A Theory of Biblical Reception History

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Abstract

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While reception history, otherwise known as *Nachleben* or *Wirkungsgeschichte,* offers a promising new tool to biblical scholars, a dearth of theoretical reflection on the practice of reception history limits its rigor and potential contribution to the field. In this dissertation I reflect upon the presuppositions of current approaches to biblical criticism and reception, and in turn I propose a new theoretical approach to reception history that seeks to avoid the least helpful of these assumptions. In the last two chapters, I offer a practical example of this approach.

In general, biblical scholars assume that reception history is a study of the meanings and forms of a text that arose after that text's origin. Yet where does one draw this boundary between the original text and its original meaning, and its receptions? Many scholars define "the original" as the ideal form of the original text, and thus determine later versions and derivative readings of those texts to be "receptions." Yet in light of textual pluriformity, I argue that a biblical text should be understood as a dynamic process, not a static product. I propose an alternate approach to textual criticism that highlights its deep connections with reception history. Since there is no objective, necessary hierarchy that organizes the different stages of redaction and transmission, I conclude that reception, understood as the act of appropriating and reworking previously existing material, constitutes the entire textual process.

Other scholars, however, claim that readings of any biblical text that occur outside the semantic, generic and historical boundaries of the original context would constitute receptions of that text. In response, I argue that texts function precisely by flowing between contexts; I conclude that there can be no firm boundary between an original context for a biblical text and later receptions, since each original context can be located as part of a larger textual continuum. Following these arguments, I propose a theory of reception history that replaces an essentialist view of literature with a focus on process. As an illustration of my theory, I briefly survey one avenue of the reception of Job 19:25-27.

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Furthermore, I would not have completed this task if it were not also for the constant support of my parents, Mary and Jerome Breed, whose emphasis on education and hard work in my youth–which may not have seemed to take hold at the time–has helped me to achieve the things that I dreamed of years earlier. Hopefully, this is proof that old dogs can learn some of those old tricks that you have been trying to teach them since they were young pups, and that would have been better to learn those years ago. But at least I got them at some point.

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I owe much to the generosity of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, whose Charlotte Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship funded the completion of this work. I hope that this dissertation may lend itself to furthering the study of ethical and religious values, and thus contribute to the goal of the Newcombe Fellowship.

Finally, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Carol Newsom, who believed in this project even before I did. Carol's constant guidance, encouragement, and even tough love brought form and matter out of a seemingly bottomless sea of scholarly chaos. I look back on that first 157 page chapter that I handed in without thesis

statement or conclusion, and I am nothing short of amazed that she helped mold it into a dissertation. If there is someone to whom I would compare the generative and life-giving powers of Woman Wisdom, it is Carol.

A supplemental postscript to the acknowledgements, because as he knows, there is nothing more central than an exception: perhaps no one has helped more, in terms of my intellectual development as well as the writing and editing process of this dissertation, than Charles D. Hankins, whose name occurs now and again throughout this text. We wrote our dissertations together, positioned next to each other on one long table, cramped in a tiny office in the icy bowels of Woodruff library. It was like an academic summer camp, complete with camping-quality lunch food, camping-like physical contests and camping-level banter. I am very glad that I do not have to say nostalgically that I wish those bygone days would return. Instead, I say: it's time to gear up for the next book, Davis. Let's find us a long table.

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The Constitutive Divide of Reception History

> I guess I'm supposed to say that I believe in the line that exists between the US and Canada, but for me it's an imaginary line. It's a line from someone else's imagination; it's not my imagination. It divided people like the Mohawk into Canadian Mohawks and US Mohawks. They're the same people. It divided the Blackfoot who live in Browning from the Blackfoot who live at Standoff, for example. So the line is a political line, that border line. It wasn't there before the Europeans came.
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> ———————————————————
>
> THOMAS KING

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE INTRODUCTION: WHERE TO BEGIN?

Like many introductions, I begin here with a sketch of the contours of my general argument that attempts to delimit its borders and situate it within the context of recent scholarship. However, a problem immediately arises: my general argument interrogates the very concept of a border and, in turn, challenges the ways in which borders function throughout critical biblical studies. The best way to begin, therefore, is with a sketch of the contours of this border-problem.

Initially, I conceived of this dissertation as a simple diachronic study of the reception history of a particular passage from the biblical book of Job, but from the start the question of *where to begin* immediately proved troublesome. Like most re-

ception historical studies of biblical texts, I could have opened with a chapter titled "Job in Jewish and Christian interpretation," thus bypassing the problem of the border altogether by simply beginning my study well after the end of the presumedly "original" period. Or, perhaps I could have opened with a chapter titled "Job in the Septuagint," thus automatically taking the proto-MT book of Job as "the real book of Job" and leaving questions about composition, redaction and textual pluriformity in the Second Temple period to the more traditional methods of "biblical criticism."[1]

Yet I rapidly became uneasy with this arrangement, since, as will become clear in the following chapters, the convoluted processes of biblical composition and redaction and the resulting textual and semantic pluriformity seemed to be qualitatively indistinguishable from "the reception of biblical texts," if "reception" is understood in the broad sense of taking a text and doing something with it, even simply reading it. That is, these texts seem to overrrun borders as a matter of course.

And, conversely, things generally called "the reception of the book of Job," such as the Septuagint, Theodotion–Job, the Targums and the Peshitta, seemed to *actually be* "the book of Job" such that labeling them "(mere) receptions" proved at least misleading. In short, with texts and their receptions on both sides of the borderline I began to wonder, whence the line? While pondering this problem, I began to suspect that the inadequate investigation and justification of this line resulted in situations in which its presence, which is nearly ubiquitous in critical biblical studies, created more confusion than clarity about the identity of the biblical text, which is our common object of study. What belongs "in the original context" and what gets turned away at the border? Who has the authority to make these borders, and who

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1. For an example of this line of thought, see John Barton's distinction between reception history and traditional methods that produce proper biblical criticism in John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 86.

minds the checkpoints? Are these borders naturally given, or do we create them artificially?

In any case, I could not avoid concluding that my literal con-fusion regarding texts and receptions led my study of a text's reception to transgress this line that has conventionally delimited its identity as a different field than a text's production. Though the issue of borders may at first glance seem to be quite marginal, upon closer inspection borders take on quite a central role in the constitution and maintenance of textual identity. That is, in order to keep things orderly, biblical scholars must take turns volunteering for the border patrol.

These and many other questions encouraged me to outline a general theory of biblical reception, which is a very different project than my initial attempt to delineate the reception of a particular biblical text. The practical case study on the book of Job, once the entirety of the dissertation, has now shrunk to the point where it fits within the boundaries of two chapters. Thus, in many ways I feel as though I have only just begun my project even as it is drawing to a close.[2]

As a result of these transformations, this project has become much more theoretical and much less practical. And yet: is there anything quite as practical as knowing the point from which one should begin a task? And, is there anything more theoretical than the assumed borderline between "original" and "reception" which would have provided the point of departure for my so-called practical research?

Now that I have sketched out the problematic in advance, allow me to introduce it in more detail. I will begin with a discussion of the role of the boundary be-

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2. Though this note appears near the beginning of the text, I write these first words, as many authors do, in closing, after writing the rest. As I have learned firsthand, one does not know where one will go before one begins, and thus I can only introduce terrain that I have already mapped out.

tween "original" and "reception" within biblical studies as well as broader reception theory, after which I will introduce my plan for the remainder of the dissertation. This dissertation critiques the concept of the borderline that separates an "original text" or an "original context" from its "receptions," and in turn proposes a different manner of framing the practice of biblical reception history that, I argue, does more to clarify both text and reception.

2   MIND THE GAP?

Once a finished text leaves the pen of its author, or perhaps once a text moves beyond its original context, it enters into the world of *Wirkungsgeschichte,* or reception history, or literary *Nachleben*.[3] This is, at least, the foundational assumption that allows for the very study of reception history, since, broadly construed, "reception" implies an inquiry into the function of a text beyond the context in which it was produced.[4] As James Barr summarizes: reception history is the "history of the effects of writings rather than [their] origins," and thus it focuses on the period "after they were composed, after they were finalized."[5] Without this separation between the orig-

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    3. For the time being, I will gather these disparate concerns under the name "reception history" merely for the sake of convenience. They overlap, at minimum, in their attention to the function of texts in various contexts, especially those contexts removed from the text's authors or editors. I use "reception history" only because it is used frequently, and most biblical scholars will have a passing familiarity with the name. For those concerned with the metaphysical baggage that may accompany a term such as "reception history," see the discussion of "paleonymy" Jacques Derrida and Henri Ronse, *Positions* (trans. A. Bass; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 71.

    4. This *ad hoc* definition presents many problems and questions of definition which will be addressed throughout the dissetation.

    5. James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 447. See also John Barton, *Oracles of God*

inal and its reception, there would be no such thing as biblical reception history: instead, there would only be biblical criticism, which, in the words of John J. Collins, mainly carries out the work of "placing the Bible in its historical context."[6] It is only by means of the distinction between the Bible's historical context and presumably later, different historical contexts that biblical critics constitute manageable borders for their scholarly domain. In light of its fundamental importance, however, this gap between original and reception has come under surprisingly little scrutiny within the quickly growing field of biblical reception history.[7] For the sake of biblical reception history's rigor, it is imperative for biblical critics to take note of this constitutive boundary and discern its contour: how do we locate this boundary, where does it run, and what effects does it create? For example: is the Septuagint a later reception or the text itself? Is Second Isaiah a reception or an original text? Is the Noah pericope(s) a biblical text or a later reception of the original Mesopotamian flood myth? If producing careful reception histories is important, then the answers to these questions are also important.

