 'pumpkin' and its etymological cognate, *yyy*, resulting in the modern word *coach*. These scholarly investigations have no impact upon the forceful moral codes that keep women waiting for the prince. *Cinderella* has been all too clear to women. In fact, the straight line from women's obedience to the salvific arrival of the prince was not broken until questions were raised about the ideological biases of the storytellers and their interpreters.

poised to seduce the male reader; and Deut. 22.13-30, in which laws governing sexual activity reflect male attempts to control female sexuality. To these con-texts of women's improper behavior, the Sotah ritual stands as an antidote.

Feminist biblical scholars in the past decade have used literary strategies of reading to point out that women are defined in relation to their family roles: they are daughters, wives, and mothers.[5] Although literary feminists studying the ancient world have struggled with the difficulties of reading male-authored texts, which do not provide access to women's inner thoughts, or tell us much about their daily lives, most of the readings have not attempted to break out of the institutional containers, which view biblical texts as discrete measured works without a context.[6] By stressing the borderless nature of texts, I hope to dissolve barriers that have prevented readings that extend beyond the verses of a biblical passage. In spite of my desire to dissolve borders, I do not claim to recover women's lived reality in my reading. While the account of the Sotah may not add material details about women's lives in ancient Israel, I think it reveals a lot about what women had to put up with. Political theorist Susan Okin provides a set of questions that are tied to such a concern. Her sharp distinction in looking at the ways men and women have habitually been defined by social and political philosophers will be useful in my analysis of the Sotah narrative. She writes: 'Philosophers who, in laying the foundation for their political theories, have asked, "*What are men like?* What is man's potential?" have frequently in turning to the female sex, asked "*What are women for?*"' (Okin 1979: 10, italics mine).

5. Some of the most subtle and helpful of these works have been produced by Bird, Exum, Fuchs, Meyers.

6. I suggest to the reader two notable exceptions to encased readings. Bal's biblical studies (1985, 1986, 1988) illustrate the benefits of trans-disciplinary readings of codes in order to break disciplinary borders. *Reading Rembrandt* (Bal 1992) is a startling performance in which a literary critic reads visual works and shows how they both fill the gaps of the literary texts they augment and produce further questions about those texts. Exum (1992) examines the traditional views of Greek tragedy and suggests untraditional ways in which biblical texts can be read as tragic without being dependent upon the classical model.

The problem of how a reader survives the ritual of Sotah, when she cannot swallow the implicit threats to women stirred up in the ritual, can be solved by posing Okin's political question, *What are men like?*, as a psychoanalytic one. This strategy is particularly well suited to biblical texts, since they are male-authored, and thus contain the symptomatic utterances of the author/narrator. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the text operates as a pair of male doubles: the male narrator and the ideal reader, who is also male. Thus, while the woman is the object of the text of Numbers 5, she is excluded from the male dialogue. The reader is allied with the male author/narrator by ignoring the sexual desire of the female character and by joining the author in a critique of her sexual behavior. As I found in my reading of modern interpreters, the gender of the reader does not determine the reading. Frymer-Kensky, for example, like her male counterparts, is not concerned with forming an alliance with the female character in the text. Trying to imagine a female reader contending with male subjectivity, a critic reading with a feminist-psychoanalytic strategy can subvert a text's desire so as to hear what it does not wish to say. 'Son and father agree to write the mother out of the text, for to desire her is not to have the phallus. They conspire both to rid the text of her and to entrap her in it; she is immured' (Segal: 169). Reading the text against its demand, however, *reading as a woman*, allows the subversion of male doubling and allows the figured woman in the text to communicate with a feminist reader. Reading through the sexual codes, a feminist reader charts the literary coercion traditional institutions have used to define the female as other.

Sotah with a Twist

The Sotah is unique in biblical law: it is the only trial by ordeal; it is the only occasion on which a person can be accused of a capital crime without two witnesses. The half-disrobed woman with dishevelled hair, appearing as though she has been caught in an intimate act, is not even permitted to utter the self-incriminatory oath: the ritual oath is put in the mouth of the priest. Only the potion is put in the mouth of the woman. She is forced

to swallow what she knows. In my view, then, the Sotah is a unique vehicle for envisioning what is denied, repressed, and silenced in ancient Israelite culture.

The Sotah is not unique in making a woman's fate be determined by men. It is not unique among biblical descriptions of ritual in its textual ambiguities that make it difficult to determine what actually occurred. Interpretations of the Sotah are not unique in having focused upon elements of historicity in the text: is the ritual indeed a trial by ordeal? what are the components of the drink? what occurs physiologically to the woman after swallowing the brew? does she die? does she become sterile? is the Sotah a divine forerunner of RU 486, a chemically induced abortion? Num. 5.11-31 is not the only text that interpreters have failed to read as a political text expressing the fears of its male authors toward woman and their colonization of the female body. Symbolically the woman becomes the currency of the exchange between males. This transaction bears similarities to the Deuteronomic laws concerning undesirable sexual acts. Under the dictates of a phallic economy the father or husband can demand reparation for the damaging of the woman's body. Female sexuality uncontained deflates the phallic economy in which all gains accrue to the master (Benstock 1991: 95).

In the ancient Near East, whose cultures demonstrated a flourishing phallic economy, a man could buy his way out of an adulterous situation by compensating the husband and accepting a discounted wife. Unlike its neighbors, Israel had no provision for a husband to mitigate the death penalty for a wife and her partner convicted of adultery.[7] The fact that the crime of adultery was incorporated into the Sinaitic covenant guaranteed its fateful consequences. 'Unless it [adultery] was punished with death,' Milgrom argues, 'God would destroy the malefactors and indeed the entire community that had allowed it to go unpunished'(1990: 349).

But what if the duplicitous wife is not caught?

Because the concern with ensuring paternity was so strong in Israel, a ritual was devised to further protect the husband from the possibility of a 'wandering wife', and its attendant loss of

7. Hammurabi §129; Middle Assyrian Laws §§14-16; Hittite Laws §§192-93; *ANET* 171, 181, 196.

prestige. The Sotah ritual described in Num. 5.11-31 is constructed around suspicion of adultery, rather than proof of the crime in which two witnesses were required in order to pass sentence of death. The horror of trial by ordeal applied to the woman accused indicates the social view of adultery. Further, it reflects the patriarchal attempt to assure a husband that his honor could be restored if he had so much as a suspicion that his wife had been fooling around. Female erotic desire, then, was understood as erratic, a threat to the social order. By drowning such desire, the traditional order was assured of continuing dominance over women's bodies.

Fateful In/fidelities

As I have stated, the ordeal of Sotah described in Num. 5.11-31 is unique in the Bible, but there are other biblical texts that reflect male anxiety about female sexuality. Genesis 39 evinces the dangers of rampant female sexuality, and, in Proverbs 5 and 7, the *'ishshah zarah* is the paradigm for the woman who uses her sexuality to ensnare men. I shall use these two texts as examples of male-authored warnings about women's sexuality, warnings that are textual defenses of the trial by ordeal. Both the Egyptian woman and the *'ishshah zarah* are examples of woman's sexuality out of control. The Sotah stands as an antidote.

Numbers 5.3 permits a suspicious husband to accuse his wife of adultery without fear of punishment. The figure of the lascivious wife in Genesis 39 supports a husband's suspicion of adultery. Potiphar is told by his wife that his servant has attempted to rape her. A measure of uncertainty salted with suspicion must exist in Potiphar's mind, since he throws Joseph into prison rather than ordering him killed. Both the Sotah and Genesis 39 indicate the presence of a smoking gun, but no body. In each case suspicion of women's sexual impurity results in loss of honor for the husband. Since the sexual activity described by the wife of Potiphar has not been witnessed by any other character—in other words, she has not been caught *in flagrante delicto*—her situation bears certain similarities to that of the woman accused in Numbers 5. Genesis 39, however, presents witnesses who have heard about the sexual invitation and its

rejection. Joseph knows a story different from the one told by his mistress; he remains silent. The narrator and reader know that no sexual crime has been committed. Thus they convict the woman for letting her sexual desire flame out of control. If, however, the reader chooses to place the woman in the subject position, and to question the anxiety of the male narrator and of the character Joseph, she can produce a reading that transforms the female character from the mute figure silenced under the terms of phallocentric discourse. This act of reading is what French feminists have termed 'producing an alternative female imaginary' (Irigaray: 197). As I have argued elsewhere, reading to recover the suppressed story of the wife of Potiphar can result in a story of fatal attraction, female obsession with the male love object (1993).

In Numbers 5, like Genesis 39, no crime at all need be committed. The vivid images in the husband's imagination are all that is necessary to bring his wife to the tabernacle to drink the bitter water. On the basis of suspicion of her activities, the Israelite husband could bring his wife before the priest, who would administer the *me hammarim*, 'bitter water',[8] to determine her guilt or innocence. As in rituals of this sort, the punishment was incorporated within the act (or ordeal) itself. An innocent woman survived drinking the potion; a guilty one suffered some sort of punishment related to her sexuality. Interpretations of exactly what the woman's punishment was have varied widely from the time of the Tannaim to the present day.

In Genesis 39 the wife's sexual fantasy condemns her to narrative humiliation; in Numbers 5 the husband's sexual fantasy

8. Scholars have debated the meaning of this difficult term. Sasson has suggested that *mrr* is connected to the Ugaritic root, 'to bless', with a resulting merismus, 'waters that bless and waters that curse'. Also imbuing the term with powers of judgment, Brichto argues that one cannot derive *marim* from the verb *mrr*, to be bitter. He supports his suspicion with the contention that neither the dirt from the tabernacle floor nor a few drops of ink could account for bitterness. He has provided an intriguing suggestion that one read the term *marim* (as derived from the verb *yrh* 'to teach') *mei hammarrim* as a construct with a hiphil plural of abstraction, understood as 'spell-inducing water' (59). In addition, a reading that understands *me hammarim* as spell-inducing waters that would 'teach' the guilt or innocence of the woman is compelling.

condemns his wife to drink the bitter water and be publicly humiliated. Even if the woman is found to be innocent and survives the ordeal (both the biblical text and its expansions emphasize the possibility of the woman's guilt, as I argue below), she has been shamed in front of the community. The priest, the male mediator figure representing her husband's rights, unbinds her hair, an act that evokes a picture of female sexuality unbound: the loosed hair of the loose woman. Holding her husband's jealousy offering in her hands, the woman stands submissively while the priest acts as her mouthpiece, reciting her self-condemning oath. Having been revealed in the presence of the community, even an innocent wife will have difficulty regaining status and respect, since the husband's suspicion has been transmitted to the community. Verse 31 attempts to stabilize the husband's position. He is exonerated regardless of her guilt or innocence. The very ambiguity of the wife's position—did she or didn't she?—separates her from the usual position of the wife-woman, who receives her social identity from her husband.

The husband free from blame differs from the case of the newly married man who falsely accuses his bride of sexual impurity.[9] Deuteronomic law states that if the father can present proof of his daughter's virginity, the husband receives a dual punishment: he must pay reparations to her father (100 shekels of silver) and he may not divorce his wife, who has been slandered/degraded (Deut. 22.19). If, however, the father cannot produce the evidence to clear his daughter, she is assumed to be impure and is stoned to death in front of her father's door. The execution carried out at the father's door provides a vital clue to the integral connection in both cases between the father and the husband: if the girl is guilty, the father has either knowingly or not offered for sale to the husband damaged goods. In the case of the girl's innocence, the husband must pay damages to the father, whose good name has been damaged. Thus the law reflects the men as subjects of the concern and the woman as the object of male ownership.

9. Phillips argues, I think convincingly, that the question in this case is not paternity so much as the husband's eagerness to recover the *mohar*, 'bride price' (1981: 13).

Only another man can verify the husband 's accusation. In the Sotah ritual, the priest functions as intermediary, acting on the husband's suspicion. According to traditional interpretations, the father God enters the bitter waters to determine the woman's guilt or innocence. The physical evidence confirming her innocence is a clean functional womb revealed to the community of witnesses after the deity's 'inspection'. In the Deuteronomic law, the father produces the bloody evidence of his daughter's sexual purity, again assuring a clean functional womb. As in the case of the Sotah, the woman's version of her own story is not considered. Thus, even when a husband can be punished for falsely accusing his wife of sexual impurity (Deut. 22.19), she is not to be believed. The law reflects the concerns of the phallic economy: it protects her father if she is innocent; it protects her husband if she is guilty.

The textual emphasis on the woman's secrecy in Num. 5.13 undergirds the author's concern with the difficulty of discerning female sexual purity. Four times within the indictment, the 'fact' of the woman's secrecy is repeated: 'without the knowledge of her husband', 'she keeps secret', 'without being forced', 'and there was no witness against her' (v. 13). Like a too-rapid heartbeat, the repetition is a telling clue about the power of male fears and fantasies about women's secrets. It is not surprising that the patriarchal society has fashioned a law that protects men's suspicion of women and their dark secrets.

Tractate *Sotah* in the Mishnah elaborates the biblical case law in Num. 5.11-31. The sages describe even more pain and suffering in store for the bad wife. It is worth looking in some detail both at the passage in Numbers and at the Mishnah's interpretation of it in order to understand the fierce reaction in biblical as well as postbiblical Israel to the act of adultery as a crime both against the husband and against the larger community. According to Jewish law, a wife faced a punishment of death if she willingly had sexual relations (*wayyitten 'ish bak 'et-shekobto*, Num. 5.20) with a man other than her husband (*shakab 'otak*, Num. 5.19; *shikbah 'immi* is the invitation of the wife of Potiphar to Joseph in Gen. 39.7). If there is no witness to the act ('none of the men of the house was in the house', Gen. 39.11), it is assumed the woman was not taken by force, but

was a willing participant. Deut. 22.23 states that a woman who is taken in the city and does not cry out for help is equally guilty with the man who lay with her (*shakab 'immah*). Hittite law even more sharply defines the woman's culpability: '[I]f [a man] seizes her in (her) house, it is the woman's crime and the woman shall be killed' (§197; *ANET*, 196). Clearly there was an ancient connection between the territory of the woman (inside her house or the city) and her ability to control any situation occurring within 'her' borders. If, however, the act occurs in the countryside, the Deuteronomic lawgivers understood the crime differently. Away from the structured life of the town, the woman's (assumed) screams would not have been heard. She is exonerated, but the man is put to death, his crime equated with the act of someone who attacks and murders his neighbor (Deut. 22.27). One can infer from this crime against a woman's sexual purity, a capital crime, as is murder, that a sexually ravaged woman had no more future than a dead woman. Thus, a woman who participated voluntarily in her own defilement (allowing another man access to her husband's private place) would invoke the same death penalty: the swallowing of the bitter Sotah.

After the husband has accused his wife of adultery, he is enjoined to bring her to the priest for the trial by ordeal, after bringing to the tabernacle a cereal offering for his own 'jealousy'. Later sages indicate that the *torat sotah* is in effect even if the lover or the husband is a castrate. Thus, even if her unfaithfulness could not have resulted in progeny and even if the husband could not have been concerned about the paternity of his subsequent children, she would still be required to drink.[10] For some of the rabbis, then, the protection of paternity becomes secondary to the protection of male honor and integrity of the household. This reading of *torat sotah* would indicate the male desire to compensate a castrated husband by assuring him the same rights in respect to his wife as a potent man. Its inclusion in

10. *Bemidbar Rabbah* 9.17. *Sidrah Naso*, where this interpretation appears, is thought by some scholars to be based upon the ancient Tanhuma, which frequently preserves original readings not found in Buber's edition. See the introduction to *Bemidbar Rabbah* (trans. J.J. Slotki; London: Soncino Press, 3rd edn, 1983).

Sidrah Naso implies that no man may threaten the position of the husband, even a man without procreative organs. What a vivid illustration of the woman as mode of exchange in the phallic economy!

The root *sth* is used in Numbers 5 to describe the activity of the adulterous woman as a 'turning aside', from the marriage path. In three of the four examples (vv. 19, 20, 29) the verb is used in connection with the wife 'turning aside from under her husband's control'; extramarital sexual relations for a wife are understood as her breaking out of her proper place (*tahat 'ishek* 'underneath your husband' (*'ishah*, 'her husband', in v. 29). Some standard translations do not acknowledge the vivid verbal portrait of sexual activity that is suggested by the Hebrew: RSV reads 'under your husband's authority'; JPS reads 'while married to your husband'. Neither allows for a possible sexual allusion.

In addition to its use in Numbers 5, the root *sth* is found in only one other biblical book, Proverbs, where the young man is warned to 'turn aside' from the way of evil men (4.15) and 'not to allow his heart 'to turn aside to the path' of the seductive woman (7.25) since her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the house of death (7.27).[11] Indeed, the victim is compared with an ox headed for the slaughterhouse, a deer bounding toward a noose, a bird winging into a snare (7.22-23). Extending the text's animal metaphors produces a reading in which the young man with the eager innocence of an animal rushes exuberantly toward a predetermined death. Female sexuality is a trap baited by a predatory female hunter. If the youthful male reader of Proverbs stumbles on the paths of wicked men (*resha'im*), there is no indication that he will end up in the dire shape predicted if he sets his foot on the path of the *'ishshah zarah*. The connection of turning aside (*sth*) for sexual purposes

11. Fishbane (1974: 44) reads the connection between the motif of female seduction and Prov. 6.20-35 as an inner-biblical midrash on the Decalogue. According to Fishbane, 'what makes this case significant is that the various prohibitions are presented in the light of a general warning against adultery—or, more specifically, in the light of the seduction of false wisdom in contrast with divine wisdom, Prov. 8–9'. Thus, the tension is between the adulterous woman and the good woman.

with punishment occurs only in the instance of misreading the scented trap of the *'ishshah zarah*.

In spite of the conventional interpretation in English of *'ishshah zarah* as a foreign woman, the Hebrew word *zarah*, meaning 'strange', does not necessarily equate such 'foreignness' with ethnicity. The word can imply otherness, as reflected in the woman who is depicted by the RSV as a 'loose woman' or 'adventuress'. Her otherness is understood in contradistinction to the good woman, *'eshet hayil*, who is not described in terms of her sexuality. Thus, *'ishshah zarah* is foreign to goodness, to wisdom. Scholars continue to dispute whether she is actually a foreigner or, as I suspect, a woman whose explicit sexuality made her a social outcast and therefore an outsider.[12] In each case, nevertheless, the turning aside is clearly on to the path of illicit sexual relations since the verbal root is *sth* rather than *swr*. The far more common root meaning 'turn aside', *swr*, is not always understood in an explicitly sexual manner even when used in connection with women, e.g., by the author of Proverbs of the beautiful woman 'turning aside (*sarat*) from the paths of discretion' (11.22). One assumes that these are improper paths, but the text does not indicate that they are necessarily sexual ones.

In the Proverbs account, the *'ishshah zarah* is firmly rooted on the evil path, indeed her house leads to Sheol. There is no warning for a female reader not to stray into these paths; rather the warning is presented to her potential male victim. It is the vulnerable young male, a nameless parallel to the chaste hero Joseph, who must be warned against 'turning aside,' or turning *toward* the *'ishshah zarah*, a parallel to the character of the Egyptian wife. The roles of the two women in Proverbs, the *'eshet hayil* and the *'ishshah zarah*, are fixed; the author of Proverbs expects no textual engagement between a wife-woman and her sexual twin. He is not concerned with exploring possible shadings in either woman's character. Nor is he

12. Bird (1974: 87 n. 44) designates *'ishshah zarah* as the 'other' woman, contrasting her with the wife. De Vaux (1965: 36) considers the term to contain nothing more loaded than 'the wife of another man'. For further discussion, see Camp 1985; Humbert 1937; McKane 1970: 285, 287; Snijders 1954: 103-104.

worried about stones in the paths of young women, causing them to stumble. It is male readers (the sons) to whom the author (the father) addresses his collection of maxims and warnings. Once again the woman is the object of male anxiety: subduing her sexuality is the key to his safety.

In the prohibition in Numbers 5, God instructs Moses (v. 11) to present the case of a woman who is suspected of wandering (*tisteh*, v. 12) from the authority of her husband. Thus the crime and its ritual punishment are seen to be devised by the deity, not by the community. If there is a warning to the woman, it is in the description of her startling punishment: 'when the LORD makes your thigh fall away and your body swell' (RSV). The Hebrew text is more vivid than the English translation: literally, 'when God causes your thigh (*yarek*) to droop and your womb (*bitnek*) to swell' (v. 21). These terms are suggestive of the sexual act. The word *yarek* is a commonly understood euphemism for sexual organs (e.g. Gen. 24.2, 9; 46.26; 47.29; Exod. 1.5; Judg. 8.30). In these other biblical usages, the word refers to the male 'seat of procreative power', according to BDB, although in Num. 5.21, 22, 27 BDB considers *yrk* as parallel to *btn*. The word *beten* is often understood to refer to the womb (e.g. Gen. 25.23, 24; 38.27; Hos. 12.4; Job 10.19, 31.15; Qoh. 11.5; Ps. 139.13). The parallelism (*yarek // beten*) in vv. 21, 22, 27 suggests strongly that *yrk* does not mean 'thigh' but 'reproductive organs' (as against BDB) and thus emphasizes the wife's role as bearer of the husband's legitimate heirs. It is her place of procreation (*yarek // beten*) that has been violated, and thus will be deformed or destroyed by the priestly potion, a magical brew of holy water and the dust from the floor of the tabernacle (v. 17). If these terms tell us what women are for, they also make it clear what women are not for. The male fantasy imagines the woman as possessing the *yarek*, the seat of procreative power, and thus threatening to 'reverse the body symbolism on which the father's authority is established' (Newsom: 153). A similar version of this pervasive fantasy occurs in the Proverbs description of the *'ishshah zarah* as 'sharp as a two-edged sword' (5.4).

Unbinding the woman's hair, and placing the husband's

jealousy offering (*minhat qena'ot*, v. 15)[13] into her hands, the priest functions as proxy of the offended male, the husband, and of the deity whom the woman's sexuality has taunted. Yet, as the male unbinding another man's woman, he is also the mirror of the lover, touching the forbidden woman. The *minhat qena'ot* held in the wife's hands symbolizes her potential danger, as the one holding and possibly controlling his sexuality. It can also echo the secret lover, whom she held instead of her husband, the sex that resulted in jealousy. Then the priest pronounces the terms of the trial by ordeal, the no-win situation for the woman. In my opinion a strong subtexual suggestion of sexual language exists in the Hebrew text. I provide below an interpretation that intentionally teases out these nuances.

> If no man has *profaned your body,*
> if you have not *turned aside to uncleanness*
> while *you should have remained underneath your husband,*
> be free from this *bitter water that brings forth the agony* (v. 19).
>
> But if *you have turned toward your lover,*
> though under your husband's power,
> if *some man other than your husband*
> *has placed his seed inside your house,*
> *then let the water that brings this curse*
> *pass into your bowels*
> *and make your womb swell*
> *and your thigh fall open* (vv. 20, 22).

The most remarkable aspect of the priest's speech, as I have interpreted it, is the extent of 'guilty' language, shown here in italics. The emphasis is placed on the woman's sexual acts and the agony that results from her turning aside from her husband. If she is innocent, none of these wrenching pains will occur. But as they are all detailed, her possible purity is drowned, or at least diluted, by the volume of curse that issues from the priest's mouth. Thus, the stream of language acts to accuse and punish as much as the priestly potion streaming into the woman. If the woman is innocent, the water will pass through her, and she will

13. The connection between the offering of jealousy (*qn'*), which becomes the *torat haqena'ot* in Num. 5.29, and the husband's sole and complete rights to his wife, is emphasized through a linguistic play. The husband has a legal right to protect jealously (*qn'*) his acquired property (*qny*).

continue to function as a wife, to produce her husband's children (v. 28).[14] A sympathetic interpretation states that if the husband is innocent, the wife will be tested by the bitter water; if the husband has accused his wife wrongly, the wife will not be harmed (Phillips 1981). By picturing so vividly the woman having had sex with a man other than her husband, the text makes it difficult to remember that she might be innocent and not have to undergo the punishment that is described in such detail. By having these words pronounced about her, the woman is verbally punished even if the bitter water does not punish her physically. There is no incantation mentioned that will give equal time to her innocence. A reading that assigns guilt to the husband's accusation would switch the focus of the text from his fears, simultaneously switching power to the wife. The dominance of the husband over his wife is reflected, then, in the text's emphasis on her guilt. The husband's honor is further restored by his dominance over the shadow of the unknown lover, whose intimacy with the wife has been both recalled and repudiated by the priest. If the woman has committed the acts of which she has been accused, then YHWH's judgment shall transform the water:

> the water that causes the agony shall stream into [enter] her
> and shall cause her bitter pain
> and her belly/womb shall swell
> and her thigh/womb shall sag (v. 27).

Instead of her lover's semen entering her, it is the water of judgment that streams into the woman. The poison will cause her belly/womb to swell with pain and in torment her sexual organs will collapse.[15] A most arresting allusion to the sexual act

14. *Bemidbar Rabbah* assures the woman that if she is pure, the water will not affect her, 'for this water is only like dry poison placed upon healthy flesh and cannot hurt it' (9.33). Characterizing the water as poison certainly makes clear its deleterious effect upon the one who must swallow it.

15. Frymer-Kensky supplies a medical explanation for the result of the flooding of the woman's sexual organs. According to her interpretation, the woman suffers the 'collapse of the sexual organs known as a prolapsed uterus...Conception becomes impossible, and the woman's procreative life has effectively ended (unless, in our own time, she has corrective surgery)' (1984: 20-21). What I find most interesting about this description is its

gone wrong. The string of verbs in vv. 20-21—*'et-yerekek nophelet ve'et-bitnek tsavah*, 'your thigh/sexual organs shall *sag/fall away* and your womb *swell/distend*'—echoed in v. 27, focuses attention upon the sexual act. Thus, a connection is made between the husband's loss of prestige through his wife's adulterous act and the loss of erection. The wife's sagging (and therefore empty) womb becomes a symbol of measure for measure punishment meted out for the husband's loss of prestige. Through the punishment that drains her of sexuality and power, he regains his authority.

What Are Men Like?

Many rabbinic sages assume that the result of the woman's drinking the bitter water is death. *Bemidbar Rabbah* records an *aggadah* (Naso 9) that illustrates the magical or divine nature of the bitter water, which can discern the difference between a good woman and an evil one. Two married sisters look very much alike but live in different towns. The one who lives in Jerusalem is 'clean'. The other is 'defiled', and goes to her good sister and pleads with her to take her place in the ritual of the bitter water. The good sister agrees, drinks the water, and is unharmed. Returning home, her sister, who has played the harlot, comes out to embrace her. As they kiss, 'the harlot smelled the bitter water and instantly died'. While the story supports the view that a clean woman will be untouched by the water, as she has been untouched by a man other than her husband, it also makes clear that death caused by the bitter water is the just punishment for an adulterous woman.

There are no recorded cases of the administration of the *torat sotah*, although the *aggadah* quoted above gives the rabbinic view of unavoidable death to the guilty woman—even if she has not actually swallowed the potion. Proximity to the judgmental drink is sufficient to cause punishment. There are no *aggadoth* that record a happy ending for the innocent woman. Jewish tradition maintains that Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, shortly after

offering of analgesia for what the text describes as 'bitter pain'. Put another way, the interpreter seems intent on slowing the pulse of the passage, rendering it safe for a modern reader.

the destruction of the Second Temple, abolished the ordeal, because he felt that divorce was sufficient to separate the husband from his possibly adulterous wife (*m. Soṭah* 9.9). The Tosefta (*Soṭah* 14.2) offers a less romantic explanation. 'The ritual of bitter waters is performed only in cases of suspected [unprovable, without witnesses] adultery, but now there are many who fornicate in public (with witnesses)'. In any case, the fact that the sages may have rejected the ordeal *in principle*, Romney-Wegner observes, does not allow us to assume that 'it constitutes a rejection of the double standard that assigned women far less sexual freedom than men' (Romney-Wegner 1988: 54).

In the Mishnah's elaboration of the law of the *sotah*, the sages separate the wife's sexuality into two parts. 'By paying bride-price the husband acquired both the sole right to intercourse with her and (still more important to the sages) the sole right to utilize her reproductive function' (Romney-Wegner 1988: 52-53). This second aspect of the husband's property rights is emphasized in the Mishnah tractate *Soṭah*, chs. 1–6: A wife who is sterile, past menopause, or for any other reason unable to bear children, does not have to drink the priestly potion. But if the husband divorces such a wife on his suspicion of her sexual impurity, Rabbi Meir says she does not receive her *kethubah*, 'marriage settlement'. Rabbi Eliezer, who clearly knows what women are for, adds that the husband is justified in marrying another woman and having children with her (*Soṭah* 4.3). Thus, even being suspected of sexual impropriety has its price.

If the wife is unable to bear children, the threat to the husband is more symbolic than real. A Talmudic passage links the Sotah with the instance of Maacah, the mother of Asa the king, who is punished with the loss of her status as queen because she has made an 'abominable image'. Rabbi Judah defines *miphlezeth*, the 'abominable image', as an object which 'intensifies licentiousness (*maphli lezanutha*), as R. Joseph taught: It was a kind of phallus with which she had daily contact' (*Avodah Zara* 44a). Touching the phallus, like touching the golden calf, puts the woman in contact with the locus of male power. While Queen Maacah's crime involved holding a symbolic phallus, anxiety was also raised at the possibility of the woman touching a penis.

Deuteronomy presents the case of a woman whose husband is wrangling with an opponent in the marketplace; the wife goes to his aid. In trying to defend her husband, she touches the crotch of the other man, an offense that shames her husband, but, more alarming, brings her into contact with the male organ. A woman seizing a man's genitals will have her hand cut off (Deut. 25.12).

The sages linger over the image of the adulterous woman, the woman who has enticed the wrong man:

> If she were clothed in white garments, he [the priest] covered her in black ones. If she had upon her ornaments of gold, necklaces, earrings, and rings on her fingers, they take them from her in order to disgrace her; and after that he brings an Egyptian rope[16] and ties it above her breasts. Everyone who wants to behold her comes to gaze at her (*m. Soṭah* 1.6).

After undressing her in the text, the ancient rabbis embellish the violent destruction of the woman alluded to in the biblical account:

> Hardly has she finished drinking before her face turns yellow and her eyes bulge and her veins swell, and they say, 'Take her away! take her away! that the Temple Court be not made unclean' (*m. Soṭah* 1.7).

A later rabbinic description is even more graphic:

> She painted her eyes for his sake, and so her eyes bulge. She braided her hair for his sake, and so the priest dishevels her hair. She beckoned to him with her fingers and so her fingernails fall off. She put on a fine girdle for his sake, and so the priest brings a common rope and ties it above her breasts. She extended her thigh to him and therefore her thigh falls away. She received him upon her womb, and therefore her belly swells. She fed him with the finest dainties; her offering is therefore the food of cattle. She gave him to drink choice wine in elegant flagons, therefore the priest gives her to drink the water of bitterness in a piece of earthenware (*Bemidbar Rabbah* 9.24).

16. The text reads *hevel mitsra'*, literally 'rope made from rushes', which was a contemptuous name for a slave (who had presumably been forced to make the rope in Egypt) and was considered a badge of shame. One is tempted to connect this mention of shameful rope with the Egyptian courtier's wife who shamed her husband with her adulterous longings. A rabbinic play on *hbl* is tempting since the noun also means 'birth pangs'.

In the rabbinic view, the punishment is not extraordinary. The principle of measure for measure that opens *Soṭah* 7, *bammidah sh'adam 'oded bah moddin*, states that the punishment fits the crime: since she 'adorned herself for transgression', God undressed her:

> with her thigh (*bayarek*) did she first transgress,
> and then with the belly (*beten*),
> therefore shall the thigh be stricken first
> and then the belly
> and the rest of the body shall not escape (*m. Soṭah* 1.7).

The sages then provide other examples of measure for measure: Samson, who looked at women with lust in his eyes, has his eyes gouged out by Philistines; Absalom was vain about his hair so he was suspended by his glorious hair. Absalom (again) had copulated with the ten secondary wives (*pilagshim*) of his father; thus, ten javelins are thrust into him. Clearly there is intentional sexual imagery in these biblical examples cited as parallels to the ritual of the *Sotah*. For the ancient rabbis, measure for measure acted as a control against sexual transgressions, by men or women. An adulterous person lost whatever merit she or he may have achieved throughout the rest of their life. Rabbi Judah haNasi ruled that merit held in suspense the immediate effects of the bitter water, but the 'woman would not bear children or continue in comeliness, but *she will waste away by degrees and in the end will die the self-same death'* (*Soṭah* 3.5). Thus, ancient readers probably believed that if a woman drank the ritual water she would not survive.

The Glass Half Empty

Modern interpreters seem intent on mopping up the bitter waters and downplaying their deleterious effects on the suspected wife. In doing so, however, they do not recognize their own interest in normalizing the Sotah as a Jewish ritual. Their cool medical explanations of a prolapsed uterus or false pregnancy stand in stark contrast to the hot fantasies of the ancients. One reading suggests that among the horrible physical effects that take place upon drinking the bitter water for the adulterous wife who has conceived through that union, the

fetus will be aborted. If, on the other hand, the woman is innocent and has conceived with her husband, she will 'retain the seed' (v. 28) and bear her husband's child (Romney-Wegner 1988: 52).

After referring to Numbers 5 as 'a harrowing ordeal' (55), Brichto argues that the dangers in trial by ordeal are physical, and 'the danger in the potion is hypothetical—and at that, explicitly nonexistent if the woman is innocent' (56). Frymer-Kensky rejects the category of trial by ordeal as 'unwarranted and misleading'. She prefers to consider the Sotah as an example of the classic purgatory oath. Milgrom wavers, claiming that the genius of the Sotah ritual is that it removes the ability to punish from human hands and gives it into the divine realm, which would indicate trial by ordeal. In his Numbers commentary, he refers to the ritual as 'the ordeal'. Nonetheless, because Milgrom does not understand the resulting punishment of the woman as death, but merely sterility, he views the ritual of Sotah as lacking the critical element of a classic trial by ordeal: death of the guilty person. In contrast, Fishbane assumes its status as trial by ordeal. He offers a form-critical analysis of similarities between the 'draught-ordeal' ritual described in Numbers 5 and the Babylonian parallel of a case of suspected adultery in *Code of Hammurabi* 131-32. What all these analyses overlook is that the ritual of Sotah is initiated by the husband's suspicion of his wife's adulterous activity. The biblical text echoes the fear of female secrecy four times in one verse: 'it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, she is undetected, since she was not caught, and there is no witness against her' (v. 13). This fear of what another man might be doing inside his wife's house (or body) results in a protection of that house by the husband through the ritual of Sotah.

These historical critics are concerned with the extent of the woman's physical punishment—is it miscarriage, sterility, or death?—and whether the trial was actually carried out. What I find of central interest in Numbers 5 is not its degree of historicity, but rather what its existence tells us about men's fear of women's sexuality. As I have shown, concern with sexual politics allows the reader to see what is at stake in patriarchal guarding and regarding the female body. The existence of the

Sotah within the biblical corpus functions as a means of social control over wives who might ignite their husband's anger. The ritual shames her, even if she is found innocent. Accepting the text's construction of a situation in which the husband and community must be able to determine a woman's sexual purity, the contemporary scholars under review here have produced a unified picture of woman as threat to her husband's status. Remaining within the framework of belief that accepts suspicions about women's sexual lives, their techniques do not disrupt the fixed binary oppositions that categorize sexuality and gender.

Milgrom argues that the trial actually protects the woman from the 'lynch-mob mentality' of the angered community (1990: 348-50). Because the ritual has been assigned to the priest, and thus, the opportunity of dealing with the errant wife has been removed from the hysterical mob, an innocent woman would be protected from the wrath of her accusers. Brichto goes even further in transmuting the ordeal into a balm by asserting that the Sotah protects 'the woman as wife in the disadvantaged position determined for her by the mores of ancient Israel's society'. While the argument may seem attractive to those concerned with preserving the woman's life, it does not seem to have been one professed by ancient interpreters. Each time they refer to the woman put to the ordeal of bitter waters, they describe calamitous physical results. While they linger textually over the destruction of the guilty woman's body, they create no such parallel about the preservation of the innocent woman's body. While the interpreter as observer can gaze at a guilty woman's body, it would be a crime against the husband to gaze at an innocent wife's body. Describing her physically would be equivalent to undressing her. The guilty woman has already been observed in her nakedness, her husband already shamed.

That one could in theory assume an ordeal that at the least causes sterility as a way of protecting the woman is difficult to support. A sterile woman in a culture in which women function as child-bearers does not have a salutary future. Protection seems to be constructed for the husband, who, even upon his narrowest suspicion of his wife's infidelity, can force her to submit to this ordeal. The text even provides for the safety of the suspicious husband in the event that the wife is proved

innocent. He is completely exonerated even if his suspicions are proved false (v. 31).

Fishbane has delineated a complex and elegant inner-biblical exegesis that connects the prophetic use of the unfaithful wife motif (as illustrated by Hos. 1–2; Isa. 50.1; 51.17-23; 57.3-14; Ezek. 16; 23) as a metaphor for Israel's infidelity to YHWH with the divine judgment exercised in the ordeal in Numbers 5 (Fishbane 1974: 40-45). Certainly connecting the motif of an adulterous woman betraying her husband with the people Israel's betrayal of YHWH is a striking example of the vitality of midrashic technique at work. What is troublesome is that Fishbane, like the early midrashists, assumes the guilt of the woman in Numbers 5. Reading with the ideology of the text, he raises no suspicions about the possible motives of the accuser.

In overlooking the indeterminate nature of the crime as presented in the Sotah, Fishbane produces a new text, one in which the woman is known to be guilty of the crime. In the prophetic view, Israel's harlotry is overt; the people have been plainly worshiping other gods. It would seem that the legal texts upon which the prophets are playing would be those that refer to such a *witnessed* offense of adultery (Exod. 20.14; Lev. 20.10; Deut. 22.22), not to the *suspected* adultery in Numbers 5.

A narrative text that contains motifs of both the trial by ordeal ritual and of Israel as harlot is Exod. 32.19-20, where Moses (acting as priest) makes a potion from the golden calf that the people of Israel are required to drink. While this text has been connected since Talmudic times with the Sotah ritual (*Avodah Zarah* 44a), there are two noteworthy differences. In the Exodus text, after drinking, all the guilty people of Israel are struck down by a divine plague. Their communal act is met with communal punishment, whereas the Sotah sets the isolated woman apart from the community. Most important, Moses has seen their act of infidelity. 'When he approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot...' (v. 19). The priest in the Numbers ritual, on the other hand, has no proof of the woman's guilt at the time he makes her swallow the drink. Moses plays the role of the priest mixing up the deadly brew, although his actions at the outskirts of the camp appear to be impulsive, stemming from his fury at the people's disloyalty

to YHWH. He is not carrying out part of a formal ritual. In the Exodus text YHWH claims the dual role of shamed husband and divine vindicator. Both biblical recipes contain divine ingredients. Moses' brew contains the powdered remains of other gods, and the Sotah is made viable by the presence of YHWH.

The 'when' and 'how long' of the ritual and its resultant punishment concerns Frymer-Kensky. She envisions the woman going home 'to await the results at some future time' (1984: 22), yet the text does not imply any passage of time from the point of swallowing the potion to its devastating effect. While Frymer-Kensky's reading provides the woman an element of privacy—the woman would suffer her punishment at home—such a thoughtful emphasis on privacy directly counters the publicness of the ritual undergone upon the altar of the tabernacle. As I understand the measure-for-measure principle upon which this text is based, at best the woman would be rendered sexually dysfunctional for her sexual philandering. A parallel element requires a public punishment for a public sexual display. Since the wife did not remain at home alone, she will be publicly punished. Since the wrong man saw her body, everyone will see her sexually humiliated.

Brichto and Milgrom consider the effect of the bitter water upon the guilty woman to be more sinister, and more permanent, than abortion: sterilization. While I am more persuaded by an interpretation that embraces long-term effects than by one that supposes spontaneous abortion, I am skeptical that a husband would deprive himself of a fecund wife on the basis of his suspicions. In its favor, a barren or menopausal wife was exempt from the ordeal—which leads one to conclude that the potion had to affect the woman's ability to bear children. In this light Milgrom's 'cleansing of the womb' theory, which would return to the husband a wife able to conceive, has merit. The ordeal shares with many ancient laws involving women the overriding concern with protecting paternity, assuring the husband that any child born to his wife is his.

Another element of the readings of these scholars (Fishbane, Brichto, Frymer-Kensky, Milgrom) that I find curious is that none of them is struck by the fact that the woman is condemned to undergo the ordeal on the basis of her husband's suspicion,

not on proof. And that if the woman was proved guilty, as reflected by some womb-shaking punishment, they do not imagine that death would be the result. Cases of 'proved' adultery were treated as capital crimes; it would seem that the swollen womb and sagging thigh would be all the evidence one would need that the woman was guilty. Indeed the proof would be of divine origin, since the magical (or divine) nature of the potion is that once inside the woman it discerns the purity or defilement of her body.

Milgrom argues that God has taken the punishment out of the hands of the outraged community, and thus the husband and community are forbidden to cause the death of the woman. YHWH has punished her through sterilization (1990: 349). If one accepts Milgrom's softer interpretation, the punishment remains in patriarchal hands: the deity avenges the crime against the husband. The woman is deprived of speech and action. *What is the woman for* in Milgrom's interpretation? She is the vessel through which the male-concocted brew flows. If she is a proper vessel, the liquid fills her like semen. She will bear the children of her husband. If she is an improper vessel, the liquid redefines her. She will no longer bear children.

Each of these modern interpretations remains within the borders of the biblical ritual. While the analyses describe or reflect the husband's existing suspicion of his wife, they all serve to augment the sense of suspicion about women that is produced by the biblical text. The concentration on suspicion of the woman also leaves unexamined the biblical constraint upon a wife not to behave in a suspicious manner, not to arouse her husband's anxieties. What I find missing in the recent analyses is any acknowledgment of the consequence to the woman of shaking up the sexual/gender system. At the same time there is no attempt to challenge, or even comment upon, the institutional structure of patriarchy that used the ritual of Sotah to put a woman in her place.

The Glass Half Full

From the sampling of midrashic texts imagining the fate of the wandering wife, it seems clear that the ancient rabbis were not

embarrassed about creating violent sexual images of punishment for the wife who might have double-crossed her husband. In their attempt to limit the negative impact of the Sotah text, modern interpreters generally ignore the violent language in these texts. The readings of Milgrom and Brichto defend the practice of the ritual of Sotah as a strong means of protection of the woman against her irate husband. But the possibility of vengeance as the husband's motive is ignored, as are the images of shrinking genitalia and distended womb. Such considerations would provide the reader with an alternative possibility to the woman's guilt.

As more scholars apply feminist theories to the Sotah, the presumption that the male point of view is universal or normative will be dissolved. The scant or perfunctory examination of women's responses to this corrosive text is an example of how much work needs to be done in the area of feminist analysis of biblical texts. Romney-Wegner has recently added to the literature of the Sotah by producing such a critical analysis of the text as legal document. She notes two prongs of discrimination reflected by the ritual of the Sotah: (1) there is no corresponding ritual for an errant husband, since adultery is defined as a crime committed by a wife against her husband, not a husband against his own wife. (2) The Sotah is the only case in either the Bible or the Mishnah that circumvents the normal rules of evidence, in which two witnesses are necessary in capital cases; the result is a double standard of due process. The wife's personal rights are diluted by the husband's property rights.

Romney-Wegner's insights are important to a feminist analysis of ancient legal texts that kept women contained. Since her interests are legal and not literary, however, the powerful language of the text, and the rabbinic fantasies that expand upon it, are out of her purview. She does not wonder about the effect upon the image of women when a society creates its only trial by ordeal in order to punish their improper sexual behavior. Clearly the integration of research on women from many different fields is needed to circumvent the borders of our particular disciplines. Each analysis of the Sotah will present

a partial picture until we use an interdisciplinary analysis that encompasses many partial views.

The crucial element of the Sotah text, regardless of whether one wishes the accused woman to suffer a horrible death or merely to sip a noxious cocktail, is that it reflects the potency of male imaginings. As surely as the innocent bird eagerly wings toward the tempting snare, the husband imagines his wife as luscious Eve, the source of trouble and the root of desire. A tamed Eve pleases men, a wild one frightens them, but in neither aspect does she serve the needs of women. The Sotah both reflects and supports the patriarchal social system that cannot accept the woman without seeking to offset the threat that she represents, a threat of dissolution, anarchy and antisocial disorder.

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INTERTEXTUALITY AND THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH: ANIMADVERSIONS ON TEXT AND THEORY

Robert P. Carroll

> Yet, what appears as a lack of rigour is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double.
>
> Julia Kristeva[1]

> Every text, being itself the intertext of another text, belongs to the intertextual, which must not be confused with a text's origins: to search for the 'sources of' and 'influence upon' a work is to satisfy the myth of filiation. The quotations from which a text is constructed are anonymous, irrecoverable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without quotation marks. The work does not upset monistic philosophies, for which plurality is evil. Thus, when it is compared with the work, the text might well take as its motto the words of the man possessed by devils: 'My name is legion, for we are many' (Mark 5.9).
>
> Roland Barthes[2]

> Literature is not exhaustible, for the sufficient and simple reason that no single book is. A book is not an isolated being: it is a relationship, an axis of innumerable relationships.
>
> Jorge Luis Borges[3]

1. J. Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', in *The Kristeva Reader* (ed. T. Moi; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 37 (ET by A. Jardine, T. Gora, and L.S. Roudiez of 'Let mot, le dialogue et le roman', in *Semiotiké* [Paris; Editions du Seuil, 1969], pp. 143-73 [146]).

2. R. Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (ed. J.V. Harari; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 77 (ET by J.V. Harari of 'De l'oeuvre au texte', *Revue d' Esthétique* 3 [1971]).

3. J.L. Borges, 'A Note on (towards) Bernard Shaw', in his *Labyrinths:*

I

Having written copiously on the book of Jeremiah, I still find that that book eludes my reading of it. It resists all my reading strategies and other scholars' reading strategies do not persuade me at all that they have got the measure of Jeremiah. I can cope with being mystified and even defeated in my reading of the Bible because its alienness is both self-evident and generally acknowledged by contemporary writers on the Bible. I am unable to accept many of my colleagues' readings of Jeremiah because they tend to demystify it to the point of domestication. Its alienness—of time, place, culture, ideology, etc.—is charmed by such reading strategies and often becomes the underwriting of their own programmes. Such domestications I wish to eschew, while leaving myself open to the criticism that I have failed to milk the text of its obvious theological wealth.[4] That failure is not all that great because in my opinion a success here would be a betrayal of the text. In this paper I shall attempt to put forward a rather different approach to the understanding of the book of Jeremiah, using insights from modern literary theory known as 'intertextuality'. In discussing the book of Jeremiah in terms of my own approaches to it in conjunction with those of other commentators on the book I have already begun to *practise* an intertextual approach to Jeremiah.

Selected Stories and Other Writings (London: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 248-49.

4. This I take to be the main point of W. Brueggemann's criticism of my work on Jeremiah in his review of recent commentaries on Jeremiah: 'Jeremiah: Intense Criticism/Thin Interpretation', *Int* 42 (1988), pp. 268-80. Brueggemann has now contributed two fine volumes of commentary on Jeremiah himself, so his own theological reading of the text can be scrutinized: *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down: A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1–25; To Build, To Plant: A Commentary on Jeremiah 26–52* (International Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1988, 1991). I have offered some reflections on the Jeremiah commentaries of Carroll, Holladay and McKane in my articles, 'Radical Clashes of Will and Style: Recent Commentary Writing on the Book of Jeremiah', *JSOT* 45 (1989), pp. 99-114; and 'Arguing about Jeremiah: Recent Studies and the Nature of a Prophetic Book', in *Congress Volume, Leuven 1989* (ed. J.A. Emerton; VTSup, 43; Leiden: Brill, 1991), pp. 222-35.

The term 'intertextuality' (or *intertextualité*) is taken from the seminal 1966 essay by Julia Kristeva. This essay is a presentation and development of the central ideas of the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin.[5] In her discussion of Bakhtin she writes:

> Writer as well as 'scholar', Bakhtin was one of the first to replace the static hewing out of texts with a model where literary structure does not simply exist but is generated in relation to *another* structure. What allows a dynamic dimension to structuralism is his conception of the 'literary word' as an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context.[6]

She develops her explication of Bakhtin's work further:

> The addressee, however, is included within a book's discursive universe only as discourse itself. He thus fuses with this other discourse, this other book, in relation to which the writer has written his own text. Hence horizontal axis (subject–addressee) and vertical axis (text–context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read. In Bakhtin's work, these two axes, which he calls *dialogue* and *ambivalence*, are not clearly distinguished. Yet, what appears as a lack of rigour is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*.[7]

These two quotations from a complex essay will have to serve as points of definition. The term 'intertextuality' defines the literary object/event/word as an 'intersection of textual surfaces' and as 'a mosaic of quotations'. In other words, a text is always both pretextual and contextual, as well as being textual. It is not simply generated by a writer, but is a complex production

5. She focuses mainly on Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World* (ET 1965) and his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (ET 1973); but the reader interested in his dialogism theory might be better recommended to read M. Bakhtin, in M. Holquist (ed.), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist; Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981).

6. Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', p. 37 (emphases original).

7. Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', p. 37 (emphases original).

formed by prior textual events and the interaction of writers/redactors/readers with such a contexting textuality.

Further intertextual definitions of intertextuality may be added to Kristeva's initial analysis. Among many definitional statements, the following by John Frow are given here to aid understanding of the nature of the intertextual:

> Texts are therefore not structures of presence but traces and tracings of otherness. They are shaped by the repetition and the transformation of other textual structures.
>
> These absent textual structures at once constrain the text and are represented by and within it; they are at once preconditions and moments of the text.
>
> Texts are made out of cultural and ideological norms; out of the conventions of genre; out of styles and idioms embedded in the language; out of connotations and collective sets; out of clichés, formulae, or proverbs; and out of other texts.[8]

The notions of otherness and repetition are fundamentally important in defining the nature of intertextuality. They point to the codedness of textuality and emphasize the fact that a text reflects a system (or code) of other textual factors (or structures). Every text makes its readers aware of other texts. It insists on an intertextual reading.

Turning from the definitional to the biblical text, it is possible to demonstrate the self-evident nature of the intertextuality of the Bible by referring to what is already known about that collection of many books that we call 'the Bible'. This in turn will allow me to introduce an intertextual reading of Jeremiah as a natural follow-on from the collection of books in which the book of Jeremiah now has its place. For once it may be worthwhile pointing out the obvious so as to remind readers of the Bible of what they may be forgetting when reading that book.

Whatever our ideological holdings and however we may favour reading the Bible, the presentation of the books constituted by the different canons of the Bible (Hebrew, Greek, Christian, etc.) represents certain narratological arrangements

8. J. Frow, 'Intertextuality and Ontology', in *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (ed. M. Worton and J. Still; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 45-55 (45).

that tell a story (e.g. from Genesis to 2 Kings or from Genesis to 2 Chronicles/Ezra–Nehemiah). This story (or these stories) depend very much on all the books being arranged in sequence and therefore the story that emerges from the Bible is fundamentally intertextual. Each textual unit (or book) within the larger collection of books depends on the books preceding and succeeding it for its place in and contribution to the story. Some canon-conscious communities may prioritize certain elements of the narrative and thereby make all the other books in the collection dependent on or reflective of the prioritized books—as happens in Orthodox Judaism, where the Torah of Moses is the main focus of revelation and everything else in the canon is (mere) commentary on Torah. Intertextuality becomes metacommentary.[9]Jameson The relationship then between Torah and the rest of the books ('the law and the prophets') is an intertextual one. In various Christian communities (whether Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant) such intertextualities are taken up into a greater intertextuality created by the addition of the (Greek) New Testament to the (Greek version of the) Hebrew Bible. The storyline of the New Testament depends very much on the (meta)narrative of the Hebrew Bible and would be meaningless without it. Much of what is in the New Testament is generated by an intertextual dialogue with the older collection of writings (the letter to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse make the intertextual point without remainder!). Within the New Testament itself there is a strong intertextual factor in the production of the Synoptic Gospels, where the Gospels feed on and off each other. The Gospel of Mark signals its intertextual nature immediately by identifying the 'beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, *as it is written* in Isaiah the prophet...' (1.1-2a) in intertextual terms. Matthew's genealogy of Jesus reflects the Gospel as book (1.1, 'the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ') and is modelled on the *toledoth* literature of the Hebrew Bible. Luke's Gospel equally signals its

9. On metacommentary see F. Jameson, 'Metacommentary' in his *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971–1986. I. Situations of Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 3-16 (article originally published in *PMLA* 86.1 [1971], pp. 9-18). David Clines and Robert Carroll are currently editing a volume on the Hebrew Bible under the general title of *Metacommentary*.

intertextual construction by acknowledging the many who had 'undertaken to compile a narrative' before he set out 'to write an orderly account' of the matter (1.1-4).