In many of the opening pages of books dealing with biblical reception, however, one finds the constitutive divide between textual production and reception either posited or implied. This general assumption may be found quite clearly in the major

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(Oxford: Oxford University, 2007), x.

6. John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Augsburg: Fortress, 2007), 13.

7. As Carol Newsom notes, this field is growing in both energy and promise: "As reception history becomes increasingly integrated into biblical studies, it offers the promise of moving the hermeneutical engagement...beyond the current set of issues and problems. Although much of the reception historical literature is produced by scholars working in other disciplines, more and more biblical scholars are contributing to this research." Carol Newsom, "Re-considering Job," *Currents in Biblical Research* 5.2 (2007): 176.

efforts underway within the field of reception history of biblical texts. Perhaps most importantly, the series preface of the Blackwell Bible Commentary series, which describes itself as the first commentary series to focus primarily on reception history of biblical texts, claims that the series

> is based upon the premise that how people have interpreted, and been influenced by, a sacred text like the Bible is often as interesting and historically important as what it originally meant.[8]

In this statement, one can see a clear distinction between the text's "original meaning" in its original context and its later meanings in later contexts. The Blackwell series editors have employed their own versions of this assumption in other settings; as John Sawyer writes,

> What people believe the Bible means has often been more significant that what it originally meant… It can also be fascinating and valuable to reconstruct what the world was like in the ancient Near East, and how teachings and prophecies of the Bible were originally understood by their earliest listeners or readers… The study of postbiblical readings and artistic representations is known as reception history, or Wirkungsgeschichte…[9]

 In other words, reception history finds the "edge" of the original context– whether it be the work of the author or the immediate historical context of the text's production– and constitutes its scholarly domain as everything beyond that "edge." The Blackwell series introduction, however, does not explain where this edge exists, how one may find it, or what effects its alleged existence may have on texts and readers.

The *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, another scholarly reception historical series currently underway, defines its work in much the same way as the

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8. Series preface to the Blackwell Bible Commentary series, found in David. M. Gunn, *Judges Through the Centuries* (Blackwell Bible Commentaries; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), iv.

9. John F. A. Sawyer, *A Concise Dictionary of the Bible and Its Reception* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), ix.

Blackwell series:

> The Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception (EBR) pursues the twofold task of (1) comprehensively recording– and, indeed, advancing– the current knowledge of the origins and development of the Bible in its Jewish and Christian canonical forms and (2) documenting the history of the Bible's reception in Judaism and Christianity as evident in exegetical literature, theological and philosophical writings of various genres, literature, liturgy, music, the visual arts, dance, and film, as well as in Islam and other religious traditions and contemporary movements.[10]

Thus, the *EBR* divides its data into two categories: namely, (1) the context that produced and canonized the biblical texts and (2) readings and transformations of biblical texts within other contexts, presumably after their "canonization." Likewise, Choon-Leong Seow, one of the editors of the *EBR,* calls his approach "the "history of consequences," using "consequences" to connote *what comes after* (as in the history of interpretation and reception) as well as *impact* and *effects*."[11] Seow's forthcoming commentary detailing the history of the consequences of Job may provide a justification of this boundary between "before" and "after," but as of yet the boundary itself remains publicly unexamined.

Even scholars fully at home in the worlds of philosophy and literary theory often step over the constitutive divide as if it were a mere crack in the sidewalk. For example, in her excellent monograph exploring the literary *Nachleben* or "afterlife" of the book of Jonah, Yvonne Sherwood begins by jumping directly into the history of Christian interpretation of Jonah.[12] Even her title is indicative of the divide running

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10.   "Introduction," in Hans-Josef Klauck et al., eds. *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (Vol. 1: *Aaron-Aniconism.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), ix.

11.   Choon-Leong Seow, "Reflections on the History of Consequences: The Case of Job," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen* (eds. Kent H. Richards et al.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 563.

underneath her work: *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives,* wherein the biblical text separates from its afterlives by means of the conjunction "and." Sherwood's theoretical background does, however, shine through in her work: she cleverly divides reception into dominant and subversive categories.[13] By contrasting 'the mainstream" tradition with interpretive "backwaters and underbellies," Sherwood traces multiple lines of descent for the interpretation of Jonah, often in indirect, fragmented, dislocated trajectories, and seeks to de-legitimatize authoritative readings by unmasking their contingent rise to dominance.

Sherwood's use of the term *Nachleben,* usually translated "afterlife" or "survival," derives from the work of Walter Benjamin and, after him, Jacques Derrida, and has caught on especially among scholars familiar with poststructuralist theory.[14] Though Benjamin and Derrida primarily use this term (and with it *überleben*, *fortleben*, and *sur-vie*) to complicate the borderline between originals and reception, this aspect of Benjamin and Derrida's thought does not seem to have complicated the borderline for many "literary"-minded biblical scholars.[15] For example, David Gunn

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12.   See Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000), 9ff.

13.   By dividing the receptions of Jonah in this way, Sherwood follows Foucault's appropriation of Nietzsche's *wirkliche Historie.* See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (trans. D. Bouchard and S. Simon; Ithaca: Cornell University, 1977), 139-165.

14.   See Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's 'Tableaux Parisiens'," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (ed. H. Arendt; New York: Schocken, 1923), 69-82, Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (vol. 1; Stanford: Stanford University, 2007), 191-225, and R Detweiler, "Overliving," *Semeia* 54 (1991): 239-55.

15.   I here note the excellent work of Tod Linafelt, which explores how texts such as Isaiah 40-66 and Targum Lamentations function as "survivals" of Lamentations 1-2. Though Linafelt does not offer a thorough discussion of the border between "*vie*" and "*sur-vie*," his work serves as a model for careful reading and helpful conclusions. See Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a*

begins his study of the reception history of the book of Judges with a section on "early Christian and Jewish interpreters," neglecting to justify to his readers why *this* is the place to begin.[16]

Perhaps the explanatory lack derives in part from the basic, yet problematic, distinctions that have created and continue to sustain the field of biblical criticism. The foundational gesture of modern biblical criticism seems to be the assertion that scholars should read the "original version" of biblical texts within the cultural, political, literary, theological, and semantic boundaries provided by its "original context" instead of reading derivative versions of the text in light of later theological frameworks.[17] Since "later" versions and readings of the Bible have exerted such a powerful and complicated influence over the history of biblical interpretation in general, modern biblical scholars have understandably focused much of their attention on differentiating which texts and meanings are "original" from those that are "later," and in turn analyzing in more detail the "original" context and content.[18] While the signifi-

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Biblical Book (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000).

16. Gunn, *Judges Through the Centuries*, 18. Gunn may well have a helpful response to this question, but I have not been able to find a published version.

17. For a detailed defense of this claim, see chapters 2-5 of this dissertation.

18. It is rather common procedure for biblical scholars to begin a study with a popular reading of a particular passage before introducing the "real" meaning of that text as it was "in its context," thus disproving the popular reading. For example, almost every one of the hundreds of scholarly comments written on Job 19:25-27 begins with a now-hackneyed reference to Handel's *Messiah*, which, we are told, is the popular source for the commonplace thought that Job is a prophet of the resurrection. See, for example, J. Holman, "Does My Redeemer Live or is My Redeemer the Living God? Some Reflections on the Translation of Job 19,25", in *The Book of Job* (BETL 114; ed. W.A.M. Beuken; Leuven: Leuven University, 1994), 377. In general, the scholar then reveals that it is, in fact, Jerome who first made this startling interpretive shift in his Vulgate translation by imposing a foreign ideology upon an unsuspecting text. In the words of S. R. Driver, the OGJob, Pesh-Job and Rabbinic Targum "do not justify the conclusion that the translators detected an experience after death: however, the Vulgate, with all clearness,

cant contributions of scholars who search for the original (con)text are in no way in question, there is, however, a problem of definition that remains largely unthought: what is the point at which a text or meaning is no longer "original," and how can we know what this point is for biblical texts in general? What constitutes a context, and what is extraneous to its reconstitution? What is the status or value of "original" texts and meanings as opposed to the "later" ones? And by what means can one make this judgment? Taking a cue from Cherokee author Thomas King, quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, we may ask: does this border not create as many things as it breaks apart? What do we do with the unruly, disorderly "native" elements that inhabit these times and places within which we would like to impose a boundary? Of course, these are the problematics posed by *the constitutive divide*, which, as is becoming clear, is not simply a line like any other, since it adjudicates what is considered the proper domain of the discipline of biblical criticism.

Reception history does not usually challenge the boundaries of this modern framework; in general, it simply shifts the emphasis from one side of the divide to the other. Concerning the reception history of the New Testament, Luke Timothy Johnson writes,

> biblical scholars in the future will probably find the examination of the world that the New Testament creates more fruitful than the study of the world that created the New Testament.[19]

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does and even introduces the idea of the resurrection of the body." S. R. Driver and G. B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), 173. However, Jerome clearly did not invent the overtones of resurrection in this passage; they were in fact already inscribed in additions to the Septuagint and were quoted as such by Clement in the first century CE. For an early version of the "Jerome" argument, see J. I. Mombert, "On Job. xix. 25-27," *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis* 2 (1882): 29. For a more recent version, see David C. Hester, *Job* (IBS; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2005), 58.

19.   Luke Timothy Johnson, "Literary Criticism of Luke-Acts: Is Reception-

In order to differentiate the original and its reception, Johnson here uses the familiar trope of separate "worlds." Deriving from the work of Paul Ricoeur, this model of biblical criticism envisions a tripartite schema: the *world behind the text,* the *world in the text*, the and the *world in front of the text*.[20] In this model, the "world behind the text" refers to the context of the text's production, and can be addressed through the work of so-called historical criticism. Second, the "world in the text" refers to the "text itself," and can be addressed through formalist "close readings" and rhetorical criticism, otherwise known as "synchronic" or "literary" readings. And third, the "world in front of the text" refers to the "later" contexts wherein the text was "received," and can be addressed through the work of reception history, reader response criticism, and other sorts of situated readings. Terry Eagleton has used Ricoeur's model to periodize the history of modern literary theory, and it could serve as a rough guide to biblical scholarship as well:

> a preoccupation with the author (Romanticism and the nineteenth century); an exclusive concern with the text (New Criticism); and a marked shift of attention to the reader over recent years.[21]

This popular schema emerges from a series of simple distinctions, or constitutive boundaries, between author, text, and reader. Such an articulation of the elements involved in biblical criticism has immediately apparent value: for example, the modern reader inhabits a situation quite different from that presumed by the text at hand, and likewise the study of source criticism does tend to ignore how later readers made sense of such internally contrasting texts.

History Pertinent?," *JSNT* 28 (2005): 159.

    20.   Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1976), 87-94.

    21.   Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (2nd ed. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), 64.

Yet while these distinctions allow for the coherence of much of contemporary biblical scholarship, they also distort the fields indexed by the three terms. For example, when biblical critics talk about the "text itself" as something distinguishable from the "world in front of the text," we obscure the complicated zones–that is, the borderlines–in between these "worlds." For example: what do we look at when we look at the "text itself?" Most biblical scholars simply pick up the *BHS*, or perhaps now the *BHQ*. But the *BHS* is an edited *modern* scholarly reproduction of a *medieval* manuscript with *late antique* vowels, written in an anachronistic script and surrounded by diachronous layers of paratextual symbols. How can biblical scholars talk about something so historically sedimented as if it belongs to a world all by itself (i.e., the "world of the text")? Clearly, several "worlds" other than the "text itself," such as the Masoretic scribes and modern scholars, mediate the text and supply the conditions by which the text appears to us. So: what *is* the "text itself" if not for a complicated mix of things behind and in front of the text?

For that matter: how will we read this "text itself?" First, we will have to master the rules of classical Biblical Hebrew and use a dictionary, of course. Yet here we encounter the same problem: our only access to any "text itself" is mediated not only by the "worlds in front of the text" that devised grammars and lexica, but also by the "worlds behind the text"–some directly behind the text, and others, such as other ancient Semitic language-contexts, helping from a distance–that the modern grammarians and lexicographers study in order to create the means by which to read the "text (now not all by) itself." And whatever the "text itself" is, it must include just enough of the "world in front of the text" to let the reader in, however minimally. As for the "world behind the text," we find the same problems of mediation: we only know that world through the "texts themselves" and modern scholarly research, which we only know by means of previous work on the "world behind the text" from those already

in front of it. So: what *is* the "world behind the text" if not for a complicated mix of things in and in front of the text?

Thus when we look closely at these constitutive boundaries, instead of three nicely delineated worlds we find a paradox of infinitely regressive mutual dependencies. The borderlines themselves are so porous that one could hardly imagine what they might be able to keep out. Yet abandoning these distinctions would result in a collapse of the modern form of biblical criticism, since it relies so heavily upon the differentiation of a reader's context from the context in which the text was produced. Otherwise, we might all read whatever we like into whatever text we happen to read, which is commonly disparaged as the practice of "eisegesis." Though this state of affairs might delight a handful of reader response critics, it would by and large erase many of the fascinating and quite convincing achievements of modern biblical criticism, the most important of which is the discovery of the complicated history of the biblical text's composition and development.[22] But should not the field of biblical studies, which is so proud of its commitment to the truth no matter where it leads,

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22.   It is also important to note that Stanley Fish, the most famous of the reader-response critics, is persuasive only up to the point that he remains ambivalent about borders: Fish constantly deferred questions about the borders between interpretive communities and the different factions within a single interpretive community (e.g., concerning the boundary between reader and text: "what is that act an interpretation *of?* I cannot answer that question, but neither, I would claim, can anyone else..." Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1980), 165.) One could here sense the beginning of infinite regress: how could an interpretive community understand the communal rules of interpretation of a text without already being able to decipher discourse, since the interpretive rules must be learned by means of discourse? In other words, interpretations are texts too: how do we read those enough to learn the rules that guide them? Perhaps more problematic is the Hegelian rejoinder: how do you know about that boundary between the interpretation and whatever that interpretation is an interpretation *of* if you do not already know that there is a text on the other side of that border?

take an unflinching look at these problematic borderlines upon which it depends?

In the wake of the surprising discoveries at Qumran there has been more scrutiny of the borderline region, if not the concept of the border itself. As John Choi points out, much recent work in Pentateuchal studies, for example, attempts to locate the moment of transition wherein the Torah *qua* Mosaic Law emerged; this moment, then, might constitute a boundary between composition and reception of the Pentateuch.[23] As Choi writes,

> With regard to the Hebrew Bible, studies of reception history have generally focused on the history of interpretation of a given text within Jewish or Christian contexts. The present study, however, will take a slightly different path through a focus on the inner-biblical reception history of the Pentateuch.[24]

Yet even Choi, whose work brings him infinitesimally close to this border, continues to define reception history as merely

> the manner in which a certain text was regarded by later authors and readers... Rather than examining the cultural and sociological factors that inform text composition, reception-historical studies focus on the aftermath of composition and promulgation.[25]

But what does one do with, for example, OG-Daniel and MT-Daniel, which seem to both be later, though differing, expansions and redactions of a previous, and now lost, original?[26]   Where is the line between the "math" and the "aftermath"–that is, between composition and promulgation: do we only have receptions of the later ways

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23.   See the essays in G. N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson, *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding its Promulgation and Acceptance* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2007); also J. H. Choi, *Traditions at Odds: The Reception of the Pentateuch in Biblical and Second Temple Period Literature* (LHB/OTS 518; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 3-5.

24.   Ibid., 3-4.

25.   Ibid., 2-3.

26.   This will be discussed in chapter 2.

in which Daniel was regarded by later readers, or was there some way that the border had not yet been drawn? How would we know, in either event?

Likewise, James Kugel distinguishes between a "biblical period" and a period of "the rise of the ancient interpreters" without much discussing what would distinguish the reading of, say, Jeremiah in Daniel 9 from the reading of Habakkuk in Pesher Habakkuk.[27] To be sure, among biblical scholars interested in questions of inner-biblical interpretation, as well as scholars of literature of the late Second Temple period, one can find a sensitivity to the issue of the border between original and reception; the debate concerning the phrase "rewritten Bible" is a function of this very issue.[28] Yet aside from the "final form" provided by canonical criticism, the "original text" of some text critics, or the fiat authority of particular authors or readers, who has a clear idea of where to draw this line?

Perhaps the difficulties with borders derive from the fact that, in general, biblical scholars working with reception history have shown mild disinterest in the details of theories of reception or *Nachleben*. A clear index of this situation may be found in remarks made by Christopher Rowland, the lead editor of the Blackwell Bible Commentary Series. In a paper titled "A Pragmatic Approach to *Wirkungsgeschichte*," Rowland explains his lack of interest in methodological discussion:

> The inspiration for the BBC series did not come from immersion in the theoretical literature on reception history, most of which, I have not found too helpful in the task on which I have set out. Instead of beginning from a particular hermeneutical theory the series focuses

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27.   James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 7-8.

28.   I note here the cross-boundary work of William M. Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David: The Reception History of 2 Samuel 7:1-17* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). On rewritten Bible, see James E. Bowley and John C. Reeves, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible': Some Theses and Proposals," *Henoch* 25 (2003): 3-18.

on the task of exploring some of the many and various effects of biblical books.[29]

While Rowland's invaluable contributions to the field of reception history are beyond question, his decision to eschew theory in favor of a "pragmatic" approach is, I think, unfortunate. Not only does Rowland pass up the opportunity to use the BBC series to think through, propose, and revise methodologies for reception history; bypassing the the question of theory ultimately authorizes unanalyzed (and probably unhelpful) methodological assumptions. This attitude is not unique to biblical studies: as Charles Martindale laments,

> few have attempted, within classics, to theorize reception, or explore how such studies should best be pursued; indeed reception has been largely turned back into a form of positivist history, often of a rather amateurish kind.[30]

"Amateurish" may be a bit harsh, but as Rachel Nicholls points out, many studies of reception history do amount to a "scrapbook of effects" by simply juxtaposing readings that emerge from contexts later than the Second Temple period.[31] In many ways, the "scrapbook" reflects a lack of interest in selecting, organizing, and comparing the various interpretations: in short, the very purpose of the scholarly critical enterprise. One must in some way employ a theory, a *theoria:* a way of organizing by means of a scheme. Even a scrapbook is a scheme, though uncritical and usually unhelpful for

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29.   Chris Rowland, "A Pragmatic Approach to Wirkungsgeschichte: Reflections on the Blackwell Bible Commentary Series and on the Writing of Its Commentary on the Apocalypse" (paper presented at EKK Biannual Meeting, March 21-23, Germany, 2004). Posted online at <http://www.bbibcomm.net/news/rowland.doc>, accessed Jan 21, 2010.