The intertextual nature of the Bible cannot be gainsaid. Whether we read the Hebrew Bible, the literature from Qumran, the New Testament or the Bibles of the various Christian churches, we are always reading texts that have been generated intertextually. I state the obvious in order to put it behind us. The whole Bible (whichever one is used) is a mosaic of mosaics (a mosaic of Mosaics, also). In classical critical theory about the Bible, the Documentary Hypothesis about the generation of the Pentateuch from four documents (JEDP) is a primitive form of an intertextual account of the writing of the Bible. However much that theory (in whatever version) may be under review in current biblical scholarship, and whatever theory of biblical composition may (or may not) replace it eventually in the guild of biblical studies, any account of how the primary narratives of the Bible came to be written will have to have an intertextual basis.[10]

It would take a chapter in itself to outline the dominant intertextual relations between the books in the Hebrew Bible. The so-called Deuteronomistic History of Joshua–Judges–Samuel–Kings (with the book of Deuteronomy as its prologue) is edited so as to be quite dependent on the Pentateuch, and it regularly cites it. Throughout that History (and also in Chronicles) there are many references to books that form intertextual connections with what is in the biblical text. Any examination of the books making up the Prophetic Collection (Isaiah–Jeremiah–Ezekiel–the Twelve) will discover a whole intertextual world where each individual book will be found to contain a considerable amount of material common to other books (the most obvious example may be Isa. 2.2-4 = Mic. 4.1-3, but further similar examples could be multiplied a hundredfold). To read and understand Isaiah 40–55 it is necessary to know the book of Psalms; to read the book of Jeremiah requires a deep knowledge of the

10. My own view of the composition of the Pentateuch, which tends to follow Rendtorff's notion of *Bearbeitungen*, is merely academic here, and the intertextuality of the Pentateuch is a perception about the five books independent of any particular theory of composition (in or out of vogue).

Deuteronomistic History. The examples could be multiplied, but the argument would not be made any firmer by statistical information. The books of the Bible are interwoven by and from each other and no account of their composition that avoids addressing their intertextual nature can be an adequate account of anything in the Hebrew Bible.

II

To turn to the book of Jeremiah after this most general of introductions is to see just how intertextual the biblical books really are. The major, and in my opinion now classic, commentary on Jeremiah by Bernhard Duhm (1901), with its explanation of the composition of the book of Jeremiah in terms of the poems of Jeremiah, the book of Baruch and supplementation of these two documents by later writers, indicates the fundamentally intertextual nature of Jeremiah without using such terminology.[11] The notion of supplementers working on prior documents and producing the book as we know it already contains in it the basic idea of intertextuality. Texts are generated by prior texts. So the material for an intertextual account of the book of Jeremiah is there in the work of the commentators of this century (Duhm's work was mostly done in the last century, but the publication of his commentary in the first year of this century makes his work a twentieth-century book). Whether we develop Duhm's work or enhance it by modification or expansion using the subsequent work of Sigmund Mowinckel and William McKane does not materially affect Duhm's fundamentally important contribution to the modern understanding of the book of Jeremiah.[12] Mowinckel may favour the 'streams

11. B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (KHAT, 11; Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1901), pp. xi-xx.

12. S. Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter, 4; Hist.-Filos. Klasse, 1913, 5; Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1914), and *Prophecy and Tradition: The Prophetic Books in the Light of the Study of the Growth and History of the Tradition* (ANVAO, 2; Hist.-Filos. Klasse, 1946, 3; Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1946); W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah. I. Introduction and Commentary on Jeremiah I–XXV* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986). For a brief survey of the work of Duhm, Mowinckel and others on the composition of Jeremiah, see R.P. Carroll,

of tradition' approach rather than Duhm's 'supplements', and McKane may advocate a 'rolling corpus' notion of the book's generation, but all these commentators see Jeremiah as, in very important senses, being the product of development and supplementation (that is, as an *Ergänzungstext*). And the fundamental feature of any *Ergänzungstext* is its intertextual construction.[13]

Our knowledge of the processes that gave rise to the book of Jeremiah in the first place is absolutely nil. Everything we know (or imagine we know) is based on a highly interpretative account of what we may imagine is 'information'. We posit certain texts and narratives in Jeremiah as being prima facie an account of how the book was written (e.g. Jer. 36). This judgment is always open to question because it is analogous to lifting ourselves up with our own boot-straps—it is a boot-strapping operation because we extrapolate from information contained within a book when we have yet to demonstrate that such information can be used reliably for the purposes we have in mind. Commentators who rely on their own reading of Jeremiah 36 as *the* account of how *the book* of Jeremiah was written, so that 'the book is largely the work of the scribe Baruch', read more into the text than can be warranted by any prior argument.[14] On the other hand, treating the text as an *Ergänzungstext* allows us to recognize the obvious and then permits us to produce an intertextual account of the book's production. Jeremiah 36 allows a glimpse of this possibility because it presents an account of the transformation of Jeremiah's spoken oracles into a written document. When the king has the scroll of Jeremiah's words burned, Baruch the scribe *re*writes the scroll and 'many similar words were added' to the words of Jeremiah (36.32).[15]

Jeremiah: A Commentary (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1986), pp. 38-50. My articles referred to above in n. 4 offer further comment on the composition of Jeremiah, especially in relation to the work of Holladay and McKane.

13. On the connections between Jeremiah and 2 Kings, see C.C. Torrey, 'The Background of Jeremiah 1–10', *JBL* 56 (1937), pp. 193-216; on Jeremiah as an *Ergänzungstext* see my 'Arguing about Jeremiah', cited in note 4 above (pp. 229-31).

14. The brief quotation is from W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah. 2. A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 26–52* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 24.

15. I have written at greater length on the narrative of ch. 36 and also on

The intertextuality of that story must be obvious, even to incompetent readers. Words are transformed into writing and the first written version is replaced with a rewritten and longer second version. Incorporated into the second scroll is the first scroll, but it is now supplemented or even transformed—we do not know what the relations between the two may have been, other than whatever is conveyed by the term 'added'—and in that change you have a testimony to the scroll's intertextuality. The intertextual is the pretextual further inscribed. Baruch's second scroll has as its pretext the first scroll (its pretext is the words of Jeremiah), and its incorporation into the second scroll demonstrates the intertextual nature of that second scroll.

The fundamental intertextuality of the book of Jeremiah may be demonstrated using an approach different from the *Ergänzungstext* thesis. Perhaps the first and most obvious thing to notice about the book of Jeremiah is the fact (and fact it is!) that its final chapter (52) is also the final chapter of 2 Kgs (25). How intertextual can you get? Whatever the reasons for incorporating 2 Kings 25 into the book of Jeremiah and thereby forming an inclusio or closure between the Deuteronomistic History and Jeremiah, the intertextual nature of Jeremiah is strongly indicated. The shared chapter is declarative of the strong relationship between Jeremiah and the Deuteronomistic History. A general reading of Jeremiah will show that it is a book in dialogue with the History and also dependent on it. Modern scholarship on Jeremiah often talks about a Deuteronomistic *edition* of Jeremiah.[16] Whatever may be indicated by this point of view, and whatever justification there may be for it, it does point to an important aspect of the book of Jeremiah. The language, discourse analysis, topoi and other concerns of the

the role of writing in the book of Jeremiah: see my IOSOT paper 'Manuscripts Don't Burn—Inscribing the Prophetic Tradition: Reflections on Jeremiah 36' (Paris 1992; to be published in the BEATAJ volume of papers given at that Congress), and my G.W. Anderson Festschrift contribution, 'Inscribing the Covenant: Writing and the Written in Jeremiah' (to be published by JSOT Press in the *JSOT* Supplement Series).

16. The fullest account of the matter is undoubtedly W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1–25* and *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26–45* (WMANT, 41, 52; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973, 1981).

Deuteronomistic writers are also to be found in Jeremiah. Even allowing for a general theory of a Deuteronomistic edition of the Prophetic Collection, there is a stronger element of Deuteronomistic writing in Jeremiah than in any other prophetic book in the Hebrew Bible.[17] The relationship between Jeremiah and Deuteronomism (whatever is built into that catch-all term) is a highly intertextual one. The colophon of Jer. 1.1-3 apart (most of the colophons to the prophetic books reflect deuteronomistic influence), a number of narratives show Deuteronomistic traces throughout (e.g. 7.1–8.3; 11.1-13; 25.1-14; 26; 44), and the cycle of material on the 'house of the king of Judah' (21.11–23.6) in particular. In 22.10–23.6 the collection of poems is given a series of prose commentaries that owe much to the Deuteronomistic History. Without the linking commentary the poems could not be understood in the ways suggested by the prose explanations. The intertextuality of the cycle is glaringly obvious. The poems with their commentary are a prime example of the intertextuality of Jeremiah as 'an intersection of textual surfaces' where poems about anonymous persons (apart from 22.28-30) intersect with the History's list of the last kings of Judah to form an intertextual account of their fates. Jeremiah's poems become commentary on the kings and thereby supplement the History's account of them. Such intertextual supplementations help to incorporate the book of Jeremiah into the Deuteronomistic literature (hence the closure of Jeremiah with 2 Kgs 25).

In much more general ways the intertextuality of Jeremiah can be demonstrated to the reader of the book. There are so many intertextual elements *within the book itself* that it is difficult to know where to start in the argument. The inclusios, the chiastic structures, the repeats of pieces of text within the book, the editorial rearrangements of such repeats—all testify to the intertextual nature of the book. Much of the material contained in Jeremiah has been used in so many different ways to create the book that it is itself already intertextually generated without our having to go outside of the book to demonstrate its intertextual

17. On general features of a Deuteronomistic editing process in the prophets, see for example W.H. Schmidt, 'Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches. Zu den theologischen Unterschieden zwischen dem Prophetenwort und seinem Sammler', *ZAW* 77 (1965), pp. 168-93.

nature from other pretextual sources. The differences, especially of arrangement and placement, between the Hebrew and Greek editions of Jeremiah may force any reader (or commentators) into some intertextual account of the book. If the Greek versions of Jeremiah are scrutinized, say, in the Göttingen Septuagint edition, where each and every page is constituted by a quarter or less of text and three-quarters or more of alternative readings, then the intertextuality of Greek Jeremiah is simply beyond dispute.[18] Joseph Ziegler has provided us with the means of producing a first-class intertextual account of just one reception history of Jeremiah, but a comprehensive commentary on the Greek texts of Jeremiah remains to be written. Perhaps with the increased interest in newer approaches to the Bible—especially in terms of literary, intertextual and *Rezeptionsgeschichte* approaches to it—study of the Hebrew Bible will come to include a serious treatment of the LXX.[19]

Much of the book of Jeremiah is pieced together by the manipulation of fragments and snatches of text, so that the construction and production of the book must be regarded as having followed various intertextual routes. Pieces of text are brought together as topoi to form collections of related material: for example, the cycle of material on the cult (7.1–8.3); the drought cycle (14.1–15.4); material on the royal house (21.11–23.6); the cycle on the prophets (23.9-40) and a further collection of material held together by the topos of prophets (chs. 27–29). The construction of such cycles indicates an intertextual focus whereby editors, redactors, writers—I think these are overlapping rather than synonymous terms in current biblical scholarship, though I would not like to have to take the witness stand and swear on oath as to what the differences were between them—brought together bits of texts that they regarded as

18. J. Ziegler (ed.), *Jeremias, Baruch, Threni, Epistula Jeremiae* (Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum, auctoritate academiae scientiarum Gottingensis editum, 15; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd edn, 1976).

19. Apart from various monographs on the LXX of Jeremiah, McKane's ICC volume should be recognized for the importance of its treatment of the LXX in relation to the Hebrew text of Jeremiah. A full-scale commentary on the actual Greek texts of Jeremiah is still a desideratum of Jeremiah studies.

belonging together in order to make them form a unitary statement about certain matters. Juxtaposed, these originally separate elements are now intertextually constituted, and their meanings are shaped and reshaped by their present conjunctions in the book. Intertextuality creates meaning by these writerly means. Repeated uses of the same pieces of text (e.g. 6.13-15 = 8.10-12; 11.20 = 20.12; 16.14-15 = 23.7-8; 23.19-20 = 30.23-24) suggest construction processes in the book that indicate a highly intertextual reflectivity going on in the creation of the book of Jeremiah. Such intertextuality inevitably moves us away from original authorship—whatever that may mean in terms of the sources behind the Bible—to contemplate the production processes whereby *the text took this shape* (i.e. the form we have it in). Whatever account we may wish to offer for the production of the book of Jeremiah, it will have to take its intertextual nature into consideration. But then, as Roland Barthes states, 'The theory of the Text can coincide only with the activity of writing'.[20] We need some account of how the book came to written form and any such account is necessarily focused on techniques of ancient writing in the Near East.

Many other intertextual features of the book may be noted. The writer of the prologue in ch. 1 has gathered together a set of figures or *Leitmotiven* (*Leitwörter*) in 1.10 that reflect the uses of these words throughout the book itself. This extrapolation from the text reveals the intertextual engagement involved in the book's production. The fractured chiasmus of 1.10, with its six terms 'pluck up', 'break down', 'destroy', 'overthrow', 'build', 'plant', directs the reader how to read the book. The terms themselves appear in various combinations in 12.14-17; 18.7, 9; 24.6; 31.28, 38, 40; 42.10; 45.4 (with 31.28 using all six terms). A more complex pattern of usage could be suggested if every occurrence of one or more of these terms in the book were scrutinized. Readers who wish to follow this intertextual *Holzweg* may pursue their own reading of Jeremiah.

A much more interesting and complex intertextual feature of the book of Jeremiah may be seen in some of the narratives. A reading of these narratives will demonstrate how intertextuality functions to overflow the text's boundaries and to force the

20. Barthes, 'From Work to Text', p. 81.

reader into encountering other texts. This combination of intertextuality and narrativity in Jeremiah has the added bonus of moving the discussion away from more traditional textualist issues to more modern narratological matters in relation to the biblical text. In 7.1-15 there is what may now be called the famous 'temple sermon' (famous because so many preachers when stuck for a text always retreat to it for inspiration). The text is complex and has a double representation of proclamation in the temple precincts. It is introduced by one of the many standard 'reception of the divine word' formulas so dominant in the book of Jeremiah.[21] Thereafter the section is all sermon. No further contextualization information is given. Its present context in the cycle of material directed against cultic practices gives it a certain troping and suggests an outcome consonant with 8.1-3. In ch. 26, however, the sermon—or part of it—reappears, with much greater contextualization, and is presented as part of a narrative mostly taken up with the reception of the sermon. The whole chapter serves to introduce the second half of the book of Jeremiah—a book that has come to an end in 25.30-38, as it were. Thus ch. 26 is both significant as the *restart* of the tradition and pregnant with possibilities. As the introduction to the block of material in chs. 26–36, it tropes the earlier version of the sermon in various ways. I use the word 'earlier' here to mean 'earlier in the book' rather than in historical terms. The reader (or hearer) of the book will have read (or heard) 7.1-15 before hearing (or reading) ch. 26. This way of talking (writing) about the narrative already acknowledges the highly intertextual nature of the book of Jeremiah, but I know no other way of taking the text of Jeremiah seriously than to recognize its intertextual nature.

Structural elements in the narrative of ch. 26 link it with ch. 36, which closes the section of chs. 26–36. So ch. 26 has to be read in conjunction with ch. 36 in order for the circle of signification in the narratives to be closed. Chapter 26 sets up ch. 36 and ch. 36 concludes a matter left open-ended in ch. 26. The two narratives are intertextually bound together. In both narratives the words

21. On this feature of Jeremiah, see P.K.D. Neumann, 'Das Wort, das geschehen ist... Zum Problem der Wortempfangsterminologie in Jer. i–xxv', *VT* 23 (1973), pp. 171-217.

of the prophet, whether spoken or written, are responded to by various social strata of Judaean society. Problems of and questions about representation in the Bible cannot be dealt with here or this essay will run on too long, but readers should be reminded of Jacques Derrida's point about representation in order not to be led astray by the narratives of chs. 26 and 36 in relation to Judaean history. Derrida writes:[22]

> the authority of representation constrains us, imposing itself on our thought through a whole dense, enigmatic, and heavily stratified history. It programs us and precedes us...

So I shall not deal with what these narratives represent in terms of social interaction between prophet and people or even with the representation of Jeremiah in them. Only their intertextual features interest me here.

In ch. 26 various groups react to what Jeremiah says, both for and against his point of view. In a highly stratified narrative, different social strata hear him out, defend or attack him and, eventually, he escapes by the agency of a member of an important family (26.24). In the course of various debates about the legitimacy of what Jeremiah has to say, rural elders cite Mic. 3.12 in his defence (26.17-19). This incorporated citation in a narrative is very rare in the prophetic texts—quotations are all too common, but 26.18 is set into an ongoing narrative—yet it underlines the highly intertextual nature of the story. It is not only intertextual in relation to the book of Jeremiah (the argument of these paragraphs), it is intertextual in relation to Micah. The text of ch. 26 turns paradigmatic at vv. 17-19 and 20-23 before indicating the outcome of the debate in v. 24. In ch. 36, set a few years later than ch. 26, the prophet again attempts to influence the community (and the whole state: 36.9; cf. 26.2) in a particular direction. This time he does not preach to the worshippers, but the scroll of his words written by Baruch is read by Baruch on various occasions to different groups of people. The fate of the scroll indicates the final rejection of the prophet's words, and the story left open-ended in ch. 26 is closed in ch. 36. However, once ch. 36 is read into the story of ch. 26, the

22. J. Derrida, 'Sending: On Representation', *Social Research* 49.2 (1982), pp. 294-326 (304) (ET by P. and M.A. Caws).

intertextuality of the matter becomes more complex because 2 Kings 22 is implicated in ch. 36. Jeremiah 36 and 2 Kings 22 are bound up together intertextually. They reflect one another and together constitute a paradigm of how to hear prophecy read and how not to hear it read. These narratives mirror each other. Jer. 7.1-15 may be only the content of the prophetic word, but chs. 26 and 36 and 2 Kings 22 are all about the reception of that word. Their intertextuality proclaims itself in every line. It is a moot point whether Jeremiah 36 or 2 Kings 22 is the primary narrative on which the other is based.[23] As the book of Jeremiah is fundamentally dependent on the Deuteronomistic History, it may be concluded that Jeremiah 36 reflects 2 Kings 22 rather than the other way around, but from an intertextual point of view it hardly matters which came first. Both belong together and have to be read together intertextually.

The overstrong, intertextual relationship between Jeremiah and the Deuteronomistic History has already been stressed throughout this essay. It may be further spelled out to underline the point. For Deuteronomy—Deuteronomism includes the History and Deuteronomy—the figure of Moses, especially *Moses as prophet*, is absolutely fundamental. The most important texts for this viewpoint are Deut. 18.15-22 and 34.10-12—but the whole story of Moses, especially in Exodus 2–7, is told in terms of the formal aspects of the commissioning narratives of prophets. In Jeremiah 1 there are various elements that reflect connections between Jeremiah and Moses. Whether influence is from Moses to Jeremiah or vice versa is again a moot point.[24]

23. The vexed question of whether 2 Kings or Jeremiah came first cannot be dealt with here. Someday soon biblical scholarship will have to rethink all these matters and develop much better theoretical bases for reading the Hebrew Bible. On the relative order of Jer. 36 and 2 Kgs 22, see C. Minette de Tillesse, 'A reforma de Josias', *Revista Biblica Brasileira* 6 (1989), pp. 41-61, and his contribution to IOSOT 1992, 'Josias et Joiaqim: 2 R 22/Jer 36' in the BEATAJ volume referred to in n. 15 above.

24. On Jeremiah and Moses from the conventional point of view, see the many works of W.L. Holladay, esp. his 'The Background of Jeremiah's Self-Understanding: Moses, Samuel, and Psalm 22', *JBL* 83 (1964), pp. 153-64; 'Jeremiah and Moses: Further Observations', *JBL* 85 (1966), pp. 17-27; *Jeremiah*. I. *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1–25* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 26-31; *Jeremiah*, II,

Moses is directly referred to in 15.1, and in 11.1-13 Jeremiah is represented as being a preacher of the covenant. They are intertextual reflections of each other and the wise reader of the text today will avoid the folly of trying to relate either to history or to each other, except in textualist terms.

There is a vast number of intertextual elements in the book of Jeremiah, many of which are beyond the length of this study to encompass. A few further points may be brought to the reader's attention before concluding remarks are in order. A close reading of the cycle in 3.1–4.4 will convince even a sceptic of the book's dependence on other texts (hence its intertextual nature). Jer. 3.1 begins the cycle with a somewhat tendentious citing of Deut. 24.1, 4, so immediately the interpretation becomes an intertextual reading of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy. The reference to King Josiah in 3.6-8 picks up a minor element in the book of Jeremiah (cf. 1.3; 22.11; 25.1, 3; 36.2) and necessarily makes the reader refer to the Deuteronomistic History, where the story of Josiah has its proper place. All that the book of Jeremiah does with Josiah is midrashic in nature, and biblical midrash is inevitably intertextual. In 4.3 there is an echo of Hos. 10.12c (cf. the echo of Hos. 7.4 in Jer. 23.10 and the citation of Hos. 3.5a in Jer. 30.9). Intertextual relations between Hosea and Jeremiah are well known in the standard works on Jeremiah, though not everybody would want to offer an intertextual account of the matter. There are also strong intertextual relations between Jeremiah and Ezekiel which certainly warrant us taking a very serious intertextual approach to understanding how these texts (Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) came to be written.[25]

pp. 38-39. See also L. Alonso Schökel, 'Jeremías como anti-Moisés', in *De la torah au messie: Etudes d'exégèse et d'herméneutique bibliques offertes à Henri Cazelles pour ses 25 années d'enseignement à l'Institut Catholique de Paris (Octobre 1979)* (ed. M. Carrez, J. Doré and P. Grelot; Paris: Desclée, 1981), pp. 245-54.

25. Some of the materials for this approach can be found in C. Hardmeier, *Prophetie im Streit vor dem Untergang Judas: Erzählkommunikative Studien zur Entstehungssituation der Jesaja- und Jeremiaerzählungen in II Reg 18–20 und Jer 37–40* (BZAW, 187; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989); T.M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile: Judgment/ Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); C.R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah* (BZAW, 176; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989). On

It is of the essence of intertextuality that it consists of 'an intersection of textual surfaces' and 'as a dialogue among several writings'—to echo Kristeva again—and therefore an intertextual approach to the understanding of the prophetic books is necessary in order to account for the ways in which the different books seem to echo each other all the time.

Jer. 25.30 reflects Amos 1.2 and Joel 3.16. That is, all three references are essentially the same text, with local variations in each book. That example can be multiplied throughout the book of Jeremiah, especially in the material generally known as 'the oracles against the nations' (chs. 46–51). Jer. 51.58b is identical to Hab. 2.13b. The material on Moab in ch. 48 has many similarities to the material on Moab in Isaiah 15–16 (e.g. 48.34-36 as a conglomerate formed from Isa. 15.2-6; 16.11-12). Jer. 49.12-22 is expanded by material from Obad. 1-4, among other places (see the standard commentaries). In the second volume of his major commentary on Jeremiah William Holladay offers a great deal of data on this common material in Jeremiah and other biblical books.[26] He uses an extremely old-fashioned approach which is rather theoretically uninformed and writes about 'Jeremiah's dependence on...' without drawing any conclusions about the intertextuality of all this 'dependence'. He does, however, provide a great amount of data from which any careful reader may be able to deduce a theory of intertextuality for the composition of the book of Jeremiah. I, for my part, cannot see how the inspired prophet of Holladay's account is going to go around quoting everybody else's words in order to make up his own words. If it is Baruch who is translating Jeremiah's words into the words of all the other prophets, then a different theory of prophecy is required from Holladay. I would prefer to see developed an intertextual account of the matter that would take full cognizance of the fact that so much of the book of Jeremiah is made up of intertextual elements—and that therefore any theory of the book's composition would

the Hosea–Jeremiah connection see K. Gross, 'Hoseas Einfluss auf Jeremias Anschauung', *NKZ* 42 (1931), pp. 241-56, 327-43. I would prefer an intertextual account of the matter rather than an 'influence' (shades of Harold Bloom!) approach to these biblical books.

26. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, II, pp. 44-53.

have to allow for some distance between the 'historical Jeremiah' and the written words we now read. That distance would have to be considerably further than appears to be allowed for in Holladay's voluminous writings on Jeremiah.

One final set of examples may conclude the textualist part of my essay: 6.22-24 = 50.41-43 (with minor variations). All these double texts in Jeremiah force the modern reader to think about redactional compositions of the work and make us abandon particularity of reference in understanding what a prophet may have said. I have singled out this example of a double text because it demonstrates the strong intertextual relationship between the cycle of oracles in 4.5–6.26 and the cycle of poems in chs. 50–51 in the cycle of 'the oracles against the nations' (chs. 46–51). Many of the same terms, figures, images, metaphors and metonyms occur in both sets of texts. Ostensibly chs. 4–6 represent Jeremiah's preaching against Jerusalem-Judah and chs. 50–51 represent his preaching against Babylon. The same dominant motif of 'the foe from the north' figures in both cycles. But if in chs. 4–6 the foe from the north is Babylon, who then is that foe from the north in chs. 50–51 when Babylon itself is the target? How can the same material serve such different purposes? The question may be more acutely addressed to the Greek edition, which has the material against the nations placed in the middle of the book, whereas in the Hebrew edition the oracles of chs. 46–51 are at the end of the book, thus creating a fine symmetry between chs. 4–6 and 50–51. The infinite adaptability of the text points in an interesting direction: any statement in the prophetic texts may be made up of fairly conventional, clichéd material and therefore can have as its referent (if referent there be!) a wide range of possible meanings. Stock phrases can be loaded with precise reference by variation: e.g. 'against you, O daughter Zion' in 6.23 easily becomes 'against you, O daughter Babylon' in 50.42. An examination of the book of Jeremiah will reveal it to be made up of multitudinous clichés, conventionalized speech, commonplaces, quotations, proverbs, and all the other forms of expression so characteristic of intertextual productions. Whether we need to revise our image of the prophet to one who went around adapting old sayings and updating well-tried routines of oracular expression or should pursue our intertextual readings

in a rather different direction in their bearing on the theory of the text's composition is a matter for much debate.

III

The basic data that I have chosen for consideration here are only part of the book of Jeremiah. More and different examples could have been given, but I do not think that they would have made much difference to my argument about the intertextuality of Jeremiah. The production of the prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible is very much an intertextual matter. There may have been original speakers behind the traditions represented by the books, but I do not think that in the books we are dealing directly with them. Their original work—this assumption may be challenged in many ways—has been troped by writers with other agendas and turned into the texts we know. What a theory of intertextuality does for the prophets is quite a complicated matter. It does not necessarily rule out authorship, for, as Barthes notes about the notion of the intertextual, it 'must not be confused with a text's origins' (see epigraphic introduction), but it probably means that we cannot work with old-fashioned notions of speaker–writer–text simplicities. The force of the theory is that it makes us recognize the intertextuality of all language. We already knew that! But what modern theory does is both to remind us of what we thought we knew (but have often forgotten) and to force us to acknowledge it in praxis. The intertextual points to the pretextual textuality that governs texts and that sets up webs or networks in which texts are coded and by which the author of any text is turned into a 'guest' in that text.[27] The long occupation with the author of texts in biblical studies, the almost obsessional concern to identify who wrote what and to attribute every fragment of a text to a specific author or to assign each layer of a text to the genuine, the secondary or the gloss—these are concerns that have been in the process of being abandoned in recent decades. An intertextual approach to biblical texts should assist that

27. Barthes, 'From Work to Text', p. 78. The word Barthes uses is *réseau*, which is better translated as 'network' than 'web' (the translation preferred by the translator of his article).

abandonment further. The author must be abandoned simply because the biblical texts are hardly 'authored' in the modern sense of an author as the actual writer of a text. Intertextuality goes much further than that, but even that would be a start in some circles. Jeremiah studies would certainly benefit greatly from the abandonment of the search for either 'the historical Jeremiah' or 'the author of the book of Jeremiah'. I believe both quests to be doomed to utter failure and also to be a waste of time and energy. An intertextual approach to the book of Jeremiah which sees it as a network of pretextual, contextual textualities would focus our attention on the text rather than on data to which we have no access.

Intertextuality, among so many other things, means that no text can ever be seen as existing as a closed system or as a hermetic or self-sufficient text. It always exists in terms of and over against other texts. Other texts helped to create it. Its writers are always readers of other texts. So it always exists in reference to other texts. A different intertextual approach to Jeremiah could have been taken by looking at Jeremiah in relation to the book of Psalms (e.g. 17.5-8 and Ps. 1), but that would not have established anything other than what I have written.[28] What I think is now required in Jeremiah studies is an intertextual approach which will not only investigate the whole range of intertextual elements in the construction of the book of Jeremiah, but will also turn its attentions to imagining the conditions of the production of the book. If this is how the book looks, how did it come to be this way? Its intertextuality raises many questions which may be dealt with in different ways. The historical–critical approach to the Bible always likes to work with the 'historical' because it believes specific historical occasions generate texts. That may well be the case, though I do not envy anybody who imagines that they have access—or can gain access—to the occasions that produced the biblical texts. If, in

28. Again the question of which way the influence should be understood vis-à-vis the Psalms and Jeremiah is a matter of debate; see P.E. Bonnard, *Le psautier selon Jérémie: Influence littéraire et spirituelle de Jérémie sur trente-trois Psaumes* (LD, 26; Paris: Cerf, 1960); cf. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, II, pp. 64-70. The matter of the lament poems in Jer. 11–20, commonly called 'the confessions of Jeremiah', is far too complex to discuss here.

Holladay's approach to Jeremiah, the prophet is shown to be dependent on all those other books, then we must ask about the nature of such a prophet and also ask whether all those writings were in existence *and* authoritative to the point that Jeremiah would use them to construct his own work. In a book that contains such a scathing dismissal of the written (Jer. 8.8), it may not be so obvious that the speaker would depend so much on other scribal contributions.[29] On the other hand, perhaps he did and therefore we, the readers, need to distance ourselves from this Jeremiah character because he behaves like somebody who lacks self-awareness.

There are many aspects of the theory of intertextuality that I have not taken into account in this brief survey of its application to the book of Jeremiah. That is always one of the dominant problems of using modern theory to explicate ancient texts. The metaphysics that shores up modern theories is not always appropriate for ancient writings or, for that matter, itself secure from serious criticism (this seems to me to be very much the case with any Marxist or marxisant theory used in reading the Bible). In offering here an account of the intertextuality of Jeremiah I recognize that I am using a fairly simple model of the theory in order to offer some illustrations of how such a theory can assist in reading the Bible. I am no stranger myself to theory or its use, so I do know what its shortcomings can be.[30] Whatever lack of theoretical sophistication may be charged against the user of theory, there is also always the charge that the theory involves a long, complicated way of getting to where a simpler, more traditional approach has already taken its anti-theory devotees. Such animadversions against theory are inevitable. Yet they should not hide from us the fact that most of us tend

29. My articles referred to in n. 15 above offer some observations on Jer. 8.8.

30. In my book *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Traditions* (London: SCM Press, 1979), I used the theory of cognitive dissonance, developed from social psychology, as a reading strategy for analysing the prophets. Critical reaction to that book was generally hostile to the theoretical sections and more approving of the less theoretical material. Getting the blend of text and theory right in current biblical studies is a very difficult task. This essay illustrates some of the problems.

to use some theory of composition or writing, whether or not we are as conscious of it as we might be. New theories come along in order to displace older theories because the yield from the older approaches has become steadily less and less. It is the failure of old theories *and* the death of old theoreticians that give new theories their opportunities to perform.

Intertextuality describes a number of phenomena that are very old, very common and remarkably well known. More traditionalist approaches might talk about 'echo', 'influence', 'borrowing', 'quotation', etc., though, to be fair to the concept of intertextuality, it goes much further than these terms do and covers a much wider metaphysical range too. In biblical studies much work has already been done on intertextual matters, though without calling it by such a name.[31] So any intertextual approach to the Bible can forge links with work in progress and with so much solid research already completed. McKane's 'rolling corpus' approach to Jeremiah still seems to me to be a very promising excavation of the compositional modes of Jeremiah 1–25. It is intertextuality *within* the book of Jeremiah. Other approaches will take up the intertextual as the relations between texts from different books.[32] That approach will generate a very large body of work and reflects what is beginning to appear in biblical scholarship. The more old-fashioned terminology of 'borrowing' or whatever should not conceal from us the similarity of the enterprise. We all know how musicians 'borrow' or 'steal' from each other—can Johann Sebastian Bach or Mozart be understood except in relation to the works from which they have taken so much and transformed it? In twentieth-century music the practice of deliberately taking from others or using their styles of music to construct new music is too well known to require much comment. The music of Gustav Mahler is perhaps most noted for this blending of styles taken

31. I have in mind here the very solid work of M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). Others, too many to name, also belong here.

32. E.g. D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); R.B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

from other composers, but from Monteverdi to Mahler the intertextuality of music has been part of the given in European music. The modern composer Alfred Schnittke (of German-Russian Jewish extraction) describes his own music in terms of its 'polystylism' (an aspect of stylistic pluralism). Such 'polystylism' is simply a form of stylistic manipulation whereby a composer takes a style from another composer (in Schnittke's case the main influences include Mahler, Schönberg and Berg) and reworks it for purposes other than those used by the original musician.[33] What polystylism describes in music, intertextuality describes in writing.

An intertextual approach to Jeremiah brings to the fore the vexed old question of the original author, which seems to plague biblical studies. While there is nothing in the theory that would rule out some carefully specified notion of 'author' (original writer, editor, redactor or final writer, editor, redactor or what?), it does in general diminish the role of the author as unique intersubjective personality. Since so much of the theological reading of the Bible wants to remain within striking distance of 'scripture as sacred writing with authoritative implicatures', an intertextual account of Jeremiah can raise serious problems of authenticity, legitimacy and authority. In these senses, much of current debate about 'canonical criticism' is a contested site of struggle about the authority of the Bible, and 'intertextuality' can be seen as an enemy of the canonic. There are certainly family resemblances between an intertextual reading of the Bible and the approach of 'canonical criticism'. Both approaches wish to read the text in its totality of textual and intertextual networks, codes and systems. But the canonic approach to the Bible wishes to rush to closure and to control the ownership of the Bible in ways unimaginable to the intertextualists.[34] Old and new theoretical positions do battle here. An intertextual account

33. For those who do not know the music of Alfred Schnittke, see the work of John Webb on Schnittke, esp. his 'Schnittke in Context', *Tempo* 182 (September 1992), pp. 19-22; and the work of the music critic Ronald Weitzman, who is an ardent follower of Schnittke's music.

34. This is my perception of the function of the work of the Yale theologians, especially that of Brevard Childs and also the Lindbeck–Thiemann school (including the work of Hays referred to above in n. 32).

of any biblical text (or of the Bible itself) will not necessarily serve any particular ideological position, whereas the approach of 'canonical criticism' inevitably tropes the discussion in ecclesiastical directions. I would have to say then that intertextuality holds better promise for biblical scholarship as a whole, as a discipline involving the 'community of scholars'. The canonic approaches will then favour the 'community of believers' better than they will the larger world of scholarship. That need not mean a rift between intertextual approaches and canonic approaches. An intertextual study of the Bible (or parts of it) need not confine itself to questions about canonic intentions or may not even address them at all. Different interests determine these matters. Yet both approaches recognize certain fundamental points: the texts are intertextual because texts are always in dialogue with other texts and also in dialogue with other readers, which is another way of saying the same thing.[35]

35. A shorter and earlier version of this paper was read to the Postgraduate Seminar of the Glasgow University Faculty of Divinity's Department of Biblical Studies. Something of the long, engaged discussion that followed the paper has been taken into account in the rewriting of this chapter. I am grateful for all the responses, though I will not swear to having amended my life or views adequately yet.

A WORLD ESTABLISHED ON WATER (PSALM 24): READER-RESPONSE, DECONSTRUCTION AND BESPOKE INTERPRETATION

David J.A. Clines

Let's talk of readers' response. Or, since I am doing the talking, let me talk of *this* reader's response.

There are things about this fine and famous psalm a reader like me cannot swallow. There is, for instance, the idea of the world being founded upon seas and rivers. The poet, for his part, actually believes (does he not?) that underneath the rocks and dirt of the earth's surface there is an underworld sea, fed by rivers, upon which the world floats. And I do not believe that. Or rather, to put it more strongly but more exactly, I know that that view is wrong.

But this is not the only point on which I cannot buy the ideology of the psalm. For me, this cosmological misapprehension is only the outcropping of a larger seismic fault that runs hidden beneath the whole surface of the psalm.

I will be arguing that the psalm is riddled with religious ideas as unacceptable as its cosmology, and further, that it is not even internally coherent. At the end I will suggest an answer to the question of what is to be done with a piece of sacred literature that is so ideologically and religiously alien today, even to a person of goodwill toward it (like myself), and that speaks with so uncertain a voice. I will, in other words, deploy three strategies: an ideologically slanted reader-response criticism, a deconstructionist critique, and a new proposal for a goal-oriented hermeneutic, which I call 'bespoke' or 'customized' interpretation.

1. *A Reader-Response Criticism*

Let me first speak of the reader that I am. Toward the poem as a whole I find myself ambivalent. All my life I have found the poem powerful and uplifting. This is partly due to the background music I inevitably hear when I read the poem, the singing of it by the Scottish Male Voice Choir, all the vogue in my religious neck of the woods in the fifties. But there is also something grand and elevated about its tone that attracts me—at least, that attracts a romantic and soulful part of me.

I also recognize and accept that the poem has been, for two and a half millennia or more, a vehicle for worship in Jewish and Christian communities; and however unlovely those communities may have been, I have no urge to sniff at their religious experience. In short, I want to be able to say something positive about this poem.

The other side of it is that the poem is built upon two ideologies that I deplore: the first a notion that 'holiness' attaches to places, the second an idea of victory in war as glorious.

a. *Holiness*

According to the poem, only those who live blameless lives are entitled to enter the temple of the Lord—it is those who have clean hands and a pure heart who 'shall', or 'should', ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in his holy place (vv. 3-4).[1] No doubt there is a sense of fit here, an idea that pure people and things belong in holy places, and that outside the temple, *pro fano*, is the place for the profane. But there is equally plainly a sense that the holiness that exists in the 'holy place' is in need of protection from the impure, that it is open to contamination by unholiness.[2]

In such an account, holiness is being understood both in a religious-cultic and in an ethical sense: holy places clearly cannot

1. Is this a prediction of who in fact shall enter the holy place, or who it is who is entitled to enter it?

2. Holiness is 'defined on the one hand as that which is consistent with God and his character, and on the other as that which is threatened with impurity' (D.P. Wright, 'Holiness (OT)', in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* [ed. D.N. Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992], III, pp. 237-49 [237]).

be holy in an ethical sense, but are holy only because they have been marked out as such by a divine signal.[3] Humans, on the other hand, need to match the holiness of the holy place by the kind of holiness that they can acquire, which is ethical purity (and not, of course, religious-cultic designation, unless they happen to be priests). In the language of the poem, the place is 'holy' and the entrants to it are 'clean'. Ethical 'uncleanness' is unsuitable for a 'holy' place.

My question to myself, as a reader checking all the time on my responses to texts, is: Can I tolerate a notion of holiness that sees it as contaminatable? If the world contains relatively small pockets of holiness, like a hill of the Lord or a temple, surrounded by vast areas of unholiness, like (presumably) everywhere else, and if the unholy has the power to contaminate the holy but the holy does not have the power to infect the unholy, what future, I ask myself, is there for the holy? The holy is rather under threat, is it not, if it has to be protected from the unholy by the exclusion of unrighteous people from visiting the sanctuary. For if impure people are supposed to be kept out of the shrine, or keep themselves out, in order to protect its holiness, what happens if impure people are inadvertently allowed in? Does the holy thereby become unholy?

In a word, Is the holy to be at the mercy of doorkeepers? Would it not be better, I say to myself, to think of holiness, as a symbol of the divine, as incapable of being damaged by humans? If it is worth the name of holy, must it not in any case be more powerful than its opposite, whatever *its* name? Why not think of the divine presence as a powerful purifying influence that can quite easily cope with sinners and can in some way annihilate their impurity? A temple, then, if it is to be conceived

3. 'We cannot make shrines and cannot select their "positions", but can never do more than merely find them' (G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* [trans. J.E. Turner; New York: Harper & Row, 1963], p. 398). Typically the holy place in Israelite religion is 'the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to put his name there' (Deut. 12.5), that is, the place of theophany. And Israel is to 'take care' that it does not choose its own holy places (Deut. 12.13). See also my paper, 'Sacred Space, Holy Places and Suchlike', *Trinity Occasional Papers* (Festschrift for Han Spykeboer) 12/2 (1993) (forthcoming).

of as a dwelling of the divine presence, would be a place where the unrighteous were confronted by the contrast between their badness and divine goodness, and thus it would function as a locus of ethical transformation. Holiness would be viewed, not defensively as it is here, as a substance in need of protection, but as a force for positive change in the community.

But if I 'buy' the psalm, I 'buy' its ideology of holiness, and I had better be aware of what I am doing.

b. *War*

The second ideology sustaining this poem that I find myself unable to accept is of the glory of war, or rather, of victory in war. It is not that the humans are warlike, but that the deity himself is. This only makes it worse, from my ethical perspective at least.

It comes, in fact, as something of a shock to the first-time reader of the poem (or, shall we say, to the curious and close reader) that it moves in that direction. For in its first strophe the poem has breathed a pacific air of stability and constructiveness. At its beginning, there is a creative act of 'founding' and 'establishing' that has overridden any cosmic tendency to instability, and there is not a hint of conflict in the world order that results. And in the second strophe, there are no real villains or any sign of organized opposition to the forces of good that needs to be put down by force. It is in this context of world stability and personal goodness that we encounter what is the principal truth, for this poem, about the God who dwells on the holy hill and whose face the generation of the righteous is seeking. This God is celebrated, not for his creative powers (strophe 1) nor as the fount of human goodness (strophe 2), but because he is 'mighty in battle' (v. 8) and 'Yahweh of armies' (v. 10). What makes him 'glorious' is that he is 'strong and mighty' enough to achieve military victories. There is no glory, in this poem, in creating the world, there is no glory in being the object of worship by clean-living toilers up the steep ascent of Zion. The glory that gains him the right of access through the ancient gates is his glory gained on the field of battle.

Now, as we all know, glory and honour in war is nothing other than victory. The victors always retire in honour, the

defeated in disgrace. But what makes victory, and what makes defeat? Not the rightness of the cause, not the gallantry of the combatants, not the prayers of the faithful. Victories are won by superior numbers, by alliances, by tactics, and by chance. And a victor deserves praise for nothing other than winning. This is not my idea of glory, and the fact that someone says military prowess is what makes God glorious does not impress me.

We had better know what we are doing. In subscribing to Psalm 24, we are writing a blank cheque for war, for the validity of war imagery to describe the deity's activities, and for the unexamined assumption that war solves problems. If I 'buy' the psalm, I 'buy' its ideology of war.

A reader-response approach to this psalm, then, highlights elements in it, quite fundamental elements, that raise uncertainties, if not hostilities, in the mind of the modern reader, this one at least. These have proved to be uncertainties about whether *we* can affirm what it is the psalm seems to be affirming.

2. *A Deconstructive Critique*

The problems with this psalm are greater than those, however. We next must consider, not whether we can affirm the psalm, but, whether the *psalm itself* affirms what it affirms. Are there aspects in which it is at odds with itself, perhaps even to the extent of undermining what it is professing? Does it deconstruct itself at all?

Yes, in these four respects.

1. *Although the whole world belongs to the Lord (v. 1), it is not all 'holy'.*

Now according to the cultural conventions in which our text participates, the 'holy' is defined as what belongs to the deity. A temple, heaven, priests are 'holy' because of their attachment to the deity. It follows that if the whole earth is 'the Lord's', the whole earth is 'holy'.

This view affirmed by the poem in its opening lines is subsequently undermined by the reference to the 'holy place' belonging to the Lord, presumably upon the 'hill of the Lord' (v. 3). If

all the world belongs to the Lord, in what sense can *one hill* 'belong' to the Lord? And if all the world is holy by virtue of his possession of it, in what sense can *one* place be 'holy'?

I conclude that while the poem wants to maintain that the world as a whole is undifferentiatedly the Lord's possession, it cannot sustain this view, but allows v. 3 to deconstruct v. 1.

2. *Although all those who live on the earth 'belong' to the Lord (v. 1), some of them must be his enemies.*

Again, the two affirmations undermine one another. For in what sense could it be said that the deity 'owns' his enemies? If he finds it necessary to engage them in battle, and if battle against them is so difficult that any victory over them is 'glorious', how could they already be said to be 'his'?

So the reference to warfare deconstructs the assertion of the Lord's ownership of and lordship over all the earth's inhabitants—and vice versa.

3. *Although ascending the hill of the Lord proves one's innocence, those who who ascend are in need of 'vindication' from God.*

Those who ascend the hill of the Lord are promised 'vindication' from God. The implication is that at present they lack such vindication and stand in need of it.

In the eyes of whom do they stand in need of vindication? Presumably both God and themselves are well aware of their moral virtue, so it must be in the eyes of others that they need to be vindicated. But where are the people who are refusing them recognition, and before whom their virtue must be demonstrated? There is nothing in this poem about any assaults on the integrity of the righteous by the wicked, nor any complaint that these people of clean hands and pure hearts are being persecuted or otherwise maltreated by those less upright than themselves.

So the poem craves vindication for the innocent worshippers, but, deconstructively, cannot find any respect in which they might need it.

Furthermore, since it is only those of clean hands that are permitted to ascend the hill of the Lord, the very act of participation in worship is sufficient testimony of their uprightness.

They already have their vindication, and so the promise of a future vindication becomes nugatory.

4. *Those who worship on the hill are expected to have clean hands and not to have lifted up their soul to vanity. But the deity is not.*
A double standard in ethics is in operation here.

The worshippers must have clean hands or they will contaminate the holiness of the hill. But the deity ascends it straight from the battlefield, his hands dripping with blood. Does 'lift up your heads, O gates' then mean 'Look the other way'?

The worshippers must not have lifted up their souls to vanity, but the deity has been soldiering away, seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth. 'Reputation' is nothing but Shakespearian for 'glory', and the quest for glory in war is surely a quintessential lifting up of the soul to vanity.

In short, the qualities demanded of the worshippers are deconstructed by the qualities praised in the deity they worship. And vice versa.

These are not the only places in which this poem deconstructs itself, but they are pretty central. The question arises: What is to be done with such a text?

3. *Bespoke Interpretation*

In the rest of this essay I want to offer a framework for dealing with such a question. I call it a goal-oriented hermeneutic, an end-user theory of interpretation, a market philosophy of interpretation, a discipline of 'comparative interpretation'. This framework has two axes.

First, there is the indeterminacy of meaning. Second, there is is the authority of the interpretative community.

First, then, comes the recognition that texts do not have determinate meanings. Whatever a text may mean in one context, it is almost bound to mean something different in a different context. 'Bus stop' will mean one thing when attached to a pole at the side of the road, another thing when shouted by an anxious parent to a child about to dash into that road. 'Jesus saves' will have one meaning when it stands by itself, but

another meaning when it is followed by 'Moses invests'.

We may go further. Nowadays we are recognizing that texts not only do not have determinate meanings, they do not 'have' meanings at all. More and more, we are coming to appreciate the role of the reader, or the hearer, in the making of meaning, and recognizing that, without a reader or a hearer, there is not a lot of 'meaning' to any text. Psalm 24 means whatever it means to its various readers, and if their contexts are different, it is likely that it will mean different things to different readers. There is no one authentic meaning that we must all try to discover, no matter who we are or where we happen to be standing.

The second axis for my framework is provided by the idea of interpretative communities. If we ask who it is that authorizes or legitimates an interpretation, who it is that says something may count as an interpretation and not be ruled out of court, the answer can only be: some group, some community. Solipsistic interpretations may be fun for their inventors—you meet a better class of reader that way—but if there is no group who will accept them, they don't survive. Some interpretations are authorized by the SBL, some by the ecclesiastical community, but most by little sub-groups within these communities—the Intertextuality in Christian Apocrypha Seminar and the like. The market for interpretations is getting to be very fragmented these days, and I sometimes count myself lucky if I can sell an interpretation to six people.

What we call legitimacy in interpretation is really a matter of whether an interpretation can win approval by some community or other. There is no objective standard by which we can know whether one view or other is right; we can only tell whether it has been accepted. What the academic community today decides counts as a reasonable interpretation of Psalm 24 *is* a reasonable interpretation, and until my community decides that my interpretation is acceptable, it *isn't* acceptable.

Of course, what one community finds acceptable, another will find fanciful or impossible. The local Faculty of Divinity will not approve of the interpretations of our psalm made by St Augustine and his community, neither would St Augustine think much of the interpretations of the Faculty of Divinity. There are

no determinate meanings and there are no universally agreed upon legitimate interpretations.

What are we exegetes then to be doing with ourselves? To whom shall we appeal for our authorization, from where shall we gain approval for our activities, and above all, who will pay us?

The simplest answer for academics has long been that we will seek the approval of no one other than our fellow academics. If our papers get accepted by *Vetus Testamentum* and *New Testament Studies* they are valid, and if they don't they're not.

This safe answer has started to fall apart, though. We are beginning to realize that what counts as a valid interpretation in Cambridge does not necessarily do so in Guatemala City or Jakarta or Seoul—and certainly not vice versa. The homogeneity of the 'scholarly world' is proving fissiparous, and many smaller interest groups are taking the place of a totalitarian *Bibelwissenschaft*. More and more scholars are seeking their legitimation from communities that are not purely academic.

Where does that leave us?

If there are no 'right' interpretations, and no validity in interpretation beyond the assent of various interest groups, biblical interpreters have to give up the goal of determinate and universally acceptable interpretations, and devote themselves to producing interpretations they can sell—in whatever mode is called for by the communities they choose to serve.

This is what I call 'customized' interpretation. Like the bespoke tailor, who fashions from the roll of cloth a suit to the measurements and the pocket of the customer, a suit individually ordered or bespoken, the bespoke interpreter has a professional skill in tailoring interpretations to the needs of the various communities who are in the market for interpretations. There are some views of Psalm 24 that the church will 'buy' and 'wear', and others that only paid up deconstructionists, footloose academics and other deviants will even try on for size.

There is nothing unethical in cutting your garment not only according to your cloth but also according to your customer's shape. Even in a market economy, no one will compel you to violate your conscience, though it may cost you to stick to your principles. As a bespoke interpreter responding to the needs of

the market, I will be interested, not in 'the truth', not in universally acceptable meanings, but in eradicating shoddy interpretations that are badly stitched together and have no durability, and I will be giving my energies to producing attractive interpretations that represent good value for money.

In such a task interpreters of today do not have to start from scratch. For this programme has a green angle too. It is ecologically sound, because it envisages the recycling of old waste interpretations that have been discarded because they have been thought to have been superseded. In this task of tailoring to the needs of the various interpretative communities, interpreters can be aided by the array of interpretations that have already been offered in the course of the history of the interpretation of the Bible. In fact, what has usually been called the 'history of interpretation' is ripe for being reconceived as a discipline of 'comparative interpretation', providing raw materials, methods, critiques and samples for the work of designing intelligible and creative interpretations for end-users. For too long the interpretations of the past have been lumped together under the heading of the 'history' of interpretation, with the unspoken assumption that what is old in interpretation is out of date and probably rotten and the hidden implication that what is new is best.

Recycling Christian interpretations is a good way to start the programme of comparative interpretation. For the first thing we notice is that among the readings of the patristic period no one is striving for a *correct* interpretation. Here the only fixed point is that the king of glory is Christ, and the exegesis is driven by the question, When then did Jesus Christ enter these gates? Any moment in the history of Jesus Christ to which these words can attach themselves will yield an acceptable interpretation.

For example, in the fourth-century *Gospel of Nicodemus* the gates are the gates of hell, which Christ breaks, freeing its inhabitants—the harrowing of hell. In Augustine, the king of glory is ascending after the resurrection, and the scene is one of welcome into the heavenly courts. For Gregory of Nyssa, on the other hand, the scene is the descent of Christ to earth in the incarnation.

The poem has, in Christian interpretation, then, transcended its original significances in the history of ancient Israel, whatever they were, and has become multivalent.

And every new interpretation creates an access of meaning for the poem. Here is a brand-new interpretation, fresh from your friendly corner bespoke interpreter. Come and buy. It is a non-religious interpretation that attends to the connotations rather than the denotations of the language, and it doesn't require you to give up any other favourite interpretation you may already have.

Let's say Psalm 24 is about world-building and world-orienting, about locating oneself at the centre (the Lord's hill), up it (ascending) and in it (entering the gates). And let's say the world that is being built is the world of meaning, and the poem concerns making a world of meanings, meanings secure enough to be going on with.

In Psalm 24, then, we are celebrating a world that is founded, established—a world where we can find the direction to the Lord's hill, for example, a world where Wittgenstein could say, Now I can go on. It has orientation and it has elevation: it is three-dimensional space—which is to say, a world for living in.

Now in the world of meaning there is undifferentiated space—the earth at large—and there is a particularity of space—a specific hill, the hill we seekers for meaning are interested in ascending. And in order to ascend the mountain of particular meaning—that is, to establish *the* meaning of the text—we need a pure heart, of course, because purity of heart is to will one thing—and no swearing deceitfully by the false gods of theory. Now each of us sets out on the quest for meaning alone: 'Who (singular) shall ascend the hill of the Lord?...The one that has clean hands...' We ascend the mountain in our singularity; but when we attain the blessing, which is the vindication of our quest, we find ourselves in the company of a whole generation of seekers for meaning, a veritable Fishian interpretative community: 'This is the generation of those who seek your face...'

The one who ascends the hill is, himself or herself, personally a king of glory. There is nothing glorious in itself; glory signifies the esteem of others. Glory is the recognition by a public who acclaim success in the quest for meaning. Yes, it *is* a struggle,

though a demilitarized one, against the intractability of experience and the bewildering array of interpretations already in the field.

Centring ourselves, knowing which way to turn, is a construction of a reality, a world-ordering enterprise. But if we even ask for a moment how firm a foundation we saints of the Lord have laid for ourselves in this world-ordering enterprise, we recognize that the world we have established is founded not upon pillars but upon seas and rivers. We float on a raft of signifiers under which signifieds slide playfully like porpoises; but we have to live *as if* the foundations were solid all the way down to bedrock. We cannot peer too long into the deconstructive underworld waters.

I have often wondered what one should do after deconstructing a text. A true deconstructionist would say, Start deconstructing the deconstruction. But there is another answer, which is truer, I think, to the experience of readers who have performed, or witnessed, a deconstruction. It is very difficult to forget a deconstruction; it is hard to get it out of your head. But the mind demands more order than deconstruction will leave us with, and will go on wilfully constructing, inventing new connotations, new contexts, new interrelationships that will shore up the text, even if only temporarily.

That is what I feel the course of this essay has done. I wanted to expose the fragility, the volatility of the text, its weakness and its incoherence. It was not in order to recommend its abandonment or replacement by some other stronger and less questionable text, but to point up the fragility of texts in general, the inconclusiveness of interpretations, and the impulse nevertheless to stitch them together again no matter how. Weaving and interweaving of interpretations that mean something to someone, that meet with a cry of recognition or at least a grudging assent from some interpretative community—that resolidifies texts. It is the best we can hope to do. It is something like building a universe, intelligently knit together but resting ultimately on unpredictable and ever shifting underground waters. Which was itself an interpretation of Psalm 24.

WHO'S AFRAID OF 'THE ENDANGERED ANCESTRESS'?

J. Cheryl Exum

> Who's afraid of the big bad wolf, the big bad wolf, the big bad wolf?
>
> The three little pigs
>
> Let's take a look: we shall find illumination in what at first seems to obscure matters...
>
> Jacques Lacan

A Thrice-Told Tale

Three times in Genesis the patriarch, the eponymous ancestor of Israel, travels to a foreign country, where he passes his beautiful wife off as his sister because he fears the locals will kill him on her account if they know he is her husband. Abraham and Sarah are the ancestral couple in the primal scene (Gen. 12, where their names are Abram and Sarai) and in the first repetition (Gen. 20, by which time their names have been changed to Abraham and Sarah). Sarah is taken to be the wife of the foreign ruler (the pharaoh of Egypt in Gen. 12, and Abimelech of Gerar in Gen. 20) and then returned to Abraham when the ruler learns of the ruse. The third version (Gen. 26) concerns Isaac and Rebekah; the foreign ruler is again Abimelech of Gerar; and the matriarch is *not* taken. In all three cases, the patriarch prospers, the foreign ruler is (understandably) upset, and the matriarch has no voice in the affair.

It is generally agreed that the tales are variants on the same theme. The characters change and details vary, but the fabula remains the same. Within biblical scholarship, this thrice-told tale is often referred to as 'the Endangered Ancestress' or 'the

Ancestress of Israel in Danger'.[1] The widespread use of this label raises the question, What kind of danger do scholars think the matriarch is in? If, as is generally accepted, these stories represent in some way a threat to the threefold promise to Abraham of land, descendants, and blessing, then the threat is to the promise, and it follows that the patriarch, not the matriarch, is in danger. The promise, after all, was made to him—not to her or to the two of them (see Gen. 12.1-3)—and without his wife how can he have descendants?

Or is the danger faced by the matriarch the loss of honor? This could be said to be an issue in Genesis 20, where the narrative is at pains to assure us that nothing of a sexual nature took place between Abimelech and Sarah. Here the omniscient narrator tells the audience:

> Now Abimelech had not approached her (Gen. 20.4).

He then gives the statement divine authority by placing it in the mouth of God, who speaks to Abimelech in a dream:

> Therefore I did not let you touch her (Gen. 20.6).

Finally, by having Abimelech publicly justify Sarah's reputation, he ensures that all the characters in the story share in this knowledge.

> To Sarah he said, 'Look, I have given a thousand pieces of silver to your brother; it is your vindication in the eyes of all who are with you; and before everyone you are righted'[2] (Gen. 20.16).

It is not so clear that nothing of a sexual nature happened in the primal scene, Genesis 12, where we hear that 'the woman was taken into the pharaoh's house' (v. 15) and the pharaoh says, 'I took her for my wife' (v. 19). Interestingly, what did or did not happen to Sarah in the royal harem receives more attention from scholars than it does from Abraham. Bernhard Anderson, in his annotations to the Revised Standard Version, would

1. E.g. Keller 1954; von Rad 1961: 162-65, 221-25, 266; Koch 1969: 111-32; Polzin 1975; Westermann 1985: 159; Coats 1983: 109, 149, 188; Biddle 1990.

2. Following the RSV. The translation of the obscure Hebrew is problematic, but this seems to be the sense; see Westermann 1985: 328; von Rad 1961: 224; Skinner 1910: 319.

apparently have us believe that the story is less explicit and shocking than it actually is, for he explains that Sarah 'was *almost* taken into Pharaoh's harem' (italics mine). (Does this mean she got only to the door?) Koch, Polzin, Miscall, and Coats, in contrast, assume that Sarah did have sexual relations with the pharaoh.[3] Koch's judgment, incidentally, is as ethnocentric as it is androcentric: 'There is one feature of the story missing which would be natural to us: there is no reluctance to surrender the woman's honour'. To support his conclusion that the earliest form of the story did have Sarah committing adultery, Koch appeals to what he believes other women would do: '[I]t seems obvious that the Bedouin women are so devoted to their menfolk that to protect a husband's life they would willingly lose their honour'.[4]

What is this honor anyway but a male construct based on the double standard, with its insistence on the exclusive sexual rights to the woman by one man? The scene in Genesis 16, where the situation is reversed, is comparable and illuminating. Genesis 12 and Genesis 16 raise the issue of the matriarch or the patriarch having sexual relations with someone else. In Genesis 12, Abraham tells Sarah to let herself be taken by another man 'in order that it will go well with me because of you and I may live on your account' (v. 13). In Gen. 16.2, Sarah tells Abraham to have sexual intercourse with Hagar ('go in to my maid') so that she may obtain a child through Hagar. Neither Abraham nor Sarah is concerned with what this intimate encounter might mean for the other parties involved, but only with what he or she stands to gain. In Genesis 16, we are told specifically that Abraham had sexual intercourse with Hagar ('he went in to Hagar and she conceived', v. 4), but such specific detail is omitted from Genesis 12 (we shall return to this point below). Significantly, no one speaks of Abraham's loss of honor in Genesis 16, nor is there much concern for Hagar's honor—a fact that indicates 'honor' is not only a male construct but also a class construct. Abraham, who as a man is not required to be

3. Koch 1969: 125; Polzin 1975: 83; Miscall 1983: 35; Coats 1983: 111.

4. Koch 1969: 127; cf. Abou-Zeid 1966: 253-54, 256-57. For discussion of honor and its relationship to the politics of sex, see Pitt-Rivers 1977: esp. 113-70.

monogamous, cannot be dishonored by having sex with Hagar at Sarah's urging. Neither can Hagar be dishonored, since a slave has no honor to lose.

It is not the woman's honor so much as the husband's property rights that are at stake. Still, we might expect the patriarch to show some concern for his wife's well-being. It is thus curious that in all three cases the patriarch does not consider that the matriarch might be in danger. On the contrary, he thinks *he* is in danger:[5]

> I know that you are a beautiful woman. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me and let you live (Gen. 12.11-12).
>
> It was because I thought, There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife (Gen. 20.11).
>
> When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, 'She is my sister', for he feared to say 'my wife', thinking, 'lest the men of the place kill me because of Rebekah, for she is beautiful' (Gen. 26.7).

Whether or not the patriarch's fear is justified—whether or not he really is in danger or whether his fear is simply displaced—is a question we shall explore. If the patriarch does not suppose that the matriarch is in danger, neither is there any evidence that the *matriarch* thinks she is in danger. In fact, we do not know what she thinks about *anything*, which is a very good indication that the story is not really about the matriarch at all. She neither acts nor speaks in any of the versions, though in the second version speech is indirectly attributed to her: Abimelech tells God that Sarah told him that Abraham was her brother (Gen. 20.5). If her only speech is one reported by another character in the narrative, the matriarch can hardly be said to become a narrative presence in any real sense. She is merely the object in a story about male relations (and we shall inquire below how the two men respond in relation to the object). What, then, is the danger, and to whom? More important, why do we hear about it three times?

Most studies of Genesis 12, 20, and 26 are concerned with the relationship between the three stories: how are they alike and different, and how are the differences to be accounted for

5. Clines 1990: 67-68.

(which often means, how can the repetition be explained away)? Now what happens in Genesis 12, 20, and 26 is very disturbing. A man practically throws his wife into another man's harem in order to save his skin. Yet the questions one most often encounters about this text are generally along the lines of: What is the oldest form of this story?[6] Or, Are the three accounts oral or written variants?[7] Are Genesis 20 and 26 more ethical than Genesis 12?[8] The disturbing issues raised by the story are sometimes deplored[9] but then set aside in favor of disengaged discussion of the growth of the tradition, the relative dates of the versions, and such historical questions as whether or not the stories reflect customs of 2000 to 1500 BCE (the so-called patriarchal period), or whether a man could or should marry his half-sister (the controversial evidence of Nuzi).

A few scholars have inquired into the role of these stories in the context of the larger narrative.[10] A sustained contextual reading of the three stories is offered by David Clines, who concludes that the patriarch is more of a danger to foreigners than they are to him.[11] But reading the three tales in their context also exposes problems. For example, in Genesis 20 Sarah would be over ninety years old, and we might wonder why Abraham thinks other men would take such an interest in her. Moreover, Abraham has now been told by God that Sarah will be the mother of his heir, which makes it even harder to understand why he would let another man take her (it may even be

6. See Van Seters 1975: 167-91; Koch 1969: 111-32; Noth 1972: 102-109; Westermann 1985: 161-62.

7. On the issue of literary dependency, see Van Seters 1975: 167-91; Westermann 1985: 161-62; cf. Alexander 1992. For an argument that the pentateuchal sources use the same (wife-sister) motif to develop different themes, see Petersen 1973. For discussions of the stories as oral variants, see Culley 1976: 33-41; and the more recent folkloristic approach of Niditch 1987: 23-66.

8. Most commentators agree with Koch (1969: 126), who thinks that 'moral sensitivity becomes gradually stronger'; Polzin (1975: 84) argues that Gen. 12 is as sensitive to ethical issues as are chs. 20 and 26.

9. Von Rad (1961: 162) calls Gen. 12 'offensive', and speaks of the 'betrayed matriarch' (p. 164); see also Vawter 1977: 181.

10. Clines 1990: 67-84; Fox 1989; Rosenberg 1986: 70-98; Steinberg 1984; to a lesser degree, Polzin 1975; Miscall 1983: 11-46.

11. Clines 1990: 67-84.

the case that Sarah is already pregnant with Isaac).[12] In Genesis 25, Esau and Jacob are born to Isaac and Rebekah, and by the end of the chapter they are already hunting and stealing birthrights respectively. Thus in Genesis 26, when Isaac says of Rebekah, 'She is my sister', we might wonder, what has become of the twins? These are only some of the difficulties a contextual reading must engage. I mention them not because I intend to offer a contextual reading here, but rather to underscore how puzzling and uncanny the tale is both in context and in isolation. We encounter one set of problems when the three versions are read in their larger context and other problems when they are considered in their own right. In fact, one might say that this tale in its three forms calls attention to itself by virtue of the surplus of problems it poses to interpretation. I propose that a different kind of approach to the repeated tale in Genesis 12, 20, and 26 could provide new insights into some recurrent difficulties. Specifically, I want to offer a psychoanalytical alternative to previous, largely form and tradition-historical, approaches.

By proposing a psychoanalytic-literary reading as an alternative, I am not claiming that this approach will 'solve' the problems posed by these chapters whereas other approaches do not. On the contrary, I maintain that posing questions and opening up new dimensions of a text are as fruitful an enterprise as the traditional critical approach of seeking answers as if answers were objectively verifiable. Like psychoanalysis, psychoanalytical criticism is neither externally verifiable nor falsifiable. We can only follow it, as Freud says about analysis, to see where it will lead,[13] and, in the process, hope to illuminate a hitherto uncharted textual level, the narrative unconscious. My approach appeals to the multiple levels on which stories function; like dreams, they are overdetermined. As Freud points out in comparing texts to dreams, which, he argues, require over-interpretation in order to be fully understood, 'All genuinely creative writings are the product of more than a single motive and more than a single impulse in the poet's mind, and are open to more than a single interpretation'.[14]

12. So Vawter 1977: 245; Miscall 1983: 32; Clines 1990: 75-76.
13. Freud 1961: 4.
14. Freud 1965: 299. I see little difference in my suggesting below that

To anticipate my argument: a psychoanalytic-literary approach takes as its point of departure the assumption that the story in Genesis 12, 20, and 26 encodes unthinkable and unacknowledged sexual fantasies. Because there is something fearful and attractive to the (male) narrator about the idea of the wife being taken by another man, a situation that invites the woman's seizure is repeated three times. The tale would thus appear to illustrate Freud's *Wiederholungszwang*, the repetition compulsion—the impulse to work over an experience in the mind until one becomes the master of it—whose locus, according to Freud, is the unconscious repressed.[15] The text is a symptom of the narrator's intra-psychic conflict. But whereas the repetition compulsion is neurotic and an obstacle to awareness, telling the story of the patriarch's repetitive behavior offers the occasion for a 'working out' of the neurosis.

> Repetition is both an obstacle to analysis—since the analysand must eventually be led to renunciation of the attempt to reproduce the past—and the principal dynamic of the cure, since only by way of its symbolic enactment in the present can the history of past desire, its objects and scenarios of fulfillment, be made known, become manifest in the present discourse.[16]

Repeating the story, working over the conflict until it is resolved, provides a semiotic cure for the neurosis. By the charmed third time the cure is effected; that is to say, it is believed.

In approaching the text from a psychoanalytic-literary perspective, I am not proposing to psychoanalyze the characters. Rather than treat characters in a story as if they were real people with real neuroses, I want to examine the world view these literary creations represent. Taking a cue from psychoanalytical theory and building upon the similarities between interpreting dreams and interpreting texts, I shall consider all the characters in the text as split-off parts of the narrator. When a dream is analyzed in psychoanalysis, the analysand is brought

Abraham behaves as he does because of fear and desire that his wife gain sexual knowledge of another man and, say, Westermann's contention (1985: 164) that Abraham behaves this way because of insufficient trust in the divine promises. For insightful remarks about the way traditional scholarship disguises its subjectivity, see Miscall 1983: 40-42.

15. Freud 1961: 16-25 *passim*.
16. Brooks 1987: 10.

to recognize aspects of herself or himself in the various characters of the dream. In our thrice-told tale we will consider the characters in the story as aspects of the narrative consciousness. Thus not just the female characters but the male characters also are expressions of male fantasies, anxieties, etc. When I say, 'Abraham fears for his life', I refer to Abraham not as if he were a real human being but rather as a vehicle for the androcentric values and the androcentric world view of the biblical narrative. It bears pointing out that I am not proposing to psychoanalyze the author either, in the sense that the author, any more than Abraham, is a real person. I assume, with most biblical scholars, that these ancient texts are a communal product, and, further, I assume they received their final redaction at the hands of men. The narrative thus does not reflect an individual's unconscious fantasies, but rather, we might say, it owes its creation to a kind of collective androcentric unconscious, whose spokesperson I shall call simply 'the narrator'.

Features Obscure and Obscuring

In a recent study of the Abraham traditions, Joel Rosenberg remarks that 'the "wife-sister" motif, considered as an item of history and tradition, is an obscure and suggestive theme whose full meaning will probably continue to elude us'.[17] As my epigraph from Lacan indicates, I want to look for illumination in what at first glance seems to obscure matters.[18] The tales exhibit many puzzling features. Why, for example, does the patriarch fear that he will be killed for his wife? Why doesn't he consider the possibility that she might simply be taken from him? He could be overpowered and robbed of his wife, or sent away without her, or an attempt could be made to buy him off. He assumes, however, a moral code according to which the foreign men in question will *not* commit adultery but they *will* commit murder. And when he says, in Gen. 12.13 and 20.11, '*They* will kill me', does he imagine that they would all attack him at once (and if so, who would get the woman)? Or, by assuming many men will want his wife, is he simply accepting in advance that

17. Rosenberg 1986: 77.
18. Lacan 1988: 41.

there is nothing he can do to save both his wife and his life? He is not concerned about what might happen to his wife in another man's harem, and clearly not interested in protecting her. In fact, by claiming that the beautiful woman is his (unmarried) sister, the patriarch guarantees that his wife *will* be taken.

Having taken the woman (in Gen. 12 and 20), the foreign ruler, upon learning that she is Abraham's wife, gives her back to her husband. He does not kill Abraham, as Abraham had feared, even though now he has good reason, since Abraham's lie about Sarah's status has both placed him in an unacceptable position and brought trouble upon his land (plagues in Gen. 12 and barrenness in Gen. 20). In Genesis 26, Abimelech is incensed at what *might have happened* and takes measures to ensure that it will not happen in the future. What the patriarch seems to fear, and says explicitly that he fears in Gen. 20.11—lack of morality ('there is surely no fear of God in this place')—is proved by events to be not the case. Moreover, he already attributes a certain morality to the foreign men when he assumes they will kill him rather than commit adultery with a married woman.

The crucial question is, Why does the patriarch—twice in the person of Abraham and once Isaac—repeat his mistakes? Why does he need to set things up so that another man will seize his wife not once, but three times? To answer that the threefold repetition is the result of three different pentateuchal sources or of three variants in the oral tradition behind the text is to beg the question.[19] As recent literary criticism of the Bible recognizes, the final form of the text is not a haphazard product but rather the result of complex and meaningful redactional patterning. If the androcentric tradition keeps repeating this story, we can assume that the story fills some need.

The Repetition Compulsion

We begin with what is apparent. The story is about fear and desire: desire of the beautiful woman and fear of death because

19. Indeed, one of the early arguments of source criticism for multiple authorship of the Pentateuch was the fact that the patriarch, and his son after him, would hardly have been so foolish as to repeat the ruse three times.

of her. In all three versions the patriarch considers his wife desirable to other men, and in the first two, he is right: the woman is desired, as is witnessed by the fact that she is taken as a wife by another man. In all three instances, the matriarch's desirability makes the patriarch afraid for his life, though his fear turns out to be unjustified. In assessing the patriarch's behavior in response to the perceived threat, Clines remarks that 'the danger is all in the patriarch's mind to begin with'.[20] This being the case, a psychoanalytical approach should prove especially useful. But it is not just what might or might not be going on in the patriarch's mind that will concern us. As I have indicated, all the characters in this repeated story are vehicles for the narrative neurosis.

Each of the stories, the primal scene and its repetitions, is preoccupied with the *same unconscious fantasy*: that the wife have sex with another man. Psychoanalysis tells us that this must be the unconscious desire because this is precisely what the patriarch sets up to happen. It is important to keep in mind that the desire is unconscious; what Freud says about Oedipus's desire is applicable here: in reality it would likely cause him to recoil in horror.[21] What is unconsciously desired is also unconsciously feared; as I hope to show, the story is repeated in an effort to envision and simultaneously to deny the possibility of such a sexual encounter taking place between the wife and another man. Psychoanalysis draws attention to the close relationship between desires and fears. Am I afraid of heights because unconsciously I desire to jump? Is homophobia in reality a fear of one's own repressed sexual urges? Fear in Genesis 12, 20, and 26 is conscious but displaced. The patriarch fears for his life, the assumption being that the foreign man will want the woman all to himself. Abraham is willing to let the other man have her, since the woman must belong to one man or the other but cannot be shared; she cannot belong to both. This is the familiar double standard, according to which men may have sexual relations with more than one woman, but a woman cannot have sexual knowledge of a man other than her husband. The

20. Clines 1990: 68.

21. Freud, Letter to Wilhelm Fliess of Oct. 15, 1897, cited by Felman 1983: 1022.

remarkable thing about the patriarch's ruse is that it ensures that his wife *will* gain sexual knowledge of another man. Certainty is better, more controllable, than doubt.

Since we are dealing with a text, and not with an analysand who can contribute actively to the psychoanalytical process, we can only speculate about what lies behind the fear and desire. It could be the need to have the woman's erotic value confirmed by other men, what René Girard describes as the mechanism of triangular desire.[22] Having chosen a particular woman as the object of his desire, the man needs other men's desire to validate his choice, and even to increase his desire. Or, losing the woman to another man is desirable because he will be free of the woman and the responsibility she entails. This is the male fantasy of sex without commitment; he will be free to have other women, unhampered by the domesticity that the wife represents. There may be deeper, more distressing, desires as well. The same object (originally, according to much psychoanalytical theory, the mother's body) evokes both reverence and hostility. Thus the fascination with the notion of the woman being taken by another man may mask a fear and hatred of woman that desires her humiliation (there is no question that the story objectifies the woman). Other explanations might be sought in what Freud calls 'the mysterious masochistic trends of the ego'.[23] Losing the woman to another man is also threatening, because sexual knowledge of another man would provide the woman with experience for comparison. Other men might be 'better', or know some things about sex he does not know, and perhaps she will enjoy with them what she does not experience with him. This takes us back to the patriarch's displaced fear. His fear for his life at the hands of other men disguises the fact that it is really the woman's sexual knowledge that is life-threatening for him. It is 'safer' for him to fear other men than to acknowledge his fear of the woman's sexuality.

22. See Girard 1965: esp. 1-52.

23. Freud 1961: 12. We might also keep in mind that the repetition complex is related to the desire for death and the delaying of it, which is reflected in the patriarch's fear of death because of the woman.

Patriarchy's Talking Cure

The fabula in which the wife is, in effect, offered to the other man is repeated until the conflict revolving around the woman's feared and desired sexual knowledge has been resolved. By managing fear and desire within an ordered discourse, the narrative functions as a textual working-out of unconscious fantasies, a semiotic cure for the neurosis.

Let us consider first the fundamental similarities between the three tales. All three raise the possibility that the matriarch have sex with a man other than her husband. The patriarch is not only willing for his wife to commit adultery; he invites it. The foreign ruler, on the other hand, will not willingly commit adultery. The patriarch might thus be viewed as a cipher for the unconscious desire, the foreign ruler as the embodiment of fear, and the story as the locus of the tension. The *difference* in the three tales is significant for resolving the conflict. In the first, Sarah is taken into the royal harem, and restored when the pharaoh learns that she is already another man's wife. But did she have sexual relations with the pharaoh? We cannot be sure, for this version of the story does not satisfactorily resolve the issue. It must, therefore, be repeated. The second time around, matters are different. In Genesis 20, Sarah is again taken, but Abimelech does not lay a hand on her. It is no doubt reassuring that what is unconsciously desired and feared does not take place, but the situation remains potentially threatening as long as the woman is allowed to enter another man's household. In the third version, Genesis 26, the possibility of what is both desired and feared taking place is ruled out from the start: Rebekah is not even taken into Abimelech's house.

In the working out of the neurosis, the realization of the fantasy is precluded. To describe this process as it is actualized in the narrative, I shall borrow some terms from Freud, without applying them in a strictly Freudian sense.[24] Instead I shall use a

24. I am offering neither a Freudian reading nor suggesting the superiority, or even validity, of Freudian analysis (in recent years there have been numerous important feminist critiques of Freudian theory). For basic distinctions between the ego, the id, and the super-ego, see Freud 1960; Freud used these terms differently and sometimes indiscriminately, and he changed his usage over time.

fundamental Freudian concept as a metaphor in order to clarify the contradictory impulses in the text. The foreign ruler, who expresses moral outrage at the deception Abraham has perpetrated, is a kind of super-ego, an enforcing, prohibiting agency, to Abraham's id, unconscious desire ready to give over the woman. In other words, the positions occupied in Freudian theory by the super-ego and the id, i.e. the self-observing, self-critical agency in the ego and the libidinous unconscious desire, are fantasized as characters in the story. The text is metaphorically in the position of the ego, where these contradictory impulses are finally resolved.

In the first version, the pharaoh is upset, but his response does not crystallize the moral issue; the super-ego is not yet highly developed.

> What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister', so that I took her for my wife? (Gen. 12.18-19).

In the second version, in contrast, we find a virtual obsession with issues of sin and guilt, all signs of a highly active conscience. The pharaoh's 'What is this you have done to me?' becomes Abimelech's

> What have you done to us? How have I *sinned* against you that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great *sin*? *Deeds that are not done* you have done to me (Gen. 20.9).

This super-ego, however, needs external moral support, and thus the narrative begins with a lengthy dialogue between Abimelech and God in a dream.[25] God, as symbol and overseer of the moral order, passes judgment: 'You are a dead man because of the woman you have taken; she is another man's wife' (v. 3). With continued emphasis on the issue of innocence

25. On the legal character of the dialogue, see Westermann 1985: 322-23. Interestingly, the locus for dealing with the conflict here is a dream. Freud saw dreams as fulfillments of unconscious wishes. Even anxiety dreams and punishment dreams, such as this one, perform this function, 'for they merely replace the forbidden wish-fulfillment by the appropriate punishment for it; that is to say, they fulfill the wish of the sense of guilt which is the reaction to the repudiated impulse' (Freud 1961: 37).

versus guilt, Abimelech protests his innocence before the law, appealing to his ignorance of Sarah's status:

> Lord, would you slay a *righteous* people? Did he himself not say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother'. In the *integrity* of my intentions and the *innocence* of my hands I have done this.

Abimelech is 'innocent' because God, the moral law, prevented him from 'sinning': 'It was I who kept you from sinning against me; therefore I did not let you touch her' (v. 6). Fear of punishment provides powerful motivation for adherence to the law: 'If you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all that is yours' (v. 7).

This ethical rationalization is carried through on every level of the narrative in Genesis 20. Just as Abimelech (in the position of super-ego) justifies himself to God (external moral law), so also Abraham (in the position of the id, the unconscious desire) justifies his deceit to Abimelech (super-ego):

> It was because I thought, There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother; so she could be my wife.

Subtly he tries to shift the blame by implicating God:

> When God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, 'This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, "He is my brother"'.

Abraham's protestations of innocence are like psychoanalytical negations: if he were innocent he would not need to protest so much. He undermines his defense—that he feared the lack of morality 'in this place'—by adding that he told Sarah to claim he was her brother 'at every place to which we come', indicating compulsive behavior and not a single aberration. This 'Freudian slip' is a sign of a guilty conscience, the need to be caught in the lie—and commentators have caught him.[26] The libido still feels the need to be held in check against its own powerful impulses.

By the third time (Gen. 26), the super-ego functions independently of external restraints; it rejects the very notion of the

26. E.g. Miscall 1983: 15; Westermann 1985: 326; Coats 1983: 150.

woman having sex with another man. The moral issue is generalized. 'One of the people', not the Self who no longer feels threatened, 'might have lain with your wife'—but nothing happens. We are informed in v. 7 that the men of Gerar asked Isaac about Rebekah, so we know they have noticed her. We are also told (v. 8) that Isaac and Rebekah were in Gerar for a long period of time, so we also know they are not interested. The fascination with the fantasy has been abandoned. As on the previous occasions, the id is held accountable to the super-ego, but it is no longer viewed as threatening: 'You'—the fascination with the woman's desired and feared sexual knowledge—'would have brought guilt upon us', Abimelech tells Isaac (v. 10), but (so the implication) I—the admonitory, judgmental agency in the ego—prevented it. In this version, the super-ego does not need God, the external source of morality, to tell it what to do. It makes its own law: 'Whoever touches[27] this man or his wife shall be put to death' (*mot yumat*). In the Bible, this kind of apodictic formulation appears in the legal material. In psychoanalysis, the ability to internalize moral standards is a sign of maturity.

It can hardly be fortuitous that once the story ceases to entertain the fantasy of another man having the woman, the patriarch is pictured enjoying the woman sexually, and the other man witnesses it. Abimelech looks out his window and sees Isaac 'fondling' (NRSV) or 'caressing' (Westermann) Rebekah. Whatever the precise meaning of the verb *metsaheq*, a pun on Isaac's name, it has to refer to some form of sexual intimacy, since, on the basis of this activity, Abimelech recognizes that Isaac and Rebekah must be man and wife. In this final version of the tale, the fantasy of the woman's having sex with another man is rejected in favor of the (also fantasized) assurance that her sexuality belongs exclusively to the patriarch.

And what of the other man's watching? According to Girard's theory of triangular desire, the relation between the

27. The verb *ng'* was used of approaching the woman sexually in 20.6. Here it has a double meaning, since it is also applied to the man in its more general sense of harming. The inclusion of 'this man' in the edict may be taken as a sign of acceptance of the dangerous impulses as no longer capable of jeopardizing the Self.

rivals in an erotic triangle is as important as their relationship to the object of desire.[28] Using the Girardian triangle as a model, I suggested above that the desiring subject (the position occupied in our narratives by the patriarch) needs the desire of other men to confirm the excellence of his sexual choice. The patriarch sees the matriarch as an object of beauty, and thus an object of desire ('I know that you are a beautiful woman', 12.11; cf. 26.7), but he needs to know that other men desire her too; so he sets up a situation that will elicit their desire: he presents her as an available woman.[29] The prestige of his rival only serves to affirm that the woman he has selected is worthy of desire.[30] The rival who takes the matriarch has the ultimate social prestige—he is the pharaoh or the king—and he has sexual prestige because he has a harem; he can have any woman he likes, and one assumes he chooses only the best. He is also willing to pay a high price for the woman, either to possess her (12.16) or as restitution (20.14, 16)—further testimony to her value. Girard examines stories, like ours, where the hero appears to offer the beloved wife to the rival, and concludes, 'He pushes the loved woman into the mediator's arms in order to arouse his desire and then triumph over the rival desire'.[31] Having Abimelech, the rival, witness his sexual activity with the matriarch is the patriarch's ultimate turn-on, his incontestable victory over rival desire. In

28. Girard (1965) proposes that our desire for something does not really come from ourselves, nor does it lie in some kind of intrinsic worth in the object of our desire; rather it is based on looking at what other people find desirable. Other people become our models, 'mediators of desire' in his theory, whose desire we copy. The positions in Girard's metaphorical triangle are: the desiring subject; the mediator of desire, who defines the subject's desire for him or her; and the object of the desire.

29. White (1991: 180-83) makes a similar point about the beautiful woman as an object of desire in Gen. 12, but he evaluates Abraham's desire differently, as different from and superior to that of his rivals.

30. Girard 1965: 50.

31. Girard 1965: 50. Girard also argues that 'the impulse toward the object is ultimately an impulse toward the mediator' (p. 10) and that the desiring subject wants to become his mediator/rival (p. 54). The patriarch becomes like his wealthy, powerful rival when he becomes wealthy at the foreign ruler's expense (12.16, 20; 20.14, 16; cf. 26.12-14, where the envy theme is continued), and when the ruler recognizes him as more powerful—for example, as a prophet who can pray for him, or simply as 'much mightier than we are' (26.16).

this version of the fantasy, the roles are here reversed. The patriarch is no longer in the position of the fearing/desiring subject; the other man is. Fear of the woman's knowledge of other men is transformed into other men's envy of him.

Not a Woman's Story

I have argued that Genesis 12, 20, and 26 deal with an unacknowledged and unthinkable male fantasy. In the patriarch–matriarch–foreign ruler triangle, the matriarch never becomes a narrative presence. Though addressed by men—Abraham says, 'Say you are my sister' (12.13); Abimelech says, 'Look, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; it is your vindication...' (20.16)—the matriarch never speaks and only once is she reported to have spoken (20.5). The woman has no voice in determining her sexual status and no control over how her sexuality is perceived or used. Susan Niditch calls Sarah in Genesis 12 a 'tacit accomplice'.[32] Sharon Pace Jeansonne considers her less an accomplice than a silent object.[33] In my reading, she is both accomplice and object because she, like the other characters, is a creation of the narrative unconscious. The male fantasy that created her character is not interested in the woman's point of view—her reaction to Abraham's suggestion, her willingness to be exchanged for her husband's well-being, or her experience in the harem of a strange man. The question of force versus consent, crucial for constructing the woman's perspective, is not raised.[34]

The woman is only an object in a story about male fears and desires. The possibility of the wife having sex with another man is taken out of the control of the woman and made solely an

32. Niditch 1987: 59.

33. Jeansonne 1990: 17. Jeansonne maintains that Sarah's silence is not evidence of complicity but rather a sign of her powerlessness; similarly Rashkow 1992. This is quite literally an argument from silence, and it too easily leads us into a victim–victimizer dichotomy that ignores women's complicity in patriarchy. On this point I agree with Niditch (1987: 59), but for a different reason: Sarah is an accomplice because her character is the creation of an androcentric narrator. Sarah is not, as White (1991: 185) would have it, an 'innocent victim', because she is complicit.

34. This is also the case with Hagar in Gen. 16; see above.

affair between men. This is the only way androcentric ideology can conceive of it, unless, as in the case of Potiphar's wife, the woman is a 'bad woman',[35] which, of course, the matriarch cannot be or else she would not qualify to be the matriarch. As it is posed in Genesis 12, 20, and 26, the question is not, Will the woman commit adultery, but, Will the other man commit adultery? The patriarch thinks not: he thinks the other man will kill him rather than commit adultery with a married woman. The foreign ruler also rejects the thought of adultery. The result is a kind of gentlemen's agreement about the other man's property, which reflects the biblical understanding of adultery as less a matter of sex than a violation of another man's property rights.[36] Legislating the husband's exclusive sexual rights to his wife is an effective way of controlling women's desired and feared sexuality. That the patriarch, the foreign ruler, and God all recognize the seriousness of adultery with a married woman is crucial to the ideology of all three versions (what the woman thinks is irrelevant).

'She Is Indeed My Sister'

Scholars generally deal with Abraham's claim that Sarah really is his half-sister in Gen. 20.12 by asking whether or not it is a lie. Clines and Miscall think Abraham is lying;[37] Westermann, von Rad, Speiser, and Skinner think he is telling the truth.[38] Some apologists call Abraham's claim that Sarah is his sister a 'white lie'.[39] Regardless of whether or not Sarah and Abraham are sister and brother, we know it is not true of Isaac and Rebekah. From a psychoanalytic-literary perspective, the important issue is not the veracity of Abraham's claim but the fact that in all

35. See Bach 1993.

36. See Westbrook 1990. For an interpretation of Gen. 12 that sees the taboo against sex with a married woman exploited by Abraham to set up the pharaoh, see White 1991: 174-86. For an anthropological perspective, see Pitt-Rivers 1977: 159, who suggests the stories are about 'sexual hospitality', where women are used to establish relations among groups of men; see pp. 113-70.

37. Clines 1990: 76; Miscall 1983: 14-15.

38. Westermann 1985: 326; von Rad 1961: 222; Speiser 1964: 92; Skinner 1910: 318.

39. Anderson, annotations to the RSV; Fox 1989: 32.

three versions the brother–sister relationship is imagined. All three accounts raise the issue of consanguinity simply by having the patriarch tell the foreigners that the matriarch is his sister. Might we not see in this latent incest fantasy a desire to achieve unity with the other? In the Song of Songs, for example, the man uses the epithet 'sister, bride' to refer to the woman as sign of intimacy. Clearly the matriarch's kinship ties to the patriarch are important to these stories in Genesis 12–36; she must come from his own people, his own kind.[40] As a sibling, the matriarch is more 'self' than 'other'—more like the patriarch than different. Fantasizing her as his sister may represent a narcissistic striving toward completeness or wholeness, whose realization can only be imagined in his mirror-image from the opposite sex (she is what he would be if he were a woman). Oedipal desire, of which, according to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the Girardian triangle is a schematization,[41] may be at work here as well. As his close female relative, the sister is a stand-in for the mother as object of desire (and Sarah is the arch mother). In this case, Abraham will have married a girl as much like the girl who married dear ol' dad as possible. Fear of the father's wrath may explain his willingness to give her back, symbolically, to the father—the subject position held in our tale by the powerful, foreign ruler–authority figure. In the end, his relationship to his mother-substitute is legitimized by the father. This is the significance of the fact that Abimelech *sees* Isaac and Rebekah engaged in sexual play: it represents the father's acknowledgment that this woman rightfully belongs to the 'son' and the father's permission for him to have sex with her.

40. For anthropological readings of the three accounts as representing a movement from incest to the preferred form of marriage, see Pitt-Rivers 1977: 154-55; Donaldson 1981. Pitt-Rivers offers a suggestive reading of these accounts in relation to the story of the rape of Dinah, Gen. 34; see pp. 151-71. On the matriarchs' role in Gen. 12–36, see also Exum 1993: 94-147.

41. Sedgwick 1985: 22. See her discussion (pp. 21-27), which, in contrast to Girard, takes gender into account as a constituent factor. Interestingly, Freud saw the repetition complex as going back to some period of infantile sexual life, to the Oedipus complex; see Freud 1961: 19.

Who's Afraid of 'The Endangered Ancestress'?

We have looked at the thrice-told tale in Genesis 12, 20, and 26 as a symptom of the narrative's intra-psychic conflict, a conflict between the unconscious desire that the wife gain sexual knowledge of another man and the fear that this could happen. The conflict appears in disguised and distorted form: the patriarch fears for his life because of his beautiful wife, and passes her off as his sister, thereby allowing another man to take her into his harem. In reality, the fear is of the woman's sexuality, which is both desired and feared. There is a compulsive need to repeat the story until the conflict is resolved. In Genesis 12, the super-ego (the pharaoh) is subject to the id (Abraham); he takes the woman. In Genesis 20, the super-ego (Abimelech) has external moral support (God). He is subject to the id (Abraham) in that he takes the woman, but subject to external law (God) in that he does not touch her. But morality based on external authority is not the best solution for the patriarchal neurosis. In the third version (Gen. 26), the moral code is internalized; the fascination with the woman's desired and feared sexuality no longer poses a threat; the neurosis is cured; the cure is believed.[42]

In the children's refrain, 'Who's afraid of the big bad wolf, the big bad wolf, the big bad wolf?', we find a denial of fear that, as such, is also a recognition of fear. The thrice-told tale in Genesis 12, 20, and 26 functions similarly. It says, in effect, 'Who's afraid of the woman's sexual knowledge?' And it answers by reassuring the patriarch that there is no need to fear. But it betrays itself, for, like the ditty about the big bad wolf, it acknowledges that there is something to be feared. If the danger in these three stories is woman's sexuality and woman's sexual knowledge, who or what is in danger? To the

42. Later retellings of these stories continue the process of filling gaps, thereby resolving some of the anxiety-provoking ambiguities (for example, Did Abraham lie about Sarah's being his sister?; What happened to Sarah in the harem?; Did Abraham know what happened in the harem?) and some give Sarah a greater role (for example, Sarah prays for protection, and the ruler is afflicted 'because of the word of Sarai' [*'al debar sarai*, Gen. 12.17]). On later versions of the tale in Jewish and Islamic sources, see Firestone 1991.

question, 'Who or what is afraid of the woman's sexual knowledge?', the answer is, 'Patriarchy'.

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A READER-RESPONSE APPROACH TO PROPHETIC CONFLICT: THE CASE OF AMOS 7.10-17

Francisco O. García-Treto

The new prominence given to the reader in literary interpretation of the Bible—the stimulus for the first form of this essay[1]—has led me to explore and to attempt to demonstrate what a 'reader-oriented' approach can produce, using the report of Amaziah's confrontation with Amos[2] as an example. The approach and the method spring from the work of contemporary 'reader-oriented' critics[3] who have emphasized the central importance of the reader in the production of the meaning of texts. Among these, I find most useful the well-known work of Stanley Fish, and particularly his notion of 'interpretive communities',[4] as a general frame of reference. Such communities, Fish says,

> are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other

1. A paper presented to the Prophetic Literature Section of the Society of Biblical Literature at its 1991 Annual Meeting in Kansas City, Missouri.

2. Amos 7.10-17.

3. Among the principal theorists of what is broadly known as 'reader-response' criticism are Wolfgang Iser, Umberto Eco, Norman Holland, Stanley Fish and David Bleich. For an excellent recent discussion of the area, see Michael Steig, *Stories of Reading: Subjectivity and Literary Understanding* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), ch. 1, 'Theories of Reading: An End to Interpretation?', pp. 3-16.

4. Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980). See especially pp. 167-73.

> words, these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around.[5]

Fish postulates that there is no such thing as 'simply reading', a hypothetical activity that would imply 'the possibility of pure (that is, disinterested) perception'.[6] Rather, a reader—or a reading—always proceeds from the basis of certain 'interpretive decisions' which in turn lead to the adoption of the 'interpretive strategies' that produce or determine the reading. Interpretive strategies, in fact, 'are the shape of reading, and because they are the shape of reading, they give texts their shape, making them rather than, as it is usually assumed, arising from them'.[7] This concept provides a helpful resolution to the fear of 'interpretive anarchy', which even for readers who have given up the 'impossible ideal' of 'perfect agreement' on texts with a 'status independent of interpretation' remains an obstacle to reader-oriented approaches. That fear, says Fish,

> would only be realized if interpretation (text making) were completely random. It is the fragile but real consolidation of interpretive communities that allows us to talk to one another, but with no hope or fear of ever being able to stop.[8]

Within a given interpretive community, Fish concludes, 'the only "proof" of membership is fellowship, the nod of recognition from someone in the same community, someone who says to you what neither of us could ever prove to a third party: "we know"'.[9] Post-modern literary critics, or feminist interpreters, or 'the guild' of Society of Biblical Literature members, or Brazilian Ecclesial Base Communities,[10] or fundamentalist protestants,[11]

5. Fish, *Is There a Text?*, p. 171.
6. Fish, *Is There a Text?*, p. 168.
7. Fish, *Is There a Text?*, p. 168.
8. Fish, *Is There a Text?*, p. 172.
9. Fish, *Is There a Text?*, p. 173.
10. See the work of Carlos Mesters, in particular *Defenseless Flower: A New Reading of the Bible* (trans. from the Portuguese by Francis McDonough; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989).
11. For a helpful analysis, see Kathleen C. Boone, *The Bible Tells Them So: The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), especially ch. 5, 'For Correction: The Interpretive

can all be recognized—or, more precisely, recognize themselves—as more-or-less strictly defined interpretive communities. These communities are engaged in reading the Bible, if not 'in different epochs', most certainly 'with different world-views'. I end this prologue by quoting Michael Steig's third premise for a model of reading and understanding texts, which adds an important corollary:

> Understanding, in the act of reading literature, is a temporary condition of satisfaction arrived at subjectively and, in the dialectical sense of the term, intersubjectively; it is not directly related to 'meaning' in its narrowest sense—the signification of small language units, such as words and sentences, or the propositional 'message' of a text.[12]

In order to begin to sketch a reading of Amos 7.10-17, I would like to specify more precisely the interpretive community of this particular reader, a community largely congruent with, but partly different from, that of the general class of academic biblical scholars active at this time in North America. Because of my ethnic background, cultural allegiance, personal history and experience and numerous other factors, I see myself—and others see me—as a Hispanic-American. I find myself in sympathy with Justo González's recent plea for a conscious effort on the part of Hispanics to read the Bible 'in Spanish', that is, a reading of people—whether biblical scholars or unsophisticated folk—who read the Bible 'as exiles, as members of a powerless group, as those who are excluded from the "innocent" history of the dominant group'.[13] That reading will approach the Bible as a political book, asking first

> not the 'spiritual' questions or the 'doctrinal' questions—the Bible is not primarily a book about 'spiritual' reality, except in its own

Community', pp. 61-75. Boone also uses Fish's concept as a theoretical base.

12. Steig, *Stories of Reading*, p. xiv.

13. Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), p. 85. By 'innocent history', González means 'a selective forgetfulness, used precisely to avoid the consequences of a more realistic memory', and he identifies it as characteristic of the dominant group's world view.

> sense, nor is it a book about doctrines—but the political questions: Who in this text is in power? Who is powerless? What is the nature of their relationship? Whose side does God take?[14]

The first predisposition that will inform my reading, then, will be to read for the signs of power in the discourse of the characters, in their actions, in their relationship—in short, to read politically.

There is a second predisposition in my reading, and that is to pay particular attention to the performative, as over against the purely logical, aspects of the discourse. That is to say, that as a product of a Caribbean culture at whose very heart is the tension between—rather than the synthesis of—Africa and Europe,[15] this reader is conditioned to expect and to appreciate improvisational performance, particularly in situations of controversy. By improvisational performance I mean a strategy of discourse that resolves tension and 'displaces centers without displacing them' by turning to the other in an attempt to overwhelm, to seduce, or to decenter, rather than to convince with logical argument. Arguing that Caribbean culture does not stop at the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, but that its characteristics are present as well in North American black expression, Antonio Benítez-Rojo recognizes in Martin Luther King one of its exemplars:

> His African ancestry, the texture of his humanism, the ancient wisdom in his words, his improvisatory nature, his cordially high tone, his ability to seduce and be seduced, and above all, his vehement status as a 'dreamer' (*I have a dream...*) and performer,

14. González, *Mañana*, p. 85.

15. The 'mestizaje' model, which Virgilio Elizondo has proposed as a hermeneutic key for Mexican-American culture—see his *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983)—must be modulated for the Caribbean by voices such as that of Antonio Benítez-Rojo: 'In fact, this *mestizaje* is a concentration of conflicts, an exacerbation brought about by the closeness and density of the Caribbean situation. Then, at a given moment, the binary syncretism Europe–Africa explodes and scatters its entrails all around: here is Caribbean literature. This literature should not be seen as anything but a system of texts in intense conflict with themselves.' See A. Benítez-Rojo, 'The Repeating Island', in *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?* (ed. Gustavo Pérez-Firmat; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 85-106.

> all make up the Caribbean element of a man who is unquestionably idiosyncratic in North America. Martin Luther King occupies and fills the space in which Caribbean thought (L'Ouverture, Bolívar, Martí, Garvey) meets North American black discourse; that space can also be filled by the blues.[16]

If 'the Caribbean' in this sense extends into North America, then the analysis of the performative forms of African-American discourse that Henry Louis Gates, Jr presents in his recent work,[17] particularly the concept of 'Signifyin(g)',[18] can be as relevant to my reading of Amos as those forms are to my world view and to my culture. By 'Signifyin(g)', Gates means a form of intertextuality, traditional in African-American discourse, in which 'repetition with revision, or repetition that signals difference',[19] as one scholar has recently characterized it, is valued in performative discourse. As Drewal observes, 'Signifyin(g) can include any number of modes of rhetorical play. "To signify" is to revise that which is received, altering the way the past is read, thereby redefining one's relation to it.'

In what follows, I want to read Amos 7.10-17, giving primacy to my two 'predispositions', that is, to use Fish's terminology, I have made the 'interpretive decision' of reading from my 'difference', which leads me to an 'interpretive strategy' that, for the purposes of this essay, I will simplify to two elements. These are, first, reading for expressions of power relations and characterizations of power, and second, reading for the sort of

16. Benítez-Rojo, 'The Repeating Island', p. 103.

17. Henry Louis Gates, Jr, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). See also his *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the 'Racial' Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

18. See especially ch. 2 ('The Signifying Monkey and the Language of Signifyin(g): Rhetorical Difference and the Orders of Meaning', pp. 44-88) of *The Signifying Monkey*. When referring to Gates's term in this essay, I will, as he does, capitalize the term and enclose the final *g* in parentheses.

19. Margaret Thompson Drewal, *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 4. The West-African Yoruba are the major ancestral group of Caribbean and North American blacks.

performative intertextuality which, borrowing Gates's term, can be called 'Signifyin(g)'.[20]

Power Games

Amaziah comes on the scene accompanied by narratorial fanfare. In the first half of v. 10 full titles are in order, and the narratorial voice utters them in a jingling rhyme: *wayyišlaḥ 'amaṣyâ kōhēn bêt-'ēl 'el-yārob'ām melek-yisrā'ēl*, as if to emphasize the inflated self-importance of the character. Amaziah in fact has a way with a title himself, as his direct discourse demonstrates in v. 13: Bethel is 'the king's sanctuary' and 'a temple of the kingdom'. I cannot help seeing here a parodic portrayal of someone for whom title and political authority are everything, to the extent that Beth-*el*, the 'house of *God*', becomes indeed '*the king's* sanctuary' and 'a temple of the kingdom'. Highly ironic also is the lack of any reference to God in Amaziah's discourse, whether he is addressing his superior Jeroboam, or his troublesome trespasser Amos. The priest of Bethel does not invoke divine authority, but rather he speaks as a functionary of the state. In the light of the preceding, Amaziah's much-commented use of the term *ḥōzeh* in addressing Amos can be put into context. The term, as David Petersen and others have amply demonstrated, is indeed a relatively common designation of southern prophets,[21] equivalent to *nābî'* in meaning and in function, the main difference being precisely that it is a *Judean* title. Title-conscious Amaziah may therefore have even sounded exaggeratedly polite when he addressed Amos as *ḥōzeh*, a 'southern' term, but what results is an emphasis on his certainty that Amos does not belong in the North. He uses *ḥōzeh* as an ironic trope on *nābî'*, a trope that epitomizes the point of his attack on Amos: Amos does not 'belong' in Bethel, Amos has no

20. A related concept in Cuban culture is 'choteo', but for the purposes of this essay it does not appear necessary to engage in detailed cultural analysis. See Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, *Literature and Liminality: Festive Readings in the Hispanic Tradition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986), for an introduction to 'choteo'.

21. David L. Petersen, *The Roles of Israel's Prophets* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), especially pp. 51-69.

authority, as a southerner, with which to challenge Amaziah and his northern state cult. Amos may be a prophet, but he is no prophet *here*! Many Hispanics can speak from experience for a similar use of the Spanish title 'Señor' by some Southwestern Anglos—the word in itself may be polite, but the intent is to underline the otherness, the foreignness, and therefore the unequal status of the addressee. As a priest, Amaziah is a custodian of a system, which Mary Douglas so well described, that equated purity with order, and uncleanliness with 'matter out of place'.[22] By underlining, no matter how politely in external formality, the otherness of Amos, Amaziah is quite literally 'treating him like dirt', as a preface to 'putting him in his place'.

When, besides considering Amaziah's use of titles, we move to consider his actions, what we find first is a strategy of maximizing Amos as a political threat toward the king by presenting Amos's words as extremely hostile and dangerous to Jeroboam and to the nation—

> Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words—[23]

and certainly of misrepresenting Amos's words about the king:

> For thus Amos has said,
> 'Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land'.[24]

The intent is clearly to make Amos seem a worse threat than he actually is, to elicit precisely the swift and drastic action from the political authority about which his words implicitly warn Amos. To put it bluntly, there is a double-dealing duplicity in Amaziah that is clear to the reader in the two messages, the first to the king and the second to the prophet. To the latter, addressed as we have seen by the patronizingly polite *ḥōzeh*, Amaziah directs his famous rebuke, in which he orders him to leave immediately—whether *lēk bᵉraḥ-lᵉkā 'el-'ereṣ yᵉhûdâ* is a command to 'flee' or to 'make haste' is not really the central issue—and then casts the insulting insinuation that Amos's first interest in prophesying

22. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).

23. Amos 7.10 (NRSV).

24. Amos 7.11 (NRSV).

is making a living: 'earn your bread there, and prophesy there'.[25] Finally, as has been pointed out, Amaziah utters those ironic words in which the priest of the 'House of God'—who obviously knows what he is saying—calls it 'the king's sanctuary' and 'a temple of the kingdom', giving that as sufficient reason for telling the prophet to leave.