30.   Charles Martindale, "Introduction: Thinking Through Reception," in *Classics and the Uses of Reception* (eds. C. Martindale and R. F. Thomas; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 9.

31.   Rachel Nicholls, *Walking on the Water: Reading Mt. 14: 22-33 in the Light of its Wirkungsgeschichte* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 27.

any purpose beyond creating the effect of sentimentality.

Yet one cannot blame this problem solely on biblical scholars: the problem seems to be in large part systemic. Even seasoned philosophers and theorists seem confused on this point, and have hedged on the topic of the constitutive divide. For example, neither Hans-Georg Gadamer, the author of *Truth and Method* and popularizer of the term *Wirkungsgeschichte,* nor Hans-Robert Jauss, who is responsible for the term *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, or "reception history," offer clear guidelines concerning the limits of the original text or context.[32]

In *Truth and Method,* Gadamer does not want to claim that recovering the author's intention is the goal of the hermeneutical project.[33] Yet neither does he want to assert that the text itself is entirely constructed by each interpretive community, ensuring no necessary continuity between any two interpretations.[34] On one hand, Gadamer's insistence on contemporary relevance keeps him from locating truth in the past; on the other hand, his interest in the "truth of tradition" and the "voices of the past" keep him from positing total discontinuity between the contemporary relevant meaning of the text and the past meanings of the text.[35] This puts Gadamer quite close to many biblical scholars, but no less in something of a dilemma: he needs a strong border to separate contexts so that they can fuse in dialogue, but simultaneously he needs a weak border so that both texts and readers can traverse it. Gadamer confronts this dilemma only indirectly in various brief passages of *Truth and Method,* and in other places addresses it with contradictory statements.[36] In order to

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32. For example, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (trans. J. Weinsheimer, D. Marshall; 2nd ed. London: Continuum, 2004), 267-382.

33. See Ibid., 366.

34. See, for example, Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?,* 303-321.

35. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 285.

36. For example: Gadamer claims that, in reading, the horizon of the object is

maintain the tension, Gadamer proposes that in the act of reading there exist two horizons, one of the reader, and one of the "historical horizon from which the traditionary text speaks."[37] The divide between the (original) past and the present is in fact *necessary* to proper interpretation: "Temporal distance... lets the true meaning of the object emerge fully" because "the true meaning has filtered out of it all kinds of things that obscure it."[38] Gadamer argues that the task of reading involves staging a dialogue between the two horizons creating a "fusion of horizons" that in turn produces "understanding."[39] This creates a

> tension... in the play between the traditionary text's strangeness and familiarity to us, between being a historically intended, distanciated object and belonging to a tradition. The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between.[40]

Thus Gadamer posits that reading occurs "in-between" the poles of "original context" and "reader's context"– in other words, at the borderline between original and reception.

Yet Gadamer then issues a series of conflicting judgments that complicate this picture. To begin, Gadamer argues that reconstructing the original author and audience is impossible and thus worthless,[41] but then claims that there can be no clear

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"projected" by the interpreter in order to maintain the *tension* implied (and thus separation and difference, hence a *strong border*) in the act of understanding; this projected horizon is then "fused" in a "regulated way" through the "historically effected consciousness"; this dialogue presupposes "otherness" and "a historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present," yet Gadamer's insistence on continuity can be seen in his discussion of tradition and historically effected consciousness, see Ibid., 305; his distaste for locating the true meaning in merely what has come from the past is also evident; see Ibid., 366.

37.   Ibid., 302.
38.   Ibid., 298.
39.   Ibid., 305-06.
40.   Ibid., 295.
41.   Ibid., 397. It is impossible if conceived of as a determinant judgment which

distinction between the original audience and the succeeding audiences.[42] Are all audiences equally worthless? Why should we construct our own horizon then, and the horizon of the text, if these cannot be differentiated from the original context?

Gadamer also argues that one cannot fully objectify the past, as the subject cannot be rid of its own historicity,[43] while simultaneously maintaining that the original text is rather like a speaking subject, thus casting hermeneutical investigation as a dialogue.[44] Yet how is one supposed to dialogue with an object that cannot be objectified enough to be separated from oneself? Moreover, the interpreter cannot treat the text as an object, because the text directly addresses him like an interlocutor.[45] Thus the interpreter waits for the "thing itself– the meaning of the text– to assert itself."[46] But how can the meaning assert itself if we cannot distance ourselves from it? Gadamer seems to desire both diametric dialectical tension *and* total continuity, but in the end he seems to collapse history into continuity:

> Are there really two different horizons here– the horizon in which the person seeking to understand lives and the historical horizon within which he places himself?... [T]hey together constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and that, beyond the frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness. Everything contained in historical consciousness is in fact embraced by a single historical horizon.[47]

Thus, there is no border between original and reception, and thus there is no recep-

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can be proven; but it can also be conceived of as a judgment using a concept of reason, in which the judgment can be disputed but not proven.

42. Ibid., 396.
43. Ibid., 305.
44. Ibid., 457.
45. Ibid., 390.
46. Ibid., 460.   Notice the singularity of "meaning" throughout Gadamer's discussion of texts.
47. Ibid., 304.

tion. There is only the original context, the "context itself." Yet Gadamer then at-tempts to retain the concept of a "fusion of horizons," which requires an initial separation:

> Every encounter with tradition... involves the experience of a tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naive assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out. This is why it is part of the hermeneutic approach to project a historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present. Historical consciousness is aware of its own otherness and hence foregrounds the horizon of the past from its own. On the other hand, it is itself, as we are trying to show, only something superimposed upon continuing tradition, and hence it immediately recombines with what it has foregrounded itself from in order to become one with itself again in the unity of the historical horizon that it thus acquires.[48]

We find in this paragraph a paradoxical *tension* between two *different* poles, namely, (1) the *tension* between the original context and the reader's context, and (2) the fact that this tension is nevertheless "only something superimposed" upon an actual un-derlying *unity*, and thus this false separation "immediately recombines" in "unity." One must ask: is the constitutive divide only ever false, a duplicitously artificial su-perimposition upon a naturally continuous, unified plane? Or, is it a natural division between two elements held in tension that can be overcome by the fusion of dialogic reading, forever eliminating the gap? Gadamer offers us no particular means of re-solving his own foundational internal difference, and thus his theory claims an ulti-mate unity that stubbornly resists its own unification.

Nevertheless, Hans-Robert Jauss continues to use Gadamer's image of "hori-zons," thus setting in dialogue the "original horizon of the past" with the reader's "horizon of expectations."[49] Yet while Jauss follows Gadamer's lead in retaining the

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48.   Ibid., 306.
49.   Hans-Robert Jauss, "The Identity of the Poetic Text in the Changing Horizon

"text" as something "other" than the readers and simultaneously "always already enveloped within the horizon of the present,"[50] he then paradoxically asserts the "objectifiable" nature of the "horizon of expectations" that constitutes a set of "literary data."[51] If historians and literary scholars can bracket their own situation and objectively reconstruct the horizon of expectations for a particular audience, then why does Jauss posit a seamless continuity of history that disallows the concept of an original meaning? And if formal elements are "objectively present" in both the audience and the work, then why must Jauss continue to assert that the past is enveloped and constituted by the present?

Perhaps, in part, the border between the original and its reception is troublesome because borders are simply troublesome things. Borders are required whenever one aims to separate, or clarify, or demarcate an inside from an outside: in this way, distinctions (and thus boundaries) are necessary for the possibility of thought to exist. One could not even gesture towards anything if it were not in some way distinguished from its surroundings.[52] But the distinction itself seems part *neither* of the thing distinguished *nor* its background: as C.S. Peirce put the question:

> A drop of ink has fallen upon the paper and I have walled it round.
> Now every point of the area within the walls is either black or white;
> and no point is both black and white. That is plain. The black is,
> however, all in one spot or blot; it is within bounds. There is a line of
> demarcation between the black and the white. Now I ask about the
> points of this line, are they black or white? Why one more than the

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of Understanding," in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies* (eds. James L. Machor and P. Goldstein; New York: Routledge, 2001), 7-8.

50.   Hans-Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (trans. T. Bahti; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 29.

51.   Ibid., 22.

52.   See the work of G. Spencer-Brown, who wrote the memorable phrase, "We cannot make an indication without drawing a distinction." *Laws of Form* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 1.

other? Are they (A) both black and white or (B) neither black nor white? Why A more than B, or B more than A? It is certainly true, First, that every point of the area is either black or white, Second, that no point is both black and white, Third, that the points of the boundary are no more white than black, and no more black than white. The logical conclusion from these three propositions is that the points of the boundary do not exist.[53]

But if borders do not exist, then how do we think at all? Are we, then, thinking? For this very reason, borders run philosophers in circles: is a border a real thing, or is it purely imaginary? Does the border belong to one, or both, of the elements that it separates? Are borders sharp, or vague; do they have substance or are they one-dimensional? To what degree are they permeable, and at what point does permeability render a border worthless as a border? If borders create conceptual territories that allow for the very activity of thought, does the collapse of the border necessitate a collapse in thought?[54]

Perhaps I will not address all of these questions in turn, but throughout the course of the dissertation, I will focus on questions of delimitation, identity and relations. Since reflection upon the task and tools of reception history might allow for more helpful collection and presentation of the fruits of reception historical efforts, this dissertation offers a theory of biblical reception that accounts for the concept of the gap separating the original and its reception. So: let us mind the gap.

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53. Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers, Volume 4* (ed. C Hartshorne, P Weiss; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1933), 98.

54. On these questions, see Geoffrey Bennington, "Frontiers: Of Literature and Philosophy," *Culture Machine* 2 (2000), accessed at [http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/305/290] on 4/12/2012.

3 PROBLEMS ORIGINATING ON THE BORDER (NATIVE FRONTIER PROBLEMS)

With this frame in place, let us revisit our initial statement: "Once a finished text leaves the pen of its author, or perhaps once a text moves beyond its original context, it enters into the world of *Wirkungsgeschichte,* or reception history, or literary *Nachleben.*"[55] One of the implications of this assertion is that the "original context" can be at least minimally distinguished from "previous contexts" or "later contexts," and a second implication is that there is an identifiable text that moves between these contexts.

In order to examine the nature of this divide, we must produce both a definition of what constitutes the essence of the "original" and a reasonably reliable determination of the moment at which this "original" essence changes into something "different" or "later." We must also discern what criteria should adjudicate the placement of the boundary.

Scholars have somewhat different ways of determining the original and, in turn, the secondary. Textual critics foreground the change in physical text through acts of editing, miscopying, or other forms of physical alteration from the "original" as the moment of the structural divide. Some literary-minded critics may foreground a particular change in socio-political structures (for example, the "Persian Period," or the advent of Hellenization, or perhaps the destruction of the Second Temple) as the boundary of the "original context," since the shift would establish a different set of reading and writing practices from those in place at the time of a biblical text's composition, which would necessarily alter a general reader's understanding of a text's

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55. For the putative original in this example of inner-dissertation interpretation, see B. Breed, *A Theory of Biblical Reception History,* 4.

meaning.[56] Both the text critic and the historicist literary critic, in these examples, would understand their methodological orientations as tools designed to overcome the constitutive divide and rediscover the material or ideal elements missing in "later contexts" that allow for a recovery of the "original." Most every biblical scholar plays both of these roles at times, since the ultimate goal of so-called "lower criticism" is to locate the original text among the debris of history, while the goal of so-called "higher criticism" is to place this original text back in its original context, thus allowing for an interpretation that is consonant with its "original meaning." Most methodologies used within biblical studies– text criticism, source, redaction, form, social-scientific, etc.– are designed for these specific purposes.

As a starting point, one can schematize definitions of "the original" in biblical studies as follows:

(1) one may point to the "original text," which may be differentiated from later (corrupt or otherwise altered) versions of the text;[57]

(2) one may point to the "original context," which is a reconstruction of particular elements of the social, political, ideological, linguistic, literary (and countless other) structures that were contemporaneous with the production of the text and function as a hermeneutical key to decipher the potential limits of the text's "original meaning," including the "original author's intentions," or some roughly equivalent expression, as well as the "original audience."[58]

In the next chapter, I turn to the notion of an original text that might be distinguished from its subsequent receptions.

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56. See, for example, J. M. Trotter, *Reading Hosea in Achaemenid Yehud* (JSOTSupS 328; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 37-50.

57. See chapter 2 of this dissertation for examples.

58. See chapter 4 of this dissertation for examples.

The Concept of the Original Text

> Wyman's overpopulated universe is in many ways unlovely. It offends the aesthetic sense of us who have a taste for desert landscapes, but this is not the worst of it. Wyman's slum of possibles is a breeding ground for disorderly elements... I feel we'd do better simply to clear Wyman's slum and be done with it.
>
> ———————————————
> W. V. O. QUINE

> You know, I like to walk in the slums. I can breathe when I walk through the slums.
>
> ———————————————
> JORGE LUIS BORGES

1 INTRODUCTION

According to many biblical scholars, biblical critics study original texts and contexts, while reception-historians are responsible for studying later texts and contexts.[1] The

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1. John Barton, in his effort to define the field of biblical criticism, argues that "Biblical criticism is a semantic operation in that it is concerned with the meaning of words and phrases. As we have seen, words have meaning only in a particular context: a word does not have a timeless meaning that is independent of the historical setting in which it is uttered. To that extent and in that sense biblical criticism is inevitably a historical discipline." John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 102. Barton reduces biblical criticism to the original words uttered and their meaning that existed at the moment of utterance. Thus later versions of those words and later construals of their meaning are something other than biblical criticism. As for traditional textual critics, Tov claims, "[L]iterary developments subsequent to the edition of M are excluded from [the text-critical and literary]

reception historian looks beyond the original text, while the traditional biblical schol-

ar looks at the original "text itself." Thus, in order to begin a thorough study of the

later texts and contexts that constitute the field of reception history, one must know

what the original is and where it ends.

However, the field of textual criticism has yet to give a definitive answer about

what constitutes the original text, and I suggest it cannot because the actual words of

original texts are so elusive that even the field designated to ensure their authenticity

and proper reproduction– namely, the field of textual criticism– has since its incep-

tion apologized for the impossible demands of its assigned task.[2] Though many bibli-

cal scholars attribute the failure to locate the original text to epistemological short-

comings,[3] it is becoming increasingly clear that this is instead an ontological problem

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discussion. This pertains to presumed midrashic developments in the books of Kings, Esther, and Daniel reflected in G." Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd rev. ed; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 316. Many other examples occur throughout this chapter.

2.   Louis Cappel, the first systematic modern textual critic, noted internal biblical quotations that differed slightly (e.g. Jer 52=2 Kgs 25) and, in light of the vicissitudes of transmission, concluded that "an absolutely pristine text would have required that God preserve it through a succession of miracles, something he clearly did not do." Stephen Burnett, "Later Christian Hebraists," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation, Vol. 2: From the Renaissance to the Enlightment* (eds. M Sæbø and M Fishbane; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008). 790; see Louis Cappel, *Arcanum punctationis revelatum* (1624), 289. Also see, for example, E.J. Epp's brief overview of the term "original text" in the history of New Testament textual criticism, in which he quotes J. L. Hug's 1808 Introduction to the New Testament among many other examples of textual critics visualizing their work as a necessarily limited representation, and not a mimetic replica, of a putative original text (note the hedging with the phrase 'as far as possible'): "...such are the pains that which have been bestowed upon [the biblical text] to restore it *as far as possible* to its original state..." J. Leonhard Hug, *Hug's Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. D Fosdick; Andover, Mass.: Gould, 1836 [1808]). See also Eldon J. Epp, "The Multivalence of the Term "Original Text" in New Testament Textual Criticism," *The Harvard Theological Review* 92 (1999): 253.

3.   So Ronald Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical

of the irreducible differences within various biblical books. In other words, original

biblical texts simply do not exist. As a result, a clear line dividing biblical criticism

from reception-history cannot exist either.

Some biblical critics object to the language of "origin," because this concept

ignores the various source and redaction layers that one may analyze as parts of the

history of a text's composition.[4] As John Barton claims, there are many such layers of

"origin" in every biblical text, and thus there is a variety of possible "original texts."[5]

While this is doubtless true, Tov argues that the word "original" does not necessarily

denote a moment of creation; rather, it signifies a moment of "correctness" that

stood at the end of a complicated history of production.[6] The object of textual criti-

cism, according to Emanuel Tov, is that single text that stood at the beginning of the

process of *transmission,* and whose history of production is the concern of other

sorts of scholars. Tov continues that "those who claim that a certain reading is

preferable to another actually presuppose one original text," since preference for any

particular text as the "right" text (or even the "somewhat more right text") assumes

at least a moment of relative "correctness" that existed in the biblical text's history.[7]

Thus, Tov claims that those text-critics who object to the language of the

"original" text and yet would presume to make objective judgments in favor of some

texts as "superior" are misconstruing the use of the word "original." Though Barton

denies that biblical criticism seeks only for the "original" text, he argues forcefully

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Edition," *VT* 58 (2008): 330.

    4. Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 41-43, for example, lays out objections
to the word "original text."

    5. See Ibid., 71.

    6. See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 177. Also note the discussion of
Tov below.

    7. Ibid., 168.

that the ancient text must be put back into its ancient context in order for the text to be read properly.[8] Barton points to the various redactional layers of the biblical text to deny originality to any of them, but he still holds that those texts must be divided into discrete units that correctly *reflect the text as it was in a particular point in time.* Furthermore, Barton argues that each of those texts must be analyzed within the linguistic and historical context in which it was written. Barton, like others, may claim to avoid the problems of the "original text," but Tov shows that Barton merely replicates the same logical structure on a smaller, intratextual level.