Signifyin(g)

I propose that we read Amos's reply to Amaziah as an example of something akin to what Gates calls 'motivated Signifyin(g)', a 'rhetorical transfer...which serves to redress an imbalance of power, to clear a space, rhetorically'.[26] Amos needs to revise Amaziah's exclusionary text in order precisely to remain in the power game, to 'clear a space' for himself, to 'have the last word'. Gates uses Mikhail Bakhtin's typology of narrative discourse, in particular what Bakhtin calls 'double-voiced discourse', and, within that, the two subcategories of parody and of hidden polemic as a basic construct for elaborating his theory of 'Signifyin(g)'.[27] It is the last of these subcategories, that of 'hidden polemic', that I think is particularly illuminating of Amos's reply. Bakhtin, who characterized hidden polemic as 'barbed words...words used as brickbats', defines this kind of speech as discourse that, besides its orientation toward a referential object, brings to bear a polemical attack 'against another speech act, another assertion, on the same topic'.[28] If,

25. Obviously, since Amaziah's own living was derived from his religious function, there is the possibility that the comment is to be seen as an attempt to let Amos know that, in some way, they share a common interest, and that Amaziah understands Amos's interest in prophesying at a major sanctuary, even if he does not approve and cannot permit Amos's activity at Bethel. Even if this is his intention, Amos clearly chooses to interpret the comment as a patronizing insult and to react accordingly.

26. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, p. 124.

27. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, pp. 110-11.

28. Mixail Baxtin (Mikhail Bakhtin), 'Discourse Typology in Prose', trans. Richard Balthazar and L.R. Titunik, in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views* (ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska; Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1978), pp. 176-96 (187-88) ('Tipy prozaiceskogo slova', in *Problemy tvorcestva Dostoevskogo* [Leningrad, 1929],

as Gates says, borrowing a term from the language of jazz to express the method of Signifyin(g), 'revision proceeds by riffing upon tropes',[29] I would read Amos's reply to Amaziah first as a series of 'riffs' on the latter's use of *ḥōzeh* as what I have called above 'an ironic trope on *nābî'*'. Amos pointedly ignores the term *ḥōzeh* but launches into a 'riff'—or a variation, if you will—in which he denies his '*nabî*hood'—'I am not a *nābî'*, nor the son of a *nābî'*', apparently going Amaziah one better in denying his own status, at the same time that he turns Amaziah's irony inside out by embracing the lack of status and title which the priest's ironic *ḥōzeh* had implied. He doesn't stop 'riffing', however, but launches next into a series of self-identifications as a rustic which can be read as yet another quick-witted elaboration on Amaziah's attack. Amos goes on apparently agreeing with Amaziah's implication that he does not belong where he is—'I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees', also claiming that the Lord found him 'following the flock'. This language is a well-known headache for interpreters who try to take it literally and determine from it what was Amos's 'real' occupation. Bakhtin, indeed, warns readers that there are 'double-voiced' texts, in which 'discourse maintains a double focus', that is, texts that aim both at the overt referential object of speech and 'simultaneously at a second context of discourse, a second speech act by another addresser'. To ignore this and thus to treat the speech act as if it were ordinary, single-referent discourse, is to fail to 'get it', or, as Bakhtin puts it, in that case 'we shall take stylization for straight style and read parody as poor writing'.[30] Amos seems in effect to be telling Amaziah, 'I am *anything but* a prophet! I am nothing but a cowboy, a clodhopper, a sheepkicker!' The rhetorical, performative strategy of seeming to agree with the one who 'puts you down' in order to 'put him on' is what appears to be at work here, rather than an otherwise awkward attempt on Amos's part to present some

pp. 105-35). For a different translation of the same material, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (trans. Caryl Emerson; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 185-203.

29. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, pp. 110-11.

30. Cited by Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, p. 176.

sort of *curriculum vitae* as a 'self-justification speech'.[31] The real impact of this parodic self-deprecation appears immediately, however, when Amos reveals to Amaziah that the latter's attack on him in fact has gone right through Amos to impinge on the One behind him: '*Yahweh* took me from following the flock, and *Yahweh* said to me...' The repetition of Yahweh's name, which appears here for the first time in the exchange between priest and prophet, is the turning point in the power game in which the two have been engaged.[32] Amaziah's peremptory 'go, flee away to the land of Judah' is now 'trumped' by the report of Yahweh's 'go, prophesy to my people Israel', and thus negated. Negated, also, by that 'my people', is the claim of royal and national supremacy with which Amaziah had sought to expel Amos from Bethel. Amaziah is stripped of his assumed power, left naked as it were, to face the 'word of Yahweh'. His indictment is clearly put: 'You say, "Do not prophesy against Israel, don't drivel against the House of Isaac"', and his punishment is rudely and savagely stated—like the preceding, in Yahweh's name. These terms show just how thorough is to be Amaziah's loss of status—his wife will be defiled, his children slaughtered,[33] his inheritance lost, and he himself will be cast out of the land from which he had sought to expel Amos, to die in an unclean land. Finally, what Amaziah had reported to Jeroboam as *Amos's* 'unbearable' words

31. The term 'self-justification speech' comes from Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 249.

32. The 'signifying monkey' (a trickster figure in African-American folklore) typically taunts or tricks the lion—the loud and oppressive self-proclaimed 'king'—into attacking the powerful elephant, and therefore being the instrument of his own destruction. See Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, ch. 2, 'The Signifying Monkey and the Language of Signifyin(g): Rhetorical Difference and the Orders of Meaning' (pp. 44-88).

33. The priest's actual wife and children, as I read this scene, are not represented literally in Amos's discourse. They are brought into play as abstract extensions of Amaziah, as tokens that Amos uses to extend and compromise his adversary's vulnerability. There is a striking parallel in this to the use of 'your mama' in the variety of Signifyin(g) called 'playing the Dozens' (for which see Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, pp. 72-73 and *passim*) and in similar varieties of Caribbean discourse.

concerning Israel is returned to the priest as Yahweh's inexorable decree: Israel *will* go into foreign exile.

Conclusion

In a recent book, Walter Brueggemann calls Amos 7.10-17

> a clear moment when the monopoly of throne and temple is threatened, and then maintained. The priest Amaziah banishes Amos, the voice of an alternative imagination, with the ideological judgment: 'But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom'.[34]

Reading Amos 7.10-17 with power relations in mind—the first part of my strategy for reading—yields results that agree with Brueggemann's conclusion. Amaziah is a representative of institutional power, who acts to maintain the monopoly of power by seeking to exclude 'Amos, the voice of an alternative imagination' from Bethel. I am not so certain, however, that the text is unambiguously 'a clear moment when the monopoly of throne and temple is threatened, and then maintained', as Brueggemann says. Amos does not slink away defeated. The 'alternative imagination' he represents in fact wins the day, in a performance that decenters and overwhelms Amaziah, more importantly, a performance that persuades the reader that ultimate power, far from being 'a monopoly of throne and temple', remains with Amos's God.

34. Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation and Obedience: From Faithful Reading to Faithful Living* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 188.

RUTH FINDS A HOME: CANON, POLITICS, METHOD

David Jobling

This essay has emerged as an unanticipated but necessary extension of my work on the process of canonization that created the literary entity '1 Samuel'—defined, that is, within a much larger narrative, a 'book' with precisely this beginning and end.[1] Such a book is defined, in fact, only in one of the two received canonical traditions, namely the LXX tradition, continued in Christian Bibles; the alternative Masoretic canon defines a single book of Samuel.

My initial purpose was to focus attention on the beginning of 1 Samuel, and to suggest that our reading of it *as a new beginning* has a profound effect on how we read the larger narrative. At first sight, the difference between the two canonical traditions is of limited relevance to this purpose, since the beginning of 1 Samuel is in both the beginning of a new 'book'. Doubtless because of my historical-critical conditioning, it took me a long time to realize that another difference between these canons is of direct relevance to my purpose, namely the inclusion in the LXX-Christian canon, but not in the Masoretic, of the book of Ruth between Judges and 1 Samuel. The canonical tradition which defines 1 Samuel as a separate book places immediately before it not Judges but Ruth. Thus the immediate context of the beginning of 1 Samuel in the Christian Bibles is in this respect different from the immediate context of the beginning of Samuel in the Jewish Bible.

I shall first discuss briefly, without regard to Ruth, some

[1] 1. For an account of this work, which is preliminary to a book on 1 Samuel, see my 'What, if Anything, Is 1 Samuel?', *SJOT* 7 (1993), pp. 17-31.

aspects of the beginning of 1 Samuel.[2] I shall then turn to the book of Ruth, suggesting significant ways in which the narrative that includes it differs from the narrative that excludes it; one of the effects of its inclusion, I shall argue, is to make us read the beginning of 1 Samuel as even more definitely a new beginning. I shall conclude with methodological reflection on my version of 'the new literary criticism'.

Reading the Beginning of 1 Samuel

There is no *canon* in which the story of Hannah is not the beginning of a new book. For contrast, one could simply propose a new division of the narrative, on some basis or other. But I prefer to try out an existing proposal, made by Martin Noth and developed by Dennis McCarthy. Working within the hypothesis of the 'Deuteronomic History', they of course take no account of Ruth. McCarthy's sections (which might perfectly well be called 'books') include ones which correspond to our Judg. 2.11–1 Samuel 12 (I shall call this 'the extended book of Judges') and 1 Samuel 13–2 Samuel 7.[3] I shall, in fact, keep in play *three* alternative divisions—Masoretic canon, LXX-Christian canon, and Noth–McCarthy.

Judgeship and Kingship

The major issue with which this part of the biblical narrative is dealing, I believe, is the assessment of the relative merits of judgeship and kingship as forms of government for Israel,[4] and I shall begin with the slant that the Noth–McCarthy scheme gives to this issue. Each of its 'books' concludes with a covenant-like passage: 1 Samuel 12, 2 Samuel 7 (1 Kgs 8, etc.). 1 Samuel 12, on the face of it, ratifies Saul's kingship and incorporates it into Israel's system. But how real is this kingship? Its reality is

2. This section is a summary of parts of 'What, if Anything, Is 1 Samuel?'

3. Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981 [1957]), pp. 4-11 and *passim*; D.J. McCarthy, 'II Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History', *JBL* 84 (1965), pp. 131-38.

4. David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible II* (JSOTSup, 39; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), pp. 44-87.

subject to doubts of various kinds, of which I mention two. First, the literary form of 1 Samuel 12 is that of a *valedictory*, the last words of a great figure, which appropriately mark the moment of transition to something new—just like the last words of Joshua or of Moses. But it proves to be a *false* valedictory; Samuel remains alive for many chapters. So has 'something new' really emerged? The earlier statement that 'Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life' (1 Sam. 7.15) implies that, despite the *supposed* monarchy, judgeship is still in place.

Second, a problem that came more and more to dominate the presentation of the time of the judges was that of unworthy leaders who, far from restoring Israel to the faithfulness to Yahweh on which its very existence depended, themselves threatened that existence by their own unfaithfulness.[5] 1 Samuel 12 does nothing to alter this threat, since it brings kingship under the same conditional covenant that ruled the time of the judges (see vv. 14-15). But the ending of the *next* Noth–McCarthy 'book', 2 Samuel 7, *does* solve the problem, by excluding the kings from the conditionality of the covenant. We finally have here a kingship that has separated itself *theologically* from judgeship. Is a kingship that has not so separated itself a kingship at all?

The Noth–McCarthy division, through the endings of its 'books', foregrounds this problematic of a kingship that isn't one. The Masoretic canon's division between Judges and Samuel, by contrast, puts the issue of the systemic nature of kingship into the background. What it foregrounds is the present ending of Judges, which asserts, without consideration of the nature of kingship, that the lack of a king has negative consequences. So we begin to read the book of Samuel not only expecting a monarchy, but expecting monarchy to improve things. Samuel loses his rooting among the judges, and becomes a 'John the Baptist' of monarchy.

The LXX-Christian canon's creation of '1 Samuel' seems to carry further this tendency of the Masoretic canon. 1 Samuel is best described as 'The Book of Samuel and Saul'. It exactly covers the lifetime of both characters, beginning with the birth

5. Jobling, *Sense of Biblical Narrative II*, pp. 55-56.

of the older and ending with the death of the younger. It has many dramatic scenes of interaction between them, including the first appearance of Saul and the last, posthumous appearance of Samuel. It even presents their names as somehow related, and confusable. The literary effect of the creation of the book is to exploit the intertwining of these two lives in order to foreground their relation *to each other*, and to *background* not only Samuel's identification with the judges but also Saul's identification with the kings.[6]

Hannah and the Presentation of Women

The overwhelming tendency in scholarly literature is to read Hannah's song, in 1 Sam. 2.1-10, in relation to what follows rather than what precedes it. I believe this is the consequence of our instinctive reading of her story as a beginning, rather than of any real indicators in the song. The notion that v. 10 anticipates monarchy seems to me dubious, since the wording suggests celebration of an *existing* monarchy. This celebration in any case constitutes a major problem, since it stands in stark contrast to most of the rest of the song, which rejoices in Yahweh's liberation of the oppressed, including women, in terms compatible with a theology of revolution.

Whether one reads the song forwards or backwards makes an enormous difference to one's sense precisely of this issue. Polzin reads it as one of the songs of the Masoretic Samuel (cf. 2 Sam. 1.19-27; 22.2-51), and in particular he alleges extensive parallels between it and 2 Samuel 22.[7] Reading Hannah's song along with these songs of David leads Polzin, not surprisingly, to affirm strongly the monarchical aspect of Hannah's song. But

6. I have devoted a major essay to each of these issues: for the first, see n. 4; for the second, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible I* (JSOTSup, 7; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 2nd edn, 1986), pp. 12-30. Robert Polzin (*Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History. Part Two: 1 Samuel* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989], pp. 26-30) seems to identify essentially these issues—whether there is adequate justification for kingship, and how Yahweh could abandon *Saul's* kingship—as the most critical in 1 Samuel.

7. *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, pp. 31-35. I have critiqued these parallels in 'What, if Anything, Is 1 Samuel?'

to read it as one of the songs in the Noth–McCarthy 'extended book of Judges' results in a diametrically opposite tendency. In Judges 5, the song of another woman, Deborah, celebrates the sweeping away of the vaunted power of kings by the waters of Kishon. And in Judges 9, Jotham's anti-monarchical fable, though a man's song, finds its fulfilment in a woman's assassination of a king! The focus of our reading of Hannah's song, in this context, will be on the social revolution that *gets rid of* kings, and particularly on the revolutionary role of women.

Besides her song, another aspect of Hannah's story requires our attention. She seems at first sight very much defined by her family situation as the favoured but barren wife; not only her trouble, but also her eventual reward, are within this framework—we last hear of her as the mother of six (2.21). But *within* the family she acts with a striking independence, above all in her assumption of complete control over her firstborn son. At no point is any question raised as to her right to make her own vow to Yahweh regarding this child, and to carry it out.

These two issues—family and monarchy—are taken up in a good deal of recent feminist work bearing upon the role of women in the transition from judgeship to monarchy. Some of the work sees this transition primarily in literary terms—more or less, the transition from Judges to Samuel—while some of it suggests the historical framework of an actual transition to monarchy in Israel.[8] For present purposes, I shall confine myself to the primarily literary approaches.

Mieke Bal's thesis, in *Death and Dissymmetry*, is that the book of Judges is the literary product of a struggle over the transition from one pattern of kinship/marriage to another—from 'patrilocal' (the husband moves to the wife's father's house) to 'virilocal' (the wife moves to the husband's house; Bal adjusts the customary anthropological terms 'matrilocal' and 'patrilocal' to ones based on the wife's perspective).[9] She suggests that

8. For a review of this work, see my 'Feminism and "Mode of Production" in Ancient Israel: Search for a Method', in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. D. Jobling, P. Day and G.T. Sheppard; Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1991), pp. 239-51.

9. *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*

patrilocal marriage provides women with *relatively* wider options than virilocal—not that it is beneficial for women, but that, among the various forms of 'patriarchy', there are relative differences which it is meaningful and necessary to analyse.

Regina Schwartz has recently discussed the role of stories featuring women and sexuality in the accounts of the incipient monarchy, arguing that power over women expresses political power.[10] She concentrates on three stories of David's women (Abigail, Michal, Bathsheba), noting in each case how it is a man (Nabal, Paltiel, Uriah) who appears as the 'victim', the woman being only a pawn in the male power-struggle.

It is fascinating to read Hannah in relation to the alternatives offered by Bal and Schwartz. Hannah seems fully integrated into the *virilocal* household, her life rotating about her husband, so that one might see her as the forerunner of Schwartz's women, mere pawns in patriarchal/monarchical games. Yet her assumption of control over her son—much more compatible with patri- than with virilocality—invites us to read her story as another episode in the struggle Bal perceives in Judges. In this connection, of course, we will not miss the link between Hannah's story and that of 'the Levite's concubine', so central to Bal's case. Both stories—a mere three chapters apart in the absence of Ruth—begin with 'a certain man of the hill country of Ephraim' (Judg. 19.1; 1 Sam. 1.1).

Ruth in the LXX-Christian Canon

The inclusion of the book of Ruth seems to me to extend the tendency I have discerned in the separation of Judges and Samuel, and in the creation of 01 Samuel: namely, to legitimize kingship, and specifically David's kingship.

Judgeship and Kingship

Both the opening and the closing words of Ruth confirm this tendency. The opening, 'In the days when the judges ruled', makes that time seem remote, a quite separate era from that of

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), esp. pp. 85-86.

10. 'Adultery in the House of David: The Metanarrative of Biblical Scholarship and the Narratives of the Bible', *Semeia* 54 (1991), pp. 35-55.

the books to follow. The closing reference to David stands in sharp contrast to the closing of Judges, with its 'no king in Israel'; in fact the inclusion of Ruth and the creation of 1 Samuel together result in a series of books that *end* with (a) the urgent need for monarchy (Judges), (b) the announcement of the coming of David, founder of the 'true' monarchy (Ruth), and (c) the resolution (through Saul's death) of the complication of an *alternative* monarchy to the true one (1 Samuel).

But Ruth seems to me to have a profounder impact on the canon than this. For this book achieves *exactly the same journey* that 1 Samuel does—from 'the days when the judges ruled' to 'David'. Before we ever hear of Samuel or Saul, we know that the ground covered by their joint story can be covered without these two figures, much more briefly and also much more pleasantly; instead of the dark theological intricacies of a conditional covenant, there can be a sweet pastoral story that passes from famine to plenty, from death to birth.

This idea of a canonical alternative, or short-cut, is one I wish to pursue further. Ruth alludes (in 4.12) to the story in Genesis 38. The point of the allusion is not just the general theme of fertility, but the contribution *both* stories make to the genealogy that proceeds from Judah to David and his house. When one thinks of these two stories together, one thinks readily of 'intrusion'. Just as Genesis 38 famously intrudes into the Jacob–Joseph story, so is Ruth intruded, in one canonical tradition, into the story of Israel. In the Genesis story, ch. 38 comes immediately after the taking of Joseph to Egypt (37.36), which is the first intimation of the main theme of chs. 39–50, the descent of Jacob and his family into Egypt. Narratologically, there is no way that ch. 38 can be made to fit into this larger story,[11] and thematically it has to do with settling in Canaan. I believe that it represents a canonical *alternative* to 'going down to Egypt'; and I further suggest that Ruth confirms this alternative, belonging to a view of the past that does not include having been 'brought up from Egypt'. These 'intrusive' elements *subvert* the main *Heilsgeschichte* story, hinting that we could do without exodus,

11. It shows Judah as the independent head of a household, and easily old enough to be a grandfather, whereas in the Egypt story he is still part of his father's household.

conquest, Moses, and all the elaborated (conditional) theology associated with this story, and make do perfectly well with a canon consisting of Genesis up to ch. 38, and then jumping to David via Ruth. They seem to me to betray the sense of an 'alternative' past, consisting of the first ancestors, the dimly remembered judges, and the genealogy of David's house.[12]

The Presentation of Women

It is of particular interest for feminist reading that what separates Judges from 1 Samuel, and Bal's women from Schwartz's, is a *woman's* story, and even a woman's *book*. But feminist exegetes are divided about Ruth. Some are enthusiastic about the book, seeing Ruth as a strong, independent character, and her relationship to Naomi as an example of voluntary female bonding unique in the Bible; others see Ruth and her book as subserving male agenda.[13] I am more convinced by the latter. I have suggested that the pastoral cast of the story diverts attention from the issues being dealt with, and I also suspect that some features attractive to a certain feminist reading are a skilful

12. It is, of course, widely held that the Jerusalem theology, centered in the David–Zion complex of traditions, paid little attention to the exodus tradition; also that the Davidic tradition has an affinity to Genesis, at least the parts ascribed to J. My interest here lies neither in such historical hypotheses, nor in the question of literary sources that may have fed into the development of the canon, but rather in the literary effects whereby the canon seems both to uphold and to undermine the exodus theology.

Perhaps other similar elements are to be found. Judg. 1.1-21, likewise concerned with the Judahite genealogy, is also strikingly intrusive, belonging as it does to material set off by resumptive repetition—the events of Josh. 24.28-31, including the death of Joshua, are repeated in Judg. 2.6-9.

Is not some such sense of the past implied in the early chapters of Chronicles? 1 Chronicles begins its history, as opposed to genealogy, precisely at the point when 'Yahweh...turned the kingdom over to David' (10.14)—the account of Saul's death serves merely to close the book on any alternative history. The preceding genealogies give first place to that of Judah (chs. 2–4), within which, despite the parsimony of the narrative allusions in these chapters, the Gen. 38 story rates two full verses (2.4-5)!

13. 'It is the reader's task to determine whether this book affirms Ruth or ultimately erases her' (Amy-Jill Levine, 'Ruth', in *The Women's Bible Commentary* [ed. C.A. Newsom and S.H. Ringe; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992], p. 79). Cf. Levine's whole introduction.

sugaring of the pill; the whole shape of the book allows women to take the initiative and make the plans—but only until the time comes for the real decision-making, when men take over (contrast ch. 4 with chs. 1–3).

In Bal's terms, the book reads like an apology for virilocal marriage. The choices of the two daughters-in-law in ch. 1, when placed directly after Judges, function to mark the dividing of the ways between patrilocal and virilocal marriage. Orpah chooses to stay in her own place, rather than be associated with her late husband's family—indeed, it is to her *mother's* house (1.8)[14] that she returns—and disappears from the canonical story. Ruth associates herself with her husband's family, and the *result* of her successful insertion into the virilocal system is that she participates in establishing the monarchy.[15] The ownership of women, as a legal issue, is central to the book, not only in ch. 4, where it is incidental upon the ownership of land,[16] but also in 2.5, where the question of ownership is the first that needs to be asked about any woman. In canonical terms, this stress on the legalities stands in contrast to the lawless (though sanctioned) acquisition of women in Judges 21.

Ruth's bond to Naomi, which forms the backbone of the book, and which is presented as voluntary in the book's most memorable words (1.16-17), in fact valorizes a relationship—mother-in-law to daughter-in-law—on the success of which the peace of the virilocal household depends (so that it is perhaps a just historical irony that Ruth's words have traditionally been used to express the bond of virilocal marriage). In this connection, note the charming micro-dialogue that the LXX-Christian canon sets up between Ruth 4.15 and 1 Sam. 1.8 (only a dozen verses apart). Ruth is more to Naomi than seven sons,

14. Cf. Carol Meyers, '"To her Mother's House": Considering a Counterpart of the Israelite *bêt 'āb*', in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis* (ed. Jobling, Day and Shephard), pp. 39-51.

15. Cf. Naomi Steinberg, 'The Deuteronomic Law and the Politics of State Centralization', in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis* (ed. Jobling, Day and Shephard), pp. 161-70.

16. Boaz's mentioning of the land inheritance to the next-of-kin before he mentions Ruth (vv. 3-5) may be perceived as a rhetorical trick. But note that he puts the land first also in his formal declaration in vv. 9-10.

while Elkanah claims to be more than ten sons to Hannah. Taken together, these two verses convey a message that neither alone adequately conveys: that the virilocal *system*, summarized in the triangle of head of household, his wife, and his surviving mother, is more important than mere fertility, which any system achieves.

On such a reading, the book of Ruth strikingly enacts the transition from Balian to Schwartzian woman. The relatively fluid situation in which Bal finds the women of Judges to live their lives is continued in the fluid situation in which Naomi and Ruth find themselves, and the range of options that seems open to them. But, through the very decisions that these women make, the book strives towards the relatively more fixed position of women under virilocality and monarchy. The decision of 'the Levite's concubine' to leave her husband's house was made when 'there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes' (Judg. 17.6, 21.25; I use, not without irony, the non-sexist translation of NRSV). Orpah's decision was an analogous one, but it took her out of Israel and out of the story. Ruth's decision to 'find security...in the house of [her] husband' (1.9) made her the ancestor of Davidic kings. The decision of canonizers to find a home for her book between Judges and Samuel has helped make *Hannah* into merely the herald and facilitator of Davidic kings.

Political Reading: A Postscript on Method

This essay assumes a literary criticism much under the impact of feminism, Marxism and psychoanalysis. To be adequately political, a reading needs to reflect politically at every level of interpretation, and above all to be self-reflective, reading *itself* politically. So I shall here reflect on a series of issues that have arisen in the preparation of this essay, and on the way I have tried to deal with them.

What draws me to Judges and Samuel is their overt raising of political issues, and there has recently been, in the context of liberation and feminist interpretation and theology, a considerable

quantity and variety of political readings of these books.[17] For me, such readings form the essential context for any work I do with these texts; yet most literary interpreters, even when they attend to the political themes *in* the text, are largely oblivious to political readings *of* the text.[18]

A great deal has been written, particulary within the Marxism *versus* deconstruction debates, on the politics of the *methods* one adopts within the general framework of 'literary' approaches.[19] In the great wealth of recent literary work on 1 Samuel,[20] there are two main trends; but both are responses to the same perception, that this text is a particularly complex and even self-contradictory one. One response is to try to exert control, to solve the text's problems by showing that the diversity expresses a single, though complex, ideological perspective (often equated with the narrator's point of view). The other is to accept the problems, even rejoice in them as creating the interest or fun of the text—to delineate, but not to 'solve', them.[21] This debate

17. For representative readings, in addition to the feminist ones discussed in this essay, cf. George V. Pixley, *God's Kingdom: A Guide for Biblical Study* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), pp. 20-24; Bruce C. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), pp. 204-12; Alice L. Laffey, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: A Feminist Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 93-96, 105-107.

18. Polzin, for example, sees a battle going on in 1 Samuel between the ideologies of judgeship and kingship, and throws himself fully into the problems of the ideological commitments of the characters, the narrator, and sometimes the reader; but this 'reader', like Polzin's own authorial voice, has no particular location, and feminist or liberation criticism goes unheard (cf. e.g. *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, p. 96; but such free-floating 'ideological' discussion occurs throughout the book).

19. On these debates, see David Jobling, 'Writing the Wrongs of the World: The Deconstruction of the Biblical Text in the Context of Liberation Theologies', *Semeia* 51 (1990), pp. 81-118.

20. For a review, see Robert Polzin, '1 Samuel: Biblical Studies and the Humanities', *RSR* 15 (1989), pp. 297-306.

21. To the first line belong Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, and Lyle M. Eslinger, *Kingship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of 1 Samuel 1–12* (Bible and Literature, 10; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1985); to the second, Peter Miscall, *1 Samuel: A Literary Reaing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), and, to a lesser extent, James S. Ackerman, 'Who Can Stand

calls to mind the final verse of Judges, which contrasts having a king with 'everyone doing what is right in their own eyes'; but this contrast is expressed from a monarchical perspective, so that 'everyone doing what is right in their own eyes' will probably not be a fair description of the alternative to monarchy. Likewise, there are those who tendentiously read the current plurality of biblical methods as a situation of 'anything goes', and who yearn for some controls, for a 'king in Israel'. One's choice of method, it seems, may imply a stance towards the political matter of the text.

I do not in this essay employ specific techniques of structuralism (or of deconstruction, which I regard as a radicalization of structuralism); but I assume and work with its basic tenet, namely that a text has meaning only in its *difference* from other texts. First of all, I am reading the difference between two existing literary works, the two canons. But in setting up a system of differences, structuralism does not confine itself to *existing* literary works; it also posits possible but non-existing ones. If—and the proposition scarcely needs arguing—the given *divisions* of a literary work are a significant part of the work, then the biblical narrative *not* divided into books is a non-existing literary work, as is the Noth–McCarthy 'Deuteronomic History'. I posit these works as a way of saying things about the existing ones. This method, which I find perpetually fruitful, is related to Marxist approaches which interrogate the text for what it *fails* to say.[22]

The most troublesome methodological problems continue to lie in the relationship of literary reading of the Bible to historical hypotheses about it. This essay makes what must seem, to historical-critical sensibility, an extreme claim on behalf of the literary autonomy of the text; I refer to my basing lines of argument on detailed literary effects of the placement of Ruth in the LXX-Christian canon. For from a historical perspective there is a perfectly adequate explanation of this placement: the desire of the canonizers to put as many books as possible (Genesis to

before YHWH, This Holy God? A Reading of 1 Samuel 1–15', *Prooftexts* 11 (1991), pp. 1-24.

22. The classic statement is Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978 [1966]).

Esther) in chronological order at the beginning of the Bible. So there was no specific *intention*, for example, to put Ruth 4.15 and 1 Sam. 1.8 near each other. A literary approach must insist that this collocation in the existing literary work has a status equal to that of any other literary datum, and that textual history and intention have, at this level, nothing to do with it.

On the other hand, my work relates itself at various points to historical hypotheses, and it is important to bring these relationships to consciousness, and to try to give an account of what is going on. I mention two issues. First, when dealing with the shift in the presentation of women between Judges and Samuel, suggested by Bal and Schwartz, I rather skirt the issue of the relationship between this *literary* observation and the *historical* hypothesis of scholars like Carol Meyers and Naomi Steinberg (based on models from the social sciences) that a shift in Israel from a less to a more statist form of government tended to restrict the options of women.[23] Second, I speak freely of a 'process' of canonical development, and of a 'tendency' in this process; this *historical* thesis, in fact, is what I am mainly arguing in this essay, though my literary observations could stand on their own in some other framework.

In the first case, I betray my anxiety over the possibility that the literature might be considered to 'reflect' the history. This anxiety is justified to the extent that notions of literature as a reflection of reality still reign, with various degrees of sophistication, in biblical studies; on the other hand, there must be something better to do with the literary and historical observations than just juxtapose them. In the second case, I fail to conceal my *desire* for a certain myth of the canonization process; the myth, namely, of an 'original' narrative very dubious towards monarchy, but whose true character the process obscured. In introducing the Noth–McCarthy scheme, I go beyond its value for purely synchronic comparisons, to the possibility that it represents diachronically an earlier way of dividing the narrative, in relation to which the canonical developments constitute a

23. Carol M. Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), esp. pp. 189-96; Steinberg, 'The Deuteronomic Law Code'.

'tendency'. I desire this myth for its potential political impact on biblical studies.

I have no general answer to the problem of literature and history. Certain Marxist critics suggest models that I find usable.[24] More importantly, certain feminist critics empower me to develop a style that resists taking the problem *too* seriously, since it belongs to a male model of specialization; Bal and Schwartz, for example, seem not to share my anxiety, and work out ways of studying the biblical literature in significant relation to historical hypotheses about it. What changes the shape of the problem for politically engaged readers is their insistence that we look at everything from the perspective of *our own* historicity, including the historicity of what we do with the Bible, and why. The Bible is a political reality in the present, and nothing we do with it is separate from present reality. The Noth–McCarthy division, for example, which we are conditioned to assess by its ability to account for things we think we know about the *past*, is first of all a *present* thing; my use of it to establish a monarchical tendency in the development of the canon can be stood on its head by asking whether the forming of such a hypothesis does not indicate an anti-monarchical tendency in modern biblical scholarship! It is via a thorough immersion in the problems of the relationship between *our* history and *our* 'biblical text' (the text constituted by the variegated presence of the Bible in our culture) that we need to approach the problem of the relation between *past* history and the *past* existence of the biblical text. This is not a formula to solve everything; the problems of historical analogy between present and past remain immense. But the present essay assumes that this is the right approach in principle.

My very decision to take up the issue of canon has political aspects. Any literary study of the Bible must deal in some way with the issue of the whole and the parts; my inclination, here and elsewhere, to give priority to 'a sense of the whole', rather than to close reading, goes against the main trend. But is it merely a matter of taste? In the case of the Bible, 'the whole' is in some sense the canon, and it is surely as *canon* that the Bible

24. Especially Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981).

has its unique cultural power. Yet there has been very little serious examination of canons as literary works.[25]

The part played by canonical *sequence* in this exercise of cultural power needs further study, but it is hard to believe that it is not a basic aspect of a canon as it enters consciousness and habit. It is probably of greater significance for the Christian canons, which (including the New Testament) purport to tell one story from beginning to end, than for the Jewish canon.[26] So my assumption in this essay, that the placement of Ruth in the Christian canon has an impact on the reading of it and the books around it, seems justified.[27]

Finally, both my decision to pursue the canonical issues and my findings are probably related to the fact that canonization *as such* is a negative category in feminist discourse. In general literary-critical discourse, feminists have pointed out the political dimensions of the creation of a 'canon of great books', which becomes, for example, the authorized scope of university literature curricula.[28] Feminist scholars of the New Testament suggest that its canonization tended to exclude literature by, for, and about women.[29] Establishing a canon of scripture is a major exercise of power, and power characteristically works to further entrench itself.

25. The work of Northrop Frye is the most obvious exception. Cf. also Gabriel Josipovici, *The Book of God: A Response to the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

26. I shall take up this issue in an essay on 'The Canon of the Jewish Bible as a Literary Work' in a forthcoming collection (*No King in Israel: Post-Structural Essays on the Jewish Bible* [Sheffield: JSOT Press]).

27. Before we can even consider literary effects, we should not underestimate, given Josipovici's reminder of the importance of the sheer physicality of the Bible (*The Book of God*, pp. 29-36), the effect of Ruth simply as a physical barrier of some pages between Judges and 1 Samuel.

28. E.g. Sydney Janet Kaplan, 'Varieties of Feminist Criticism', in *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* (ed. G. Greene and C. Kahn; New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 37-58.

29. D.J. Good, 'Early Extracanonical Writings', in *The Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. Newsom and Ringe), pp. 383-89.

TRACING THE VOICE OF THE OTHER: ISAIAH 28 AND THE COVENANT WITH DEATH

Francis Landy

'We have made a covenant with death...we have concealed ourselves in illusion' (Isa. 28.15).

1. Woe, O crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim
and the fading flower [m.] of the beauty of his splendour,
which is at the head of the valley of fat things,
those hammered with wine.
2. Behold one strong and mighty to my Lord,
like a flood of hail, a storm of destruction,
like a flood of waters, powerful, overflowing,
he has cast down to earth by hand.
3. With feet they tread down/are trodden down,[1]
crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim.
4. And the fading flower [f.] of the beauty of its splendour,
which is at the head of the valley of fat things,
shall be like a first fig when it is not quite summer
which, as soon as the one who sees it sees it,
no sooner is it in his hand than he swallows it up.

5. In that day shall YHWH of Hosts be as a crown of beauty and a
diadem of splendour for the remnant of his people.
6. And as a spirit of justice for the one who sits on justice,
and as power (for) those who turn back war at the gate.
7. And also these have raved with wine,
have tottered with drink,
priest and prophet have raved with drink,
are swallowed up by wine;
they have tottered from drink,

1. I read the grammatically anomalous *b^{e}raglayim tērāmasnâ* as a conflation of 'feet shall tread down' and 'with feet it (the crown, etc.) is trodden down', thereby achieving an ellipsis, a collision of active and passive experiences. For discussion of the phrase and emendations thereof, see Wildberger 1982: 1043 and Watts 1985: 360.

they have raved in vision,
they have uprooted judgment.
8. For all tables are full of vomit, shit,
without cease.

The Covenant with Death

A covenant with death is the ultimate absurdity, since death alone brooks no compromise; yet every post-edenic human endeavour is an attempt to make a deal with death, to postpone it, to render it malleable, to humanize it. The motif of the game with death, from Gilgamesh to Ingmar Bergman's *Seventh Seal*, is both a symbol for all human transactions with death, and, as play, a displacement, into wish-fulfilment.[2] We are drawn into the game not just because Death might be defeated, but because the game itself offers a space for fascination, for the suspension of closure. Into the mutual pleasure of the game is invested, not only the hope of immortality, but an invitation, that death lose its otherness. Thereby the relationship with death enters human reflection.

The covenant with death is antithetical to the covenant with YHWH, inscribed in the flesh but also in the text of the Torah and in a traumatic history. Much biblical polemic is dedicated to sustaining this opposition. It is not so much my intention to subvert it, to show that YHWH is a God of death as well as of life, as to investigate the effect of the opposition and convergence of the two covenants on writing, and with it prophetic writing.

The covenant with death is paradoxical as well as absurd, in that it is a bond with death that frees one from death. It entails, so the parallel passage in 8.19 suggests, a turning to one's ancestors, to the past, against a terrifying future. The past is the realm of memory, of the textual subconscious, whose revanchism is expressed in whispers and sighs (*ham^{e}ṣapṣ^{e}pîm w^{e}hammahgîm*), in half-erased traces of language. The dead both

2. Symptomatic of scholarly discomfort with the metaphor in Isa. 28.16 is the attempt to find a concrete reference for it, either in terms of an actual cult of death or as an allegorical designation for an alliance with Egypt. For a general discussion, see Clements 1980: 229 and Wildberger 1982: 1073-75. See most recently van der Toorn 1988.

refuse to die, haunting our dreams and our imagination, and they tell us that we will die. We all have a compact, or at least a date, with death.

Poetry

Poetry plays with alternative worlds, with the infinite combinations of sounds and images, with the transition between narcissistic omnipotence and the terror of finitude. It is a game with language and the world that constitutes preeminently a 'transitional object', transitional between mother and child but also between union and separation (Winnicott 1972). The spoken or unspoken other player in this game is death, not only in that poetry tries to make sense of the world despite death, nor in that it seeks immortality for our voices and our lived experience, but in that it passes between being and non-being, what can and cannot be said, the thought of being and the unthought.[3]

Poetry, as player, is the antagonist of death. Perhaps it alone makes no covenant, refuses to compromise, with death. Writing otherwise is technology, *techne*, and thus, according to Derrida, an instrument of totalitarian control and impersonality.[4] 'We are all in peril of becoming thing' (Owen 1989: 150). Poetry fills or at least marks the gap between human being and thing with its possibilities of metamorphosis. For Derrida, a poet is a

3. For Heidegger, poetry—which for him encompasses every work of art and language—opens the cleavage, the difference, in the thought of Being to what cannot be thought therein, to the Unsayable. This is the site of the Holy, beyond the Givenness, or 'There isness' (*Es Gibt*) of Being. But if poetry marks a trace of the holy, it also sounds the knell of the philosophical subject (Taylor 1987: 37-58 [58]).

4. For Derrida, writing as *techne* is a *relation* between life and death (1978: 227). But the machine, by which Derrida means the representation of the psychical apparatus, is dead. As representation, writing is death. Derrida also reverses this: 'Death is representation'. For Derrida, writing consists of traces, each one of which is the site of the disappearance of the self. The erasure likewise is death (1978: 230). For a reflection on the possibility of non-totalitarian language, see his essay on Levinas, 'Violence and Metaphysics' (1978: 79-153 [148]).

metaphorical Jew,[5] who crosses the Jordan, from death to life. The river-crossing is the date of composition, of circumcision, the wound in the flesh that enables one to join the community of poets and Jews, whom Derrida terms 'autochthons' of language (1978: 66). For Celan, the primary event, that date that recurs always in his poems, is the trace of that which is now nothing, no one, 'No one's rose', ash; its God (*du*) likewise can only be experienced as smoke, as an intimate disappearance.[6]

The covenant with God is also distance from God, a distance the poet fills with ambiguous language. The enigma of poetry conceals the mystery of God, and everything else. The dissimulation of God's face allows us to speak (Derrida 1978: 67); the pleroma is disrupted to open up a space for self-questioning, for thought.[7] The fragmentation of the parousia that, according to Merleau-Ponty (1968: 152), results in the folding over and invagination of being, permits a dialectic of death and life, absence and presence, as the movement or trace of poetry.[8] According to Derrida (1978: 68), poetry originates in the breaking of the tablets, in a primal catastrophe, which is also a catastrophe within God. Between the shards of the tablets, the

5. Derrida quotes Marina Tsvetayevna: 'All the poets are Jews' (1986: 338). Similarly, in his essay on Jabès, Derrida writes that for Jabès 'the situation of the Jew becomes exemplary of the situation of the poet' (1978: 65).

6. References are to Celan's 'Psalm' to God as *Niemandsrose*, in the collection also called *Die Niemandsrose*, and to his poem *Am weissen Gebetriemen*, in *Atemwende* (Celan 1980: 142, 196). See the discussion in Derrida 1986: 333-34.

7. Derrida suggests, in his essay on Levinas, that within philosophical thought God is named within difference, and as difference. God, in this discourse, is both Life and Death, All and Nothing (1978: 115-16). To the objection that Levinas opposes philosophical discourse, Derrida responds that nonetheless he engages in it, to go beyond it, to achieve 'a certain silent horizon of speech' (1978: 117). One is reminded of Barthes' contrast between the ceaseless polemic engaged in by 'texts of pleasure' and the peace afforded by texts of *jouissance*. It might be noted that in Kabbalah—one of Derrida's many occult resources (1978: 74)—*'elohim* is the self-questioning, differentiating *sefirah*, Binah.

8. For Merleau-Ponty and Blanchot, death is absent presence or present absence (Taylor 1987: 96). For Blanchot (1982), all writing is *écriture du désastre*. For the trace as the movement between absence and presence that constitutes the world of sense, see Taylor 1987: 88.

possibilities of interpretation and recombination ramify. In those spaces, poetry becomes polysemous, inexhaustible and discontinuous. With the breaking of the tablets, according to the Midrash, death re-entered the world;[9] poetry is not only a resistance to that death, but always limited, fissured and impressed with it. Its ambiguity, as a sign of the covenant and of its breach, is also that of its success or failure. It marks the traces of that which has already vanished, but can do so only through the displacements and opacity of language. Its subject, as Derrida (1986: 332) says, is the unreadable: 'The unreadable is readable as unreadable, this is the madness or fire that consumes a date from within...' The indecipherability of the poem—its function as caesura—the ash, for example, at the centre of Celan's poems, threatens its words with illusoriness, with alienation. In Celan's poem, *Fadensonnen*, songs are to be found paradoxically only on the other side of that divide, leaving the words of the poem itself voiceless.[10]

The relation with death is perhaps more intimate. Poets are attracted to death: 'Now more than ever seems it rich to die'. Eros and Thanatos, according to Freud, are inextricable (Taylor 1992: 15); the erotic desire to unite with the other concludes in the non-differentiation of death. The poetry that articulates the loveliness and order of the world, and the pathos of its disintegration, verges, beyond Freud's pleasure principle, with the poetry that seeks regression, into the song of the nightingale, and relief from the pressure to make sense and the narcissistic play of mirrors between self and other.[11] The ambiguity of the

9. Cf. the opinion of R. Jose in *Mekilta de R. Ishmael*, Bahodesh IX (II, 276), and Nachmanides on Exod. 32.6. The loss of immortality as a result of the sin of the Golden Calf is a recurrent motif in the Zohar.

10. '[E]s sind/noch Lieder zu singen jenseits/der Menschen' ('there are/still songs to be sung on the other side/of mankind' (trans. Hamburger).

11. For Freud, that which lay beyond the pleasure principle was in fact its logical extension, since the pleasure principle consists in the resolution of tension, culminating in the homeostasis of death (Taylor 1992: 13-14). Lovers endlessly see themselves reflected in each other (Owen 1989: 126-27); the interplay of projection and introjection is not only a Freudian cliché, but the dynamic of Hegel's speculative philosophy, from which Bataille sought to escape through his cultivation of radical heterogeneity (see Taylor's essay on Bataille [1987: 115-48] and his discussion of Bataille's

poet corresponds to Lacan's split in the subject, between the conscious and the unconscious, the particularity of the individual, attached erotically to the world, and the universality of the matrix, neither being nor non-being, that is both its irrecoverable past and its inevitable future (Taylor 1987: 89-96; cf. Kristeva 1982).

The community needs poets to tell it the truth and to sustain its illusions; poets are accused of inventing fabulae, and of a radical critique that threatens social foundations. The other side of this double bind is that poets can tell the truth only through illusions, through the intricate art of replacement and opening gaps in the texture of language.[12] In poetry, truth and illusion, the real and the fantasmic, are interdependent, in the playspace composed of transitional objects.

Isaiah, Poetry and Death

Isaiah's poetry preeminently concerns death, the defences against death, and some opening of the horizons beyond death. This death, as for Rilke[13] and Celan, is universal; the turning to the ancestors is a reflex of the fear that there will be no descendants. From the vanishing future one buries oneself in the past.[14] The imagination of collective death is also a collapse of the poet's world. The problem in Isaiah is to find a language for the failure of the symbolic order, which is also an inversion of the covenant, and for the new voices that he hears, a poetry that will transmit in our language the 'other language' of God (28.11). The difficulty is compounded by the contradiction between the desire to communicate and the prohibition of comprehensibility, established paradigmatically in the call vision

celebration of the death-instinct [1992: 25-29]).

12. Owen's study *Mi-lou* is a sustained modern attempt at a Defence of Poetry against Plato's charge of immorality; I borrow greatly from it.

13. For the phenomenon of mass death, in the First World War, as an unbearable problematic for Rilke, and through Rilke, for Heidegger, see Wyschogrod 1985 (esp. ch. 1).

14. According to Lacan, in the repetition complex the past is projected into the future, whose ultimate horizon is death (1966: 318). The complementary movement is from the future to the past. See also Taylor 1987: 96.

(6.10). Isaiah is a poet who must not succeed, whose success is failure. Hence the alternation of a poetic idiom that is traditional, sophisticated and compressed, with one that is strange, naive and diffuse. Isaiah combines poetry of extraordinary density and polysemy with exorbitant repetition and syntactic fragmentation. This results not only in extreme difficulties of interpretation but in a dialectic of structure and anti-structure.[15]

The dialectic corresponds to that between texts of pleasure and texts of jouissance, to employ Roland Barthes' terminology (1973; cf. Landy 1991).[16] My interest in this essay is in the points of transition between jouissance and pleasure; where the poetic excitation is engendered; the resistance to significance; whether jouissance and pleasure are congruent or antithetic. Texts of pleasure reinscribe a culture; texts of jouissance are anti-cultural, and only irrupt in the interstices, in the gaps of texts of pleasure. An ideal analysis would describe the pleasure given by the text, its order, its accumulation of sensory and hermeneutic touches, and demarcate the excitement, the discharge of tension, of jouissance. This is what is mystical in poetry, the fusion with the voice beyond any particular significance or subjectivity, in which intoxication is also peace, the cessation of polemic.[17] This point of fusion is mysterious, the residue that remains when the text has been interpreted.

15. For a good discussion of the complexity and instability of Isaiah's similes, see Exum 1981.

16. Barthes' opposition between pleasure and jouissance conforms to Nietzsche's distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian discourses. Dionysus, the god of ecstasy, represents the shattering of individuation and the union of Eros and Thanatos. For a discussion of the Apollonian–Dionysian polarity in relation to the Song of Songs, see Landy 1983. Taylor (1992: 18-33) notes the parallel between Nietzsche's interrelated opposites and those of Freudian psychology (ego/id, conscious/unconscious, eros/thanatos), and the influence of Nietzsche on Bataille and Heidegger, and thus the whole modernist movement.

17. Barthes 1973: 15, 49 and *passim*. The search for a discourse that is not violent, that does not seek to impose itself on the other, characterizes Levinas's work and Derrida's essay on him ('Violence and Metaphysics', 1978: 79-153). For Heidegger, the 'most venturesome' poets take us to the realm of the holy, that is 'nothing human', but this is also extreme passivity, openness, to the traces of stillness beyond sound (1975: 141, 206-207).

Jouissance and pleasure, vocalic play and meaning, constitute the split voice of the poet, who speaks for the society he condemns, who speaks in his own voice, as part of the human community, as well as that of God.[18] But the latter voice is also ambiguous; it condemns him and his world to death, and is the voice of life. The prophet's response to the words he speaks may combine horror, and thus align him with the community's rejection of reality, with the desire for knowledge, no matter how terrible. This may be exemplified in v. 22, where the destruction (*kālâ wᵉneḥerāṣâ*) is counterbalanced by the privilege of hearing, containing the reverberations of catastrophe, among the deaf. Knowledge of God is both an ultimate horizon (as in Isa. 11.9) and transgressive. In our chapter, knowledge is always in question: 'To whom will he teach knowledge?' (v. 9), and what will he teach?

There are two especially difficult problems. The first is the relation of the power of the text to its clumsiness. Alongside poetry of very great sophistication we find ponderous vacuity, as in v. 21: 'to work his work, strange is his work; to perform his labour, peculiar is his labour'. Such 'bad' poetry seems integral to the poetics of Isaiah, to the breakdown of symbolic order. The crudity marks the encounter with the Real, beyond aesthetic construction.[19] The issue then is of the relationship of beauty and ugliness in establishing the tone of Isaiah,[20] duplicated, at the symbolic level, in the trajectory between beauty

18. The ambiguity is amplified in Celan's lecture, *Meridian*, cited in Derrida's essay, 'Shibboleth': '[The poem] speaks always in its own, inmost, concern...But I think...that it has always belonged to the hopes of the poem...to speak in the concern of an Other—who knows, perhaps in the concern of a *wholly* Other' (1986: 311-12).

19. See Lacan's lecture, 'Tuché and Automaton' (1977: 53-64). Lacan insists that psychoanalysis is essentially concerned with the encounter with the Real that is behind all signs, all psychic repetition, and with the real as it is experienced as encounter, or trauma. For Freud, the quest for the Real was also for death, in the form of the chthonic Diana, or the mother goddess (Lacan 1966: 412). Lacan contrasts the quest for the Real in psychoanalysis with the apprehension that psychoanalysis is a form of idealism. See also Taylor 1987: 83-90.

20. See the discussion of the relationship between tone and tension in Derrida 1982: 68-69.

and excrement, sense and non-sense, that we find in our chapter.

The second problem is more elusive. We are used to the notion of holistic reading, yet it is impossible to read Isaiah except in fragments.[21] The familiar accommodation, that we are dealing with the final form of the text, with Isaiah as a retrospective composition, preserves academic peace at the price of both coherence and fragmentation as inherent processes. The reductionism that assigns everything discordant to a different redactional level is troubling, because it results in such inferior poems. Little snippets, struggling under the weight of accretions and annotations, clash briefly with other snippets in a textual mêlée, congealing under the wintry gaze of a final editor. If the metaphorical power of poetry results from the interplay and juxtaposition of different linguistic levels and experiences, including different genres, then the power of poetry, its jouissance, is a priori excluded.

There is a further consequence. We have become accustomed to regarding the composition of the poetic corpus as a collective endeavour. Indeed, it is impossible not to posit communities of reception, supplementation, deletion. The scribal community, especially if linked to sacred authority, is an instrument of critical conservatism. The redaction-critical model proposes tidy poems produced by tame poets, each contributing to the canonical nest. What interests me is the voice of radical alterity,[22] which cannot be reduced to a tradition or political conformity, the powerful and utterly distinctive voice that I hear when I read the text. This is a fact of the reading experience that must be accounted for, especially if, as I suspect, I am not alone in my experience. The individual voice is responsible for Isaiah's status as one of the world's great poems/poets.[23] It is a voice that

21. This, however, is true of any text, as Roland Barthes points out throughout his oeuvre, most notably in *S/Z* and *Le plaisir du texte*.

22. The term *alterity* is germinal to Levinas's challenge to western totalitarian thought (cf. Taylor 1987: 194, and *passim*).

23. It could be objected that anthologies, such as Psalms, the Manyoshu, or the Greek Anthology, also become literary classics. Even in anthologies, however, there are individual voices; a collection, such as the Manyoshu, indeed often seeks out the best and most strikingly individual poems of an age. Even in a corpus as conventional as Psalms, there are self-questioning,

surfaces explicitly from time to time in the text, (e.g. in v. 22), foregrounding the poet's experience as one focus of attention.[24] Only thus can one account for the strangeness of the poetry. Conformist poetry, produced by pressure groups, would not be incomprehensible. Unless one were to suppose a surrealist or dadaist collective.

Illustration: Verses 1-8

My point about the reductive nature of redaction criticism may be illustrated in exemplary fashion by vv. 1-8.[25] Critics universally separate vv. 5-6 from vv. 1-4, and regard them as a very late insertion. Even Exum, who shows how closely integrated they are together, concedes this position; this is because it does not really concern her. She is interested in the final form of the text, and is prepared to be agnostic about its development (1982: 109, 116-17). In my view, however, if one eliminated

critical, and personal voices. I discussed some examples in an unpublished paper delivered at the International SBL in Vienna, 1990, entitled 'Deconstruction in Psalms', and in Landy 1991: 57-58.

24. L. Alonso Schökel (1987: 150) describes Isaiah as a classic writer in that, in contrast to Jeremiah, he does not insert himself into his poems. It seems to me that this judgment must be qualified.

25. The choice of vv. 1-8 might need some defence, since most commentators group vv. 7-8 with the next section. This is probably the consequence of another piece of received wisdom, namely that vv. 5-6 are a later insertion. The only grounds for a division at the end of v. 6 is that vv. 7-8 seem to refer to Jerusalemites, while the subject of vv. 1-4 is Ephraim (in vv. 5-6, 'the remnant of his people' presumably also signifies Judahites, but that's a different story). However, there are no verbal or thematic links between vv. 7-8 and 9-13, and there is a clear syntactic break. Indeed, it requires the invention of a completely fanciful story to connect vv. 7-13. My reasons for reading vv. 1-8 as a poetic unit are: (a) that they form a syntactic unit; (b) that they share the motif of drunkenness, which disappears for the rest of the chapter; (c) there is at least one metaphorical link, the verb *bl'*, 'swallow'. As Exum (1982: 109-10) points out, Jerusalemites do not become the explicit addressees until v. 14; vv. 7-13 (or 5-13) thus have a transitional function. It is with some discomfort that I write this footnote, since I am a believer in the Barthesian principle of the reader's responsibility for dividing the text into manageable bites; however, it seems to me that the breaks in our text are unusually clearly marked.

vv. 5-6 one simply would not have a poem. One moves from the false crown of vv. 1-4 to the true crown of vv. 5-6, and thence to the dissipation of sacred authority in vv. 7-8. Verses 1-4 and 7-8 match each other; at the centre of present disintegration is a glimpse of a different order, a different reality. The elimination of the centre, moreover, creates a different image of the poet(s)/prophet(s) responsible for the text. One whose catastrophic vision is transposed into its opposite is clearly more interesting, complex and exciting than two poets who are monochromatically positive or negative.[26] A construct of the poet as interesting will invite more engaged readings than a construct of the poet as boring or uniform.[27] If the construct is of a liminal personality, such as a prophet,[28] it may lead to an experience of jouissance.[29]

The primary symbol in the passage is drunkenness. Drunkenness in Isaiah is a paradigmatically inane defence against death, as the *carpe diem* motif, 'Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' (Isa. 22.13), suggests. Drink fends off but also anticipates death, anaesthetizing fear and rendering the subject unconscious. In Isa. 5.14, the company of drunkards dances into death. Drink is a symbol, however, for symbolic reversal: through alcohol, the symbolic order is breached; linguistic and social regression becomes the condition of bliss. Individual boundaries blur, as do those of class and value, depression and mania. Dionysus is

26. That the division is motivated by a disbelief that ancient people could be complex is indicated by the paucity of arguments adduced for making it. Petersen (1979: 107), for example, holds that the key argument for regarding vv. 5-6 as secondary is that they disrupt the continuity of discourse between vv. 1-4 and 7-8. The most detailed discussion is that of Vermeylen (1977: 388), for whom the use of the same vocabulary for negative and positive visions suggests different origins. The circularity of both these arguments is evident.

27. It should not be necessary to argue that every reading of a text is a construction—the semiotic process is always circular (see generally, Eco 1979). The imputation of a different author for every point of view implies, however, a second degree of construction: not only do we construct the author(s), but also the text(s).

28. For a classic description of liminal personalities, see Turner 1977, esp. the essay 'Liminality and Communitas' (94-130).

29. Barthes (1973: 67), however, proposed that absolute boredom may be conducive to jouissance.

cultivated at the centre of the society he threatens to destroy.

The passage is about beauty on the edge of destruction. The beauty of the splendour of Ephraim in the first verse (*ṣ^{e}bî tipa'rtô*) is transformed into the excrement and vomit of the last. The feast has become faeces and regurgitation; the ironic recycling of food combines with the retching of the stomach to suggest not only circularity but a turning of the inside out. Kristeva argues that beauty and disgust are the lining of the narcissistic space in which the baby separates itself from its mother; disgust heralds the approach of the *abject*, the object, which cannot yet be conceived as such, which is cast out (ab-jetted) of the self so that the self can be autonomous. Corpses, faeces, vomit are all symbols of the abject. The ultimate source of abjection, according to Kristeva, is the mother, whose power is also a capacity to destroy. Total dependence on the mother is infinitely threatening; in rejecting the mother, the infant rejects also the past. The other side of abjection, then, is desire.[30] The abject is constituted by repression, breached by jouissance (1982: 9-14).[31] In the centre of itself, an intoxicated society—intoxicated presumably metaphorically as well as literally—discovers abjection. This is especially fraught in the case of a sacred people, whose code of purity and impurity repeats the drama of abjection, casting out the defiling other, associated with death and the fertilizable feminine body, in order to establish its boundaries.[32] Coprophilia foreshadows the overture to death in v. 15; the orgy erases the differences between life and death, food and waste, conspicuous consumption and destruction. If the inside is turned out, the inner lining of the 'glorious beauty' of v. 1 is the archaic mother we thought we had excluded.[33] But this is also a

30. Kristeva (1982: 9-10) stresses the ambiguity of the *abject*: 'a composite of judgment and affect, of condemnation and yearning, of signs and drives'. The other side of the abject, according to Kristeva, is the sublime, achieved through sublimation: 'The abject is edged with the sublime. It is not the same moment on the journey, but the same subject and speech bring them into being' (1982: 11).

31. The repression is in fact 'primal repression', the principle of repression itself.

32. Kristeva devotes a chapter of *Powers of Horror* to 'The Semiotics of Biblical Abomination' (1982: 90-112). Cf. esp. p. 100.

33. The symptom of abjection is that one becomes abject oneself

reversion from sense to non-sense: from the symbolic order, which assigns things their place, making unmentionables unmentionable, to the anarchic play of the liberated body.

Where is the poet's jouissance? Condemnation might cloak complicity, a prurient indulgence at one remove. Or it might be the jouissance of righteous anger, that destroys the deceptive beauty of a brilliant but perverse culture for the sake of true aesthetics-ethics. That would be the familiar prophetic and divine self-justification. But this might be rationalization, for delight in violence for its own sake. On the other hand, the poet may be allied with the world he condemns. The relationship between alcoholic and poetic intoxication is long and terrible. It might be mimetic, as in v. 7, in which poetic rhythm ludicrously replicates the staggering hierophants. They may converge, as when drunken babble and hallucination stimulate verbal delirium. Poetry may be ascetic, its discipline requiring an attentiveness exclusive of any competition. Isaiah might represent this extreme in his call vision, when he is granted a pure word, in contrast to the impurity of language in which he is embedded (6.5-7).

Displacement prevents the resolution of these contraries. The ideal dominion is displaced into the future, subsequent to the expenditure of violence. The temporal disjunction permits both satisfactions. The beauty of Ephraim is celebrated and ironized, but only through metaphor, synecdoche and repetition. Stylistically, the first four verses are a set of sidetracks, deferments, and syntactic dislocations. The poetic pleasure that plays with images and sounds, imitating the hedonistic insouciance of the world it imagines, is hedged, in the intervals between its tableaux, by the anguish of disaster, and by the flight of the signifiers from the reality they portend. As we will see when we discuss v. 1 in detail, successive phrases, such as 'crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim', enable us to envisage the doomed world; each snapshot, each 'fading flower of the beauty of its splendour', is also a sign of closure, complete in its perfection and disintegration. The description distracts us from annihilation, and indirectly alludes to it. In it both moralistic anger, for

(Kristeva 1982: 5, 11). Socially, abjection confronts us with our animality; in our personal archaeology, with our earliest attempts to free ourselves 'of maternal entity' (1982: 12-13).

example at drunkenness, and sensuous delight are diffused inextricably in the intricacies of verbal texture.

Only close reading, paying attention to the patterning of sound as well as meaning, will reveal the interplay of jouissance and pleasure, fracture and articulation, in this passage. It begins with poetic art at its most perfect, with a description of the beauty of Ephraim that is exhaustive, polysemic and self-negating. The long list of epithets is both celebratory, like a throne name, and subversive: 'Crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim and fading flower of the beauty of its splendour, which is at the head of the valley of fat things, those hammered with wine'. In this sequence, 'the beauty of its splendour' (*ṣᵉbî tipa'rtô*) alliteratively matches and contrasts with 'the fading flower' (*ṣîṣ nōbēl*); the 'pride' of the 'crown' (*ʿᵃṭeret gē'ût*) is implicitly undone by the drunkards over whom it reigns.[34] Drunkenness ill fits a crown, as we know from the words to Lemuel (Prov. 31.4-5); such a king is liable to be a lord of Misrule, and to exemplify carnivalesque inversion.[35] Paronomastically, the pride (*gē'ût*) of Ephraim is neutralized by the 'valley' (*gê'*) of 'fat things' (Exum 1982: 115),[36] while the violence of 'hammered with wine' (*hᵃlûmê yāyin*) induces stillness. Meanings proliferate: 'crown', for example, may be a metonym both of king and personified pride; it may represent the arrogant euphoria of the drunkards or the pretensions of Ephraim.

34. A number of critics hold that the 'crown' is a wreath worn by the drunkards (Wildberger 1982: 1047; Clements 1980: 225) as well as Samaria, surrounded by its fortifications. It is not apparent to me why these possible connotations should exclude reference to a king, except for distrust of polysemy, and a reductive desire to find a particular and concrete meaning for each image. If it speaks of 'the crown of the drunkards', it must, it seems, refer to an actual crown worn by them. Even if it does signify a crown worn by drunkards, or an an attitude of mind of theirs, it would still retain its emotive and symbolic aura. In Prov. 4.9, to which Wildberger turns for evidence, the 'crown' is clearly a metaphor for Wisdom's sovereignty.

35. For a carnivalesque reading of a prophetic narrative, see Garcia-Treto 1990.

36. Various critics eliminate the word play by reading *gê'* as *ge'ê*, following 1QIsa; cf. the discussion in Wildberger 1982: 1042. This seems motivated by little more than a dislike for complexity.

Ṣîṣ may mean 'diadem' as well as 'flower', while *nōbēl*, alongside its primary meaning of *fading*, connotes *folly* (*nᵉbālâ*), *drunkenness* (*nēbel*, 'bottle'), and *music* (*nēbel*, 'harp, lute'), all presumably associated with a feast.

Meanings also interfuse, for example into the undifferentiated impressiveness of *ṣᵉbî tipa'rtô*, 'the beauty of its splendour,' which, as Exum (1982: 115) points out, combines the consonants of *'ᵃṭeret*, 'crown', and 'Ephraim' (*'eprayim*). The burst of beauty, at the centre of the line, summarizes the total aesthetic/sensual experience of Ephraim; it is expressed poetically in verbal excess and through its lack of an objective referent. It represents a moment of the sublime, which for Kristeva (1982: 11-12) is the other side of the abject. Here, where the lines of metaphor and metonymy meet, structure becomes unstructured. Its counterpart, however, is prophetic anger, in such loaded phrases as 'drunkards of Ephraim' and 'the valley of fat things/ones'; conspicuous consumption is implicated in a greedy and oppressive social system, and non-productive complacence (e.g. 'those hammered with wine'). The transition between *gē'ût*, 'pride', and *šikkōrê*, 'drunkards', produces a momentary shock, that the grandeur is in fact inebriation, allied with phonetic contrast; the harsh texture of the fricative (*š*) and plosive (*k*) in *šikkōrê*, 'drunkards,' is imbued with the intensity and structurelessness of prophetic rage. A similar effect is produced by the contrast between the soft liquids and labials of *nōbēl*, 'fading', and the initial affricate (*ṣ*) of *ṣᵉbî*, 'beauty'. My point is not simply that metaphorical onomatopoeia traverses the boundaries of the semiotic and the symbolic, but that the text is a composite of structures and fissures, that the intricate verbal artistry, and the civilization it indicates, is threatened with *bouleversement*.

A perfect world, carefree and inviolate, is evoked and exposed as a nexus of emotional and symbolic tensions, poised between pathos, condemnation, and prospective nostalgia. It is shadowed by the introductory *hôy*, 'Woe', an inarticulate word on the threshold between the divine wish to express itself and its manifestation in human speech. *Hôy* introduces the genre of lament for the fragility of culture. Across the threshold is

another world that mirrors our own,[37] whose desirability, e.g. in the image of the early fig of v. 4, arises both from the imagination of bliss, and the utter impurity, the freedom from repression, with which it is invested.

Verse 2 accomplishes the shattering of the world of v. 1, an explosion of violence demarcated by the deictic *hinnēh*, 'Lo'. *Hinnēh* matches *hôy*, 'Woe', as a formulaic anticipation of doom, and as a transcription of a paralinguistic gesture that breaks the continuity of the text. It is a sign of revelation, of a divine emissary ('One strong and mighty to my Lord') who is both contiguous with the prophet and is his *alter ego*, the 'other' whose advent he announces. What is curious, though, is that this emissary never appears.[38] No sooner do our eyes open, to truth, than they are distracted, by similes and other rhetorical sidetracks. The formidable attributes of the adversary, *ḥāzāq w'ammiṣ*, 'strong and steadfast', herald identification and action; instead, an eight-word double simile ('like a flood of hail, a storm of destruction, like a flood of waters, powerful, overflowing') intervenes between subject and predicate.[39] The simile is cleverly interwoven with the metaphor of v. 1, restoring its fictional/allegorical landscape; its power comes not only from the intensity of the storm, with its concatenation of heavenly and earthly disasters—hail, wind and flood—but from its irruption into the text. Simile provides homologies, but also opportunities for infinite regress; one goes through the looking glass of likeness into a different world—in other words, into fantasy.

The accumulated power of the epithets *ḥāzāq w'ammiṣ*, 'strong and steadfast', debouches in the simile, in the surge of

37. Ephraim is a symbolic as well as political entity in this context. The position of a prophecy against Ephraim at the beginning of a cluster of texts about Judah has been subject to some discussion. My view is that Ephraim functions as a 'transitional object', mediating between Judah and other nations, an other who is yet the same.

38. There is, of course, no shortage of attempts to compensate for this aporia. Irwin (1977: 8), for example, suggests that the prepositional *lamed* of *la'dōnāi*, 'to my Lord', is emphatic, and that the real subject is YHWH.

39. In fact, it is not clear where the simile ends. *Hinnîaḥ lā'āreṣ b'yād*, 'he has cast down to earth by hand', could either be the predicate of the main clause, as I assume, or the continuation of the simile, in which case the sentence remains incomplete.

water (*mayim kabbîrîm šōṭ^epîm*, 'waters, powerful, overflowing'). The fantasy is of imperial phallic desire and its jouissance, in the service, however, of death and not of life. The object of desire is devastated; the subject is missing.[40] Non-relation substitutes for relation. The expenditure of violence in fantasy, in the encapsulated space of the simile, is a displacement of horror, that derives its energy from the real death it cannot say;[41] it is a refuge in play, in the possibility of reconstructing the world, making death tractable; but also it reflects the need, greed and fantasy of the other, the conqueror. What is his desire? According to Lacan (1977: 29 and *passim*), desire stems from a *manque à être*,[42] from narcissistic emptiness. All desire is for the Real, for Being, which is constituted in the archaic mother. The fantasy of the flood is a metaphorical transcription of unstructured drive-energy, submergence in the Real, that sweeps self and other away in pure kinesis. This is the basis of jouissance in the passage, overladen, however, with elements of anal fantasy, in which the accumulation of possessions, of being, is a defence, a screen, against the desire to be spendthrift, for loss of being.[43]

The rest of the description of the doom of Ephraim consists of disintegrating attempts at reparation. The mode is ironic/pathetic, but it also transforms the fantasy. As if attempting to restore the past, virtually the whole of v. 1 is repeated in vv. 3-4. Exorbitant repetition is as characteristic of Isaiah as polysemic compression. The effect is mantric; one cannot let go of those lovely phrases, the perfect world. They are counterpointed, however, by the rhythm of the trampling feet of v. 3, and the single transformative word, *w^ehāy^etâ*, 'And it shall be', at the beginning of v. 4. Like a broken record, the duplication of

40. This is compounded by the syntactic indeterminacy of the verb *hinnîaḥ*, 'caused to rest', whose subject could either be the Lord, or the one strong and steadfast, and whose object is equally uncertain (cf., for example, Petersen 1979: 105).

41. Owen (1989: 150-53) illustrates this in a brilliant analysis of Sylvia Plath's poem 'Cut', where 'the wit of substitution becomes the violent defense of words against physical violence to the self, against being transformed into thing'.

42. See also the discussion in Taylor 1992: 100-101.

43. A basic statement of his thesis that the anal object is a gift to the mother is to be found in Freud's Rat Man case history (1979: 93ff.).

language freezes time at the moment of dissolution. Instead of moving to the other side of that moment, we escape into yet another simile, that of the first fruit.

Coupling a simile to a metaphor results in a second-order figure of speech; the strangeness is compounded by the inappropriateness of likening a fading flower to an early fig.[44] If a simile takes us to a different domain, we find ourselves in familiar and somewhat clichéd surroundings.[45] Two elements save the simile from banality. The first is that of gender. The flower, on its reappearance in v. 4, is feminized; *ṣîṣâ*, 'flower' (f.), replaces *ṣîṣ*, 'flower' (m.). Likewise *bikkûrāh*, 'first fruit', is feminine. Feminizing its victims is a frequent prophetic tactic for exacting sympathy.[46] The desire of v. 2, which presumably is the ultimate referent, has been romanticized, has acquired a legitimate erotic façade. Moreover, the subject of desire has switched, from the unseen other to ourselves, the male Israelite reader, in our vernal perambulations.[47] The pleasant bucolic scene replaces the scene of disaster; the joy of eating, with its sexual suggestiveness,[48] is a fantasy

44. Exum (1981: 333-36) discusses an example of a comparison within a comparison that intensifies the poetic effect. Here the problem is that of the dissonance between the original metaphor and the simile. Exum notes the difficulty of the mixed metaphors (1982: 113). The Masoretic insertion of a *mappîq* in *bikkûrāh*, 'its first fruit,' subordinates the simile even more explicitly to the metaphor, while rendering it even more obscure.

45. Amos 8.1-3 uses the vision of summer fruit, and the pun *qēṣ/qāyiṣ*, 'summer/end', similarly to fuse metaphorically alimentary satisfaction and death. A similar metaphor, with God as subject, is to be found in Hos. 9.10: Israel is God's *bikkûrâ*, 'first fig', discovered by surprise in the wilderness.

46. Habitually, for instance, cities and peoples are figured as daughters. The daughter image may be lined with sadism, the sentimentality stirred in order to be shattered, as in the accounts of the daughter of Babylon in Isa. 47 and Ps. 137. Nevertheless, the cloying gesture is part of the emotive repertoire.

47. The reader/observer projected by the text is male, in my view, because of its masculine morphology. If the inclusive language argument is to have any validity, it must apply to ancient texts as well as to modern ones. In other words, the so-called impersonal masculine inflections merely establish the universality of the male perspective. It is overdetermined in our text by the assumed heterosexuality of the desire for the flower/fig. Feminizing the object of desire polarizes its subject as masculine.

48. The fig is a pervasive genital symbol.

unlike, yet compared with, the torrent and conquest. There is thus a threefold transfer, from the other to ourselves as the subject of desire; from ourselves to the fig as its object; and from destructiveness to enjoyment. Reversing the transfer, we are the figs, feminized and violated; our desire is in fact our death.

The other distinctive quality of the simile is temporal displacement. The fig is both in the hand and swallowed up; it is no sooner seen than picked; it is not quite summer, yet the sign of summer is already consumed. The humour arises from the surprised absurdity of the lagging consciousness, which acts before it is aware. The dialectic of presence and absence, the fruit tangible, visible, and vanished, pervades the passage, in which the illusory beauty of Ephraim, and, in vv. 3-4, its afterglow, merges with the advent of the destroyer.

Into this space, this gap, enters a new voice. *Bayyôm hahû'*, 'On that day', like *hôy*, 'Woe', and *hinnēh*, 'Lo', is the inscription of a textual threshold, that annuls the world created and destroyed in vv. 1-4. Like *hinnēh*, 'Lo', it is deictic, a sign of revelation; it announces, however, not the mode of destruction, but a polity which is not death. On the other side of the jouissance of violence is something else. *Bayyôm hahû'*, 'on that day', signifies both simultaneity and discontinuity.[49] The temporal caesura is the fundamental rupture in the poem. The poet is one who has a capacity to cross the caesura, to imagine what it is like on the other side.

'That day' offers stability, certainty, the order of truth instead of illusion. Its metaphors, however, represent a conjunction of opposites. The crown is now YHWH, invisible and beyond images. The judgment seat and the one who sits upon it are directed by justice and the spirit that animates it; the fourfold regress replaces the symbols of authority and the system of law with something intangible and uncontrollable. Likewise, the power that turns back war at the gate is presumably also immaterial.[50] Thus we move from the structured to the structureless,

49. Wildberger (1982: 1050) represents critical opinion in not taking 'on that day' literally. But that does not mean that it should not be taken seriously, as a poetic metaphor.

50. The intertextual link with Isa. 11.2 would suggest mere ellipsis of *ruah*, 'spirit'.

to the wind/spirit of YHWH as the motive force that counters violence, the immense storm that blew itself out in v. 2.

Conclusion

I began this essay by speaking of poetry as a covenant with death, as playing with death, in the transitional space between mother and child, and as going beyond death. The poet, like all of us, creates and speaks for a culture. But the poet also speaks, as Celan says, in the interest of an Other, for a radical alterity. Isaiah is a movement between that other voice and his own, inscribing the trace of the *rûaḥ*, the 'wind/spirit' on the other side of disaster. I would have liked to have discussed the rest of this extraordinary chapter: the parable in vv. 23-29, whose apparent clarity and reassurance is a guise for actual incomprehensibility, for God's marvellous but impenetrable wisdom; the nonsense syllables of vv. 10 and 13 that trap the people, and their relation to the child audience of v. 9; the covenant with death composed by the *mōšᵉlîm*, the 'rulers/proverb-makers' of Jerusalem, as a reflex of aphoristic wisdom; and the long and ceremonial description of Zion in v. 16 as a counterpart to that of Ephraim in v. 1. That will have to have to wait for another opportunity.

I will conclude with two reflections. The first is that there are two paradigms in the chapter. One is composed of the chain: drunkenness–excrement–nonsense–death, encompassed by the beauty of Ephraim and elegantly contrived speech. The other paradigm is that of the new age and its new language, of which the primary symbol in Isaiah is children. God's child language, in v. 9, replaces mother's milk as the nourishment of children. It is paronomastically linked to the vomit and excrement of v. 8, and is identical to the syllables that entrap the people in v. 13. The speech that gives knowledge to the children is that which appears to be nonsense to the adults. This suggests that the two paradigms are in fact identical, and that the oppositions, such as that between God and death, on which the chapter is based, are insidiously subverted. The second reflection is really a question. I have looked at *jouissance* in the poem purely from the point of view of God and the prophet, in other words from that

of the author's experience, and I have assumed the reader's identification with them. But supposing the reader's pleasure, interest in reading, and psychosomatic processes are quite other than those of God and prophet? Can one imagine a reader who is entirely impersonal, unconcerned with the fate of Samaria, Judah, or the human race, who is simply fascinated by the creation and destruction of imaginary worlds? If one were to adopt a radical reader-response perspective, what difference would it make to the contract between author and reader of which the covenants with death and with God in our chapter are representations? The *mōšᵉlîm*, rulers and aphorists, tell parables to a death invoked as a reader, a treaty-maker, simply because it cannot read; God and prophet speak to a people who cannot listen. In v. 12, God tells of a speech he once made: 'This is the resting place; leave it to the weary; this is the repose'. The speech suggests a narrative, such as the divine story, a location, and a way of life. Beyond that, however, it is the language, with its clarity and comfort, that creates the place, that deictically situates the people. If they refuse to listen, as the text says they did, all they can hear from outside the story are jumbled fragments: *'ṣaw lᵉṣāw, ṣaw lᵉṣāw, qaw lᵉqāw, qaw lᵉqāw;* a little here, a little there'.[51] And perhaps that is our situation also.

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51. Interpretations of this enigmatic sequence abound. It is frequently assigned to the drunken prophets/priests; there is, however, no reason for this, as Halpern remarks (1986: 111-12). For a general discussion, see Wildberger 1982: 1053-54 and Watts 1985: 361.

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MANASSEH AS VILLAIN AND SCAPEGOAT

Stuart Lasine

The most striking feature of the Deuteronomists'[1] portrait of Manasseh (2 Kgs 21) is that it is not the portrait of an individual at all. What this chapter portrays is the 'limiting case'[2] of an evil king. By taking the most sinful actions of his evil predecessors and magnifying them, the narrator produces a composite drawing of an evil king who is not only like the worst monarchs but the exact opposite of the best. As one reads from v. 3 to v. 9 one learns that Manasseh is the opposite of his father Hezekiah (v. 3) and like Ahab (v. 3; cf. v. 13). He is like Ahaz

1. I say 'Deuteronomists' because it is possible that more than one deuteronomistic author/redactor may have contributed to 2 Kgs 21 in its present form. Although I will discuss the views of scholars who espouse one or another of the various multiple redaction theories as well as those who assume one 'Deuteronomist', my goal is not to affirm any specific redactional scenario. However, my discussion of the rhetorical functions of 2 Kgs 21 does assume that the present text is addressed to an exilic audience.

2. Manasseh is the 'limiting case' of a villainous king in the sense that mathematicians call a circle the limiting case of a series of regular polygons with constantly increasing numbers of sides. While the circle is the limiting case of a polygon, in the strict sense it is not a polygon itself. In fact, 'to speak of a circle as being a regular polygon...is a convenient linguistic fiction' (M. Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus'* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964], p. 229). Similarly, while 2 Kgs 21.2-16 describes the limit of royal villainy from the perspective of the Deuteronomistic History (= DH), the constantly increasing number of sins attributed to Manasseh by the narrator is so extreme that readers may no longer view the finished portrait as the depiction of a real villain. As I will discuss below, readers who view the Manasseh of 2 Kgs 21 as a 'convenient fiction' have reason to regard this pseudo-villain as a scapegoat whose role is to serve as the fictional cause of Judah's real demise.

(v. 6; cf. 2 Kgs 16.3) and the opposite of the Saul who banished spirit mediums in accordance with ritual laws (v. 6; cf. 1 Sam. 28.3, 9; Lev. 19.31; 20.6; Deut. 18.11). He is the opposite of David and Solomon when it comes to temple policy (vv. 7-8; cf. vv. 4-5). Finally, he is like Jeroboam in seducing the people and causing them to sin with 'his' idols (v. 9; cf. v. 11).

The narrator stresses the enormity of Manasseh's sins and their disastrous repercussions by listing each species of sin committed by the king and then expanding on the nature or extent of that sin or its consequences. For example, v. 2 likens Manasseh to the nations—v. 9 says he and the people did worse than the nations. Verse 2 reports that Manasseh did evil in Yahweh's eyes—v. 6 says he did much evil in Yahweh's eyes to provoke him. Verse 3 reports that he made altars for Baal—vv. 4-5 report that he put various altars in different areas of the temple. Verse 3 reports that he made an *'ᵃšērâ* like Ahab—v. 7 adds that he placed the *pesel* of the *'ᵃšērâ* he had made in the temple. Verse 4 states that Manasseh built altars in Yahweh's house where Yahweh had said his name would be put—v. 7 adds that Yahweh had said this to David and Solomon and reports what Yahweh had told them. Verses 10-13 then expand on vv. 2, 7 and 9 by detailing the dire consequences of Manasseh's many sins. When the narrator concludes his indictment in v. 16, he not only reiterates that Manasseh caused Israel to sin by doing what was evil in Yahweh's eyes (cf. vv. 2, 6, 9, 11), but expands on the king's evil deeds, charging that he shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem with it from one end to the other.

While the narrator of 2 Kings 21 leaves no doubt about the extent and variety of Manasseh's idolatrous actions, his portrait of the king does not include the person who performed these actions. Moreover, this faceless portrait is set against a blank background. The chapter includes no quoted speeches of the king, let alone descriptions of his emotions similar to those reported of his fellow-apostate Ahab. Nor does the narrator describe any interaction between Manasseh and the 'people', opposition parties, specific prophets, or rival leaders, as he did for Jeroboam and Ahab. While 2 Kgs 21.10 and 16 mention prophets and innocent blood spilled by the king, these allusions

are so vague that they actually reinforce the schematic nature of the portrait rather than increase the verisimilitude of the story. Finally, in contrast to the Jeroboam and Ahab stories (as well as those of Hezekiah and Josiah), the narrator reports no interaction between Manasseh and any foreign nation. In light of the fact that scholars typically interpret 2 Kings 21 almost entirely in terms of Manasseh's assumed submission to Assyria, this omission is particularly striking.

One might argue that the narrator's explicit comparison between Manasseh and Ahab invites the audience to fill in the blanks left in Manasseh's portrait by going back to the presentation of Ahab's character in 1 Kings 16–22; after all, Ahab is the only sinful king to whom Manasseh is explicitly likened. Readers who accept this invitation may be surprised to find that the affinities between Ahab and Manasseh are rather limited, while those between Manasseh and Jeroboam are rather extensive and profound. In the first section of this paper I will isolate the defining traits of the biblical Jeroboam and Ahab, discuss their relationship to Manasseh within DH, and ask why Ahab is singled out for mention. I will also analyze postbiblical descriptions of Manasseh and Herodotus's portrayals of tyrants in order to gauge the significance and implications of DH's 'abstract' portrait of Manasseh.

If any synchronic analysis of the Manasseh narrative is to help one solve the complex historical and redactional problems surrounding 2 Kings 21 and related texts, it must address a number of issues concerning the 'authorial audience', that is, the audience for whom the texts were rhetorically designed.[3] For

3. The term 'authorial audience' was coined by Rabinowitz; see P.J. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 21-30. Rabinowitz points out that readers of narrative play several audience roles at any given time. As members of the 'narrative audience', readers believe (or pretend to believe) what the narrator says (pp. 93-96). The narrative audience of 2 Kgs 21 would accept the narrator's portrait of Manasseh as believable and historically reliable. As members of the authorial audience, however, readers are also expected to possess a specific degree of knowledge and literary competence (e.g. knowledge of literary conventions, awareness of rhetoric devices, knowledge about historical persons and events alluded to in the narrative). Readers who view DH's Manasseh as

2 Kings 21 the most difficult problem is to determine whether the audience is expected to view the overwhelming inventory of Manasseh's sins as a case of tendentious 'overkill'. Almost all commentators[4] describe Manasseh as a 'foil' for Josiah, if not Hezekiah. But are ordinary readers of the chapter *also* expected to recognize the artificiality of this portrait of an arch-villain? Could the ancient audience have compelling reasons for accepting this depiction of the king as believable and historically accurate? In the second section of the paper I will attempt to answer these questions. I will consider the possibility that the account of Manasseh's reign given in Kings (as well as the report in Chronicles and later depictions of Manasseh as a persecutor of prophets) amounts to a posthumous scapegoating of that king designed for an audience that was struggling with the disastrous fall of Judah. These texts allow the audience to identify with their innocent ancestors whose blood was shed by Manasseh, and hence to view themselves as secondary victims of the evil king. For an audience coping with catastrophe and exile, a royal scapegoat-villain provides a more comforting explanation for

tendentious and unhistorical do so as members of the authorial audience. For an analysis of the difference between authorial and narrative audience reactions to the Jeroboam narrative, see S. Lasine, 'Reading Jeroboam's Intentions: Intertextuality, Rhetoric and History in 1 Kings 12', in *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. D.N. Fewell; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 138-39 and *passim*.

4. For example, H.-D. Hoffmann, *Reform und Reformen: Untersuchungen zu einem Grundthema der deuteronomistischen Geschichtsschreibung* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980), p. 166; T.R. Hobbs, *2 Kings* (WBC, 13; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), p. 309. H. Spieckermann describes Manasseh as an 'antitype' to glorious Josiah (*Juda unter Assur in der Sargonidenzeit* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982], pp. 161, 196). B. Halpern makes a passing reference to Manasseh as 'the scapegoat of the books of Kings', but does not develop this idea or investigate the social functions of scapegoating ('Jerusalem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century BCE: Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability', in *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel* [ed. B. Halpern and D.W. Hobson; JSOTSup, 124; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991], p. 65). Neither does G.W. Ahlström, who states that the *Chronicler* makes Manasseh 'the scapegoat for the disaster of the country' (*Royal Administration and National Religion in Ancient Palestine* [Leiden: Brill, 1982], p. 79).

their plight than one based on the assumption that they and their ancestors are fundamentally corrupt.

Ahab, Jeroboam and Manasseh as Villains

The account of Manasseh's career in 2 Kings 21 includes two explicit comparisons between Manasseh and Ahab (vv. 3, 13). Yet the only *specific* feature that suggests that it is Ahab, and not Jeroboam (or Ahaz),[5] who most resembles Manasseh is that both Ahab and Manasseh are associated with Baal and Asherah. Moreover, none of the features that specifically characterize the Ahab of 1 Kings 16–22 is shared by the Manasseh of 2 Kings 21. While the author consistently stresses Ahab's weak will and infantile emotions, he displays no interest in reporting anything about Manasseh's feelings or internal thoughts in the way he had reported those of Ahab and Jeroboam. Furthermore, only Ahab[6] has a powerful foreign spouse who 'incites' him to worship Baal and who spills innocent blood.

One might argue that Ahab and Manasseh share one trait that is so important that any differences between them become negligible: both are emblematic of the evil king *sans pareil*. According to Ishida,[7] Ahab's house apparently 'became the symbolic name of Israel's most evil dynasty soon after its destruction'. If so, Ahab may have become the emblem of the evil king before the Deuteronomists made Jeroboam into the antitype of David and

5. Like Manasseh, Ahaz passes his son through the fire, emulates northern kings and repeats the abominations of the nations. For his part, the Chronicler increases the similarity between Ahaz and Jeroboam by describing Ahaz as the maker of molten images for the Baalim (2 Chron. 28.2; cf. 1 Kgs 14.9; 2 Kgs 17.16) and accusing him of having 'broken loose' (*pr'*, 28.19). While Jeroboam himself does not 'break loose', he follows in the footsteps of the calf-maker Aaron, who had caused the people to 'break loose' (Exod. 32.25). See Lasine, 'Reading Jeroboam's Intentions', pp. 144-45.

6. There are no grounds for McKay's 'suspicion' that 'Manasseh's Asherah cult, like Ahab's, was introduced as a consequence of a diplomatic marriage' (*Religion in Judah under the Assyrians* [SBT, 2/26; Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1973], p. 23). McKay goes so far as to suggest that 'Manasseh's wife was in all probability Arabian' (p. 24).

7. T. Ishida, 'The House of Ahab', *IEJ* 25 (1975), pp. 135-37 (136).

the cause of the fall of the Northern Kingdom. Of course, Ahab could have attained this status in spite of Jeroboam's role as antitype to David or his role as *Unheilsherrscher*.[8] In either case, the Manasseh of 2 Kings 21 may have been compared to Ahab not because the historical Manasseh was particularly akin to the Ahab of 1 Kings 16–22, but because Ahab had gained the reputation of being the epitome of the evil king.

At the same time, it is not at all clear that DH's Ahab *is* the symbol of the '*most* sinful dynasty' in the north.[9] Admittedly, the sins of Ahab that most recall the sins of Manasseh are introduced as though they were committed in addition to the sins of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 16.31). To this extent, Ahab's sins necessarily exceed those of Jeroboam, even if the bloody end of the two houses is identical (1 Kgs 14.10-11; 21.21-22, 24). Nevertheless, the fact remains that DH assigns the blame for the fall of the Northern Kingdom as a whole to Jeroboam, not to Ahab.[10] Two factors in particular suggest that the parallel between Manasseh and Jeroboam is more profound than that between Manasseh and Ahab. The first has just been discussed: it is the idolatrous king's role in causing the downfall of his kingdom. The second is the role played by the idolatrous king in causing his people to sin. Scholars often attempt to date portions of DH on the basis of whether they hold the king or the people responsible for popular idolatry. Texts that blame the people are typically assumed to be exilic in origin. Friedman goes so far as to claim

8. On Jeroboam as *Unheilsherrscher*, see C.D. Evans, 'Naram-Sin and Jeroboam: The Archytypal *Unheilsherrscher* in Mesopotamian and Biblical Historiography', in *Scripture in Context. II. More Essays on the Comparative Method* (ed. W.W. Hallo, J.C. Moyer and L.G. Perdue; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 114-24.

9. Ishida, 'House', p. 136; emphasis added.

10. Considering the fact that Manasseh's key role in DH is to explain the fall of Judah, one would think that the parallel between Jeroboam and Manasseh would take precedence over the Ahab–Manasseh parallel. Some scholars actually discuss 2 Kgs 21 as though this were DH's strategy. For example, R.D. Nelson virtually ignores the explicit parallels with Ahab, preferring to characterize Manasseh as 'Judah's Jeroboam' (*First and Second Kings* [Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Atlanta: John Knox, 1987], p. 247; cf. p. 249). Cf. Hoffmann, *Reform*, p. 158 n. 52.

that 'all responsibility is placed upon the people in every Exilic passage'.[11] On this basis he concludes that the prediction of the fall of Judah in 2 Kgs 21.8-15 is exilic because it 'places responsibility completely on the people, so that Manasseh is blamed primarily as a catalyst'.

Leaving aside for the moment that Manasseh is more than merely a 'catalyst' in 2 Kgs 21.8-15, one simply cannot date texts in DH solely on the basis of whether the king or the people is blamed. For one thing, DH, like Exodus–Numbers, implies that mass idolatry is the result of a process in which both the leader and the people play essential roles.[12] For another, this dating-clue is based on the assumption that an exilic text will necessarily address an audience that will be comforted by viewing the fall of their kingdom as just punishment for their collective sins, hoping in the efficacy of contrition and repentance rather than in the restoration of the monarchy. Yet it seems just as likely that exilic audiences would find coping strategies like scapegoating more palatable than an 'anthropodicy'[13] that blames their plight on their own abysmal guilt and corruption.

The fact that leaders and followers are typically assumed to be co-responsible does not mean that specific texts do not make crucial points by focusing almost exclusively on the role played by the leader or the people. In Jeroboam's case, for example, it is the king who is repeatedly said to have caused all Israel to sin and to have drawn them into idolatry. In contrast, Ahab is only once said to have caused Israel to sin (1 Kgs 21.22).[14] In the case of Manasseh the narrator manages to combine the people's and Manasseh's responsibility for doom in a way that spans many generations. In 2 Kgs 21.7-8 the narrator quotes what Yahweh

11. R.E. Friedman, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative* (HSM, 22; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), p. 33; cf. pp. 10-11.

12. See e.g. Lasine, 'Reading Jeroboam's Intentions', pp. 143-49.

13. On the use of the term 'anthropodicy' in this sense, see e.g. J.L. Crenshaw, 'Introduction: The Shift from Theodicy to Anthropodicy', in *Theodicy in the Old Testament* (ed. J.L. Crenshaw; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), pp. 1-16.

14. The other references to Ahab's apostasy focus only on his idolatrous actions (1 Kgs 16.31-33; 18.18; 21.26). These actions provoked Yahweh (*hik'îs*; 16.33; 21.22) but they are not explicitly said to have led Israel to follow its king in worshiping Baal and Asherah.

said to David and Solomon, that he would not make Israel 'wander from the ground I gave *their* fathers, if only *they*...' Verse 9 then begins with '*they* hearkened not'. Who are 'they'? The generation of 'Israel' to whom Yahweh referred when speaking to David and Solomon? The next words read: 'Manasseh caused *them* to go astray to do...' Clearly, the narrator is telescoping the 'Israel' to whom Yahweh had referred at the beginning of the monarchical period with the 'they' who still were not listening when Manasseh caused them to wander astray. Taken together, these verses imply that if 'they' had hearkened to what Yahweh told the kings who governed their ancestors, Manasseh's cultic reforms would not have been able to mislead them.

In spite of the profound similarities between Manasseh and Jeroboam and the limited affinities between Manasseh and Ahab, most scholars take their cue from 2 Kgs 21.3, 13 and conclude that Manasseh is 'Judah's Ahab'[15] or 'the Jezebel of the south',[16] not Judah's Jeroboam. Some ask whether the historical Ahab might have resembled the biblical and/or historical Manasseh in other ways as well.[17] Commentators often focus on the fact that both are said to have shed the blood of innocent people (1 Kgs 21.19; 2 Kgs 9.7, 26 // 2 Kgs 21.16; 24.4). Noting that 2 Kgs 21.16 comes soon after the reference to 'the prophets' castigations' in v. 10, Rofé concludes that Manasseh is associated with the persecution of prophets, as was Ahab.[18] He believes that 'an analogy between Manasseh and Ahab was clear to the people at the time of Menasseh [*sic*] and had found its way into the sources of the Books of Kings'. Rofé argues that the 'otherwise incomprehensible references to the murder of prophets' in the Ahab story are due to the fact that the Elijah

15. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, p. 311; cf. B.O. Long, *2 Kings* (FOTL, 10; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 250.

16. Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* (trans. M. Greenberg; New York: Schocken Books, 1972), p. 141.

17. For example, Jones asserts that 'Manasseh's sins corresponded *in many respects* to those of Ahab' (*1 and 2 Kings*, II (NCB: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], p. 596; emphasis added), although he does concede that even their cultic sins are not totally identical. Cf. Long, *2 Kings*, p. 248.

18. A. Rofé, *The Prophetical Stories* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988), p. 200; cf. pp. 189-90, 192.

'epic' was written during Manasseh's reign.[19] Unfortunately, 2 Kgs 21.10, 16 hardly constitute sufficient evidence to prove that prophets were persecuted during Manasseh's reign, let alone that the persecution was so severe that it influenced the way Ahab's reign was depicted. Nor does the apparent dearth of prophetic activity during Manasseh's reign allow one to conclude that the king had used violence to silence them. The phrase 'shed innocent blood' used in v. 16 refers to a much wider range of violent injustice than prophet persecution alone (see below). Finally, the vague reference to prophetic activity in v. 10 is never developed in Kings and is removed by Chronicles (2 Chron. 33.10). In fact, the narrator of 2 Kings 21 does not even say whether Manasseh himself heard the divine judgment conveyed by the prophets in vv. 11-15.

If 2 Kgs 21.3, 13 and 16 have prompted some commentators (and the authors of post-biblical legends)[20] to view Manasseh as an Ahab-like persecutor of prophets, these verses can also lead one to compare Ahab and Manasseh to the tyrants whose *pleonexia* and *koros* are so often described by ancient Greek authors. These monarchs indulge their insatiable desire for what rightfully belongs to another by committing acts of social injustice. From this perspective the innocent blood shed by Manasseh recalls the blood of the innocent Naboth and his sons (1 Kgs 21.19; 2 Kgs 9.26). At least one postbiblical work reinforces the image of Manasseh as a typical tyrant. In *2 Baruch* 64

19. Rofé, *Prophetical Stories*, pp. 189, 190.

20. See L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1958), IV, pp. 278-79; VI, pp. 374-75; B.H. Amaru, 'The Killing of the Prophets: Unraveling a Midrash', *HUCA* 54 (1983), pp. 170-73. According to Josephus (*Ant.* 10.38), Manasseh slaughtered prophets daily [!]. In the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, the satanic Belkira prompts Manasseh to saw Isaiah in half (5.1). Belkira is a descendant of the false prophet Zedekiah ben Chenaanah, the 'teacher...of the four hundred prophets of Baal' in the days of Ahab (2.12). The author interrupts the story of Isaiah's fate to detail Ahab's abuse of Micaiah and his son Ahaziah's killing the prophets of the Lord, including Micaiah (2.13-16). Clearly, in this work Manasseh the prophet-persecutor is Ahab *redivivus*. For the 'Martyrdom of Isaiah', see M.A. Knibb (trans.), 'Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah', in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), pp. 156-64.

Manasseh is described in terms that recall Otanes' portrait of the tyrant in Herodotus's famous 'Constitutional Debate' (3.80). According to Herodotus's Otanes, the insatiable and irresponsible tyrant will meddle with or remove ancestral customs and observances, force women, and kill men indiscriminately without trial. In 1 Kings 21, DH describes a king whose desire for the vineyard belonging to another is satisfied by executing the rightful owner of the property and his heirs. Far from giving Naboth a fair trial, Jezebel perverts justice in Ahab's name by convening a kangaroo court. The house of Ahab continues to be associated with acts of social injustice even in Mic. 6.9-16. For his part, the Manasseh of 2 *Bar.* 64.2 far exceeds Ahab in tyranny. He 'killed the righteous, and perverted judgment, and shed innocent blood, and violently polluted married women, and overturned altars, and abolished their offerings...'[21] While the author of 2 *Baruch* follows Chronicles in having Manasseh pray to the Most High, his impiety and *hubris* are apparently too great to allow him to avoid the punishment awaiting him at the end (64.8-10).

While the Chronicler deletes DH's tantalizing references to Ahab, in one respect his Manasseh has more in common with Ahab than does DH's unrepentant villain: both Ahab and the Manasseh of Chronicles 'humble themselves' (*kn'*) and repent of their sins (1 Kgs 21.27-29; 2 Chron. 33.11-13). Of course, one can dismiss these acts of penitence by arguing that the authors applied a formulaic 'schema of reprieve'[22] to these monarchs to explain why neither suffered for his egregious sins during his long reign. However, this common feature also links Ahab and Manasseh to Josiah, for whom Manasseh serves as foil in DH. Manasseh and Josiah are two of only four kings whom the Chronicler describes with *kn'*, his characteristic verb for humbling (cf. 2 Chron. 12.6, 7, 12; 32.26; 34.27), while Ahab and Josiah (2 Kgs 22.19) are the only two kings whose actions are described with this verb in DH. Oddly enough, Ahab resembles not only the repentant Josiah of 2 Chron. 34.27, but the Josiah

21. 2 *Bar.* 64.2; trans. A.F.J. Klijn, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), p. 643.

22. Long, 2 *Kings*, pp. 227-28, 260-61; cf. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, p. 143.

who disregards a divine warning, goes into battle in disguise, and is mortally wounded (1 Kgs 22.19-23, 30-37; 2 Chron. 35.22-24). If the exceedingly long reign of the sinner Manasseh presents a challenge to theodicy, the fact that he is the only one of these three kings to enjoy a peaceful death would seem to require that he be vilified and punished in other ways. In the next section I will argue that the portrayal of Manasseh as an arch-villain in 2 Kings 21 may have more to do with meeting the needs of the exilic audience than with justifying Yahweh's granting Manasseh such a long and successful career.

Manasseh as Scapegoat

Considering the stark contrast between DH's nuanced and extensive descriptions of Jeroboam and Ahab and his one-dimensional portrait of Manasseh, one might well ask whether the authorial audience could accept this report as believable and reliable. Could the author have *expected* his audience to view his 'Manasseh' as a tendentious fabrication? Scholars often evade such questions by regarding Manasseh as merely one of the several 'characterless, cardboard villains' created by an exilic editor who describes most of his villains in 'wooden phrases'.[23] Long[24] challenges this assumption, noting that advocates of the double redaction theory of DH typically identify the exilic editor's writing on the basis of their 'modern literary tastes', judging it to be simplified, imitative, wooden, vague or terse. Yet, in light of the fact that many sections of DH seem designed for an audience with considerable literary sophistication,[25] one must ask whether the ancient audience would find 2 Kings 21 to be any less cardboard and unbelievable than do their modern counterparts.

At the same time, one cannot simply assume that the narrative is *so* reductive that it must have been viewed as unbelievable. In her study of 'authoritarian fictions', Suleiman remarks that a

23. R.D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup, 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), p. 126; cf. p. 37.

24. B.O. Long, *1 Kings, with an Introduction to Historical Literature* (FOTL, 9; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 17-18.

25. See Lasine, 'Reading Jeroboam's Intention', pp. 135-39, 145-46.

roman à thèse cannot accomplish its ideological goals if its characters are totally lacking in contradiction and totally predictable, and if its message is conveyed with excessive redundancy. Total closure undermines the verisimilitude—and therefore the believability—of the narrative. In fact, 'the more a *roman à thèse* is faithful to its didactic calling, the less it succeeds in making itself believed, that is, accepted as a reliable, truth-telling witness'.[26] While DH's Manasseh is certainly predictable and lacking in contradiction, it may nevertheless have been accepted as 'a reliable, truth-telling witness' by the ancient audience, if reader response to modern formulaic fiction is any indication. The villains in formulaic genres like the detective story are often accepted as believable by audiences who find the social chaos depicted in the work to be unsettling.[27] In general, the detective story conveys the comforting message that a single unambiguous villain is responsible for crime and disorder, not the prevailing social structure of which the reader is a part.[28] Here the fictional villain functions as a scapegoat for the real audience. In fact, Rabinowitz has demonstrated that when readers encounter ambiguous characters in sophisticated and 'disturbing' novels like Chandler's *The Big Sleep* they often reduce those characters to scapegoat-villains. He shows that Chandler's Carmen is more victim than villain, but that many readers employ a 'strategy that allows them to increase her monstrosity so that they can put enough blame on her to make her punishment cathartic'.[29] This procedure 'involves an act of scapegoating: in order to create a sense of resolution in a morally chaotic situation, someone must be seen as the wrongdoer and appropriately punished'.[30]

It is highly probable that 2 Kings 21 is also designed for an

26. S.R. Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 189; cf. pp. 172, 194.

27. See S. Lasine, 'Solomon, Daniel and the Detective Story: The Social Functions of a Literary Genre', *HAR* 11 (1987), pp. 247-66.

28. J.G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 104-105.

29. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading*, p. 205.

30. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading*, p. 203.

audience that was seeking to escape a 'morally chaotic situation'. If modern readers are quite willing to transform a complex victim like Chandler's into a villain, would not the exilic audience of Kings be all too happy to accept as believable a reductive portrait of an arch-villain like Manasseh? The fact that the reductiveness is so extreme could testify to the extent of the audience's anxiety concerning their situation. While the authorial audience of DH may have possessed considerable literary sophistication, it is entirely possible that this critical faculty would be laid aside if their need for a one-dimensional villain were strong enough. The temptation would even be stronger if the story also allowed the audience to identify with the victims whose 'innocent blood' was shed by that culprit. It is also possible that the reductiveness serves different functions for different readers, in the manner of an ambiguous figure drawing—except that this time the ambiguity would be the result not of indeterminacy in the narrative, but of its *hyper*determinacy. If this is the case, the excessively detailed depiction of Manasseh's sins would be believable to readers who need such a monstrous villain, while those who feel no such need would recognize that the emperor has no clothes—that is, no depth or reality—exposing the fact that the villain is actually a scapegoat.

If one is to determine whether the author or final redactor of 2 Kings 21 expected his target audience to accept his depiction of the villain Manasseh at face value, one must first ask what functions this portrait might have been designed to serve. The criteria employed by scholars to date texts like 2 Kings 21 involve the presumed social functions of those texts for their intended audiences as well as stylistic and thematic features. According to Cross,[31] the purpose of the exilic edition of DH was to transform the Josianic edition into 'a sermon on history' which 'overwrote' and contradicted the original theme of hope for a new golden age under a Davidic king, replacing it with 'a muted hope of repentance...and possible return'. The revised account of Manasseh's reign plays a particularly important role in this 'sermon', by 'conforming Judah's fate to that of Samaria and Manasseh's

31. F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 287-88.

role to that of Jeroboam'. In Nelson's formulation,[32] the theological lesson of the second edition is that salvation rests in 'an acceptance of the justice of Yahweh's punishment and in repentance'.

But can one assume that an exilic edition would necessarily be designed to function as an anthropodicy for an audience that would rather blame the loss of their world on themselves and their fathers than to question Yahweh's justice? While it might serve the interests of the literate elite who produced this text for an exilic audience to emphasize the role of the people as opposed to the role of leaders such as themselves, their addressees might well seek to cast off the shroud of responsibility spread over them by those in power. They might do so by projecting all responsibility onto the leaders. However, *all* parties in the exilic community could avoid the pall of guilt if they could agree that a specific individual from a distant generation was to blame for all their troubles. As Girard and others have shown, communities often regain stability and unity during religious and political crises by unanimously choosing a scapegoat whom all can affirm as the locus of guilt.[33] Considering the social function of scapegoating, the passages that heap all responsibility for the fall on King Manasseh are just as likely to have been composed as a means of coping with the exile as the verses that blame the people, in spite of the common assumption that passages that blame the king must be pre-exilic.