Other scholars object to the search for the "original text" because it sounds too similar to outmoded discussions of authorial "autographs."[9] Even such a stalwart conservative nineteenth-century theologian as B. B. Warfield hedged that there were biblical texts whose exact autographic wording were not within "direct reach."[10] Thus, almost all textual critics use qualifiers to admit that their search cannot recover the presumably lost "original" manuscripts. Scholars who reject the notion of "autograph" entirely (since it implicitly denies a complicated and redactional composition history) distance their text-critical goal from a presumed "original text" by claiming to seek an "archetype" or "hyparchetype." These terms are used to admit an epistemic humility, since the textual critics can only reconstruct an ideal later version of the original text based upon sometimes-spotty data, not the original text itself. For example, Ronald Hendel seeks the "earliest inferable textual state" of each extant

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8. Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 123, for the claim that a text must be placed into its linguistic context for proper comprehension.

9. See Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," and Michael V. Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible," *JNSL* 32 (2006) and the discussion of both below.

10. See Epp, "The Multivalence of the Term "Original Text" in New Testament Textual Criticism," 253.

edition of the biblical text (i.e. the proto-Masoretic text [=MT], the proto-Old Greek text [=OG], etc. where they present different literary editions).[11] Hendel still holds that there was, at one point, an "original text" that was the basis of each subsequent edition, but the original texts are themselves on the whole unrecoverable. Thus the goal of Hendel's text-critical work is necessarily "archetypes" that are a "step toward the original text" but are none of them the original text itself.[12] Thus the concept of the original text remains within the schema, but it is rendered as an asymptotic ideal at a remove from the "actual" original, which may thus be approached, but never fully attained.

Michael Fox finds the quest for the archetype too arduous, and so builds the system out one more level. In his article on the text-critical work underlying his edition of Proverbs for the Oxford Hebrew Bible project, Fox calls the archetype a "phantom," and instead tries to recover the "hyparchetype" of the proto-MT version of Proverbs.[13] This re-construction of the search for the original text remains indebted to the general narrative outlined above, since Hendel removes his goal one step from an ideal (the *Urtext*) onto another ideal (the archetype), and Fox simply removes his ideal one more step onto another ideal (the hyparchetype), all of which may only be approached in the manner of an asymptote. All of these replicate the problem of the "moment" of text-critical origin without solving it. Whether one objects to the term "origin" because of the diverse histories of composition of any biblical text or because of necessarily limited modern scholarly abilities to locate precisely any "pristine" text-form, the underlying, unsatisfying narrative of the "original text"

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11. See Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," 329, quoting E .J. Kenney, "Textual Criticism," *Encyclopedia Brittannica* (15th ed.; Chicago, 1984), vol. 18, 191.

12. Ibid., 332.

13. Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible,", 13.

still remains.

Since textual criticism seeks to identify that which is excluded from and yet forms the impetus for reception-historical work, reception history must seek to clarify the concepts and conclusions of textual criticism in order to understand its own domain. What follows is an examination of recent influential constructions of the text-critical goal and a re-assessment of the notion of the "original text" in all of its forms. In order to focus the discussion of this chapter, I will examine the work of major text critics who are also in some way are responsible for the major biblical text-critical projects that are currently underway: namely, Emanuel Tov, Ronald Hendel and Michael Fox, Moshe Goshen-Gottstein and Shemaryahu Talmon, and Eugene Ulrich.

Though I disagree with their conception of the "original" or "final text," my work is entirely dependent upon their vast contributions to the field. My hope is to critique what I see as unhelpful elements within their methodologies, not to question their expertise.

2   E. TOV: TELOS AND AUTHORITY

It is difficult to overstate Emanuel Tov's scholarly contributions to the field of textual criticism; his prodigious learning and prolific output have forever enriched the biblical studies community. Tov has, among other things, served as the editor-in-chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project, as an editor of the Hebrew University Bible [=HUB] and as the managing editor of the HUB edition of Jeremiah; he has also written what is currently the most comprehensive and prominent introduction to

textual criticism.[14] As such, Tov, and especially Tov's handbook of textual criticism, provides a conspicuous index of the broader field of textual criticism. For this reason, I will focus my critique on the conception of the original text presented in his handbook, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* but I note here that Tov has already begun to question this approach in recent years.

Since the discovery of the manuscript collections near Qumran, scholars have become keenly aware that the texts of the Hebrew Bible exhibited significant pluriformity several centuries before the common era.[15] Thus, various large-scale differences between OG and MT, for example, are not only due to translation errors and sloppily-transmitted manuscripts; instead, it seems that the MT actually exhibits a late, expanded form of several books, while OG reflects some later expansions as well as some Hebrew *Vorlagen* that are shorter than MT.[16] The manuscripts at Qumran also testify to the early existence of forms later edited by the Samaritan community into the Samaritan Pentateuch,[17] as well as biblical texts written in a particularly late scribal mode *and* biblical texts exhibiting variants heretofore unknown.[18] Tov labels

14. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible.*

15. Some scholars even argued in favor of textual pluriformity before the discoveries; see Paul Kahle, "Unterschungen Zur Geschichte Des Pentateuchtextes," in *Unterschungen Zur Geschichte Des Pentateuchtextes* (Opera Minora; Leiden: Brill, 1956).

16. For example, the MT exhibits a late reworking of the books of Jeremiah and 1-2 Samuel in comparison to the presumedly older base-text of the OG. See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible.* OG, Tov argues convincingly, represents a post-MT expanded Hebrew Vorlage for OG 3 Kingdoms [=1 Kings], Esther, and Daniel. See Emanuel Tov, "The Many Forms of Scripture: Reflections in Light of the LXX and 4QReworked Pentateuch," in *From Qumran to Aleppo: A Discussion With Emanuel Tov About the Textual History of Jewish Scriptures in Honor of His 65th Birthday*; (eds. A Lange et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009).

17. As found in 4QpaleoExod^m; see J. E. Sanderson, *An Exodus Scroll from Qumran: 4QpaleoExod^m and the Samaritan Tradition* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

18. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 114. Tov calls the Second Temple era

the latter group "non-aligned" texts, since they do not agree with any edition; this hefty chunk of Qumran manuscripts do not form a coherent text-group, but rather testify to a theoretically unlimited number of alternative text-forms.[19] At least some of these variant editions date from a time before the developments that led to the proto-Masoretic text, and thus there was never a moment at which the proto-MT offered the only version of biblical texts.[20] In spite of Qumran's snapshot of textual pluriformity, however, Tov has generally argued in favor of the *Urtext* theory, claiming that the proper objective of textual criticism is to locate the original text of the Bible.[21]

In light of the synchronic pluriformity at Qumran and the diachronic diversity within each textual tradition,[22] how could one argue there was one privileged manuscript of one privileged textual tradition? Tov relies upon the concepts of telos and authority to guide him to the proper text: in short, Tov posits that one particular

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orthography "Qumran practice," while Ulrich argues that these scrolls reflect a wider phenomenon throughout Palestine and thus should not be labeled as a sectarian stylistic group. See Eugene Ulrich, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hebrew Scriptural Texts," in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Second Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins* (ed. JH Charlesworth; Waco: Baylor University, 2006).

19. See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 116 for a list of various Qumran manuscripts that contain unaligned readings; most important are texts that show significant variations, such as 4QJosh[a] 4QJudg[a] and 4QSam[a]. Tov estimates that "non-aligned" texts comprise a full thirty-five percent of Qumran scrolls.

20. As attested by, for example, 4QJer[b,d]; see Emanuel Tov, "The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Its Textual History," in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (ed. J.H. Tigay; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1985)..

21. See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible.* 177-179. In recent years, Tov has redefined his project somewhat, but he continues to consider text-critical witnesses on a relative scale of more or less original. See Bénédicte Lemmelijn, "What Are We Looking for in Doing Old Testament Text-Criticism Research?" *JNSL* 23 (1997).

22. To complicate this presentation somewhat, each diachronic textual tradition also demonstrates internal diversity at any given synchronic moment of its development.

manuscript of the biblical text functioned briefly as both the telos of a long, complex process of textual production and as the origin of a long, complex history of transmission. Among the various versions, one was chosen as authoritative by a particular community and at a particular point in time that, for Tov, carried universal force.

Tov begins his introduction to textual criticism by offering a simple definition of his method: textual criticism (a) attempts to describe the "external conditions" and "procedure" of the text's transmission, (b) evaluates the variants in order to discover which one was "most likely to have been contained in the original text," and (c) does not inquire into or evaluate "readings included in textual witnesses which have been created at an earlier stage, that of the literary growth of the biblical books."[23] At first glance, this logic seems unimpeachable: when faced with a group of medieval and ancient witnesses to an even more ancient text, the textual critic must seek to describe the relationships between the manuscripts and evaluate which readings most closely represent the text that stands at the source of the tradition of transmission. Differences between manuscripts, by and large, thus reflect alterations made by scribes at some point in the copying process, and these alterations should be identified and corrected towards the readings that are more faithful to the original finished text. Versions written before completion should, much like the preliminary drafts of modern authors, not be considered in the assessment of the final published form of the text. For the central task of text criticism, Tov consciously follows in the footsteps of Paul de Lagarde, who first proposed an overarching theory of the biblical *Urtext,* or "original text."[24]

Tov defines the "original text," the goal of his methodology, with the following:

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23. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 1.
24. See Ibid., 183.