A review of the way Manasseh is described in DH, in Jer. 15.4, in Chronicles, and in postbiblical literature will indicate whether the biblical Manasseh is not only a 'foil' and 'antitype' to Josiah, but the audience's scapegoat. In *Violence and the Sacred*, Girard quotes Vernant's analysis of rituals in which a surrogate victim is sacrificed instead of the king. Here the community chooses an 'antisovereign' upon whom the king unloads all his negative attributes, creating a carnivalesque 'inverted image of himself'.[34] This double is expelled from the community

32. Nelson, *Double Redaction*, p. 123.

33. For a critical review of Girard's theories and their application to biblical texts, see S. Lasine, review of *Job: The Victim of his People*, by R. Girard, *HS* 32 (1991), pp. 92-104.

34. R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 109.

or put to death when the carnival is over, ending all the disorder symbolized by his topsy-turvy identity. I would suggest that the Manasseh of 2 Kings 21 is DH's 'antisovereign', the inverted image of a glorified Josiah. The fact that he is so extraordinarily and unequivocally evil indicates that his function is to represent the limiting case of an anti-king. This would explain why DH's Manasseh is about as believable as a figure in the topsy-turvy world of carnival. Only an unreal construct that 'embodies' the worst qualities of the Israelite tyrant could serve as the absent cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the exile.

Like Manasseh, the quintessential tyrant envisioned by Herodotus's Socles can overturn the order of the universe itself:

> Surely the heaven will soon be below, and the earth above, and men will henceforth live in the sea, and fish take their place upon the dry land, since you...propose to put down free governments...and to set up tyrannies in their stead. There is nothing in the world so unjust, nothing so bloody, as a tyranny (5.92).[35]

Manasseh's function as the emblem of a world-upside-down is signaled by the unique simile employed by Yahweh in condemning the Jerusalem debased by Manasseh: 'I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down' (2 Kgs 21.13). Yahweh uses *hāpak*, the key verb for the world-upside-down *topos* in the Hebrew Bible, to describe how he will invert the city whose symbolic identity was perverted when Manasseh placed the *'ăšērâ* image in the house and in the city in which Yahweh had placed his name (v. 7). If Job 'sought to turn the dish upside down' by accusing God of unjustly allowing the earth to be given into the hand of the wicked (*b. B. Bat.* 16a; Job 9.24), the hand of the wicked and unjust Manasseh has succeeded in turning the dish of Jerusalem upside down. When God turns it again he puts things right only in the sense of providing the right punishment for Manasseh's crimes.

According to Girard,[36] for a monarch himself to be

35. Translation by A. Ferrill, in 'Herodotus on Tyranny', *Historia* 27 (1978), p. 395. On the world-upside-down *topos* in the Hebrew Bible, see S. Lasine, 'The Ups and Downs of Monarchical Justice: Solomon and Jehoram in an Intertextual World', forthcoming in *JSOT*.

36. R. Girard, *Job: The Victim of his People* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 88.

transformed into a scapegoat he must 'carry out the major social function of a "wicked man"'. That is, he must commit the 'imaginary "crimes" of the scapegoat'. Besides oppressing the people, he is 'expected to confess officially to a certain number of oedipal crimes' such as parricide or 'some well-concocted incestuous relationship with a mother or sister'. Is it merely a coincidence that postbiblical descriptions of Manasseh not only include vastly enhanced accounts of his victimization of the innocent (see below), but the charge that Manasseh committed incest with his sister (*b. Sanh.* 103b) like a biblical Cambyses, and parricide, by killing his grandfather Isaiah (*j. Sanh.* 10, 28c; *b. Sanh.* 103b)?[37] Those to whom such crimes are attributed are often viewed as having turned the world upside down like the biblical Manasseh. For example, the Christians persecuted by the Romans were often charged with committing *flagitia* such as incest and cannibalism, while witches in traditional societies are often accused of similar 'inverted world' behavior such as incest, cannibalism and infanticide—all the sorts of behavior that threaten the basic cultural categories that sustain social order.[38]

Ab. 5.9 links such crimes with exile in a manner which evokes the typical scapegoat pattern as well as Manasseh in particular: 'Exile ensues in the world on account of idolatry, because of incest, for spilling of blood, and on account of the release of the land'. The biblical Manasseh who causes the exile commits two of these four acts, while the postbiblical Manasseh commits three. In fact, the Bible itself connects all three of those sins with exile. Exile, bloodshed and idolatry are linked in Ezek. 36.18, and exile and incest are connected in Lev. 18.24-28. In addition, Manasseh's shedding of innocent blood (21.16)—a sin that can pollute not only a city (Deut. 21.8-9; Jer. 26.15) but also the nation (Deut. 19.10-13) and the land (Num. 35.33-34)—is

37. See further in Amaru, 'Killing', pp. 172-73.

38. On the *flagitia*, see e.g. G.E.M. de Ste Croix, 'Why were the Early Christians Persecuted?', in *Studies in Ancient Society* (ed. M.I. Finley; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 233-34 and *passim*. On witches, see e.g. R.R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 74; S. Lasine, 'Jehoram and the Cannibal Mothers (2 Kings 6.24-33): Solomon's Judgment in an Inverted World', *JSOT* 50 (1991), p. 35 n. 1.

also associated with exile in one instance.[39]

Obviously, postbiblical descriptions of Manasseh in terms appropriate to the ritual monarch-scapegoat can only tell us how some postbiblical readers understood the Manasseh of 2 Kings. Yet Manasseh is also made to complete the typical career of the royal scapegoat within the pages of the Hebrew Bible, when his story is retold in 2 Chronicles 33. Like Oedipus and other typical scapegoats, this Manasseh is expelled from the community and confesses to his crimes (33.10-13). Like Oedipus, he brings blessings to a community before he dies. After Yahweh brings him back from exile Manasseh not only engages in building projects but purifies the very cult he had criminally defiled, commanding Judah to serve Yahweh (vv. 14-16). Perhaps the greatest 'blessing' he bestows is that he is no longer the cause for the exile. If the monstrous Manasseh of 2 Kings causes the exile of his people without going into exile himself, the exile and repentance of the Chronicler's Manasseh ensures that the people will *not* be exiled on his account.

The reference to Manasseh in Jer. 15.4 can also be construed as evidence that Manasseh is DH's scapegoat. The prophet quotes Yahweh as declaring that he will make the people a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh did in Jerusalem. Almost all commentators find this verse alien to Jeremiah's message precisely because it blames the catastrophe on Manasseh, whereas Jeremiah typically spreads the blame among the people as a whole and their leaders. As Clements puts it, in the book of Jeremiah 'no scapegoats are singled out as guilty'.[40] Carroll[41] explains the singling out of Manasseh by suggesting that the verse 'allows the Deuteronomists to settle an old score and round off the composition'. While 'the nation's

39. On the connection between shedding innocent blood and exile in Deut. 19.10, see A.D.H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (NCB: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 287. On the other cited passages, see J. Milgrom, *Numbers* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), p. 509.

40. R.E. Clements, *Jeremiah* (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), p. 95.

41. R.P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 321.

destruction may seem excessively cruel...it is justified because King Manasseh was such a vicious and corrupt ruler'. Carroll finds it ironic that Manasseh was blamed for filling Jerusalem with innocent blood, 'when in reality Yahweh, under the guise of the Babylonians, did precisely that!'. In other words, Yahweh's shedding of innocent blood is justified not because the inhabitants of the city were in reality far from being innocent, but because they were doomed by their villainous king.

One can get a clearer idea of how the biblical Manasseh might have functioned as a scapegoat for readers of Kings and Jeremiah by exploring his alleged connections with prophet-persecution. On the basis of 2 Kgs 21.16 and 24.4, historians often conjecture that the historical king Manasseh did not merely shed the innocent blood of the oppressed, but instituted a 'reign of terror'[42] against persons who opposed his cult reforms. Others, like Rofé, argue that 2 Kgs 21.10, 16 constitute evidence that Manasseh persecuted prophets. As discussed earlier, Rofé conjectures that the Ahab narrative highlights prophet-persecution to a unique degree because it was composed during Manasseh's reign, when prophets had become 'persecutable' because they were no longer perceived as having access to divine power that rendered them inviolable. While the vagueness of 2 Kgs 21.10, 16 does not allow one to conclude that the narrator is alluding to prophet-persecution, these verses, together with the references to Ahab, probably did inspire the postbiblical portrayals of Manasseh as an Ahab-like slaughterer of prophets found in the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, Josephus, and a number of rabbinic legends (see above). For example, the author of the *Martyrdom* attributes to Manasseh most of the sins described in 2 Kgs 21.1-10, 16, including 'persecution of the righteous' (2.5). To this list he adds an elaborate account of the king sawing in half the prophet Isaiah at the instigation of the satanic Belkira (5.1).

Perhaps Rofé could not connect the advent of prophet-persecution with Manasseh's period because the explicit allegations of prophet-persecution were generated by a later crisis, one triggered by the end of the monarchy, the loss of the temple, the exile, and the disruption of the sacrificial system. That the

42. Kaufmann, *Religion*, p. 435; cf. p. 141.

idea of prophet-persecution began to assume importance only during this crisis is supported by the portrayal of Jeremiah as near-scapegoat in the deuteronomistically edited book which bears his name. Jeremiah is also the only book composed before Nehemiah and Chronicles that alleges that a prophet was murdered.[43] At various times, all the authority figures as well as the people threaten or attack Jeremiah, although his provocative and seemingly seditious behavior does not lead the community to murder him. In contrast, one postbiblical tradition has the Jews stoning him to death in Egypt, while another has him inadvertently and involuntarily committing the scapegoat crime of incest (or, more precisely, impregnating his daughter *in absentia*).[44]

By stressing that the persecution of prophets becomes a major theme in texts composed or edited in response to the fall of Judah I am not suggesting that prophets were *actually* scapegoated at this time (or in postexilic times, as could be argued on the basis of the references to prophet-murder in Nehemiah and Chronicles). Rather, I am suggesting that the exilic (and possibly postexilic) communities shifted blame for the fall of Judah to former generations by claiming that earlier prophet-persecutions were a primary cause for the disaster. Exilic texts that harp on the people's spurning of Yahweh's 'servants the prophets'[45]

43. See Jer. 2.30 (a difficult text) and 26.20-23 (where the victim is Uriah son of Shemaiah); Neh. 9.26; 2 Chron. 24.20-22; cf. 2 Chron. 16.10. Compare *Pes. R.* 26, 129ab, according to which Jeremiah refuses Yahweh's call, asking, 'When lived there a prophet whom Israel did not desire to kill?' Considering that the Bible itself presents the prophet Jeremiah as a near-victim, it hardly seems a coincidence that this is the only prophetic book in which the villain Manasseh is specifically singled out as the cause of the exile, and the only book that links Manasseh's signature sins and phrases from 2 Kgs 21 with the scapegoat crime of cannibalism, which here becomes a punishment (Jer. 19.3-5 // 2 Kgs 21.3, 6, 12, 16; Jer. 19.9). Nor does it seem coincidental that the only biblical personage who explicitly applies the spilling of 'innocent blood' to the blood-polluting sacrifice of a prophet by the community at large is the potential victim Jeremiah (26.15).

44. On the former tradition, see e.g. Ginzberg, *Legends*, VI, pp. 399-400; on the latter see the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* 16-20 (in M.J. bin Gorion, *Mimekor Yisrael: Classical Jewish Folktales*, I [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976], pp. 193-96).

45. See Nelson, *Double Redaction*, pp. 58-59.

imply that the exilic generation were also victims of their evil ancestors' persecution of prophets, in the sense that the warnings of those prophets, if heeded, could have averted the disaster that befell the exiles.

2 Kings 21 also affirms the audience's sense of innocence by representing it in the text in the form of innocent ancestors victimized by the king, as opposed to the guilty ancestors whose idolatry and violence are said to have caused the exile. The process of identification is facilitated by the vagueness of v. 16, which provides room for 'innocent' readers to find their true ancestors among Manasseh's victims. This understanding of the function of 21.16 is similar to Carroll's view of Jeremiah's soliloquies. According to Carroll, these speeches use language typical of individual and communal laments to represent the exiled communities who are pleading their innocence, even though the oracles in the same book continue to condemn the people as evil and deserving of destruction.[46]

This way of evading responsibility for the exile serves to verify both the general indictments of the people at large (the fathers did nothing but evil from the start [e.g. 2 Kgs 21.15; Deut. 9.7, 24; 1 Sam. 8.8; Jer. 32.30-31]) and the specific indictment of Manasseh as the direct cause of the catastrophe (2 Kgs 21.11-13; 23.26-27; 24.2-4). Admittedly, this coping strategy must concede that both the king *and* the people victimized the prophets whose mission was to implore the people to repent before it was too late. However, the good news is that the viability of repentance and the possibility of restoration remain

46. R.P. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), pp. 260-61; cf. pp. 28, 129-30. G. Garbini (*History and Ideology in Ancient Israel* [New York: Crossroad, 1988], pp. 114-19) also analyzes the late appearance of prophet-persecution stories and a 'victimistic' ideology in terms of the audience's need to identify with those whose innocent blood was shed. In his view, however, this is mostly due to the special interests of second-century 'Pharisees' whose hypocrisy on the subject of prophet persecution was exposed by Jesus in Mt. 23. Garbini does not consider the possibility that the reductive and one-dimensional nature of such portraits of Jewish villains might indicate that they are actually being made into scapegoats like DH's Manasseh. For an analysis of Stephen's speech as an attempt to transform his ancestors into scapegoat-villains, see Lasine, review of *Job*, by R. Girard, pp. 101-103.

intact for the victimized children of those who persecuted the prophets as well as for those whose fathers were slaughtered by Manasseh. By focusing on Manasseh's and the fathers' persecution of scapegoat-victims with whom the exilic audience can identify, the biblical historian has provided that audience with a more comforting explanation of their present plight than one based on the evil effects of their traditional—but illicit—cult practices or one predicated on the incorrigible perversity of their own nature. This is the ultimate blessing that the vilified Manasseh of Kings bestowed on the original readers and hearers of DH. This blessing would be denied only to those readers who were unable to accept the overblown portrait of the villainous Manasseh as true-to-life and to those who were reluctant to victimize their forebears by transforming them into villains in order to appropriate the role of victim for themselves. What remains unclear is whether or not the final redactor designed his description of Manasseh so that readers could view it as the portrait of a scapegoat as well as the portrait of a villain.

MOSES AND DAVID: MYTH AND MONARCHY

Peter D. Miscall

Pentateuchal narratives about Moses and the creation of the people Israel have a mythic quality because they are stories of origins in which God takes the initiative and because they have a narrative style marked by clarity and resolution. Moses, the hero, is introduced at the very start of the narrative. Narratives about the origins of kingship, including the book of Judges and 1 Samuel, do not have this mythic quality. They are marked by ambiguity and doubling, and it is impossible to speak of 'the very start of the narrative' of kingship. David, the hero, is not introduced until 1 Samuel 16. This contrast in narrative style reveals the author's inherent negative judgment on kingship. The author treats kingship at such length because it lasted 400 years and was an integral part of Israel's pre-exilic history.

In this essay, I compare and contrast narratives in Genesis–2 Kings, which I regard as a work written in the post-exilic period and not as an editorial compilation of already existing material.[1] Genesis–2 Kings is a particular interpretation of Israel's past, whether legendary or historical; it is not just the traditional view, i.e. 'Israel's perception of its history'. Many current works on this corpus (or on Deuteronomy–2 Kings, the Deuteronomic History) implicitly or explicitly point to its anti-monarchical stance, especially in (Judges) Samuel–Kings; kings and kingship are the problem and the main symptom, if not the cause, of Israel's turning from the Lord. Kings lead to the international treaties, intrigue and wars that eventually result in the fall of both Israel and Judah. As a counterpart to this particular interpretation, I assume that a post-exilic monarchist party would have presented a radically different story of David and the Davidic dynasty.

1. I do not take a stand on the question of specific authorship and date.

In this article I buttress this anti-monarchical reading of Samuel–Kings by contrasting aspects of the narratives about Moses in the Pentateuch with those about Samuel, Saul and David in 1–2 Samuel. (For the purposes of this study, I focus on the material in 1 Sam. 1–17.) My emphasis is on narrative style and mode of presentation, not on characterization and thematic content. In short, I maintain that the author expresses his anti-monarchical sentiments in how he tells his story and not just in the story he tells. The repetitive and disjointed style of 1 Samuel, when compared with the style of the story of Moses, is an integral part of the portrait of kingship. At the same time, I relate the length of the presentation of the kings in Samuel–Kings to the anti-monarchical author's acceptance of the fact that monarchy endured for centuries and gave Israel and Judah their identity and existence in the pre-exilic era.

In other cultures, kingship was connected with, if not equated with, the divine realm and with the creation of the world and its order, both cosmology and cosmogony. The stability of dynastic kingship mirrored the stability of the kingship of the creator god and his secure foundation of the universe. King, myth and ritual went hand-in-hand in the ancient empires. I cite the Babylonian example of Marduk in the *Enuma Elish* although examples from Egypt, Assyria and the Hittites could be included. Biblical parallels to this mix of myth and kingship occur mainly in the Psalms and the prophetic literature.[2]

In Genesis and Exodus, myth and ritual mix. Kings and kingship come later in the narrative and not with the creation of the world or of Israel. Parallels between Genesis and 1–2 Samuel, for example between David and both Abraham and Joseph, only emphasize the absence of kings in the former.

I use the term mythic to refer to narratives that deal with the origins of the world and of significant human institutions. These institutions are grounded in the created order and are due to the divine initiative; the creating deity acts and speaks and humans respond. In this sense much of Genesis and Exodus has a mythic aspect to it, especially the stories of the creation of the

2. See Heidel 1951 for the *Enuma Elish* and its biblical parallels. For contemporary discussions of biblical material, consult Ollenburger 1987 and Weinfeld 1983.

world and of Israel and its institutions. On the other hand, I do not want to over-stress this quality by presenting this material as purely mythic or as a myth. I am reading Genesis and Exodus as narrative with a mythic quality to it and not as a narrative myth. Genesis gives background to Exodus; the latter is not an absolute origin, for in it God 'remembers' his covenant with the forefathers (Exod. 2.24). The call of Israel in Egypt is not a *creatio ex nihilo* any more than the creation of the world in Genesis 1.

With these qualifications in mind, I focus on the narrative style and design of the story of Moses and compare them with those of the stories of the rise of kingship and of David in 1 Samuel 1–17.[3] This reading will reveal a contrast between the mythic quality and relative clarity of the Moses story and the non-mythic aspect and frequent obscurity of the narratives in 1 Samuel 1–17.

Exodus opens with Moses' birth and wondrous rescue. He is a man of destiny. Outside the Hebrew Bible, Sargon of Akkad and Cyrus of Persia, both kings, have similar birth stories.[4] God appears to Moses in the burning bush and calls him to lead Israel out of Egypt to take possession of the land of Canaan.[5] The call and commission of Moses are at God's initiative. The divine initiative contributes to the mythic aura of the narrative, and the aura continues in the plagues that present a mythic combat between the Lord and Pharaoh, the symbol of chaos.[6]

3. I am indebted to one of my students, Marilyn Thorssen, for drawing my attention to the absence of any mythic quality in the David story, particularly in his introduction in 1 Sam. 16–17 and in his death scene in 1 Kgs 1–2. Moses dies on a mountain top at 120 years of age 'with his sight unimpaired and his vigor unabated', whereas David dies in his bedroom at 70 years of age (2 Sam. 5.4) in bed with a young woman whom he knows not (1 Kgs 1.2).

4. For the Sargon legend, consult Pritchard 1969: 119; for the Cyrus legend, consult Herodotus, *The Histories* 1.11.108ff.

5. In view of Moses' being denied entrance into the promised land (Num. 20.2-14; 27.12-14; Deut. 32.48-52), I note that his commission in Exod. 3 is to confront Pharaoh and to bring the Israelites out of Egypt; the Lord will bring them into the land that he is giving them.

6. See Cross 1973: 112-44 and Levenson 1988: 3-50, for particulars on the myths of creation as combat and on their biblical parallels.

The event at the Sea, especially when coupled with the crossing of the Jordan on dry land (Josh. 3–4), is a Hebrew version of the Canaanite myth of Baal's defeat of the two-named god Sea–River.[7] The crossing of both sea and river are done at God's command. The revelation at Sinai in Exodus 19–Numbers 10, at God's initiative, sets in place significant social and cultic institutions. Again, divine initiative in origins and beginnings signals a mythic quality.

I emphasize the various aspects of the mythic quality of the material in Exodus–Numbers with the reminder that this is a mythic quality and not myth. The mythic occurs in the relative clarity and scope of the divine commission and revelation; these are stories of beginnings and foundings in which God takes the initiative. I say 'relative' because these are not absolute qualities. Josipovici (1988: 83-85, 193-200) speaks of the rhythm of life that begins in Genesis, but it is a rhythm that is threatened and upset by the narrative pattern of fairytale starts followed by the intrusion of harsh reality. Clines (1990: 93-98) notes the same pattern and refers to it as fair beginnings and foul endings. The wondrous Exodus and events at Sinai are both interrupted by and followed by stories of rebellion and death in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.

One final aspect of the mythic quality lies in the issue of leadership and succession. Moses is the divinely chosen leader of the people; he is succeeded by Joshua, who is likewise divinely appointed and installed in a formal ceremony (Num. 27.12-23; Deut. 31.1-8). Aaron is appointed priest and, at the time of his death, formally succeeded by his son Eleazar in the poignant scene in Num. 20.22-29.

Judges: The Centre Cannot Hold

The relative clarity and scope end with the book of Joshua. Joshua and Eleazar die without successors. Some elders live beyond Joshua but are not presented as successors (Josh. 24.31); Eleazar is buried at Gibeah, a town that belongs to his son Phinehas who, however, is not said to succeed his father

7. See Coogan 1978: 75-89, for comments on the Baal myth and a translation of its relevant part.

(Josh. 24.33; see Judg. 20.27-28). Judges opens with the Israelites, as a group of tribes without a leader, taking the initiative and inquiring of the Lord. Throughout Judges Israel splits into individual tribes or groups of tribes; 'all Israel' appears only when they do what is evil in the eyes of the Lord (e.g. 2.11; 3.7, 12; 8.22-28). The mythic aura is gone.

In her article 'The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges' (1990), J. Cheryl Exum captures the disintegration of the book in a mode of reading that directly relates the textual difficulties and obscurities of Judges to its content; the instabilities are both thematic and textual. I extend this mode of reading to the issue of kingship; the questioning, dissenting view of monarchy is revealed just as much in the narrative style of 1 Samuel as in its thematic content. Judges offers a way to overcome the disorder and violence. Several times the narrator notes that everyone did what they wanted because 'in those days there was no king in Israel' (17.6; 18.1; 19.1; 21.25). Perhaps a king can provide the missing leadership and unity.

At the close of Judges, Israel has two major problems. First are the Philistines. Samson only began the process of saving Israel from them (13.5)—if what he did can even be called a beginning. Second are the Israelites themselves. In Judges 17–21, the Israelites almost destroy themselves in civil war, and they save the Benjaminites by allowing them to raid other Israelite areas. Perhaps a king can save them from the Philistines and from themselves.

The previous stories of Gideon and his son Abimelech, however, already raise questions about the wisdom and effectiveness of kingship. Gideon refuses to rule over Israel because the Lord rules over them (8.22-23). After his death, his son Abimelech, whose name means 'My father is king', becomes king of Shechem in a bloodbath. A lone survivor, Jotham, issues a parable of the trees denouncing Abimelech. The king is like the bramble from which fire comes 'and devours the cedars of Lebanon' (9.15). The fire consumes Abimelech and the Shechemites and, in the long term, the dynasties and peoples of Israel and Judah. Judges ends with a divided opinion on a king. He can bring leadership and order but he can also bring trouble and destruction on the people he rules.

Judges 21 closes and 1 Samuel 1 opens at Shiloh, but we are given no indication of the time that separates the two chapters (Miscall 1986: 8). This uncertain gap indicates the uncertain relation between the two books. This contrasts with the break between Genesis and Exodus where there is a jump in time and a dramatic change from prosperity to oppression. Given the promises in Genesis, we expect divine help and it comes immediately in the first chapters of Exodus. This is not the case with 1 Samuel and the rise of monarchy. Judges leaves us uncertain as to what to expect and even, as Exum notes (1990: 431), uncertain about whether God is still with his people. The narrative in 01 Samuel does not begin immediately with the birth and call of the first king as Exodus begins with Moses. The 1 Samuel narrative is about origins but without any mythic quality; there is seldom clarity in the matters of the divine role and of the calls of the leaders. And if there is clarity, there is little scope or extent to it.

Doubles and Ambiguity

I focus the reading of my selected material in 1 Samuel (mainly chs. 1–17) around the issues of narrative clarity and scope, especially when the narrative is obscured by ambiguity and doubling. By doubling, I mean the situation when we are faced with the possibility of reading a single story or evaluating a character in two different ways, or when the text presents us with at least two different views or versions of a given event or character.[8] For example, the Israelites are threatened externally and internally, and a king may or may not be the answer to their problems.

1 Samuel 1 is a birth story, which begins with the barrenness of Hannah and the reactions of her husband Elkanah and her

8. I am working with a more limited understanding of narrative ambiguity than I did in either *Workings* or *1 Samuel*. In those two books, particularly the latter, I pushed ambiguity and its deconstructive twin, undecidability, to their limit and attempted to locate them in almost every part of the text; also I understood them to be necessary aspects of the text. Here I locate ambiguity in particular aspects of the text and relate it to some of the larger goals of the narrative.

co-wife Peninnah. There are two major parallels to the story. First is the birth of Moses. Second is the birth of Samson, who is anything but a Moses. 1 Samuel 1 has close ties with the latter story in the shared Nazirite themes. However, 1 Samuel 1 presents us with the misery of Hannah, not the misery of Israel in a situation of oppression, whether from Egyptians or Philistines. This is limited scope. Even if this is the birth of a child of destiny, what is he destined for?

The ambiguity continues in the naming process. Hannah 'called his name Samuel for "I have asked him (*šᵉ'iltîv*) of the Lord"' (1.20). The relevant verb *šā'al*, 'to ask' or 'dedicate', occurs nine times in reference to Samuel (1.17-28; 2.20). It takes interpretive gymnastics to regard *šā'al* as an etymology for Samuel (*šᵉmû'ēl*). There is an obvious relation to Saul (*šā'ûl*) and this exact form of the verb occurs in 1.28: 'he is *given* or *lent* to the Lord'. This is a birth story of two men, Samuel and Saul, or two birth stories folded into one.

Exodus moves quickly from oppression to the birth and call of Moses. 1 Samuel opens with the dual external and internal threat and matches it with the doubling of Samuel and Saul. The Lord's activity is muted. He remembers (*zākar*) Hannah and she conceives (1.19-20);[9] he remembered (*zākar*) his covenant and called Moses to save his people (Exod. 2.24). The former comment refers to Samuel's conception and birth and not to a divine plan or purpose for the child. There is one area in which the Lord's role is clearly delineated but with limited scope. He is against the house of Eli because of the corruption of Hophni and Phinehas (1 Sam. 2.12-17, 22-36); all three, father and sons, die on the same day (4.12-18). But this is the fate of the house of Eli, not the house of Israel,[10] and we are definitely not dealing with divinely appointed successors like Joshua and

9. The repeated statement in vv. 5-6 that the Lord had closed Hannah's womb may be the narrator's statement or the indirect discourse of Elkanah and Peninnah, i.e. the comment on divine action is ascribed to their judgment.

10. Absalom's fate is analogous. He is doomed 'because the Lord had ordained to cancel the wise counsel of Ahithophel so that the Lord could bring ruin on Absalom' (2 Sam. 17.14). Significantly, there is no mention of how this divine action relates to David and his future.

Eleazar. Ichabod, 'Where is the glory?', survives in the house of Eli (4.19-22).

Moses is 80 years old (Exod. 7.7) when called by the Lord. He questions who this God is and why he, Moses, should be accepted by the Israelites as their divinely called leader. Provided with answers, he still has the temerity and strength to object to and refuse the call; the Lord overrules the objections and sends Moses on his mission. Samuel, a mere youth, does not even realize that he is being called and must ironically rely on Eli, the object of the divine judgment, to direct him. The message to Samuel is a double of that delivered by the man of God (1 Sam. 2.27-36); it concerns the fate of Eli's house, not that of Israel, and Samuel only delivers it at the urging of Eli. This narrative on origins bogs down in doubling and ambiguity.

Samuel is the Lord's trustworthy prophet (3.19-21) and Saul, the Lord's king and anointed (2.10), lingers in the background. The narrative does not move to the establishment of monarch and prophet; instead it shunts both aside in favor of stories of Israel's defeat by the Philistines and the Philistines' defeat by the Ark. In large part I find Polzin's parabolic reading of this material compelling (1989: 55-79). The collapse and death of Eli prefigure the collapse and death of monarchy, and the powerful Ark on its own symbolizes Israel without kings and, I would add, without prophets. Samuel is far from the Mosaic successor predicted in Deut. 18.15-22 (also see 34.10-12).

Such a parabolic reading is fitting for a narrative of the rise of monarchy (and prophecy) that is unable to get to the point. Kings and kingship there will be even though defeat and death are their ultimate fate, yet the narrative provides this overview obliquely since we the readers provide the connection between the houses of Eli and David. The Lord retains power and control, yet this is symbolized by the story of the Ark wreaking havoc among the Philistines and then, surprisingly, among the Israelites (6.19; I am reading the number 50,070 that is in the Hebrew text).

In ch. 7, Samuel returns to the scene as effective leader to whom both Israel and the Lord listen. Israel puts away the Baals and serves the Lord; the Lord answers Samuel's cry and the Philistines are crushed. Samuel saves the Israelites from

themselves and their enemies. He is a hero. The fairytale view is upset in the first four verses of ch. 8. Samuel has no divinely appointed successor and, like Eli, he is disgraced by his sons. The Lord does not step in to remedy the situation, and the elders take the initiative, demanding that Samuel 'set up for us a king to govern us, like all the nations' (8.5).

Kingship without Myth

Kingship and king are introduced in anything but a mythic mode. The people take the initiative and the Lord goes along. Chapter 8 is dominated by the negative themes of Israel's rejection of God (vv. 7-8), the harsh rule of the king (vv. 11-17), God's rejection of the people (v. 18), and the people's refusal to listen to their prophet (v. 19; see Deut. 18.15-22). Three times the Lord commands Samuel to listen to the people and to give them a king (vv. 7, 9, 22). Samuel does not obey. Unlike Moses who can object and question the Lord, Samuel simply does not act. He sends all the people home, and God has to send the future king to Samuel (Polzin 1989: 83-88).

A king, Saul, arrives on the scene in the folktale of the tall, handsome lad who goes in search of his father's asses and finds a kingdom. Samuel anoints him king and although the anointing is followed by signs, the signs are far from the signs and wonders of Exodus. Samuel recalls the Exodus in 10.17-19, and he again associates the king with the people's rejection of God. Saul, indeed, may be the only one affected by the signs; people around him muse, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' (10.9-13).

The tale does not have the mythic qualities of the call of Moses. It is a fairytale or folktale, not a myth. I do not use these terms in a technical sense; I want to indicate the reduced scope of divine involvement in 1 Samuel, particularly involvement in the form of explicit and far-reaching statements and miraculous acts and wonders. Fairytale or folktale also captures the sense of a story in which things go particularly, and frequently surprisingly, well.

Saul comes late on the scene even though his 'birth story' is in ch. 1. The Lord speaks to Samuel and not to Saul. His statement echoes the assertion, in Exod. 2.23-25, that the Lord heard the

Israelites' groaning. Saul will save Israel from the Philistines; no further role is given.

> About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you will anoint him leader [*nāgîd*][11] over my people Israel. He will save my people from the hand of the Philistines for I have taken note of my people because their cry has come to me (01 Sam. 9.16).

The folktale continues and doubles itself in 10.20-24 with the public selection as king of the tall lad who hides himself in the baggage. Negative statements on king and kingship in vv. 17-19 and 25-27 frame the tale. Narrative ambiguity arises in the doublets (and even triplets). God sends Saul; Samuel anoints him; finally, the people proclaim him king. King and kingship are both God's will and rejection of God.

Saul's fair beginning reaches its peak with his defeat of the Ammonites; this is his finest hour, yet it is tarnished by the fact that it is Ammonites, not Philistines. It is also marred by the parallel with Jephthah who defeats the Ammonites and who, like Saul in 1 Samuel 14, makes a rash vow that endangers his child. There is a parallel with Israel at the entrance to the land since at the end of Numbers they are near or even in Ammonite land; Samuel alludes to the exodus and the land in 1 Sam. 12.8. However, Saul is not an example of the divinely initiated transference of power witnessed in Eleazar's ordination (Num. 20.22-29) and Joshua's appointment (27.12-23).

Finally, there is the clouded and debated passage in 1 Sam. 11.12-13:

> The people said to Samuel, 'Who is saying, "Saul will reign over us"? Give us the men that we may put them to death'. And Saul said, 'Not a man will be put to death this day for today the Lord has wrought deliverance in Israel'.

However we interpret the passage,[12] it links king with death

11. I am not going to treat the issue of the distinction between *nāgîd*, leader, and *melek*, king. It is part of the non-mythic quality of this tale that *melek* is not used by the Lord in his first reference to Saul. See Miscall 1986: 53-59, 85-87, for discussion.

12. Polzin argues that Saul's victory over the Ammonites has established Saul as a judge-type leader and not as king; this scene is the people's last

and not with the death of a predecessor. The chapter closes with a repetition; the people, not Samuel or the Lord, make Saul king even though this is what the Lord commanded Samuel to do (8.22) and what, in the very next verse, Samuel claims to have done (12.1).

Samuel's address in ch. 12 compares with Moses' in Deuteronomy in its retrospective and anticipatory aspects, except that Samuel does not die immediately afterwards. We do not have a transfer of power as in Numbers and Deuteronomy; rather we have overlapping leaders and leaders in conflict. 1 Samuel 13–15 are the sad story of Saul's failure, both in collision with Samuel (chs. 13 and 15) and on his own (ch. 14). The Lord rejects Saul. He regrets that he has made Saul king; he changes his mind (15.10, 35; see Samuel's comment in v. 29). In other words, we are dealing with a divine mistake, a false start (Polzin 1989: 28-29), and not a long-range plan. Both the Lord and Samuel pronounce Saul's rejection as king, yet Saul remains as king until the end of 1 Samuel; the remainder of 1 Samuel is occupied by the conflict between Saul and David.[13]

We have leaders and stories in conflict. Even though I have spoken of Clines's pattern of fair beginnings and foul endings, there is no such clear succession in 1 Samuel 1–15. This narrative of the establishment of kingship (and of prophets) has a hard time beginning; it does not even get to the king until ch. 8. It starts and proceeds with doubles: Samuel and Saul; Samuel and Eli; king and prophet; and the Lord's anointed king (2.10) and the king as rejection of the Lord. It is better to speak of a conflict of fair beginning and foul beginning rather than a succession of beginning and ending.

David: Fairytale and Reality

Once Saul is rejected, David enters the picture. He is the youngest and the unexpected; unlike the others, he has no birth story. Fitting 1 Samuel, he has a double introduction: 16.1-13, Samuel

chance to turn away from the disaster of kingship (1989: 108-14).

13. The relationship between Saul and the Lord is one of conflict. Conflict was in place with Samuel and the house of Eli. The theme of conflict continues into 2 Kings, at least until the fall of Israel (2 Kgs 17).

anoints him king, and vv. 14-23, Saul makes him court musician and armor-bearer. This is the 'sweet psalmist of Israel' (2 Sam. 23.1 [RSV]; Gunn 1989: 133-34). The double introduction involves David with two families: Jesse's and Saul's (Jobling 1986 and Pleins 1992). David enters Saul's court and later Saul simply takes David 'and would not let him return to his father's house' (18.2).

With David, the Lord commands Samuel, 'Anoint him for this is he!' The spirit seizes David from that day on; an evil spirit comes upon Saul. Yet, to stress my point, this is not a transfer of power as in days of old. Rejection is not immediately followed by death or removal; anointing, by coronation. Can kingship save Israel from either themselves or their enemies, since there are two kings? In the long view the author of Genesis–2 Kings must answer 'no' to both parts of the question. Israel's and Judah's continuous rebellions against the Lord bring first Assyria and then Babylon down upon them. The Lord's false start and mistake with Saul are a parable for the false start and mistake of the institution of monarchy. On the other hand, the doubles and ambiguity of the narrative are a reflection of the fact that the doomed monarchy lasts for centuries. God is with his people either through or despite the monarchy.

In *The Workings of Old Testament Narrative* (Miscall 1983: 57-83), I deal at length with the ambiguity of the portrayal of David in 1 Samuel 17. Is he the pious young shepherd of tradition or a cunning, scheming contender for the throne? I conduct that reading with the focus on David. Here I place the tale of David and Goliath alongside the two stories of kingship.

In the fair beginning, the innocent and pious youth kills the fearsome and heavily armored enemy through his native skill and trust in God. This is analogous to Saul's first victory. From one view, the story contrasts the 'city' (Goliath) with the 'country' (David). David does not don the armor and sword of royalty (17.38-39); he is not a warrior like those of all the nations. His previous opponents have been lions and bears (vv. 31-37). David proclaims the powerful Lord, the God of the armies of Israel (vv. 26, 36, 45; see 2 Sam. 22). His victory is God's and knowledge of the Lord will be its result.

> This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; I will give the bodies of the Philistine army today to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand (vv. 46-47).

The fairytale closes with the legendary killing of Goliath. The unarmed youth uses his sling to embed a stone in Goliath's forehead:

> David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone; he struck the Philistine and he killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David (v. 50).

The victory belongs to God who saves without sword or spear.

The fairytale ends with v. 50, and the narrative doubles itself with a tale of a foul beginning, the reality of kings and kingship:

> David ran and stood over the Philistine; he took his sword, drew it out of its sheath, killed him and cut off his head with it. The Philistines saw that their hero was dead and they fled. The men of Israel and Judah, with a shout, immediately pursued the Philistines...The Israelites returned from the pursuit of the Philistines and plundered their camp. David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem; his armor he put in his tent (vv. 51-54).

David kills with the sword and the victory is his; he claims the trophies and the spoils (Goliath's head is still with him when he later takes Jerusalem [2 Sam. 5.6-10]). The result of the death of Goliath is flight, death and plunder. No one, David, Philistine or Israelite, acknowledges that there is a God in Israel and that this battle is the Lord's.

The closing scene, 17.55-58, is terse and difficult. 'I do not know' contrasts with the repeated 'that they may know' of vv. 46-47. Chapter 18.1-5 follows immediately upon the scene. My concern is v. 4:

> Jonathan stripped off the tunic he wore and gave it to David with his armor including his sword, his bow and his belt.

David dons the 'city' symbols of royalty and war, and the foul and sad story of monarchy in Israel and in Judah follows. The

sword never departs from David's house (2 Sam. 12.9-10). Seldom is there knowledge of the Lord, especially on the part of kings, but there is certainly knowledge of the sword. And the sword is frequently turned against themselves in the court intrigues, succession disputes, coups, etc. The fairytale of 1 Sam. 17.1-50 ends when David kills with the sword and girds himself with the royal armor and sword.

Indeed, the comment in 2 Sam. 21.19 shows it to be a fairytale. 'Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, the Bethlehemite, slew Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam'. David has probably taken credit for a warrior's accomplishment, as Saul did with Jonathan's victory (1 Sam. 13.2-4; Miscall 1986: 82-83). It is as though the narrator, at the close of 2 Samuel, says that after all the betrayal and violence involving David, he can no longer maintain the lie of David and Goliath even as a fairytale. Nevertheless David continues as king and his dynasty endures for almost 400 years.

The Fantastic

I have dealt with the Exodus material in my essay 'Biblical Narrative and Categories of the Fantastic' (forthcoming) and here focus on the relevance of one aspect of the fantastic for reading 1 Samuel. It derives from Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic*. According to George Aichele,

> Todorov argues that literary fantasy arises as a moment of hesitation or uncertainty, in which one is unable to decide whether a given narrative phenomenon or set of phenomena belongs to the genre of the uncanny—bizarre occurrences, for which a natural explanation is nonetheless possible—or to the genre of the marvelous—for which only a supernatural explanation can be given (1991: 325).

The plagues and the revelation of Torah at Sinai are all marvelous; they are manifestly the work of the Lord. If, in the book of Exodus, we were to delete the speeches and events that are explicitly ascribed to the Lord, we would have little of the present book left. In 1 Samuel, on the other hand, if we were to conduct a similar deletion, we would have most of the present book left. With the exception of the Ark Narrative, the events

and their sequence are not uncanny or bizarre occurrences.

The double story of kingship can be viewed from yet another perspective. First is the human story of a time of change when old institutions, priesthood and judgeship, die and new ones, prophecy and kingship, arise amidst controversy and conflict. The new institutions grow old and end in the disasters of the late eighth and early sixth centuries. This is the story of the academy told in scholarly histories of Israel. There is also the marvelous story of God's faithfulness to his people and his gracious direction of their history despite his periodic punishments of them for their rebellion. Samuel and David, like Moses, are heroes; Saul is the villain. Monarchy may end, but God remains with his people and brings them back from disaster and exile. This is the story of church and synagogue told in Bible histories, sermons and the countless retellings of the youth's defeat of the giant warrior.

The hesitation, the uncertainty, lies in the relation of the two stories. Kingship is both acceptable to God and rebellion against God. A king is God's choice (Deut. 17.14-20) and the people's choice (1 Sam. 8.18). Kingship endures, yet it is a mistake, a false start. The Lord remains with his people through or despite kingship. These views of kingship stand in tension, and that tension is captured in both the style and content of the narrative(s) of the rise of kingship. Contrasts with the Pentateuchal narrative of Moses and Israel highlight the ambiguity, the doubling, and the lack of resolution and scope of the Samuel narrative.

The tension is captured, not resolved. The differing views and stories of kingship stand in an uncertain relationship. This is a human story and a divine story. Supernatural explanations are given, but we are not always certain when God intervenes or why, to what extent and for what purpose. 2 Samuel ends with the story of the census-taking that encapsulates the doubling and uncertainty. The Lord is angry, punishing and relenting. It is David's sin (24.10, 17), although it is not at all clear in the Bible why census-taking is sinful. The Lord allows him to choose his punishment, but the plague falls on the people, not David. David is both means of punishment and death and means of atonement and relief. The relief, however, comes through more

of a priestly than a royal function, and altar and sacrifices recall the sad story of Saul's failure in 1 Samuel 13–15.

Concluding Remarks

To summarize, the often noted ambiguity and doubling of the narratives in 1 Samuel 1–17 are not due to a secondary editing process that somewhat mechanically combined early and late materials that are, respectively, pro-monarchical and anti-monarchical. The narratives present kingship and its origins in a decidedly negative light through the doubling and through the narrative pace that delays the appearance of the first two kings, Saul and David. The style and pace stand out distinctly when we compare the Samuel material with the Pentateuchal story of Moses and its strong mythic quality. The same process of comparison and contrast reveals the negative judgment of kingship inherent in the style and pace of 1 Samuel 1–17; unlike the Exodus story, the story of the origins of kingship does not focus on the king, the one leader who can lead and save Israel from external and internal enemies. My title pairs Moses and David; the biblical narrative, however, parallels Moses with Samuel, Saul and David.

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CURSES AND KINGS: A READING OF 2 SAMUEL 15–16

Robert Polzin

At Play in the Fields of the LORD: Paronomasia in 2 Samuel 15

2 Samuel 15–18 describes the rebellion of Absalom that ends with his death. Four years after David had allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem, his son's revolt forces David himself to flee the city. That revolt and that flight comprise the main events of ch. 15, which wonderfully exhibits the interplay of esthetic brilliance and ideological complexity that characterizes the Deuteronomic History. Attention to a few apparently minor details in ch. 15 will help to introduce the more important issues driving the narrative along.

Verses 1–6 form a neat exposition of the four years preceding Absalom's revolt. In its frequent use of at least seven imperfective verb forms to indicate habitual, repeated or condensed action, this introductory section of the chapter recalls 1 Sam. 1.1-8, expository verses preparing the reader for the events surrounding the birth of Samuel.[1] Here in 2 Samuel 15, the narrator describes what Absalom *used to do* or *continued to do*, over the four years during which he 'stole the hearts of the men of Israel' (v. 6).[2] The importance of vv. 1-6 as exposition

1. See R. Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 19-20.

2. S.R. Driver remarks, 'Notice the pff. with *waw* conv., indicating what Absalom *used* to do. From 2b to 4, however, the narrator lapses into the tense of simple description, only again bringing the custom into prominence in v. 5, and 6a (*yb'w*)' (*Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel, with an Introduction on Hebrew Paleography and the Ancient Versions and Facsimiles of Inscriptions and Maps* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd edn revised and enlarged, 1913], p. 310). We now believe that the narrator's 'lapse' into perfective verb forms in the MT of vv. 2-4 probably

introducing the revolt of Absalom lies in the efficiency with which these verses characterize Absalom and highlight major issues.

In the exposition, the narrator quotes Absalom, 'O that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a suit (*rîb*) or cause (*mišpaṭ*) might come to me, and I would justify him (*wᵉhiṣdaqtîw*)' (v. 4). The significance of this reported speech of Absalom in the expository material introducing his revolt can hardly be exaggerated.[3] By exposing the abiding motivation of Absalom as he played the politician before every Israelite who came to Jerusalem for a suit ('See, your claims are good and right' [v. 3]), vv. 1-6 move us to wonder on the one hand how Absalom's behavior corresponds to the Deuteronomic Lawcode concerning such matters, and, on the other, how such behavior compares to that of other characters in the story.

The relevant legislation in Deuteronomy is straightforward: 'When there is a dispute (*rîb*) between men and they come into court, then they shall judge them. They shall justify (*wᵉhiṣdîqû*) the righteous (*haṣṣaddîq*) and condemn the guilty' (Deut. 25.1). The contrast between this law and Absalom's behavior is clear and simple: Absalom ought to distinguish between the innocent and guilty, yet his practice, over many years, of declaring 'good and righteous' the claims of everyone coming to Jerusalem for judgment appears to contravene the Lawcode and to constitute a flagrant attempt to steal the hearts of his fellow Israelites in preparation for usurping the throne of his father.

With respect to the legislation of Deut. 25.1-3, Solomon's words in 1 Kings 8 contrast sharply with Absalom's. During the dedication of the temple, Solomon implores the LORD to judge those who come before the altar of the temple: 'Then hear thou

reflects more accurately a lapse of textual traditions instead. There is some evidence from LXX^{L}, 4QSam^{a} and 4QSam^{c} that even the perfective verbs used by the narrator in vv. 2-4 of the MT, like those of vv. 1, 5 and 6, were originally imperfectives denoting Absalom's habitual actions. See on this point P.K. McCarter, *II Samuel* (AB, 9; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), p. 354 and his reference there to Ulrich's work.

3. In *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, pp. 60-63, I suggested that many details in 2 Sam. 15 look back to the ark account in 1 Sam. 4.1–7.2. Here I am concentrating on how ch. 15 looks forward to aspects of the story to come.

in heaven, and act, and judge thy servants, condemning the guilty by bringing his conduct upon his own head, and vindicating the righteous (*ûlhaṣdîq ṣaddîq*) by rewarding him according to his righteousness (*ṣidqātô*)' (1 Kgs 8.32).

What makes the language of justification in Moses's law and Solomon's prayer so important, as a context for Absalom's behavior here in 2 Samuel 15, is its distinctiveness within the History: Deuteronomy 25, 2 Samuel 15 and 1 Kings 8 are the only places in the History where the root *ṣdq* is used in a verbal form (whether *qal, nifal, hifil* or *hitpael*). Absalom's habit of declaring innocent *everyone* bringing a suit to Jerusalem appears, therefore, to focus upon and contravene the law of Moses, even as it stands in sharp contrast to the concept of divine justice voiced, if not practiced, by his half brother Solomon later on in the story. This aspect of Absalom's preparations for revolt succeeds in surrounding his *character zone* with a negative evaluation from the very beginning. Rather than being seen as trying to take over responsibilities somehow neglected by his father, Absalom is indirectly portrayed here as subverting Israelite law in order to curry favor with those whose support he will need if his revolt is to succeed. We see here how legal and literary context can transform an apparently innocent statement into an implicit condemnation of its speaker.

The chapter's tendency to play with language highlights a second aspect of Absalom's promiscuous justification of fellow Israelites during the period preceding his revolt. When David hears that 'the hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom' (v. 13), the king quickly flees the city, and immediately meets three individuals, Ittai the Gittite (vv. 19-22), Zadok the priest (vv. 24-29) and Hushai the Archite (vv. 32-37). Wordplay immediately surrounds David's meeting with Ittai. The account of the meeting comprises only 4 verses, yet Ittai's name is connected to the circumstances surrounding David's flight in a number of interesting ways. The meeting begins with 'Then the king said to Ittai (*'ittay*) the Gittite, "Why will you also go with us (*'ittānû*)?"' (v. 19), and ends with 'So Ittai (*'ittay*) the Gittite passed on, with all his men and all the little ones who were with him (*'ittô*)' (v. 22). In between, Ittai's own oath indicates the thematic function that his name plays in the story itself, 'But Ittai

answered the king, "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, wherever my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will your servant be"' (v. 21). The narrative role of Ittai, therefore, whose very name suggests 'loyalty' or 'companion', is *to be with David wherever he goes.*[4]

Lest we assume that there is something haphazard about the appearance of Ittai in conjunction with the repeated usage of *'et* in vv. 19-22, a broader perspective suggests that paronomasia is a widespread feature of the story at this point. *'et*, as one of the two principal words meaning 'with' in Hebrew (*'im* is the other word), occurs 10 times in ch. 15 alone—more often than in any other chapter of 2 Samuel.[5] Moreover, if we look at the larger story of Absalom's revolt, we notice that the occurrences of *'et*, 'with', in these 5 chapters are much more frequent than anywhere else in the book.[6] It is safe to suggest, therefore, that wordplay involving the meeting of David and Ittai in 15.19-22 points to aspects of the narrative that transcend a merely esthetic connection of the name of Ittai to his abiding desire to be *with* David. A number of paronomastic details within the chapter not only structure its narrative events, but also indicate some authorial perspectives that shape the larger story of Absalom's revolt.

If we return to the expository material in vv. 1-6, we will see how wordplay can indicate something about the authorial motivation behind the three meetings recounted in this chapter. I have already remarked how rarely the History uses the language of justification employed by Absalom in v. 4 ('Then *every man* with a suit or cause might come to me, and *I would*

4. See M. Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1991), p. 219, who has independently noted the wordplay between Ittai and *'th/'tnw* in 2 Sam. 15.19. I am suggesting here that such wordplay extends beyond 15.19, and that its narrative functions are closely related to other textual features of chapters 15-20.

5. 15.3, 11, 12, 14, 19, 22, 24, 27, 30, 33. Twenty per cent of the occurrences of *'et* in 2 Samuel appear in 2 Sam. 15, a chapter that comprises only 5% of the book. *'et* occurs 53 times in 2 Samuel and 10 times in ch. 15 alone. (In terms of verses, ch. 15 constitutes about only 5% of 2 Samuel.)

6. In chs. 15–19, *'et*, 'with', occurs 29 times out of the 53 times it appears in 2 Samuel.

declare him righteous' [*w^ehiṣdaqtîw*]). Besides providing the initial basis for a negative evaluation of Absalom in the story, his language also serves as esthetic play preceding further play on the name of the *second* person David will meet in ch. 15, Zadok the priest. Like Ittai, Zadok starts out with David, but unlike Ittai, whom David keeps with him, Zadok must return to Jerusalem. The one whose very name denotes 'companion' accompanies David as he flees Jerusalem. On the other hand, Zadok, whose name denotes 'justice' or 'righteousness', returns to the royal pretender, who for four years had unscrupulously justified or declared righteous every claimant he met at the gate of Jerusalem. There is something deliciously playful, yet intensely serious, about such verbal and narrative insinuations.

A third, albeit less direct, example of wordplay in ch. 15 involves the name of the last person David meets in the chapter, Hushai the Archite.[7] David's departure from Jerusalem is accomplished *in haste*: 'Then David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee; or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom; *go in haste* (*mah^arû*) lest he overtake us *quickly* (*y^emahēr*)"' (v. 14). It is more than accidental that Hushai, whose role in the History is confined to 2 Samuel 15–17, turns up in a story that emphasizes the dangerous haste surrounding David. *mhr* and *ḥûš* are synonyms,[8] so that there is an obvious correlation between the presence of Hushai and the increased usage of *mhr* in 2 Samuel 15–19.[9] The man whom we could call in English, 'Hasty the Archite', now comes upon the scene, because the semantic

7. Wordplay involving Hushai has already been pointed out by Garsiel (*Biblical Names*, p. 105). My discussion here widens the scope of his comments.

8. For example, in 1 Sam. 20.38: 'Jonathan called after the lad, "Hurry (*m^ehērâ*), make haste (*ḥûšâ*), do not stay (*'al ta'^amōd*)"'.

9. *ḥûš* appears rarely in the History (Deut. 32.35; Judg 20.37 and 1 Sam. 20.38); the root *mhr*, 'to hurry', however, appears much more frequently—over 40 times in Deuteronomy–2 Kings. What is important for our purposes is, first, that 1 Sam. 20.38 uses the two words as synonyms and, secondly, that in the books of 2 Samuel–2 Kings, for example, *mhr* occurs only 10 times, yet 5 of these occurrences are here in 2 Sam. 15–19 (2 Sam. 15.14; 17.16, 18, 21; 19.17), precisely and only where we find Hushai, the hasty one, participating in the story (15.32, 37; 16.16, 17, 18; 17.5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 15). Hushai, as the father of Baaniah, is simply mentioned in 1 Kgs 4.16.

wordplay between *mhr* and *ḥûšay*, like that surrounding the names of Ittai and Zadok, indicates something more than simply the esthetic pleasure that comes from etymologizing. In such wordplay we encounter something close to a recurring signal about authorial motivations for shaping the story of Absalom's revolt in its present form. David keeps with him Ittai, his loyal companion from Gath, but returns the righteous one, Zadok, to Absalom, the one who had unrighteously declared all Israelites righteous. Then David returns Hushai, his hasty friend, to the royal pretender whose contemplated haste, David declared, would force the king to leave Jerusalem in haste (v. 14).

The names of those with whom David meets and speaks in 2 Samuel 15 tell us something about the ideological dimensions of the story: What does it mean to be *with* David—or *with* Absalom for that matter? Whose side is the side of *justice*, David's or Absalom's? And what evaluative accents surround the *hasty* comings and goings that constitute this part of David's story? Before I can attend to these important questions, further artful aspects within the story need discussing.

Between Mimesis and Artifice: Crossing Boundaries

So much has been written from the supposition that the author(s) of 2 Samuel 9–20 wrote from direct personal knowledge and with a wealth of realistic particulars, that I feel compelled to complement this picture by describing some signals of literary composition within it that highlight a central aspect of the story. The account of the succession to the throne of David, at this point at least, appears to possess two opposed stylistic characteristics: a narrative edifice exhibiting an elaborate façade of mimetic detail, yet in addition, a well crafted and highly stylized—even ritualized—account of Absalom's abortive attempt to succeed to the throne of David. In connection with the extensive wordplay that I am suggesting characterizes this part of David's story, the profoundly ritualized nature of David's hasty retreat from Jerusalem, and of his painful return, is an important signal of the extent of literary artifice that has gone into the final composition of this story. We can begin to cross over from mimesis to artifice by examining the many ways

in which characters cross over (*'ābar*) boundaries—in this chapter and in those to come.[10]

We already know from the ritual procession in Josh. 3.1–5.1 that those in the History who cross the Jordan usually carry with them heavy ideological baggage.[11] To cross over (*'ābar*) into or out of the land is an especially appropriate action for Hebrews (*'ibrîm*), yet there are four sections within the History where occurrences of *'ābar*, 'to cross over', are particularly frequent: Deuteronomy 2–4; Joshua 3.1–5.1; Joshua 24; and here in 2 Samuel 15–20.[12] One ought not to be surprised, therefore, that the frequent use of *'ābar* in 2 Samuel 15–20 carries with it a number of important implications for our understanding of the story. If we concentrate on the choreography of 'crossing over' (*'ābar*) in the account of David's flight from Jerusalem in ch. 15, we can illustrate how the larger complex in chs. 15–20 uses highly stylized language to convey highly ritualized action.[13]

To begin with the *stylistic façade* of 2 Samuel 15, countless readers have commented on the general impression they have when reading 2 Samuel 9–20 that it is based upon an 'eye witness' account of the events unfolding within it. However, when such commentators try to give reasons for their impression, they rarely discuss those features which directly and obviously suggest that the narrator may be writing from direct personal

10. Ari Cartun has written an important article on topography as a literary template for 2 Sam. 15–99, thus highlighting an important aspect of this section's highly stylized language and composition: 'Topography as a Template for David's Fortunes during his Flight before Avshalom', *Journal of Reform Judaism* (Spring 1991), pp. 17-34. See also David Gunn, 'From Jerusalem to the Jordan and Back: Symmetry in 2 Samuel XV–XX', *VT* 30 (1980), pp. 109-13.

11. For an account of the ideological implications of crossing the Jordan in Josh. 3.1–5.1, see my remarks in *Moses and the Deuteronomist* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 91-110.

12. In Deut. 2–4, the root *'ābar* occurs 30 times in 115 verses; in Josh. 3.1–5.1, 25 times in only 42 verses; in Josh. 24, 8 times in 33 verses; and in 2 Sam. 15–19, 38 times in 165 verses. In 2 Sam. 15–19, a majority of occurrences (25) appear in the first and last chapters of the section.

13. This combination of stylization and ritualization is similar to the narrative style employed by the narrator to describe the events in 2 Sam. 2.

knowledge. Chapter 15's extensive use of imperfective verb forms in the reporting speech of the narrator is perhaps the most immediate, yet largely unrecognized, compositional reason for the 'eye witness' flavor of this portion of the story of Absalom's revolt. There may be no pericope within the books of Samuel that so abundantly employs verb forms whose function is to bring readers into the center of the action by presenting that action as if it were taking place before their eyes—in a manner similar to the temporal point of view of the characters themselves within the story world. David's flight from Jerusalem, from the conspiracy of Absalom mentioned in v. 12 to Absalom's subsequent taking over of the city in v. 37, is narrated from a predominantly *synchronic viewpoint* that succeeds in slowing the action down and giving readers the impression that they too are present as events unfold.

This obvious feature of the chapter's narrative style says absolutely nothing about anyone's actual knowledge of, or physical presence at, the events described therein. All we can really say is that the function of these imperfective verb forms is to convey an impression of such knowledge. Like the narrator's obvious omniscience, the text's synchronic perspective is simply a conventional literary feature that establishes for us, as Sternberg might say, the truth claim, but not the truth value, of the reliable, or eye witness, flavor of this chapter's happenings. And, as previous readers have so often remarked, what happens before our eyes in ch. 15 is as much a ritual performance as it is a strategic retreat.[14]

Besides, then, the imperfective verb forms which indicate habitual or condensed action in the exposition within vv. 1-6, an unusual number of other imperfective verb forms function in the chapter to draw the reader into the center of action and to represent the temporal perspective of characters rather than that of the narrator. The following narrative statements are synchronic rather than retrospective:

v. 12 And the people with Absalom continued to increase (*hôlēk wārāb*);

v. 18 And all his servants were passing by him (*'ōbᵉrîm 'al*

14. See McCarter, *II Samuel*, pp. 375-76.

yādô) and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites were passing in front of the king (*'ōbᵉrîm 'al pᵉnê hammelek*);

v. 23 And all the land was weeping (*bôkîm*) with a loud voice and all the people were crossing (*'ōbᵉrîm*) and the king was crossing over (*'ōbēr*) the brook Kidron and all the people were crossing over (*'ōbᵉrîm*) in front of the road to (?) the wilderness;

v. 24 And lo (*wᵉhinnēh*) Zadok and the priests with him were carrying (*nōśᵉ'îm*) the ark.

v. 30 David was going up (*'ōleh*) the ascent, going up (*'ōleh*) and weeping (*bôkeh*), and his head is covered (*ḥāpûy*) and he was walking (*holēk*) barefoot, and they were going up (*wᵉ'ālû*) crying continually (*'ālōh ûbākōh*).

v. 32 Behold (*wᵉhinneh*) Hushai the Archite to meet him: his coat is torn (*qārûᵃ'*).

v. 37 And just when Hushai, David's friend, came to the city, Absalom was coming (*yābō'*) to Jerusalem.

Notice that these synchronic imperfectives are complemented by two occurrences of *hinnēh* ('behold', vv. 24, 32), by which the narrator further describes action from the various points of view of the characters themselves.

When one relates the distribution of these synchronic verbs to their specific content, it is clear that what is conveyed to readers as happening before their very eyes, as it were, is the series of events that begins with the *continuing increase* of Israelites who side with Absalom in v. 15 and ends with Absalom's *entering Jerusalem* in v. 37. In between these verses, the employment of at least 14 additional imperfective verb forms succeeds in making the action especially vivid and present to the reader. And yet, paradoxically, this recurring feature of the chapter is the clearest indication we have that such synchronicity is but a stylistic façade indicating the complex artifice that shapes the narrative at this point.

Listen to David after he hears that the hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom: 'Arise, and let us flee; or else there will be no escape for us from Absalom; *go in haste*, lest he overtake us *quickly*' (v. 14). Yet, as the events of vv. 15-37 unfold, the synchronic, slow motion effect of all the imperfectives

employed in these verses combines with the repetitive choreography of David's procession, and with his series of meetings, so that this combination turns the narrative into an account of a choreographed withdrawal rather than a hurried flight. What happens before our very eyes is a highly stylized account of the highly ritualized flight of David from Jerusalem.

Three features especially illustrate the stylization of language that embodies ch. 15 and foreshadows further details of the story to come. First, there are a couple of processional reversals using the verb *'ābar*, 'to cross over'. These reversals emphasize the ritualistic nature of the flight itself and prepare us for interesting and unexpected uses of *'ābar* later on in the story. Secondly, David's hasty journey out of Jerusalem in ch. 15 is interrupted by ideologically important conversations with Ittai, Zadok and Hushai, just as ch. 16 will narrate his meeting with Ziba and Shimei near the high point of his flight (16.1), and just as ch. 19 will describe David's meetings with Shimei, Mephibosheth and Barzillai prior to his crossing the Jordan back into the land in v. 39. This 3–2–3 configuration of meetings, as David goes up away from, and down toward, Jerusalem, intensifies the choreographed impression one has while reading this section. And, thirdly, there is a definite protocol involved in 'crossing over with the king' (*'ābar 'et* or *'im*) or 'making him cross over, escorting him over' (*'ābar* in the *hiphil*). Definite but complicated rewards or penalties await those who manage, or fail, to accompany the king on his processional journey.

Each of these three aspects of David's ritual procession out of and back into Jerusalem offer important ideological indications of what the text is saying at this point in the story.

First, the initial reversal in ch. 15 takes place in vv. 17-18, where, at first, the king is in front of the people, but then the procession halts and 'all his servants were passing by him (*'ōbᵉrîm 'al yādô*) and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the six hundred Gittites who had followed him from Gath were passing on before the king (*'ōbᵉrîm 'al pᵉnê hammelek*)'. A second processional switch occurs in v. 24, 'And behold, there were Zadok and all the Levites with him, who were carrying the ark of the covenant of God, and Abiathar also; they set down the ark of God until the people had all passed out (*'ad tōm laʿᵃbôr*)

from the city'. The king and the ark precede, but at a crucial point in the journey, that is, at the last house in v. 17 and at the outskirts of the city in v. 24, the leaders stop and allow those behind them to cross over before them, as if following a rubric according to which king and ark are to precede *before* the crucial crossing, but then follow *after* it takes place.

Such ritual moves remind us immediately of the account of Israel crossing the Jordan into the land in Josh. 3.1–5.1. One has only to compare the following sets of verses to see that something similar is going on—whatever its ritual and ideological significance:

> And while all Israel were passing over (*'ōbᵉrîm*) on dry ground, the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood (*wayya'ᵃmᵉdû*) (Josh. 3.17).
> And they stood (*wayya'ᵃmᵉdu*) at the last house and all his servants were passing by (*'ōbᵉrîm*) and all the Cherethites and Pelethites and Gittites were passing over (*'ōbᵉrîm*) in front of the king (2 Sam. 15.17-18).
>
> ...until all the nation finished passing over (*'ad 'ᵃšer tammû la'ᵃbōr*) (Josh. 3.17).
> ...until all the people had passed out of (*'ad tōm la'ᵃbôr*) the city (2 Sam. 15.24).

This comparison of Joshua 3–5 and 2 Samuel 15–20 is especially relevant because both complexes center around crossing the Jordan. What 2 Samuel 15–20 adds, however, is a more ritualized and detailed procession and protocol, a stylized series of *crossover points* during the revolt of Absalom. In Joshua 3–5, the procession of Israelites crosses over the Jordan in only one direction (into the land), whereas here in 2 Samuel 15–20 David's crossing the Jordan is in both directions, out of the land in 17.22 and back into it in 19.40. Nevertheless, the journey in Joshua 3–5 is still described from two spatial points of view.[15] More importantly, the two features of crossing the Jordan in procession and of doing so according to a definite protocol concerning who leads or follows, are both repeated within 2 Samuel 15–20 through a number of wonderful narrative variations.

Secondly, ch. 15's account of David's meetings with Ittai,

15. See my remarks in *Moses and the Deuteronomist*, pp. 99-101.

Zadok and Hushai consists of a series of dialogues before the procession crosses over the Jordan, just as ch. 19's account of the king's meetings with Shimei, Mephibosheth and Barzillai interrupts his return journey just before the procession crosses over back into the land in 19.40 (English versification). And in between these triple meetings in chs. 15 and 19, David's meetings with Ziba and Shimei follow his 'crossing over the summit' in 16.1. The 3–2–3 configuration of meetings that I have already indicated, so obviously determined by the procession's location in reference to various crossover points throughout the journey, lends a stylized and ritualized cast to the account—a slant that is in tension with any 'realistic' features one may point to in the text.

As I suggested above, David's dialogue with Ittai, whose name suggests 'with me', or 'my companion', involves deciding whether he is to accompany David or return to Jerusalem; the conversation with Zadok, whose name suggests 'righteous' or 'just', leads to his and the ark's return to the royal pretender who habitually declared righteous every Israelite whom he met at the gate; and David's meeting with Hushai, whose name suggests 'hurry' or 'haste', is surrounded by numerous references to the dangerous haste caused by the revolt of Absalom. In short, these three meetings involve a paronomastic staging that makes this section of 2 Samuel a delight to read and a challenge to interpret.

Thirdly, the emphasis in chs. 15–19 on who is *with* or *not with* the king during his flight, on who escorts the king and who does not, and on the protocol that obtains within the procession itself—such emphasis is best understood when one considers that the local wordplay between Ittai's name and David's statement in 15.19 ('Then the king said to *Ittai* (*'ty*), "Why will you go, you *with us* [*'th 'tnw*]?" ') is actually indicative of a much wider stylistic phenomenon within chs. 15–20. Concerning the two Hebrew words meaning 'with', *'et* and *'im*, each occurs with much greater frequency in chs. 15–19 than elsewhere in 2 Samuel.[16] This increased usage of 'with' obtains partly because

16. Simply put, the preposition *'et* occurs only 53 times in 2 Samuel, and 29 of these 53 occurrences are in chs. 15–19. Similarly, *'im* occurs about 70 times in 2 Samuel, and yet 16 of these occurrences are found in chs. 15–19.

the material itself is so much concerned with who is with David or not with him, with Absalom or not. Nevertheless, the lexical profile of chs. 15–19, insofar as wordplay involving *'et* or *'im* is concerned, corresponds to its thematic profile in ways that transcend the normal union of form and content found in everyday speech.

In short, the story that ch. 15 introduces is highly contrived and stylized, whatever its historiographic profile may be.

David's Flight: Ideological Directions

I have already described the emphasis, in chs. 15–19, on the theme of *being with the king* or not, a theme signalled by the marked increase and frequent wordplay of terms indicating 'accompaniment' in this section. The story of Ittai, Zadok and Hushai is one of being *with David* even though only Ittai physically and etymologically accompanies him across the Jordan into temporary exile; Zadok and Hushai remain with David despite faithfully and hastily returning to Jerusalem. There was also the definite protocol in the chapter concerning *how* one accompanies the king: in the procession out of the city and across the Jordan, those who are with the king are at times in front of him, at times behind him. To pass over with the king (*'ābar 'et* or *'im*) requires *following him* up to the boundary, but then *preceding him* across it. Finally, there are important implications in David's proposed return to Jerusalem.

The narrative, even before Absalom rebels, signals its coming preoccupation with matters of return by quoting Absalom's vow in v. 8. Absalom tells David, 'For your servant vowed a vow while I dwelt in Geshur in Aram, saying, "If the LORD will indeed bring me back to Jerusalem (*yāšîb yᵉšîbēnî*), then I will offer worship to the LORD"'. Absalom's vow introduces us to ideological issues of return (*šûb*) that will occupy the narrative until David's actual return to Jerusalem in ch. 19. Almost half of the occurrences of *šûb* in 2 Samuel appear in chs. 15–19, and the importance of 'returning to Jerusalem' is signalled by its intro-

Taken together, *'im* and *'et* occur in chs. 15–19 a total of 45 out of 123 times in the book. And this high proportion does not take into account the 8 occurrences of the name Ittai in chs. 15–19.

duction into the story even before the revolt begins.[17] Absalom is concerned about returning from exile to his own city, Jerusalem, and this is the first and most important function of the use of *šûb* in 2 Samuel 15–19.[18] After Absalom's revolt and David's flight have begun, David counsels Ittai the exile (*gōleh*), '*go back* [to Jerusalem], *go back* and take your brothers with you' (15.19-20). David then tells Zadok, '*Take the ark back* to the city; the LORD *may bring me back* to see the ark's habitation; *go back* to the city' (vv. 25, 27). The narrator reports that Zadok and Abiathar *brought the ark back* to Jerusalem (v. 29), and David finally tells Hushai, '*Return* to the city' (v. 34).

A second issue introduced by *šûb* is the restoration of the king(dom). If the eventual loser in the revolt is shown first returning to Jerusalem even before David—the eventual victor—is forced to start planning his own return in 15.19ff., it is Mephibosheth—already a loser—who first voices this second aspect of return: 'Today the house of Israel will *restore* to me the kingdom of my father' (16.3).[19] Will David, the supplanter of Saul, be returned to his throne after his exile across the Jordan?

A third function of *šûb* in this section concerns the question of divine recompense for David's actions. Again it is a loser in the story, here Shimei, who introduces us to this aspect of return. Shimei's curse to David states, 'May the LORD *return upon you* all the blood of the house of Saul' (16.8). David's response indicates the alternative that he, understandably, prefers: 'It may be that the LORD will look upon my affliction, and that the LORD *will return good to me* in place of this cursing of me today' (16.12).

These three facets of *šûb* in the story—returning to Jerusalem, restoring the king(dom) and repaying the king for his actions—help us to see something of the ideological point of view that permeates the story of Absalom's revolt. The various emphases

17. Some form of *šûb* occurs 57 times in 2 Samuel, and 25 of these occur in chs. 15–19: 15.8 (twice), 19, 20 (twice), 25 (twice), 27, 29, 34; 16.3, 8, 12; 17.3 (twice), 20; 18.16; 19.11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 38, 40, 44.

18. Returning to one's city, especially Jerusalem, is the focus of *šûb* in 15.8 (twice), 19, 20 (twice), 25 (twice), 27, 29, 34; 17.20; 19.38, 40.

19. This slant on 'return' is found in 16.3; 17.3 (twice); 19.11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 44.

on return in chs. 15–19 seem not so much required by David's flight from Jerusalem, as David's flight appears necessary in order to focus the story on some central issues: exilic return to Jerusalem; return with or without the king; following him across boundaries in deadly pursuit (17.22-24) or preceding him across as his loyal servants; exilic restoration of the kingship; and finally, divine retribution concerning the house of David. Here is a story wherein the hasty flight of David is slowed down in a highly stylized manner so that the central topic of his eventual return to Jerusalem may be addressed in terms that mirror the complex situation of discourse between a Deuteronomic voice and its contemporary audience.

For example, perhaps the ark is not allowed to cross the Jordan with David because it is no longer with Israel in Babylon. David may be stating to Zadok what many Israelites in Babylon hoped in their hearts, 'If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me back and let me see both [the ark] and his habitation' (15.25). As we earlier saw indications of the exilic situation of discourse lying behind references to exile or captivity in 1 Sam. 4.21-22, so also the use of *gālâ* here in 2 Sam. 15.19—where Ittai the exile (*gōleh*) is allowed to cross the Jordan with David into a kind of double exile—is the only other instance in the books of Samuel of *gālâ* denoting 'exile'.[20]

We find a final hint of the ideological dimensions of ch. 15 in David's command to his servants, 'Arise, and let us flee; or else there will be no escape (*pᵉlēṭâ*) for us from Absalom' (15.14). The root, *plṭ*, is found infrequently in the History, yet many of its occurrences concern issues of fratricide, whether familial, tribal or national in nature.[21]

The authorial perspective on survival during Absalom's revolt looks backward to the judicial period in Israel's history when, in the Jephthah story of Judges 12, the Gileadites smote their tribal brothers, the Ephraimites, and where both are called 'survivors of Ephraim (*pᵉlîṭê 'eprāyîm*)' (Judg. 12.4, 5). At the end of Judges, warfare between tribal brothers becomes so severe that the tribe of Benjamin nears extinction: 'And they said, "There

20. See my remarks in *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, pp. 66, 237.

21. The root *plṭ* occurs in Josh. 8.22; Judg 12.4, 5; 21.17; 2 Sam. 15.14; 22.2, 44; 2 Kgs 9.15; 19.30, 31.

must be an inheritance for the survivors (*p'lēṭâ*) of Benjamin, that a tribe be not blotted out from Israel"' (Judg. 21.17). Here in 2 Samuel 15, during the monarchic period, 'survivors' refer to individuals within the house of David who are threatened by another member of the same house. And David himself will thank the LORD in 2 Sam. 22.44, 'Thou didst deliver me (*watt'pall'ṭēnî*) from strife with my people'.

Ahead in the story, the conspiracy of Jehu against Joram also recalls Absalom's conspiracy against David. There, as here, the issue of escaping from the city is central to the plot, 'So Jehu said, "If this is your mind, then let no one escape (*pālîṭ*) from the city to go and tell the news in Jezreel"' (2 Kgs 9.15). The Deuteronomic issue of tribal and national survival will take one final turn during Assyria's assault on Israel. Isaiah will prophesy, 'And the surviving remnant (*p'lēṭat*) of the house of Judah shall again take root downward; for *out of Jerusalem* shall go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors (*š'ĕrît ûp'lêṭâ*)' (2 Kgs 19.30-31). It is almost as if David's flight from Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 15 is a precursor of Isaiah's prophecy in 2 Kings 19, a ritual procession that looks forward to Israel's exile from the land even as it reverses, with similar choreography, Israel's original crossing of the Jordan *into* the land in Josh. 3.1–5.1.

2 Samuel 16: Considerations of Context

We begin with the ways in which the events in this chapter are structured. Verses 1-14 recount what happens after David crossed beyond the summit of the Mount of Olives, and vv. 15-23 report what transpires after Absalom came to Jerusalem. The parallels between these two halves are striking. First David meets Ziba and Shimei, then Absalom meets Hushai and Ahithophel. The chapter begins 'just beyond the summit', at the spatial highpoint in David's procession where David receives a couple of asses laden with food and drink—gifts from the servant of Mephibosheth 'for the king's house'. The chapter ends on the roof of David's palace, the spatial highpoint of Absalom's revolt, where Absalom went in to the concubines whom David had left 'to keep the house'. What happens on

high to David in the chapter—beyond the summit and upon the roof—are ironic lowpoints in his career: he is cursed by Shimei and dishonored by Absalom. Finally and perhaps most importantly, the chapter characterizes Shimei's cursing of David and Absalom's taking of David's concubines in much the same way: Shimei curses David because, David believes, the LORD said he should (vv. 10, 11); and Absalom humiliates David in the sight of all Israel because Ahithophel said he should. Since David and Absalom consider the counsel of Ahithophel equivalent to the word of God (v. 23), not just the cursing of David in the first half, but even his humiliation in the second, are believed to be happening at the LORD's behest.

We should not forget that the narrator earlier has David saying, 'O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness' (15.31). Yet now we hear that David considers this counsel to be 'as if one consulted the word of God' (16.23). Are we to understand that David hopes to turn the *word of God* into foolishness? At any rate, we know that David hopes, 'Perhaps the LORD will look upon my iniquity and repay me with good for this cursing of me today' (v. 12). If the structural juxtaposing of these two events in ch. 16 has any obvious authorial point, it may be that David's hope in the first part is supposed to be dashed by Absalom's act in the second. It is not just David and Absalom who equate Ahithophel's counsel to the word of God. The narrative also does this here in as obvious a manner as one could expect. We know that David's sin in 2 Samuel 11 provoked God to prophesy in 2 Samuel 12: 'Behold I will take your women before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your women *in the sight of the sun*' (v. 11). As countless readers have understood, Absalom's going in to his father's concubines *in the sight of all Israel* is an indication that Absalom's following of at least *this* counsel of Ahithophel is presented by the Deuteronomist as an obvious fulfilment of the word of God.

Besides this looking backward to the divine prophecy of 2 Samuel 12, the events in 2 Samuel 16 also refer to matters raised in 2 Samuel 9. There, David restored all of Saul's land to Mephibosheth, but here he returns it to Ziba. Further on, in 2 Samuel 19, David will again vary his position by halving the

property between Ziba and his master. Taken together, these three occasions help to characterize David in a less than favorable light. The kindness (*ḥesed*) David shows Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake in 2 Samuel 9 he now retracts in 2 Samuel 16—only to backtrack once more in 2 Samuel 19. Whether the LORD always shows steadfast love to his anointed, as David sings in 22.51, God's anointed is clearly inconstant in demonstrating *his ḥesed* to friend and foe alike.

Like 2 Samuel 15, 2 Samuel 16's continuing emphasis on synchrony within the first half of the chapter (through the use of imperfectives and *hinnēh*) may also help to formulate present aspects of the Deuteronomist's ideological perspectives. 2 Sam. 16.1-14 is filled with action that is presented by the narrator as if it were happening before our eyes, and represented by characters as if it were happening before theirs:

v. 1 Behold (*wᵉhinnēh*) Ziba to meet him (*liqrā'tô*) with a pair of asses saddled (*ḥᵃbušîm*).
v. 3 'Behold (*hinnēh*) [Mephibosheth] is residing (*yôšēb*) in Jerusalem' (Ziba to David).
v. 5 Behold (*wᵉhinnēh*) a man coming out (*yôṣē'*), and as he was coming out (*yōṣē' yāṣô'*) he was cursing (*ûmᵉqallēl*).
v. 8 'Look at you (*wᵉhinnēh*) in your ruin' (Shimei to David).
v. 11 'Behold (*hinnēh*) my son is seeking (*mᵉbaqqēš*) my life' (David to Abishai).
v. 13 And Shimei was going (*hōlēk*) along on the hillside opposite him, cursing and throwing stones (*hālôk wayᵉqallēl wayᵉsaqqēl*) and flinging dust (*wᵉ'ippar*).[22]

When the narrative leaves David's 'ongoing' procession and returns to events in Jerusalem in the second half of ch. 16, it reverts to the usual *retrospective* presentation of events: in vv. 15-23 the narrator no longer employs imperfective verb forms and *hinnēh*. It is as if we are meant to see what happens in David's procession in the wilderness as somehow *still going on before us*, whereas Absalom's machinations in royal Jerusalem

22. On the frequentative or imperfective aspect of these verbs in v. 13, see Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel*, p. 319, and McCarter, *II Samuel*, p. 369.

have happened, and represent a stable past, one that is in contrast to the highly mobile, ongoing or durative aspects of David's stylized and ritualized procession in the wilderness. The contrast—between Israel wandering in the wilderness, while David's kingship is being threatened (vv. 1-14), and Israel's residing in Jerusalem (vv. 15-23), where Hushai ambiguously says to Absalom, '"Long live the king! Long live the king!' (16.16)—may represent the Deuteronomist's own perspective on the *synchronic*, ongoing dimension of Israel in exile (with their king in question and their geographic instability emphasized) and the *retrospective* aspect of royal Jerusalem (with its spatial and temporal permanence over with and done for).

One final feature of 2 Samuel 16 continues a concern of 2 Samuel 15: a heavy emphasis on who-is-with-whom during the constitutional crisis inaugurated by Absalom's revolt.[23] The paronomastic implications of *'et* continue in this section, and one wonders whether the increased usage of *'et* within 2 Samuel 15–19 has hermeneutic significance as well.

Cursing and Counselling Kings

The heart of 2 Samuel 16 lies in the complex interaction of two related themes concerning the house of David. First, is the house of David really cursed, and if so, in what ways? And second, what role does the king's counsel play in the cursing of the king? Chapter 16's response to these two matters suggests that there is an intimate connection between the LORD's cursing of the king and the king's reliance on human counselors. So

23. *'et* meaning 'with' occurs proportionately more often in these two chapters (2 Sam. 15–16) taken individually than anywhere else in the book. *'et* occurs 10 times in the 37 verses of 2 Sam. 15 and 7 times in the 23 verses of 2 Sam. 16. On average in 2 Samuel, *'et*, 'with', occurs about only once every 13 verses in the book as a whole, but increases to once every 5.7 verses in 2 Sam. 15–19, and once every 3.5 verses in 2 Sam. 15–16. There are people *with* David in the wilderness (v. 14); Ahithophel is *with* Absalom in Jerusalem (v. 15). Absalom questions Hushai's loyalty *with* David by asking, 'Why did you not go *with* your friend?' (v. 17). Hushai ambiguously promises to remain *with* the chosen of God (is this David or Absalom?) (v. 18), and Ahithophel counsels Absalom to make himself odious *with* his father so that the hands of those who are *with* Absalom may be strengthened (v. 21).

Shimei's cursing of David in the first half of ch. 16 appropriately precedes Ahithophel's counselling of Absalom in the second half.

The significance of Shimei's cursing of David rests upon the affinity that curses and kings have within the larger narrative. The object of curses, whether uttered or actualized in the History, can be nations, tribes or individuals.[24] When the accursed is a nation, that nation is exclusively Israel—most often the entire nation, but in 2 Sam. 19.44 the northern tribes alone. However, when the accursed are individuals, these unfortunates are almost always *royal figures*—and David turns out to be the History's favorite king to curse.

The narrative scope of Shimei's cursing of David, and its significance within the larger account of Absalom's revolt, is best seen against the backdrop of the History, which establishes an intimate connection between the cursing of individuals and the curse of kingship. Whether the individual instances combining kings and curses are explicit or not, in most cases accursed individuals are narrative stand-ins for the cursing of a nation.

Look first at the History's practice. The Deuteronomist's favorite objects of curses, *even before the onset of Israel's royal revolt in 1 Samuel 8*, are kings or those individuals who support them. Given the exquisite care with which the History has been fashioned, it is highly significant that the first person actually cursed through the use of a form of the root *qll* (to curse) is Abimelech, Israel's upstart king in the book of Judges: 'And [the men of Shechem] went out into the field, and gathered the grapes from their vineyards, and trod them, and held festival, and went to the house of their god, and ate and drank and cursed (*wayqal^{e}lû*) Abimelech' (Judg. 9.27). Later in this chapter, the narrator has God fulfilling the curse of Jotham upon the men of Shechem themselves because of their original support of Abimelech as king: 'And God also made all the wickedness of the men of Shechem fall back upon their heads, and upon them came the curse (*qil^{a}lat*) of Jotham, the son of Jerubbaal' (Judg. 9.57).

If kings are easy to curse, the History shows that David, of all

24. For nations, see Deut. 11.26, 28, 29; 23.5, 6; 27.13; 28.15, 45; 29.26; 30.1, 19; Josh. 8.34; 24.9; 2 Kgs 22.19. For tribes, see 2 Sam. 19.44. And for individuals, see Deut. 21.23; Judg. 9.27, 57; 1 Sam. 2.30; 3.13; 7.43; 2 Sam. 6.22; 16.5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13; 19.22; 1 Kgs 2.8; 2 Kgs 2.24.

Israel's kings, is the easiest one of all. No sooner is David anointed king in 1 Samuel 16, than Goliath curses him, 'And the Philistine cursed David by his gods' (1 Sam. 17.43). When David brings the ark of the LORD to Jerusalem in triumph, Michal's reproach provokes him to respond, 'I shall make myself even more accursed than this (*ûn^{e}qallōtî 'ôd mizzō't*)' (2 Sam. 6.22). From then on in 2 Samuel, attention to cursing focuses exclusively upon Shimei's cursing of David (2 Sam. 16.5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13; 19.21). In his confrontation with Shimei, as with Michal in 2 Samuel 6, David gives what appears to be something like an authorial interpretation of such cursing. David rebukes Abishai, 'Let [Shimei] alone, and let him curse; for the LORD has bidden him' (2 Sam. 16.11).[25] Clearly, David is no longer the man after God's own heart.[26]

The History's practice of presenting kings as special objects of God's curse, therefore, suggests that the story of Shimei is significant in terms of the authorial perspectives refracted within it. David's statements to Abishai ('If he is cursing because the LORD has said to him, "Curse David", who then shall say, "Why have you done so?" Let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD has commanded him') and David's hopes for the curse's reversal ('It may be that the LORD will look upon my iniquity, and will repay me with good for this cursing of me today' [16.10-12]) are striking. If the accursed himself admits that such cursing is from God, and if the substance of the curse is that 'the LORD has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom' (16.8), then the understandable failure of Absalom to maintain his throne while he hangs from an oak would appear to corroborate David's prescience on both counts: David indeed

25. The boys who jeer Elisha, and are roundly cursed by him in 2 Kgs 2.24, are the only non-royal figures cursed in the History with the language of *qll*. The only other accursed characters in the History whom I have not yet mentioned are Eli's sons, whom God curses in 1 Sam. 2.30, and whom the narrator accuses of cursing God in 1 Sam. 3.13. See *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, pp. 44-54 for my discussion of the royal dimensions of the cursing found in 1 Sam. 2 and 3.

26. In the execution of Absalom in ch. 18, the question of royal curses, especially as they are *indirectly* indicated in the story, once more becomes central to the story.

is cursed by God, but that does not mean that Absalom will not get cursed in turn.

We see that God's curse upon David differs from that imposed upon Saul. The cursing of David is like the cursing of his house: both involve the *continued existence* of the accursed. Yet within the house of David, the fates of father and son differ: the curse of Absalom involves hanging from a tree; God's particular curse for David, however, requires returning him to the throne.

Since the king, precisely as *royal head* of his people (1 Sam. 15.17; 2 Sam. 22.44), is a special carrier of the divine curse, it is ironically appropriate that the *character zone* of kings within the History is so often filled with heady violence and bloody heads. In fact, the characters within the History whose heads are bloodied or violently handled form something like an exclusive company of the royally damned—those who are unfortunate enough to get too close to the *character zone* of kings. Here is a listing of everyone in the History who literally suffers some kind of capital misfortune.

To be mentioned first are all those whose heads are somehow bloodied (*rō'š* plus *dām*) in the History:

1. The Amalekite who claimed to have slain Saul is executed by David with the words, 'Your blood be upon your head' (2 Sam. 1.16).
2. Joab is executed by Benaiah following Solomon's words to the executioner, 'The LORD will bring back [Joab's] bloody deeds upon his own head. So shall their blood come upon the head of Joab and upon the head of his descendants forever' (1 Kgs 2.32-33).
3. Shimei is executed by Solomon following these words, 'For on the day you go forth, and cross the brook Kidron, know for certain that you shall die; your blood shall be upon your own head' (1 Kgs 2.37).[27]

Next comes the procession of those in the History who suffer terminal violence to the head, whether by seizing, crushing, piercing, hanging, strangling or beheading.

27. Blood is called down upon the heads of God's enemies in Deut. 32.42, and upon those who go against the promise of Joshua's spies in Josh. 2.19, but these threats receive no narrative fulfilment in the story.

1. Sisera, the general of Jabin, king of Canaan (Judg. 4.2), dies at the hand of Jael: 'She struck Sisera a blow, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple' (Judg. 5.26).
2. Abimelech, the upstart king in Israel, dies after 'a certain woman threw an upper millstone upon Abimelech's head, and crushed his skull' (Judg. 9.53).
3. Goliath is beheaded by the newly anointed David (1 Sam. 17.51).
4. Saul is beheaded by the Philistines (1 Sam. 31.9).
5. The 24 Israelites at the pool of Gibeon act out the conflict between the royal houses of Saul and David by seizing one another's heads and killing each other (2 Sam. 2.16).
6. Ishbosheth is beheaded by the sons of Rimmon (2 Sam. 4.7).
7. The sons of Rimmon are executed by David, and hung beside the pool at Hebron (2 Sam. 4.12).
8. Ahithophel commits suicide by hanging himself, because Absalom did not follow the royal counsel (2 Sam. 17.23).
9. Absalom is executed while hanging by his head from a tree (2 Sam. 18.9, 10, 15).
10. Sheba is beheaded by the townspeople of Abel, with his head thrown over the wall to Joab (2 Sam. 20.22).
11. The seventy sons of Ahab have their heads cut off, put in baskets, and sent to Jehu at Jezreel.

It takes little imagination to see that there is a notable affinity, in the History, between the character zone of *royal* heads of nations, on the one hand, and the graphic language of doing bloody or terminal violence to anyone having the misfortune to come too close to these heads, on the other. Whatever the particular mix of unconscious mindset and esthetic motivation lying behind these dangerous linkages of physical and royal heads may be, the widespread tendency in the History to write of bloody heads and capital violence within an almost exclusively royal context argues for a good deal of conscious literary deliberation, else we would find such violences occurring more often in stories that do not have a royal cast to them. It is almost as if Moses' principle about the punishment fitting the crime—'If any harm

follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe' (Exod. 21.23-24)—is taken over and given a literary application and a narrative form: Israel's capital crime is to have chosen a king to be their head (1 Sam. 15.17); their punishment now is *head for head*. There is a special connection between curses and kings, insofar as heady violence pertains particularly to the *character zone* of royal heads of nations.

This tendency in the History for royal overkill helps to explain why the story of Absalom's revolt is not a simplistic account of the eventual victory of those in the right over those in the wrong, but rather a complex and nuanced story of the doomed struggles of those whose lives are touched by the cursed sphere of kings. Almost all the characters in ch. 16 follow this rule about the dangers of getting too close to kings. Mephibosheth is sadly mistaken if he indeed said, 'Today the house of Israel will return the kingdom to me' (16.3). Ziba may receive all of his master's land, but he soon will lose half of it through David's caprice in ch. 19. Shimei's reward for cursing David, apparently at the LORD's behest, will be execution at Solomon's command. And finally, Ahithophel and Absalom, in chs. 17 and 18, will suffer the LORD's special curse by hanging.

The second half of ch. 16 (vv. 15-23) concerns the counsel of Ahithophel, and adds a second reason why the *character zone* of kings is so fraught with danger. If cursing the king eventually brings death to Shimei, counselling the king will do the same for Ahithophel. What is there about the counselling (*yā'aṣ*) of kings that connects it to the cursing of kings? Chapter 16 provides us with the beginning of an answer. Simply put, when royalty equates such counsel to consulting the oracle of God, as David and Absalom do in 16.23, then the counsel of kings, like kingship itself, is a threat to the rule of Yahweh.[28]

28. 'To counsel' (*yā'aṣ*) appears at least 34 times in the History (either in nominal or verbal form), and fully 31 of these 34 occurrences explicitly concern the giving of advice to or about kings. Most of this royal counsel (27 of 31 occurrences) is found in 2 Sam. 15–17, where Absalom does not follow Ahithophel's counsel and loses the throne he seized from David, and in 1 Kgs 12, where Rehoboam refuses to follow his elders' advice and loses the 10 northern tribes.

We learn from the two instances in the History where kings seek advice from royal counselors—Absalom in 2 Samuel 15–17, and Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12—that it is dangerous or risky for *kings to seek counsel*. In the story of Absalom's revolt, 'the LORD had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, so that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom' (2 Sam. 17.14). When forced to decide between the counsel of Hushai and that of Ahithophel, Absalom unfortunately chooses Hushai's, and loses the kingdom. Similarly, when faced with the conflicting counsel of his elders and young men, Rehoboam 'forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men' (1 Kgs 12.8)—and lost the northern kingdom.

Moreover, the History makes it clear that the danger of seeking counsel in a royal context rests upon the practice's opposition to more theocratic means of seeking advice. If prophetic inquiry constitutes a divinely ordained check upon unrestrained royal rule, then the introduction of 'the king's counselor' would appear to be a royal attempt to restrict the power of the prophet within the court.[29] When the narrator informs us that 'in those days the counsel which Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the oracle of God; so was all the counsel of Ahithophel esteemed, both by David and by Absalom' (2 Sam. 16.23), then reveals to us that 'the LORD had ordained to defeat the *good counsel* of Ahithophel' (2 Sam. 17.14), and finally shows us this rejected counselor going home to hang himself (2 Sam. 17.23), the lesson is abundantly clear:

There are two passages that variously compare royal counsel to other kinds of royal consultation. In 2 Sam. 16.23, the narrator has David and Absalom equate the counsel of Ahithophel 'in those days' to the oracle of God, and during Hezekiah's reign, the story has the King of Assyria talking about Hezekiah's supposedly disastrous *counsel* in 2 Kgs 18.20, but the sequel contrasts this characterization with Isaiah's conveying of the (correct) *word of God* to Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 19. Clearly, *giving counsel* in the History is predominantly a *royal affair* (as in 2 Sam. 15–17; 1 Kgs 1.12; 12; 2 Kgs 6.8; 18.20), but not always (see Deut. 32.28; Judg. 19.30; 20.7).

29. See my discussion in *Samuel and the Deuteronomist*, pp. 99-100. Another attempt to limit the restrictions of the prophet would be to set up the royal prophets one against the other, as recounted in 1 Kgs 22.

whether good or bad, wise or foolish, merely human advice lacks the providential status and epistemological guarantees that result from seeking out or inquiring of the LORD.[30]

30. We also see in the History that inquiring of the LORD/God typically involves seeking out a prophet ('Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, "Come, let us go to the seer"; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer' [1 Sam. 9.9]) or priest (1 Sam. 14.36-37), whether in the presence of the LORD's ark (Judg. 20.27) or ephod (1 Sam. 30.7-8). If both David and his son consider their counsellor's advice like an inquiry of God, then it may be helpful to see how these two royal means of consultation, the one human the other divine, are distributed throughout 1–2 Samuel during the reigns of Saul's and David's houses.

SURVIVING WRITING: THE ANXIETY OF HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE FORMER PROPHETS

Hugh S. Pyper

> In my opinion, the reader of a mystery is the only real survivor of the mystery he is reading, unles it is as the one real survivor that every reader reads every story (Saramago 1992: 12).

Why is it that in the great corpus of writings that we know as the Former Prophets there is so little reference to the process of writing itself? Given the multiplicity of references to messengers and messages, it is surprising to say the least that there are only five incidents in all the books from Judges to 2 Kings which involve a character in the act of writing. The fact that writing is mentioned at all makes it clear that it is available as a motif to the writers of these texts.

So why the reticence? One might intuitively expect that those who committed Israel's traditions to writing themselves would have a bias in favour of the process, and would, if anything, be inclined to overestimate its importance and its use in the wider population, and in earlier periods.

Something of the sort indeed has been suggested as the explanation for the case in Judg. 8.14, where a young man is captured and forced to *write down* the names of the leading men of Succoth. This is the only occurrence of the verb *ktb* 'to write' in the book of Judges, and it has occasioned more heat than light in the attempt to discover the level of literacy in ancient Israel.[1]

1. Does it indicate a widespread ability to write in the population at the time of Gideon, or is it a later retrojection of writing by the literate compilers of these traditions? Such an enquiry makes assumptions about the historicity of the text that are far from our concerns here, but which render the whole argument rather suspect. By an equally questionable inversion, this form of argument has been used to claim that the passage cannot be

The very singularity of this incident, however, makes the point. Why should the act of writing be mentioned explicitly just here? Whatever the historical situation that this passage reflects, if indeed it reflects any, what impels the reference to the act of writing?

The thesis which this study will seek to explore is that this repression of writing is tied to a wider anxiety, what we might call an anxiety of utterance. It centres on the paradox of survival. In the face of inevitable death, the individual can survive only through an act of utterance, either through the production of a text, or through begetting a child. Yet the corollary of this is that any such act of utterance carries with it the odour of death. The child or the text that bears our survival is also the sign of our death; our successor is our rival and our supplanter. Yet we in our turn by the fact of our existence testify to the death of those to whom we owe the debt of life, those who preceded and begot us. This leads to an ambivalence and to a repressed violence which we shall call on Freudian insights to illuminate. Such ambivalence has profound implications for the relation between the text and the reader, a relationship that in the case of the Former Prophets has been of exceptional scope, endurance and impact, spanning millennia and a vast range of interpretative communities. Our starting point, however, will be the small manifest symptom we have identified, the paucity of explicit mention of writing in these texts.

read as a scene of writing. See the note added by S.A. Hopkins to G.R. Driver's mention of this incident in his *Semitic Writing*: 'That any ordinary boy, met by chance on a journey, can have been able to write at such an early date is improbable; that he can have had the necessary tools with him and that Gideon can have had time to wait while he slowly painted on a sherd or engraved on a piece of stone, already prepared for the purpose, a list of 77 names is equally improbable. Why will he have needed to write and not recite them (Jud 8.14)?...Surely כתב "wrote" must in such contexts have had its primitive sense of "pricked, scratched, i.e. ticked off" e.g. the numbers on a piece of wood or stone to check them as he counted them' (Driver 1976: 242).

Writing in the Former Prophets

We will look in vain for a theoretical discussion of the nature of writing in these texts. What we can do is examine the other episodes where characters write, where there is a *mise en abyme* of the process of the production of texts. Such episodes allow the invisible process of writing which is the *sine qua non* of the existence of the texts to break surface, as it were. This may lead us to look again at the implications of the writtenness of the texts in which these embedded scenes of writing occur. What do these texts reveal of the conscious and unconscious reactions to the process of writing among those in Israel who took the momentous step of producing this unique written monument to their nation's past?

Such an examination reveals that the episode in Judges exemplifies a consistent pattern in the Former Prophets in which writing is linked with violence and death. The boy writes, if that is what he does, under duress, and Gideon uses the information to take the elders of Succoth and, as the RSV puts it, 'teach' them with thorns of the wilderness and briers (Judg. 8.16). Both the act of writing and its consequences involve violence.

A brief review of the few other incidents where writing is explicitly involved is enough to demonstrate this consistent association.[2] In 2 Sam. 11.14-15, we have the repeated insistence that David himself writes the letter that he sends with Uriah, who carries it as his own death sentence to Joab. The only other occasion when David's name is connected with writing is his instruction in 2 Sam. 1.17 that his elegy for Saul and Jonathan should be recorded—and the connection with death there need hardly be stressed.

1 Kgs 21.8-9 records Jezebel's letters to the elders of Jezreel, which instruct them to arrange for the fatal denunciation of Naboth. And in 2 Kings 10, Jehu sends two letters to the elders

2. This link is made by Nielsen (1954: 45), who in the course of examining the references to writing throughout the Old Testament turns to the matter of private letter writing and remarks that 'the known instances are all of a distinctly macabre nature'. Why this should be he does not discuss.

of Samaria who are harbouring Ahab's sons, the second of which is a direct command to bring the heads of these sons to him at Jezreel. The elders duly comply.

Every episode where a character explicitly writes in the Former Prophets involves the threat of death. This is borne out by the way in which the recipients of even ostensibly innocuous letters respond to them. Characters as readers react to writing as the harbinger of death. The most telling example of this is 2 Kgs 5.6-7. The king of Syria sends an innocuous letter to the king of Israel which reads: 'When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent you Naaman my servant that you might cure him of leprosy'. What is the king's reaction? 'And when the king of Israel read the letter, he rent his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me."' Death does in fact overshadow the occasion of this writing, which embodies the attempt to save Naaman from the lingering decay of leprosy. The recipient, however, reads it as a threat to his own existence.

In 2 Kings 10, Jehu's letter is also on the face of it quite innocuous. He writes ostensibly to invite the elders of Samaria to appoint one of Ahab's sons as king. Their reaction contains an element of paradox: 'We are your servants, and we will do all that you bid us. We will not make any one king; do whatever is good in your eyes'(2 Kgs 10.5). The one thing Jehu has instructed them to do, however, is precisely to make someone king. They are obeying him by disobeying him. It is the threatening power of the written word that induces their anxiety and their realization of the ironic import of his request that is borne out in the brutal directness of his second letter.

Such anxiety is also seen in the crucial episode of the rediscovery of the book of the law in 2 Kings 22. This leads to utter consternation and a great display of mourning on the part of king and people. By far the largest category of references to writing, however, is the oddity of the repeated appeal in the books of Kings to other written sources, almost always couched in the form of a question: 'Is this not written in...?' It is almost as if the claim of these texts is being evoked only to be repressed. They exist in the half-world of the interrogative. The

reader, especially the modern reader, to whom these books are lost, is left with a sense of deprivation. All we know of these books is their absence, the fact of their loss of which we only become conscious through this reminder.[3]

Paradoxically, the very physicality that gives a text its possibility of endurance is also the point at which it can be assailed. An oral account cannot be obliterated in the same way, simply because it has no 'body' to be destroyed. Books may be burnt, but oral narrative is much more difficult to suppress. Only a written text can be lost. The possibility of its survival serves as a reminder that the threat of destruction is ever present.

Writing and Death

The association between writing and death is discussed by Walter Ong (1977). Writing, so he argues, entails death in two aspects. It makes the continued life of its author irrelevant, so he or she is 'as good as dead' (1977: 235), but its own ability to outlast its author comes at the price of a fixity, a 'death' of the language that it contains. This death, however, is also freedom, as Paul Ricoeur would have it. By becoming detached from its context and from its author, writing becomes open to reinterpretation,

3. In her recent article, 'Joseph's Bones and the Resurrection of the Text: Remembering in the Bible', Regina Schwartz discusses the relationship between remembering and forgetting in the biblical text, and especially in its 'scenes of writing'. Loss and destruction leading to rewriting attend these incidents. The book of the law is lost and rediscovered (2 Kgs 22–23); Jeremiah's scroll is burnt and rewritten (Jer. 36); the tablets of the law are smashed and reinscribed. See also the recent article by Conrad (1992), who urges the *rhetorical* importance of the mention of 'books' in the Old Testament, and the danger of anachronistic assumptions engendered by the translation of *sefer* as 'book' rather than 'letter' or 'document'. He concludes his study as follows: 'In summary, then, books in OT are for the *ear*, not for the eye of the silent reader; unlike the proverbial child, they should be heard and not seen. Furthermore, when the OT mentions 'books that are lost for the reader, it is not referring to 'books' 'out there' in the world external to the text, but to books that the implied audience is encouraged to remember and recreate by the only means available—the 'book' they are hearing in the present whose narrator (represented by the one reading it aloud) gains authority as the one who has known more than the audience can ever know' (1992: 59).

to survival in new contexts. In his essay, 'Phenomenology and the Theory of Literature', Ricoeur writes:

> Primarily, through writing, the discourse slips away from the speaker, since writing has the power to preserve the discourse after the destruction and disappearance of the speaker. So there is an autonomy of text in relationship to the occurrence of the discourse, which is at its origin and enables the text to have a destiny distinct from that of its author. The writer dies, but the text pursues its career, continues and produces its effects from time to time, which is vaster than the time of a human life. Therefore, if we go back to this triangular relationship, in regard to the author of the discourse, the text frees itself from the boundary of the history of its production and survives the occurrence of speech (1991: 442).

But the very fact that writers need to write to ensure their survival, and know that the text may survive them, itself acts as a reminder of the inevitability of their death.

Quite apart from the effect on the author and on the language of the text, Ong also refers to the very real sense of threat that the encounter with writing may bring to its potential readers. Writing, seen as the key to culture by the literate, can also be seen as the death of oral culture, of memory and of immediate communication.[4] On the one hand, there are those such as Eric Havelock who see the introduction of alphabetic writing in ancient Greece as the necessary condition of the revolution in human consciousness that underlay that culture's unparallelled philosophical and scientific sophistication (1986: 98-116).[5] On the

4. 'Those reared in a highly literate culture, where literate habits of thought are acquired shortly after infancy, commonly have little if any memory of entry into writing as a cutting loose from oral thought processes, as a kind of death. For those dominated through adolescence by the functional orality of subcultures in our American cities or some of our rural districts, the situation is quite different. They feel writing as a threat, a destruction of their psychic world, however desirable writing may be' (Ong 1977: 237). The classic expression of this distrust of writing is Plato's *Phaedrus*.

5. This view is not uncontroversial. Havelock is following a line that derives from the classic article by Goody and Watt (1968). For another view, which sees literacy as an aspect, but not a cause, of this intellectual revolution, see Street 1984; a summary of the issues of this debate is to be

other hand, a writer such as Claude Lévi-Strauss records with sorrow the introduction of all the malaise of Western civilization into the lives of a primitive people when they are first exposed to the technology of writing (1961).