> At the end of the process of the composition of a biblical book stood a text which was considered authoritative (and hence also finished on the literary level), even if only by a limited group of people, and which at the same time stood at the beginning of a process of copying and textual transmission...All the textual witnesses - except those that reflect an early literary stage of the book - developed from the final authoritative copy which it is the object of textual criticism to reconstruct.[25]

Thus, Tov claims that the original text is that text which began the process of transmission; simultaneously, this is the *same text* as the final text that was the capstone of the compositional process. This image of the textual process works relatively well when describing modern compositional practices, in which an author composes a text by means of drafts and then subsequently the corrected text is published.[26] But does this image account for the known data concerning the development of the biblical text in the ancient world? In what follows, I will examine the moment that Tov argues beheld the actual existence of the final/original text, and then I will inquire into the authority given to this text and the status of the community that held this privilege.

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25. Ibid., 177.

26. Even in modern cases, however, deciding amongst various drafts, autographs, and proofs to identify "the original text" is more complicated than one might imagine. In the case of William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, for example, the later authorial addition of a rather self-interpretive appendix has led to disagreements concernign the appropriate constitution of the "original text" of this modern book. See Philip Cohen, "'The Key to the Whole Book': Faulkner's the Sound the Fury, the Compson Appendix, and Textual Instability," in *Texts and Textuality: Textual Instability, Theory, Interpreation* (ed. Philip Cohen; New York: Garland, 1997), 239-268.

2.1　Tov's Telos

Though Tov does not name a specific time and place that held the authoritative edition of each biblical text, he provides the conditions for its existence: namely, that the text was finished and deemed authoritative. What Tov means by "finished," however, is far from clear. Even if Tov's model is correct, the text clearly has been changed after the date at which it became "authoritative" (at which date and by what community is irrelevant), since the changes classified as "midrashic additions," "corruptions" and the like testify to the never-ending process of textual alteration.[27]

So what is the status of the multiple "non-pristine" text-forms that co-existed in the Second Temple period? That is, in the wake of the twentieth-century discoveries in the Judaean Desert, in which several large-scale variants in OG were found to have a Hebrew *Vorlage* different from the proto-MT yet co-extant in Palestine, how does Tov justify giving "final/original" status to one textual tradition at the expense of the others?[28] Tov claims that some communities decided that a particular text was finished and thus authoritative,[29] but as the text continued to change, this "final" edition became an "earlier edition."[30] Tov claims that the endpoint of this process is the Masoretic text, and thus marginalizes the variants underlying proto-OG. To re-quote:

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27. One may even add translation to the list, which also pushes the problem up to the present day. See chapter 3.

28. Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (SDSSRL; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 17-33 gives an overview of this evidence.

29. Ulrich presents an alternative to the "selection" thesis: namely, that the "selection" was an accident of history, proven by the difficult text of MT Samuel, Ezekiel and Hosea in light of less textually difficult forms that later found inclusion in OG via translation. See Ulrich, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hebrew Scriptural Texts," 77-100 .

30. See, for example, Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 177-79.

> The formulation of the original text is complicated by the assumption that in some books the authoritative edition such as known from M [the Masoretic Text] was preceded by earlier literary editions, each of which was accepted as authoritative by subsequent generations. All the textual witnesses - except those that reflect an early literary stage of the book - developed from the final authoritative copy which it is the object of textual criticism to reconstruct.[31]

Here, Tov admits the existence of multiple literary editions of biblical texts but then immediately defines them as non-final, non-authoritative. In a sleight of hand, Tov defines the variant edition of Jeremiah presented by the proto-OG, for example, as an "early literary stage," something premature that nevertheless continued to function as an authoritative text and be copied as such. Yet Ulrich points to the telic problem underlying this argument and the entire vocabulary of "proto-MT" and "proto-OG": these two supposedly discernible groups of texts exhibit no across-the-board typological similarities, and thus did not undergo some sort of definitive recension before admission into various communities as sacred texts.[32] In other words, the "proto-MT" texts exhibit no common recensional traits, since some so-called proto-MT texts contain "midrashic expansions" (e.g. Jeremiah) and others are textually problematic (e.g. Samuel) in light of the texts that ended up being translated and used in the Greek Bible. Calling a text "proto-MT" only makes sense in retrospect, since these texts were not grouped together over against other editions; thus the names "proto-MT," "proto-OG" and "proto-SamPent" treat an essentially contingent series of developments as if they were entirely necessary. Tov here claims that the essence of these texts, unbeknownst to the people who wrote and re-wrote them, was only to be fulfilled in their future canonical actualization.[33] In Armin Lange's words, this classi-

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31. See Ibid., 177.
32. See Ulrich, 93, and Tov's admission of the same, 93 n. 34.

ficatory scheme is a "retro-projection."[34]

Tov then asserts the quantitative value of the MT, since "all the textual witnesses" derive from the presumed proto-Masoretic "final authoritative copy." Yet this begs the question by defining away any textual competition: of course "all textual witnesses" except those witnesses that witness to something else witness to the MT![35]

Tov defines stages of the text's development that occur later than MT as something else entirely:

> Literary stages preceding the literary editions included in M are taken
> into consideration, but later ones are not...Thus the recensionally
> different Hebrew texts behind various sections in G in 1 Kings (3
> Reigns in G), Esther, and Daniel, in our mind all later than the edition
> of M, and probably reflecting late midrashic developments, need not
> be taken into consideration.[36]

Developments that occur before the "final" stage of MT are thus considered

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33. In structure, Tov's argument seems eminently "Hegelian": the historical structure contains within itself the essence of its own telic fulfillment, and history is the discovery of the necessary movement of History. One may, instead, think in terms of Freud's *nachträglichkeit*: that is, meaning is a retroactive determination that assigns necessity to what was, ultimately, a contingent series of events. The terminology "proto-MT" means nothing more than "that which would be seen as a member of a category by later people." One cannot speak of this group in terms that respect the "historical context" of Second Temple Palestine. It is in this retroactively determinate sense that I use these terms, proto-OG and proto-MT; see Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (trans. G. Bennington; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 134.

34. Armin Lange, "'They Confirmed the Reading' (*y. Ta'an* 4.68a): The Textual Standardization of Jewish Scriptures in the Second Temple Period" in F*rom Qumran to Aleppo: A Discussion with Emanuel Tov about the Textual History of Jewish Scriptures in Honor of His 65th Birthday* (Armin Lange, ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2009) 51, 77.

35. Tov also admits elsewhere that the quantity of manuscripts is irrelevant to their textual status, since this is merely an index of their socio-cultural status; see Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* 25.

36. Ibid. 179.

"early literary stages" that precede the "final" form, while later alterations are consid-ered "midrashic" and thus are of a different order than the composition of the text it-self. Again, Tov asserts a definition assuming an ontological difference (here, "liter-ary" versus "midrashic") and then proceeds to argue for the distinction based upon the definition. Furthermore, while Tov may accept the existence of multiple "final forms" of the text, including proto-OG, nevertheless Tov uses this logic to define the "object of text criticism" as the reconstruction of the proto-Masoretic text of the first-century CE. Can an entire scholarly discipline really accept such a starting point?

For texts such as Jeremiah, which "reached a final status not just once, in M, but also previously,"[37] Tov seems to allow that the previous stage of Jeremiah reflect-ed in the proto-OG was authoritative, at least for that community. Yet can proto-OG Jeremiah be "previous" if both proto-OG Jeremiah and proto-MT Jeremiah co-exist at Qumran, as in 4QJer[a,c,e] and 4QJer[b,d], and if later derivative editions of both con-tinue to function as sacred scripture for different communities post-70 CE?[38]

Tov is very clear that for him the textual multiplicity does not reflect the origi-nal text:

> [I]f we had reconstructed a number of pristine texts constituting this multiplicity, we would have been laboring under a misconception, since they merely reflect a relatively late stage in the textual development of the Bible.[39]

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37. Ibid. 178.

38. From this, another question arises: how can the authority invested in the proto-OG Jeremiah function only provisionally, whereas the authority invested in proto-MT Jeremiah is somehow universal? See §2.2, below. For an overview of the problem posed by the Qumran variants, see Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, "De Baruch À Jérémie: Les Deux Rédactions Conservées Du Livre De Jérémie," in *Le Livre De Jérémie* (ed. P.-M. Bogaert; BETL 54; Leuven: Leuven University, 1981).

39. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 179.

Thus, he implicitly defines pristine texts as those texts that reflect proto-MT. Furthermore, the period of time that marks the original text is not something determinate, but rather is itself defined by means of exclusion: if something was written prior to the final text, it is a late stage of development. If it was written after the final text, then it is an early stage of midrash or an early corruption. How is a text critic supposed to find something defined exclusively by means of circular logic?