In *Tristes tropiques*, he recounts an incident where the leader of the Nambikwara people grasps the significance of writing as an act. He asks for a note pad and traces wavy lines on the page in imitation of Lévi-Strauss's note-taking. He then proceeds to read out to Lévi-Strauss this 'list' of objects to be distributed to his people. As Lévi-Strauss sees it, he has understood the social function of writing, which is to mark out relations of power, to mark a difference between those who have the ability or authority to write and those who do not. Writing becomes an élite means of communication which confers power on those who possess the secret, a power that becomes the legitimation of violence and oppression. Lévi-Strauss offers this hypothesis: 'the primary function of writing, as a means of communication, is to facilitate the enslavement of other human beings' (1961: 292).

Lévi-Strauss's position is subjected to a detailed criticism by Jacques Derrida in a section of his *Of Grammatology* entitled, significantly, 'The Violence of the Letter' (Derrida 1976). Derrida has gained notoriety for his championship of writing in the face of the 'logocentric' bias of Western culture. In this case, he argues that the swiftness with which the Nambikwara chief adopted the technology of writing suggests that what he calls 'writing in the narrow sense', i.e. inscribing visual signs on a substrate, is a manifestation of something that was already at work in Nambikwara culture, long before Lévi-Strauss and his notebook arrived. This he calls 'arche-writing'. Lévi-Strauss's sense of guilt as a bringer of corruption depends on the Rousseauesque fiction of the innocent savage, of a culture without violence built on the immediacy of oral communication, of the possibility of presence. On the contrary, at the heart of all human culture and language in Derrida's world is what he calls *différance*, the artificial compound of 'difference' and 'deferral' that sidesteps any claim to certainty and presence. The

found in Ong 1988: 78-116. In ancient Israel, the situation is complicated by the debate over whether the Semitic alphabet is a true alphabet or a syllabary (see Havelock 1986: 100; Ong 1988: 89-91).

technology of 'writing in the narrow sense' merely expresses this tension, this absence, this ceaseless slippage.

Neither Havelock nor Lévi-Strauss gets to the heart of the matter in their attempt to find some causal connection between writing and culture as Derrida would have it. 'Writing in the narrow sense' expresses rather than creates the conditions of human interaction. This leaves us with the question of what leads to the manifestation of this technology; why does 'arche-writing' display itself as 'writing in the narrow sense'? In the concrete terms of our discussion, what leads Israel to embody its own history and origins in the unique series of texts which now comprise the Former Prophets?

Derrida himself connects the birth of 'writing in the narrow sense' to a condition of anxiety: *genealogical* anxiety, the anxiety about one's place in the social and familial world. 'The genealogical relation and social classification are the stitched seam of arche-writing, condition of the (so-called oral) language, and of writing in the colloquial sense' (1976: 125).

The Anxiety of Genealogy

Genealogical anxiety has two aspects, depending on whether we see it from the point of view of the parent or the child. For the parent, the anxiety reflects the knowledge that there can be no 'conscious begetting', as Joyce's Stephen Daedalus puts it.[6] The biblical text is full of fathers who cannot engender the heirs they, or their wives, seek because of the exigencies of the reproductive process. Their position can be summed up in the words of Jacob in response to Rachel's plea for sons: 'Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the

6. 'Fatherhood in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical state, an apostolic succession from only begetter to only begotten. On that mystery and not on the madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro- and microcosm, upon the void. Upon uncertitude, upon unlikelihood. *Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction. Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son?' (Joyce 1961: 207).

womb?' (Gen 30.1-2). No man can ensure that he fathers a child merely by so willing. David's unlooked-for child by Bathsheba represents the other side of the same coin; fatherhood may be unwilled.

The reciprocal anxiety of the child finds its expression in that oddest of biblical questions, Saul's enquiry as to whose son the young man who has killed Goliath may be (1 Sam. 17.55-58). To know the name of one's father[7] is to know one's place in the social order of Israel. The importance of the father as against the mother in this reflects the old legal tag, *pater semper incertus est, mater certissima* (paternity is always uncertain, maternity is most certain).[8] There is an uncertainty about the relationship

7. The concept of the 'Name-of-the-Father' is also a central reference point in Jacques Lacan's theory of symbolization, not something susceptible to easy summary. Lacan himself acknowledges its origins in the return of the dead father in *Totem and Taboo* (1977: 199). The conjunction of fatherhood and death in Lacan's thought gives rise to the insight that both of these states can only be known through the agency of the signifier.

Though Lacan does not specifically indicate this, the common factor for both states is *absence*. Both the father and the dead are lost to the present, the father through the gap between copulation and the emergence of the faculty of recognition in the child. Just as the child can have no knowledge of those who die before its birth without the facility of symbolization and language, the ability to make the imaginative leap to assimilate what can only be told to him or her by others, to acknowledge the father as progenitor demands the same faculty.

The Name-of-the-Father becomes the essential anchor point for language, and for the speaking subject itself. The child is located socially by relation to the father and the bearing of his name, notably so in the Hebrew Bible. Not only that, however, the child is located as a speaking subject by the access to the metaphoric process that the recognition of the father brings. Recognizing one's father is the paradigm case for recognizing one's place in the biological, social and linguistic networks of exchange that constitute network of relations designating the self. The father is seen as the origin of law, of authority, with, in Lacan's account, the same possibilities for destruction and creation that we have seen any form of repression can engender (see Lacan 1977: 179-225).

8. Quoted in Freud 1909: 223. Freud in this essay refers to the fantasies that children have of being the unacknowledged offspring of the rich and famous, perhaps something to be set against the fantasies that parents have of their children succeeding in becoming what the parents failed to be (see the discussion of the work of Leclaire and Gunn below).

between father and child that does not exist in the case of the mother, an uncertainty intrinsic in the delay between copulation and child-birth, and the hiddenness of the process of development. The male can only have direct knowledge of the moment of ejaculation and of birth, not of the moment of conception. The consequences of this sense of the uncertainty inherent in fatherhood are profound.

The parallels between this and the uncertainties in the process of communication are the key to our discussion here. Fatherhood in the Hebrew Bible is initiated by an irrevocable act of utterance, of outpouring of seed, which is then consigned to the body of the woman, and whose subsequent fate it is not in the power of the father to determine. Writing too is an act of utterance, and irrevocable commitment of particular signs to the physical form of the document, whose subsequent fate and interpretative history are no longer in the power of its author to determine, for good or ill. The two aspects come together in the story of 2 Samuel 11, in which David writes the fatal letter to Joab that arranges for its bearer's death.

David's secret moment of lust will be literally brought to light in the embodiment of Bathsheba's child. A night of passion can be forgotten; a child must be lost or destroyed. A child is an exposed secret, which can be read and interpreted by those around. The child is the sign of sexual congress, the clue that leads to whispering about what went before. Like a text, the child is the visible, tangible evidence of a secret moment of creation and of utterance.[9]

In the text of 2 Samuel 11, David's secret letter is exposed to the reader's gaze. It is at once secret and vulnerable. The reader of the biblical text is put in the position of reading his secret document 'for Joab's eyes only'. How do we come to see it? Is what we are reading a transcript of a document that Joab preserved and somehow fell into the hands of those who wrote

9. Ricoeur remarks, 'A text opens up an audience, which is unlimited, while the relationship of dialogue is a closed relationship. The text is open to whoever knows how to read, and whose potential reader is everyone' (1991: 442). Writing is at once secret and open: secret in that it is incomprehensible to those who cannot read, open in that those who can read need no other permission to read it.

whatever version of the story eventually found its way into our present text? Is it a reconstruction? Is it in fact a literary device, originating not with David but with the teller of David's story? Is it merely a coincidence that the only reference to writing in the *Iliad* is also to a letter which commands the death of its bearer?[10]

The text provides no answers to these questions. What is clear is that the one piece of writing that is unequivocally attributed to David in the text that inscribes the rise and final death of his dynasty's rule over Israel is the shamefully exposed secret, intended 'for Joab's eyes only', of his attempt to repress the knowledge of his paternity. The consequence of this escapade is the birth and subsequent death of the child born to David. The prophet Nathan makes it clear that the child dies in some sense in David's stead (2 Sam. 12.13-14).

David's reaction to the child's illness is sufficiently unusual to be the subject of comment by his servants. While the child is dying he mourns and fasts. On receiving the news of his death, he gets up and dresses himself and eats. When he is challenged, his response is enigmatic: 'While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, "Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me"' (2 Sam. 12.22-23). This speech has provoked contradictory reactions in commentators. Is this the highest degree of spiritual resignation and wisdom, or is it the cynical response of a man who has got off with his own life?

10. *Iliad* 6.167ff. Bellerophontes is sent off by king Proitos to the king of Lycea with a tablet that instructs his death. This is done at the instigation of Proitos's wife Anteia, who had failed in an attempt to seduce Bellerophon. In his comment on Rousseau's dismissal of this episode as a later interpolation, Derrida draws attention to the fact that 'the only piece of writing in Homer was a letter of death' (Derrida 1976: 349). Not only that, but there is a sexual motivation as well. In the light of our subsequent discussion, this observation may be of some significance. Why should the two great bodies of ancient literature that the eastern Mediterranean has bequeathed to us both contain such a story as one of the few references to writing? The fact that the motif of the messenger who bears his own death sentence is known in other folk-literatures could indicate that it reflects some deep-rooted anxiety (see Gunkel 1984: 15).

Again the text gives no answer, and indeed goes out of its way to emphasize the ambivalence of the situation. The reactions of commentators may reveal more about their own anxieties than about the text. Yet there is an underlying ambivalence here in terms of the survival of the father at the expense of the son. Whose death does David truly desire—his own or his son's?

Son as Heir/Son as Rival

The complex dynamics of father–son relations in a biblical text have recently been explored by Devorah Steinmetz (1991). She begins with an overview of the attempts to relate psychoanalytic theory to the social anthropological study of kinship relations in various societies. She summarizes the ambivalence of the relation of father to son as follows:

> Fathers live on through their sons, passing down together with physical substance, possessions, ideals and customs. Whatever the father has accomplished will die with him if he has no son to take over. It is here that the ambivalence lies. As an extension of the father, the son ensures his immortality, yet as successor, the son usurps his place—he can continue for his father only on his father's death.
>
> To the father then, the son represents both the ultimate promise and the ultimate threat, immortality and death, and the father responds both by claiming the son and by rejecting him, in being torn between nurturing and killing him (1991: 21).

For the son, too, the father represents both promise and threat. The father has engendered the position that the son will inherit, but is also the obstacle to his achieving that position. How much more is this true in the situation of a hereditary monarchy, where questions of political power are overlaid on this already fraught structure of compromise between father and son.

Every episode of writing that we have looked at in the former prophets displays exactly this anxiety. On each occasion it is an issue over inheritance that prompts both the violence and the writing. This is obvious in the case of David and Uriah, where the paternity of Bathsheba's child is the problem, but the same holds true of the other incidents we have explored. Jehu is concerned to cut off the threat to his rule posed by the legitimate heirs of the king against whom he has rebelled. His

purpose is to eradicate all the sons of Ahab who might revenge themselves upon him for the murder of Joram and who might use the argument of heredity to regain the throne. His letters result in the deaths of Ahab's seventy sons and all his former retainers.

It is a problem caused by the implications of inheritance that, in turn, gives Jezebel the motive to write. The reason Naboth gives for refusing to sell Ahab his land is that it is 'the inheritance of my fathers' (1 Kgs 21.3).[11] Jezebel seeks to override that customary right in this case, but, by doing so, could be seen as undermining a fundamental pillar of Israel's social organization, coherence and continuity. Even the episode in Judges 8 is part of the story of Gideon's vengeance on the murderers of his brothers. Writing, death and genealogy seem inextricably linked in these books of the Hebrew Bible, linked by the ambivalence of the need to risk the vulnerability of utterance, sexual or linguistic, in order to ensure survival. This ambivalence is manifested in the attitude of parents to children, and of writers to texts, of children to parents, and of readers to authors. It is also manifested in the attitude of a community to its history, the history that gave rise to it, and the history it propounds.

Fathers and Sons/Readers and Texts

The violence implicated in the ambiguous attitude of parents to children is explored by Daniel Gunn (1988). He draws on the writings of Serge Leclaire (1975), in which he describes the necessity for each of us 'to kill a child'. In each of us, there is a fight to the death between the real child and the 'marvellous child', the fantasy child who is compounded out of the long-suppressed narcissism of the parents. If this child is not killed, then the real child is doomed to a life of unreality. Yet the parents seek to resurrect in their child the child that died in their own early lives. In doing so, they evince an unconscious hostility to the

11. We might note here that Jehu represents himself as the avenger of the death of Naboth when he orders that Joram's body be cast on Naboth's plot in accordance with a divine oracle (2 Kgs 9.25-26). He thus respects the rights of inheritance in the middle of his revolt against the hereditary monarch.

concrete limitations and potentials of their real child. What is needed is the conscious choice to repudiate the fantasy in order to ensure the survival of the child, at the price of affirming the death of that fantasic child in the parents. Yet Leclaire urges the need for this child to be mourned repeatedly. 'Whoever does not mourn and mourn repeatedly the marvellous child he would have been, remains in limbo, in a milky light shed by a hopeless state of waiting that casts no shadow' (1975: 12).

Gunn himself relates the necessity of this choice to the anxiety of writing. In order to achieve any writing, the 'marvellous book' must be killed, the book that will end all books, that will have the final word.

> Only in the acceptance of the partiality and awful finality of words, and from the ashes of the narcissistic fantasy of universality, can writing emerge which will leave a place not for all readers but for any single reader and this individual reader's desire (1988: 46).

Writing involves the choice of one set of words among infinite possibilities, one narrative structure among infinite structures. Writing history demands the choice of one past among many possible pasts. In Gunn's words,

> Poets utter, writers write and as a consequence readers read, as it were backwards...The present tense of literary production is constantly a return to a worrying beginning which is itself inferred from the traces of death, completion and fulfilment. Ending seems to be written into narratives by the very ambivalence of the fact of telling, when telling is founded in the need to tell, and the suppression of the infinite possibilities which any particular telling necessitates (1988: 123-24).

Yet it must also involve a mourning for the past that has been killed, the ideal past that has perished in the compromises and failures of the present and whose monument is the written history—a monument both in the sense of a marker of death, but also as a reminder, which becomes the possible dream of the future.

The fascination of the Former Prophets is that they display a dizzying synthesis of content, form and expression in regard to this fundamental anxiety. Their subject matter is the growth and decline of the hereditary monarchy, the familial metonym for the

community. Here political and sexual tensions are not just related, but become fused. Absalom, for instance, rebels against both his father and his king. Yet the text that records this itself arises out of the genealogical anxieties of the community. It reaches its final form in the anxieties of the exile, among a community that seeks both to establish its continuity with its past and yet to reject it, to remember and forget, to mourn the fact that the ideal was never realized and to use that ideal to ensure the survival of the real community.[12]

Regina Schwartz (1990: 47-49) argues that this dialogue between memory and forgetting resembles the relationship of repression and interpretation as expounded by Freud in his *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Her point is that these two apparently contradictory movements of destruction and restoration are bound up with one another. Repression is not only bound to destruction and forgetting but also to remembering and interpretation. Put negatively, repression makes interpretation necessary in the attempt to recover what is missing; positively, it creates the space in which interpretation as re-creation becomes possible. The act of remembering is also an act of repetition, which itself entails both continuity and discontinuity:

> discontinuity, because there must be a break to enable something to be repeated, just as something must be lost to be recovered, forgotten to be remembered; and continuity, because the fact of repetition, recovery, memory ensures a living on (1990: 55).

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud makes intriguing references to the importance of writing in his account of dream

12. See on this Brooks (1984: 227-28), who writes the following in his discussion of the transference relationship as applied to the interaction between the text and the reader: '[T]here is in the dynamics of the transference at once the drive to make the story of the past present—to actualize past desire—and the countervailing pressure to make the history of this past definitely past: to make an end to its reproductive insistence in the present, to lead the analysand to the understanding that the past is indeed past, and then to incorporate this past, as past, within his present, so that the life's story can again progress'. In this sense, the historiographer could be seen as attempting though writing the cure of a society traumatized by the loss of its monarchy, as offering a way that the story may yet continue.

interpretation. He offers an account of one of his dreams which contains a baffling phrase. In a footnote, he remarks,

> This description was unintelligible even to myself; but I have followed the fundamental rule of reporting a dream in the words which occurred to me as I was writing it down. The wording chosen is itself part of what is represented by the dream (1900: 598 n. 2).

What actually matters in the end is the wording. It is in the act of writing that the dream-text which is the object of analysis comes into being. In writing, the conscious mind makes choices, and represses the unconscious, which nevertheless makes its presence felt through oddities and aporiae. It is the questioning of the text in its immutable display of repression and displacement at work in its language that leads to a reading of the dreaming subject, and access to the unconscious, the repressed, the forgotten.

Freud, Historiography and the Death of the Father

The link between this and the topic under consideration is made by Freud himself, who ventured an analysis of biblical historiography in his *Moses and Monotheism* (Freud 1939).[13] In this work he defended the thesis that the core of Judaism was an act of repression of the murder of Moses. He presents Moses as an Egyptian nobleman who had enforced an ethical monotheism derived from that of the heretic Pharaoh Akhenaton on a recalcitrant band of slaves. In an upsurge of resentment at his repressive demands, the Israelites turned on him and killed him. Their collective guilt at this deed perpetrated against one whom they both loved and feared as a father-figure led to repression of this memory. The God Yahweh displaced Moses as the origin of their ethical and cultic practices. The re-emergence of ethical monotheism now associated with Yahweh in later Judaism is an

13. See on this Yerushalmi (1991: 29): 'What readers of *Moses and Monotheism* have generally failed to recognize—perhaps because they have been too preoccupied with its more sensational aspects of Moses the Egyptian and his murder by the Jews—is that the true axis of the book, especially of the all-important part III, is the problem of tradition, not merely of its origins but above all its transmission'.

instance of the return of the repressed, to be compared with the same phenomenon in the aetiology of neurosis.

Though Freud's historical reconstruction is far-fetched to say the least, what is interesting from our point of view is his analysis of the role of writing in this development. The historical books of the Hebrew Bible that offered a very different account of Moses' career from that offered by Freud. How is this to be explained? According to Freud, the biblical text as we now read it is the product of two opposed forces: (a) an impulse to revise and mutilate the historical record in the interests of repressing the knowledge of the primal murder; and (b) a solicitous piety that preserves the resultant text despite its manifest contradictions. 'In its implications', he writes, 'the distortion of a text resembles a murder; the difficulty is not in perpetrating the deed, but in getting rid of the traces' (1939: 283).

This adds another murder to the story. The 'murder' of the text is the attempt to suppress the evidence of the original murder of Moses. This, however, is itself the re-enactment of an even earlier murder: the murder of the father of the primal horde which Freud discusses in his *Totem and Taboo* (Freud 1913).[14]

Yet any act of writing, not simply Israel's historiography, bears witness to an act of murder, as Derrida points out in his extended reaction to Plato's familial metaphors in the discussion of writing in the *Phaedrus*. Socrates there dismisses the written text as the errant son:

> ...once a thing is committed to writing it circulates equally among those who understand it and those who have no business with it; a writing cannot distinguish between suitable and unsuitable

14. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud argues that an original despotic patriarchy was overthrown by the banding together of the subjugated sons to murder their father and gain access to the women he controlled. This fraternity, however, was still haunted by the figure of the absent father who was loved and admired as well as hated, and so set up in his place a particular animal as a totem, and renounced in a process of 'deferred obedience' their rights to the women they had gained. Over time, the repressed knowledge of this murder resurfaced in the form of a gradual evolution toward the worship of a single all-powerful generative God, the idealized replacement for the father of the primal horde.

> readers. And if it is ill-treated or unfairly abused it always needs its parent to come to its rescue; it is quite incapable of defending or helping itself (1973: 97).

As Derrida reads Plato's account, writing is in need of its father, but also exists without him. It is at once a pitiable orphan and the despicable wastrel, one who could stand accused of parricide. It carries with it the taint of murder. Writing acknowledges its 'father' only by calling attention to his absence, and by calling down upon itself the reproaches due to the murderer of the father. The figure of the parricide is the only witness to the existence of the dead father.[15]

This means that the relation of generation is reversed. Although biologically the father generates the son, the existence of the son is the datum that follows the inference of the existence of the father. In the same way, the reader of the text must engage in an act of generation of its author, through the body of the text. The 'author' of a text is a fiction that the reader engenders, a 'father', a point of origin, that the reader fathers, with all the complexities of emotional interaction that that might give rise to. In biblical studies, historical criticism has engendered a plethora of such authorial figures, all of whom have been engaged in the rewriting, the suppression of their predecessors' work, just as critics have built upon and thereby assailed the work of their precursors.

This process is exposed by Harold Bloom in *The Book of J*, an attempt to resurrect the writing of the female author J, whom he regards as responsible for the strongest biblical writing in the canon (Rosenberg and Bloom 1991: 19).[16] Bloom has great fun in

15. Derrida explains, 'Writing can thus be attacked, bombarded with unjust reproaches (*ouk en dikei loidoretheis*) that only the father could dissipate—thus assisting his son—if the son had not, precisely, killed him. In effect, the father's death opens the reign of violence—and that is what it's all about from the beginning—and in violence against the father, the son—or patricidal writing—cannot fail to expose himself, too. All this is done in order to ensure that the dead father, first victim and ultimate resource, not be there. Being-there is always a property of paternal speech' (1981: 146).

16. Bloom's work on the anxiety of influence in which he sees all creative work as marked by a strong misreading of the author's precursors and a wresting of the tradition from those who went before is here belatedly acknowledged as a significant influence on the present text. In

describing this delightful woman, who carries the whole erotic weight of his response to these astonishing texts. She is, of course, a fiction, and he makes no bones about this:

> This J is my fiction, most biblical scholars will insist, but then each of us carries about a Shakespeare or a Tolstoy or a Freud who is our fiction also. As we read any literary work, we necessarily create a fiction or metaphor of its author. That author is perhaps our myth, but the experience of literature partly depends on that myth. For J we have a choice of myths, and I boisterously prefer mine to that of the biblical scholars (1991: 19).

J's text has not ensured her survival; she survives as a fiction, the mother fathered by Bloom on the text. She can only be resuscitated at the expense of the murder of the text as we have it, the dissection out of its layers, and the killing of the figure whom Bloom refers to as R, the Redactor, the equally fictional author of the final form of the texts. R himself has suppressed the existence of those authors whose work he draws upon, and yet paradoxically it is the fact that his text survives in the canon that enables his precursors to be raised to a ghostly life.

Text and Reader: The Fight for Survival

As such, R embodies, as must any author, the guilt of the survivor.[17] Tellers of stories display an incident from the past.

particular, Bloom's reading of Freud and his use of the category of repression is of great interest. See on this Bloom 1982 and, specifically on *Moses and Monotheism*, Bloom 1991.

17. The term 'survival guilt', now widely used in the examination of the trauma that affects those who live through major disasters, and with a special application in the experience of those who were liberated from the death camps of Nazi Germany, is generally traced back to Freud himself, who identified it as a component of his own reaction to the death of his father. See *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887–1904* (ed. J.M. Masson; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985): 202 (Freud to Fliess, 2 November 1896), where Freud, in the course of describing his reaction to his father's death, talks of the 'self-reproach that appears regularly among the survivors'. He alludes to this more fully in his open letter to Romain Rolland ('A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis' [1936] *Standard Edition* 22, 239) where he traces the strange feeling of dissociation he experienced on his first visit to the Acropolis to a

When they talk of danger, they talk of danger survived, or else there would be no story and no teller. When they speak of death, they speak of the death of another. They display the life of the dead in order to affirm their own life. The narratorial voice has survived the events of the narrative in such a way as to be able to bring those events into narrative form.[18] That guilt finds expression in the writer's abuse of writing, the unreliable bearer of the writer's own survival. For the historiographer, this resentment is compounded by the knowledge that survival has been bought at the price of murder and repression. The historiographer turns against the process of writing that ensures his own survival. It is this process that leads to the suppression of writing through its association with death and violence that prompted the question with which this study began.

Yet that tale of survival can only be resurrected by the reader, who comes after, who has survived the author in that he or she is addressed by the text which bears witness to the supplanting of the author. The voice of the author which the reader fathers upon the text becomes a voice that speaks from and for the dead who lay claim to life through the reader.

So R, the fictional figure of the compiler of the historical books, embodies the anxiety of those who have survived the exile and of the demise of the Davidic kingdom. The very act of writing of that kingdom as past confirms that demise. The monarchy dies when its passing is committed to writing. The terror of that act of pious killing imbues the act of writing itself with a sense of doom, just as the movement towards a hereditary kingship in Israel presaged its own doom through its activation of the tensions between father and son. The suppression of the act of writing and its association with death and genealogy within the

feeling of guilt in having surpassed his father.

18. On the topic of the relation between the survivor and the story, see Felman and Laub 1992 for their fascinating exploration of the testimony of the survivors of the Holocaust. They summarize the relationship between these elements as follows: 'The story of survival is, in fact, the incredible narration of the survival of the story, at the crossroads of life and death' (1992: 44), and later: 'The survivor survives in order to tell the story, but also must tell the story in order to survive, in order to have a sense of who they are—we *are* our testimony' (1992: 78).

text reflect the complex of anxieties that culminated in the act of generating the text, an act that itself involves both murder and procreation.

The final compiler of these texts commits murder against the texts of his predecessors, a murder that he suppresses, but that becomes the only means of survival of these precursors. In his turn, his name is lost to history. But that death also becomes the possibility for reinterpretation after the exile. The writer is effaced by his own text, and has in turn effaced other writers. The community that his text now enables to survive is unrecognizably different from the one he knew, which in turn is radically different from the one he created as he wrote. His text is silent testimony to the murders on which it is based, and yet it is a testimony to the possibility of survival. As such, it places on its readers a choice. It claims us as its progeny, as members of the community that will ensure its survival. It promises the survival of the community in order to induce the community to ensure the survival of the text.

Ultimately, the power of these texts for the reader is that that they activate the reader's anxiety of genealogy. The text claims its status as father, as the key to the genealogy of the community and the reader, with all the implied aggression that that claim embodies. Is the reader to assent to the claims of the text, to accept the possibilities it offers and so to enter the community whose survival is symbiotic with that of the text, to father the next generation of readers? Or will the reader repudiate the text as the harbinger of death, the father that seeks to kill the possibilities of the reader's existence, in its frustrated attempt to create an ideal child?

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DAUGHTERS AND FATHERS IN GENESIS... OR, WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

Ilona N. Rashkow

While it is not surprising that biblical narratives depict a definable family structure, what *is* surprising is that conspicuously absent is a figure lurking beneath the text, a figure repeatedly subjected to erasure, exclusion, and transformation. Genesis lacks daughters. Narrative after narrative describes the desire for male children, the lengths to which women would go to have sons,[1] the great joy surrounding the birth of a boy, and father–son relationships.[2] The birth of a daughter, on the other hand, by no means creates such attention. As Archer notes, biblical genealogical tables 'indicate a startling disparity in the ratio of male:female births, a disparity which can in no way reflect a demographic reality' (Archer 1990: 18). The tables do, however, reflect the attitude towards daughters. Inscribed within Genesis

1. So important were sons that barren women sometimes resorted to having children by their handmaids (Gen. 16.2; 30.3). For the use of concubines and handmaidens in this early period and the legitimacy of offspring from such unions, see Archer 1987: 4.

2. This is most obvious in the covenant between the deity and Abraham (Gen. 17.9-10), the implicit symbolism of circumcision powerful in its patriarchal reverberations. A son was regarded as a special blessing, more often than not the direct result of divine intervention in a couple's life. Eve, for example, the first to give birth (significantly, to a boy) triumphantly declares: 'I have gotten a man *with* [*the help of*] *the Lord*' (Gen. 4.1); Abraham, convinced of Sarah's sterility, is informed by God: 'And I will bless her, and moreover *I* will give you a son of her' (Gen. 17.15); similarly, in Gen. 30.21-24, 'God remembered Rachel and God hearkened to her and *opened her womb*. And she conceived and bore a son.' The passage ends with Rachel's plea for more sons: 'And she called his name Joseph, saying "The *Lord add to me* another son"'.

is something more than a general disregard of women: the *daughter* is specifically absent. Since the daughter's presence is normal and necessary to the biological realities of family, her narrative absence is significant and calls attention to itself. My conclusion is that beneath the surface father–son narration lies a suppressed daughter–father relationship.

Perhaps because I cannot help thinking that Genesis is more ambivalent than a narration of disinterested fathers, I read daughters in a more paradoxical way. Instead of measuring what the daughter may or may not materially contribute to the family, I consider what she threatens to subtract from it. The most obvious answer, of course, is that while yet within her father's house the daughter is the only member of the family who does not participate in extending the patronymic line. But that answer is too superficial. By aligning feminist analyses of Freud's rejection of the seduction theory with the suppressed daughter–father biblical construct, a subtext is uncovered: what makes the nearly absent daughter so central in this otherwise emphatically masculine epic is her potential to determine and expose a threat to the father's power and patriarchal rule.

Many biblical narratives describe a daughter's transgression against and departure from the closure of her father's house.[3] The text in effect becomes a code for what is subliminally the father's story of the sins of the daughter. Decoded, the accusations might read: *because* of the daughter's sin against the father, sons must henceforth leave their father's control ('This is why a man leaves his father' [Gen. 2.24]);[4] *because of* the daughter's disobedience, daughters likewise leave the protective enclosure and become maternal figures. Daughters are subsumed as mothers,[5] and the text 'reads itself through a chain-male linkage'

3. See, for example, Jephthah's daughter, whose departure from her father's house is viewed by Jephthah as a transgression *against him* (Judg. 11.35). Dinah 'goes out', is raped (Gen. 34.1-2), and is then narratively banished from the text (Rashkow 1990: 98-100).

4. Northrop Frye's comment on this verse is that 'the chief point made about the creation of Eve is that henceforth man is to leave his parents and become united with his wife. That parent is the primary image...that...has to give way to the image of the sexual union of bride-groom and bride' (Frye 1982: 107).

5. When her identity as daughter is exchanged for wife, she is still the

(Boose 1989: 22). These repeated biblical narratives of a daughter's 'transgression' seem to be prototypical of Freud's narrative of the 'catastrophe' that leaves 'the path to the development of femininity...open to the girl' (Freud 1925: 241). Significantly, the 'catastrophe' Freud describes is father–daughter incest. If read from that perspective, the daughter can be seen as locked into a conflicted text of desire and sanction.

Lévi-Strauss's well-known analysis argues that the most significant rule governing any family structure is the ubiquitous existence of the incest taboo which imposes the social aim of exogamy and alliance upon the biological events of sex and procreation. Genesis nearly constitutes a meditation on the questions from where wives for the patriarchy should come, how closely they should be related to 'us', and how 'other' they should be (Pitt-Rivers 1977: 128, 165). Within the patriarchal sagas, Abraham twice acknowledges his wife to be his sister,[6] and his son, Isaac, marries his father's-brother's-daughter. Isaac's son, Jacob, acquires two wives, sisters who constitute a lineal double of each other. That is, Jacob marries two of his father's-father's-brother's-son's-son's-daughters, who are simultaneously his mother's-brother's-daughters and thus again connected back to Abraham. In the next generation, Reuben sleeps with his father's second wife's maid, symbolically violating family purity laws, and Judah sleeps with his daughter-in-law. Is there a pattern here? *Contra* Lévi-Strauss, familial and sexual integrity across Genesis seems to be observed more in the breach than in the maintenance.[7] Why?

While many elements of the conventional vocabulary of moral deliberation (such as 'ethical', 'virtuous', 'righteous', and their

alien until she has once again changed her sign to 'mother of new members of the lineage', which by implication means mother to a son.

6. Not all scholars view intercourse between siblings as incestuous (see Fokkelman's discussion of the story of Amnon and Tamar, 1981: 103). As Landy points out, however, this might be another example of a royal family that 'feels itself too good for the world' (Landy 1983: 307 n. 63).

7. Within Genesis, Adam–Eve, Noah–Ham, Lot–his daughters, Reuben–Bilhah, and Jacob–Tamar are examples of parent–child incestuous congress or exposure; Adam–Eve and Abraham–Sarah are brother–sister unions (as is Amnon–Tamar in 2 Sam.); Isaac–Rebekah and Jacob–Leah–Rachel are cousin marriages.

opposites) are largely alien to the psychoanalytic lexicon, the concepts of 'guilt' and 'shame' do appear, albeit in technical (and essentially non-moral) contexts (Smith 1986: 52). 'Guilt' and 'shame' are described as different emotional responses, stemming from different stimuli, reflecting different patterns of behavior, and functioning in different social constructions, although the two are often related. Their primary distinction lies in the internalized norm that is violated and the expected consequences.

Guilt relates to internalized societal and parental *prohibitions*, the transgression of which creates feelings of wrong-doing and the fear of punishment (Piers and Singer 1953). Shame relates to the anxiety caused by 'inadequacy' or 'failure' to live up to internalized societal and parental *goals and ideals* (as opposed to internalized prohibitions), expectations of what a person 'should' do, be, know, or feel. These feelings of failure often lead to a fear of psychological or physical rejection, abandonment, expulsion (separation anxiety) or loss of social position (Alexander 1948: 43). The person shamed often feels the need to take revenge for his or her humiliation, to 'save face'. By shaming the shamer, the situation is reversed, and the shamed person feels triumphant (Horney 1950: 103).

The difference between guilt and shame is subtle but important in the context of this paper. Within the biblical text, 'shame' is a powerful and prevalent emotion and sanction indicated by the number of Hebrew words used to convey the violation of goals and ideals,[8] although in translation the differences in

8. 'Shame' is expressed in Hebrew by the verb בוש, 'to shame' (and the nouns בושה, בשת, בשת, 'shame'); the verb כלם, 'to humiliate/shame' (and the nouns כלמה and כלמות, 'humiliation/shame'); the verb קלה (niphal; perhaps a form of קלל, 'to be light', 'to be lightly esteemed or dishonored/shamed') (and the noun קלי, 'dishonor/shame'); the verb חפר, 'to be ashamed, blush'; the verb שפל, 'to be low, abased, be humiliated' (and the noun שפלה, 'lowliness, humiliation'); the verb מכך, 'to be low, humiliated'; and the nouns נבלות, 'shamelessness', and נבלה, 'disgrace'.

'Shame' words are often accompanied by phrases that express 'shame on the face' (blushing), shame expressed in body position (hanging the head), or a reduction in social position in one's own eyes and in the eyes of others (e.g. Jer. 48.39; 2 Sam. 10.5; Isa. 16.14; Jer. 50.12). The verb חרף, 'to reproach/verbally shame' (and the noun חרפה, 'reproach/verbal shame'); the verb קלס, 'to mock/shame' (and the noun קלס, 'derision/shame'); the

meaning among these words are often hard to discern. Strikingly, the vocabulary for 'guilt' is far less extensive than that of 'shame'.[9] It would appear that the text is less concerned with the violation of societal prohibitions—in this case, incest—than with the failure to achieve internalized goals, that is, the idealization and perpetuation of patriarchy and family prestige.

It is within this framework that the father–daughter relationship becomes problematic, complex in ways that even the mother–son dynamic is not, despite the same asymmetries of age, authority and gender-privilege that work to separate mother and son. On the one hand, daughters are property belonging exclusively to the father;[10] like Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel, they are bartered for economic profit. And as the Genesis narrative of Jacob's daughter Dinah makes clear, rape is not considered a violation of the daughter so much as a theft of property from her father that necessitates compensation to him. On the other hand, although the daughter is clearly regarded as legal property inside the family, she is not a commodity to be bartered in the same way as an ox or an ass. She is explicitly *sexual* property acquired from the father's sexual expenditure and his own family bloodline, not by economic transaction. Her presence as daughter resexualizes the family

verb לעג, 'to mock/shame' (and the noun לַעַג 'derision/shame'); the verb לוץ, 'to scorn/shame' (and the noun לָצוֹן, 'scorning/shaming') denote verbal shaming, taunting, mocking or scorning with insulting words. The main oppositional term to shame is the root כבד (signifying 'honor' or 'heaviness'); that is, honor increases 'heavy' esteem, while shame decreases it, causing 'light' esteem (see קלה above) (Bechtel 1991: 54).

9. 'Guilt' is expressed by the verb אשם, 'to offend/be guilty/commit iniquity' (and the nouns אָשָׁם, 'offense/guilt/iniquity', אַשְׁמָה 'wrong-doing/guiltiness', and the adjective אָשֵׁם, 'guilty'); the verb רשע, 'to be wicked/condemn as guilty' (and the adjective רָשָׁע, 'wicked/guilty'); and the noun עון 'iniquity/guilt/punishment' (Bechtel 1991: 55).

10. Since it is the father who controls the exchange of women, the woman most practically available to be exchanged is not the mother, who sexually belongs to the father, nor the sister, who comes under the bestowal rights of her own father, but the daughter. Other anthropological models do exist, however. Among the Nuer, for example, 'fatherhood' belongs to the person in whose name cattle bridewealth is given for the mother (Rubin 1975: 169).

configuration and necessitates a detailed taboo, codified in Leviticus 18, which ostensibly defines illicit congress. Virtually every family female (mother, sister,[11] aunt,[12] cousin, sister-in-law, niece, daughter-in-law, granddaughter, and so on[13]) is off-limits. Conspicuously, the only one not included is the daughter. As Judith Herman points out,

> the wording of the law makes it clear that...what is prohibited is the sexual use of those women who, in one manner or another, already belong to other relatives. Every man is thus expressly forbidden to take the daughters of his kinsmen, but only by implication is he forbidden to take his own daughters (Herman and Hirschman 1981: 61).

Of all possible forms of incest, that between father and daughter is overlooked. The daughter's presence within the father's house retains a figuratively, if not literally, incestuous option that implicitly threatens the family structure.[14]

Since the text lacks this specific taboo, the father–daughter relationship has no internalized prohibitions (hence no 'guilt'). But because the purity of a wife is the law of first priority upon which patrilineage depends, it is at the juncture of the daughter's

11. Lev. 18.9, 11; 20.17. Paternal half-sister prohibition was of special concern to Ezekiel (22.11), and his concern shows that the practice continued.

12. Lev. 18.12-13; 20.19. We might note that Moses and Aaron were both born of such a union (Exod. 6.20; Num. 26.59).

13. The other incestuous relations itemized in Lev. 18 and 20 belong to the category of incestuous adultery (that is, group-wife prohibitions) or pertain to polygamy and are therefore not our concern here. For a full analysis of the incest laws in Leviticus, their function and origin, see Bigger 1979 and Fox 1967. For a situating of these laws in the wider context of historical shifts in Jewish social structure and the changing position of women, see Archer 1990 and 1983.

14. In fact, it can even be argued that the relations of biblical daughters and fathers resemble in some important ways the model developed by Judith Herman and Lisa Hirschman to describe the family situations of incest victims: a dominating authoritarian father; an absent, ill or complicitous mother; and a daughter who, prohibited from speaking about the abuse, is unable to reconcile her contradictory feelings of love for her father and terror of him, her desire to end the abuse and fear that if she speaks out she will destroy the family structure that is her only security (Herman and Hirschman 1981: esp. chs. 1, 4–7).

marriage and transfer of proprietary rights from father to son-in-law that father–daughter incest would point a finger directly at the character whom the text privileges, the one status role that the narrative repeatedly goes out of its way to exempt from blame of any sort, the father. The biblical daughter becomes dangerous to the father's authority, and her existence within the 'safety' of her family ambivalent. It is in this context that the elaborately detailed punishment for the accused bride in Deut. 22.13-21 makes sense. All of the numerous proscriptions codified in Deuteronomy are essentially purification laws to 'banish evil from Israel'. This one, however, is unique in thrusting the father to the very center of the drama, making him a special actor, *protected* by a formulaic dialogue yet placed in the role of *defendant* against the son-in-law's charges of the daughter's impurity.[15] Implicitly, the husband has accused the father, the man who gave him this woman, of having taken the husband's property (her virginity) in advance. If evidence of virginity exists, the groom is flogged and must pay the father one hundred shekels 'for publicly defaming a virgin of Israel'. But the payment is made to the father, so perhaps we should read 'for publicly defaming a virgin's *father*'. If the bride's virginity cannot be substantiated, 'they shall take her to the door of her father's house and her fellow citizens shall stone her to death for having committed an infamy in Israel by disgracing her father's house'. This crime is not merely 'an evil' to be 'banished from the midst'; it is 'an infamy in Israel' that disgraces the father's house (the place from which the punishment implies it emanated) by tacitly accusing him of incest. It then masks the accusation by transposing cause and effect: because no hymeneal blood was shed

15. In the three sex laws that follow this one in Deut. 22, the father is either not mentioned or minimally important. If, for instance, a man forcibly seizes an unbetrothed virgin and 'they are found', he must pay her father fifty shekels and marry her (22.28-29). If a man lies with a betrothed virgin inside the city, the two offenders are to be taken outside the gate of the town and stoned to death, she for not 'crying out' and he for 'violating the wife of his neighbor'. The father is not involved here, but the male violator (as well as the female property that is now 'soiled') must die since the future rights of another man have been stolen. See Mary Douglas's chapter 'Internal Lines' (1966) for an examination of the connections between social pollution and cultural ideas of 'dirt'.

in her husband's house, the daughter's blood is to be shed on her father's door. A threat to the father's reputation (and hence his power) is averted by deflecting blame for sexual misconduct, real or imagined, from the privileged patriarch onto the powerless daughter. The shamed thus shames the victim.

A parallel construct exists in Freud's abandonment of his seduction theory. When Freud first began working with hysterical patients, in every case he found an account of childhood sexual abuse by a member of the patient's own family, and it was almost always the father.[16] On this evidence, Freud developed his 'seduction theory', that hysterical symptoms have their origin in sexual abuse suffered in childhood, which is repressed and eventually assimilated to later sexual experience. Within a year, however, Freud wrote that he 'no longer believe[d] in neurotica' (quoted in Froula 1989: 118). At this point, Freud founded psychoanalytic theory upon the Oedipus complex.

This change was crucial. As several feminist critics have argued,[17] Freud turned away from the seduction theory because he was unable to come to terms with his discovery: the abuse of paternal power.[18] The issue for Freud was credit versus

16. The editors of the *Standard Edition* trace (without critique) the vicissitudes of Freud's acknowledgement of sexual abuse on the part of fathers in a note to 'Femininity' (Freud 1933: 120 n.).

17. See, for example, Alice Miller (1984), as well as Herman and Hirschman (1981) who present clinical evidence; Marie Balmary (1979) for a psychoanalytic reading of the 'text' of Freud's life and work; and Florence Rush (1980) for a historical perspective. See particularly David Willbern's examination (1989) of the chronological complexities and fluctuations in Freud's theorizing about fathers and daughters, including a discussion of Freud's discounting of the seduction theory and his strangely unprofessional alteration of several case testimonies in which the father had been identified as the incestuous seducer of his daughter.

18. The cases of Anna O., Lucy R., Katharina, Elisabeth von R., and Rosalia H., described in *Studies on Hysteria* (Freud and Breuer 1893–95), all connect symptoms with fathers or, in Lucy's case, with a father substitute. In two cases, however, Freud represents the father as an uncle, a misrepresentation that he corrects in 1924. His reluctance to implicate the father appears in a supplemental narrative of an unnamed patient whose physician-father accompanied her during sessions with Freud. When Freud challenged her to acknowledge that 'something else had happened which she had not mentioned', she 'gave way to the extent of letting fall a single

authority—whose story to believe, the father's or the daughter's.

While many analysts have simply followed Freud in rejecting the seduction theory for the Oedipal theory, others have tried to explain and resolve the apparently contradictory ideas of 'seduction-as-fact' and 'seduction-as-fantasy' by means of Freud's concepts of *'psychic* reality' and *'primal* fantasy'.[19] That is, seduction can be a *representation* of the father's repressed and deflected sexual desires, or even a metaphor for power ('primal fantasy'). *Actual* incest ('reality') need not enter the picture, thus bridging the gap between the actual and the imaginary, the very structure of fantasy.

Conveniently, this brings us to the creation narrative in Genesis 1–3. While almost all interpretations of this text acknowledge its sexual nature, traditional exegesis has concentrated on 'Adam's Fall'. But the familiar story masks two interwoven subtexts: Freud's sexualized father–daughter narrative in which the Adam material appears merely as a re-narration, and a feminist narrative of an unacknowledged daughter's rebellion by means of her appropriating the forbidden fruit that stands 'erected' at the center of the enclosed garden. Read from this perspective, the father has planted an invitation to transgress (a metaphoric seduction) accompanied by a prohibition against doing so. The ambivalence of the father's part in the 'Fall', the focus of considerable theological commentary, perhaps can be seen as Freud's 'catastrophe', with its dangerous potential inherent in the daughter's 'transition to the father object' (Freud 1925: 241). The father desires yet forbids desiring; he simultaneously wants but does not want the transgression he has provoked, a transgression he will deny and punish. This ambivalence is textually revealed by its most psychologically accurate defense. Just as Freud, by abandoning the seduction

significant phrase; but she had hardly said a word before she stopped, and her old father, who was sitting behind her, began to sob bitterly'. Freud concludes: 'Naturally I pressed my investigation no further; but I never saw the patient again' (Freud and Breuer 1893–95: 100-101 n.).

19. See, for example, Laplanch and Pontalis, for whom the daughter's seduction story is a fantasy, its reality 'to be sought in an ever more remote and hypothetical past (of the individual or the species)' (1968: 17).

theory, deflects guilt from the father to (variously) the nurse, the mother, and, by way of the Oedipus complex, the child herself (Gallop 1982: 144-45), so the father projects his seduction onto others and thus denies paternal complicity. The seduction is displaced first onto the (phallic) serpent,[20] and then onto the daughter herself in her seduction of Adam. Thus, the chain of deflections to protect the father begins. It was not the father but the serpent who seduced the daughter and, by the end of this narrative, it is the daughter who seduced her father! Once again, the shamed shames the shamer. To effect this, however, the narrative subjects itself to a labyrinth of self-exposing transformations.

Some feminist biblical scholars see Genesis 1 as a mitigating authorization for women's equality.[21] I disagree. Every authorization of equality in Genesis 1 is subsequently repressed and erased by chs. 2–3. In fact, the juxtaposition of the two accounts of creation exposes the shadowed family construct and highlights the subtext of deflected paternal desire. The syntax in Gen. 1.26-27, which implies that man and woman are created simultaneously and equally, constructs Adam and Eve as son and daughter. Typical of the defense mechanism associated with projection and denial, this narration is an attempt to reconstitute the family into a desired model. However, this makes the deity overtly a father who authorized his children's implicitly incestuous union, and therefore necessitates a re-narration which repeatedly shows the marks of backward erasure and exclusion. When ch. 2 recreates man and woman, it erases the parallelism of the ch. 1 account and dissociates the deity entirely from the parentage of the woman, further distancing the original father–

20. The indicator I see for the serpent's phallic symbolism is based less on Freud's association than on two other factors. First, since Hebrew has no neuter gender, nouns must be either masculine or feminine, and the word for serpent is, indeed, masculine. Second, the narrative function of the serpent, and his description as 'the most wily of the beasts of the field which the Lord God had made' anticipates, and seems embedded in, Augustine's famous use of the fall to explain the frustrating unruliness of the male sexual organ.

21. See, for example, Phyllis Trible, who points out that in Gen. 1 the masculine exists no more than does the feminine (1983).

daughter relationship.[22] Adam's paternal parentage remains, and even his maternal parent is implicitly present in the earth from which he is shaped and from which his name is derived, but Eve, who is born from Adam's body, has a lineage lost in ambiguities. No matter how her creation is read, what does seem clear is that the text has tried to detach her genealogy from the father and place it with Adam. Ironically, however, in an attempt to mask the threat of deflected desire that is posed, the text inadvertently reconstitutes it. Because of the emphasis placed on Eve's derivation from Adam's side, and therefore Adam's implied paternity, the narrative re-enforces the paradigm of a tacitly condoned but overtly disclaimed act between father and daughter. The original father–daughter story that has been so problematic is repressed but remains visible in Adam. Adam, the acknowledged son, becomes the father, making father and son analogous.

At the same time, the text also contains the subtext of Eve's appropriation of the forbidden fruit, a mythology of the daughter's rebellion into sexual maturity, a 'seizing' of her fruitfulness.

In replacing his seduction theory with the Oedipus complex, Freud explains that a daughter's attachment to the father parallels a son's attachment to his mother; but for the girl, attachment to the father is 'positive', following an earlier 'negative' phase in which she learns that her mother has not 'given' her a penis. She turns in despair to the father, who may be able to give her some of its power (Freud 1925 and 1931, *passim*).[23] If read from Freud's perspective, the 'seed-bearing fruit' on the father's tree might signify the father's self, the 'father's Phallus', in both its Lacanian meaning as a symbol of paternal authority and its

22. Simultaneously, it erases the incestuous implications of the son–daughter union by eliminating the Gen. 1 license for the human children to be fruitful and eat unrestrictedly of all the 'trees with seed bearing fruit'.

23. René Girard's theory of language and culture explains the marginal situation of biblical daughters in a way that also challenges Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex. Girard argues that violence has its roots in 'mimetic desire', an approach/avoidance concept that describes the drive to imitate a respected and feared model. While the desire is to imitate, there is the recognition that a complete reproduction would result in an implicit rivalry, the extreme form of which would be displacement and, ultimately, elimination. On the other hand, if this rivalry is rejected and repressed, the subject then stands in a slave relationship with the master (Girard 1986).

Freudian significance as the physical sign of 'presence' and biological superiority. The taboo on plucking/eating this knowledge of good and evil forbids the daughter from obtaining the father's potency and privilege.

This symbolism becomes clearer if we follow the time-honored exegetical practice of reading the Bible intertextually. Just before the children of Israel are to enter the Promised Land, a recapitulation of 'the Father's original garden' (Frye 1982: 72), the fruit taboo resurfaces, and, with it, its phallic significance: 'When you enter the land and plant all [manner of] trees for food, you will regard its fruits as *uncircumcised*. For three years it will be to you a thing *uncircumcised*, and it *will not be eaten*' (Lev. 19.23). Placed into this context, Genesis 3 seems to narrate the daughter's desire to acquire the father's knowledge and power through the (phallic) sign that has been denied her, and to dramatize the threat to patriarchy that daughters represent. By asserting her desire for the sign that confers exclusive rights to the male, the daughter symbolically challenges the privilege of the gender system that the phallus signifies.

Since the text is confronted with a daughter's desires that have no legitimate place in its patriarchal order, it mutes them by denial and displacement. By reasserting the primacy of the father–son relationship, the story represses the more threatening material of its father–daughter text. Thus, Eve gives the 'seed-bearing fruit' to Adam and becomes the medium through which this symbol of potency and privilege (the Phallus in both Freudian and Lacanian meanings) is passed from father to son. Once Eve has transferred the fruit to Adam's possession, she transfers also her narrative centrality. Eve as *daughter* disappears into the margins of the story. Eve as *mother* effectively banishes the female transgressor of the father's garden. Her denied desires are perpetuated into a frustrated 'yearning'—what Freud would have called 'penis envy', or the daughter's 'recognition of absence'. But it is also a recognition of what Freud's feminist interpreters have defined as another kind of knowledge, the knowledge of the way that 'cultural stereotypes have been mapped onto the genitals' (Rubin 1975: 195). If in the 'phallic phase', as Freud asserts, 'only one kind of genital organ comes to account—the male' (1923: 142), then Eve's act of

aggression is a representation of her desire to get beyond the prohibitiveness of the Phallus, its rule as standard, what Irigaray calls 'the reign of the One, of Unicity' (1977: 43): the Father.

Eve's choice to give fruit, the conventional symbol of female sexuality, to another male may represent the daughter's ultimate dispossession of her father, and reveal this family member as *the* dangerous threat to paternal power, the reason for narrative absence. The daughter's act is a violation cursed by the father and resulting in a permanent barrier of separation. At the daughter's instigation, the son has cast aside perpetual security, in an outright rejection of the father and his authority. It is at this junction that the two interwoven subtexts merge.

The original commandment to be fruitful and multiply is transformed into the structures of taboo, transgression and punishment. Adam is now a laborer, and Eve is ordered into the *creation* of family, her presence as daughter permanently eliminated. Significantly, from now on (with the exception of the anomalous story of Ibzan [Judg. 12.9]), biblical fathers assiduously avoid ever giving daughters away. In fact, the Hebrew Bible avoids daughters almost altogether. Indeed, a father and daughter do not re-enter Genesis until the incestuous tale of Lot.[24] By then, however, the text has rationalized deflected desire: Lot is 'blamelessly' seduced by his daughters, just as Adam was unwittingly seduced by the woman he fathered.

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24. Another mention of 'daughter' precedes that of Lot, but it is the 'collective catastrophe' of Gen. 6.4 brought about by the '[generic] daughters of men'. In this odd (and obscure) fragment, the 'sons of God' are seduced by desire for the 'daughters of men', and their corrupt but heroic offspring provide the motive for God's decision to destroy humanity by the flood. Here, as elsewhere, the problem revolves around a woman positionally coded as 'daughter'.

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