Another problem arises from Tov's chronological determination, namely, when and how did authors-editors transform into copyists, and alterations shift from "redactions" or "literary developments" to "corruptions"? Tov seems to follow the idea of Ginsburg, who writes:

> The words of the text, especially of the Pentateuch, were now finally settled, and passed over from the Soferim or redactors to the safe keeping of the Massorites. Henceforth the Massorites became the authoritative custodians of the traditionally transmitted text. Their functions were entirely different from their predecessors the Soferim. The Soferim, we have seen, were the authorized revisers and redactors of the text according to certain principles, the Massorites were precluded from developing the principles and altering the text in harmony with these canons.[40]

Again, it seems that text critics are at pains to describe the authority that undergirds the final late additions to the text, whereas the changes to the text that occur after the moment of textual purity are considered a perversion of authority. This abrupt and aporetic transition from author to copyist seems to ignore the dual role of

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40. Christian D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1897) [reprinted with prolegomenon by H. M. Orlinsky; New York: Ktav, 1966] 421. Quoted in John Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the "Editor" in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 61. See Van Seters 60-112 for a detailed examination fo this very question.

scribes throughout the Second Temple period; Ginsburg himself admits to significant diversity among Masorertic scribal productions.[41] Evidence from Qumran shows that in Second Temple Palestine "scribes and their predecessors were at work along two lines," one being that of copying "as exactly as humanly possible," but scribes also "intentionally inserted new material" at times.[42] The result of this process can be seen in the quite late harmonistic developments in 4QpaleoExod[m] as attested at Qumran (and later adopted by the Samaritan community), for example.[43]

Tov has wrestled with another manuscript, tentatively named 4QReworked Pentateuch, that similarly exhibits large-scale revisions, such as an expanded Song of Miriam.[44] Tov has noted the typological similarities between 4QReworked Penta-teuch and 4QpaleoExod[m], and has concluded that since 4QpaleoExod[m] is considered an attestation of "Exodus," then 4QReworked Pentateuch must be reclassified as "4QPentateuch," following the arguments of Ulrich and Flint.[45] At any given point in time along the development of any of the variously intertwined traditions of biblical text-forms, there have been textual alterations that occurred prior to as well as sub-

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41. See especially his discussion of the Prophets and Writings, Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* [reprinted with prolegomenon by H. M. Orlinsky; New York: Ktav, 1966] 422.

42. Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible,* 11.

43. Ibid., 39; see also Sanderson, *An Exodus Scroll from Qumran.*

44. 4QReworkedPentateuch is attested to by five fragmentary manuscripts, two of which, 4Q364 and 4Q365, contain significant text. The Song of Miriam occurs in 4Q365=4QRP[c]. See Harold Attridge and James VanderKam, eds. *Qumran Cave 4.VIII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 1* (*DJD* 13; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

45. Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible.* 115-120; PW Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* (STDJ 17; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 202-27; see also M Segal, "4QReworked Pentateuch Or 4QPentateuch?," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years After Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20-25, 1997* (ed. L. Schiffman; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000); and Tov, 27.

sequent to that point.[46] Even "outside" the proto-Masoretic tradition, scribes contin-

ued to work in similar ways on either side of the presumed ontological divide: as

Tigay has shown, the process of rewriting the Samaritan Pentateuch seems almost

formally indistinguishable from the presumed compositional process of the Penta-

teuch in the early Second Temple period.[47] Scribes were always both copyists and au-

thors, always changing things to various degrees.[48]

Practically, Tov examines the difference between "literary" and "textual" criti-

cism as it applies to Jeremiah 9-10. As Tov himself has shown, Jeremiah exists in two

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46. This is especially true if one considers ancient, medieval and modern
translations; see the following chapters for an argument to that effect. Consider, for
example, the textual development witnessed by the NRSV with respect to 1 Samuel 10-11:
the NRSV has added into its base-text a presumedly lost pericope found in several
manuscripts at Qumran. See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 342-344. One
may also look to the eclectic efforts of the OHB, whose search for the original text will
doubtless create something heretofore unknown as well as recover ancient readings; this
development testifies to the still-changing biblical text. See Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew
Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition."

47. See Jeffrey Tigay, "Conflation as a Redactional Technique," in *Empirical Models
for Biblical Criticism* (ed. J. H. Tigay; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1985).

48. This fine line was noted as early as Wellhausen, who wrote: "The border between
the text and gloss [is] so fluid that one does not know whether the removal of a verse that
interrupts the context, belongs to the task of the textual or to that of literary criticism."
Julius Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis untersucht* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck
& Ruprecht, 1871) 25 n.2, quoted in Magne Sæbø, *On the Way to Canon: Creative
Tradition History in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998) 43. Sæbø
also notes his own work with Zachariah, in which he saw that "the transmission of the
text turned out to be productive, not only *reproductive,*" as well as Skehan's study of
1QIs[a], wherein Skehan argues for the presence of "an exegetical process at work within
the transmission of the text itself, in Hebrew." See Patrick Skehan, "The Qumran
Manuscripts and Textual Criticism," *Volume du Congres Strasbourg 1956* (Leiden: Brill,
1957) 148-60, cited in Sæbø, *On the Way to Canon: Creative Tradition History in the
Old Testament.*. One may even imagine that this tradition extends, though perhaps in a
more limited sense, in the post-"stabilization" period, as witnessed by variants within the
Masoretic tradition, including examples of *Ketib-Qere* and *tiqqun soferim.*

major versions, the proto-OG version and the MT version.[49] The proto-OG version is one-sixth shorter and contains sections that are ordered differently than the MT. It appears that, over time, MT expanded and altered a text that was nearly identical to proto-OG.

In Jeremiah 10, the MT has re-arranged and added several verses to the proto-OG Jeremiah 10, as attested to by 4QJer[b,d].[50] The order of the proto-OG version contains verses 1-5a, 9, 5b, 11-12; it is missing verses 6-8 and 10. What is more, in both 4QJer[b] and MT, verse 11 is written in Aramaic, not Hebrew. The verses present in the proto-OG have the uniform focus of deriding idol worship, while the verses absent in the proto-OG version share a different focus: namely, they "extol the Lord of Israel."[51] Verse 11, though present in both versions, seems to expand the critique of idol worship further than the rest of the proto-OG material, since it accuses the foreign gods of not cooperating in YHWH's creation of the world and declares that these foreign gods will "perish." These theological interests seem to be at odds with the rather less severe critique of idol worship in verses 1-5.

Most likely, proto-MT has re-arranged and augmented the earlier proto-OG version, but even before the proto-MT expansion an Aramaic editor altered the earlier version, since verse 11 appears in both texts. Knowing this, it seems strange to identify the proto-OG version as being still "in production," its scribes as still being "authors-editors," and its alterations still "compositional," whereas any minor changes made to the MT version *after* the addition of verses 6-8 and 10 are "corruptions," since its scribes are supposed to be merely "copyists" at that point!

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49. See Tov, and Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 319-327 for an overview of the textual problems in Jeremiah.

50. See Ibid. 325-327 for the texts of the different versions.

51. Ibid. 326.

In order to argue that the proto-MT is objectively the original text, Tov constructs a paradoxical object of textual criticism, the "final/original" text, that exists only briefly (or perhaps not at all) in the moment at which redactors transform into copyists, additions transform into corruptions, and all previous final/original versions become something less than "the text" for the scholarly world. Taken to its logical ends, this view forces the scholar into making nonsensical judgments.[52]

For the sake of clarity, one might depict Tov's schema as follows:
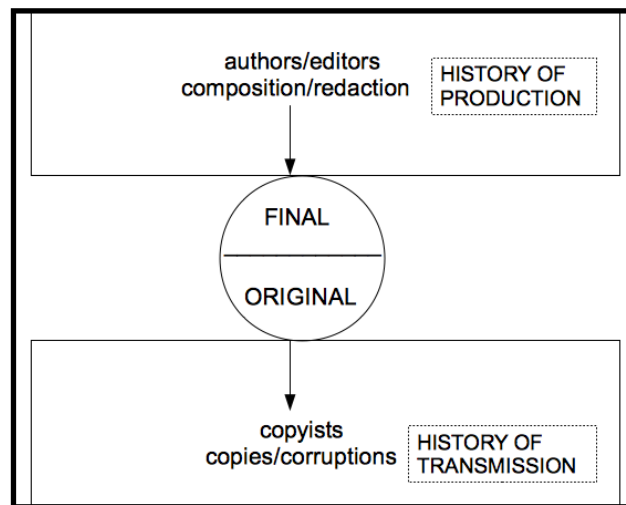
fig. 2.1: Tov's Schema

Alternatively, one might assume that transmission always relied upon a combination of copying *and* authorial-editorial work, and that there were, from a time preceding any community's assent to authority (if such a thing has ever happened in anything other than a gradual process), multiple textual traditions that continued along interwoven trajectories. Certainly corrections in the OG/LXX towards MT, as

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52. One might analyze how the "final/original" functions as a "transcendental signifier," or a anchor that organizes a conceptual system only by virtue of its ability to play several contradictory roles simultaneously. Conceptual systems "give rise to at least one transcendental term that they are constitutively incapable of questioning," and the "original text" seems to serve as this paradoxical object for textual criticism. See Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida,* 61.

well as Jewish recensions such as Aquila, Symmachus and *kaige*-Theodotion and non-aligned texts at Qumran reveal that text traditions were not hermetically sealed from one another.[53] Furthermore, what objective reason can one give that relegates the versions that follow these multiple "original texts" to anything less than the same ontological status as their source texts? If no compelling reason can be given, then perhaps the ontological divide between "original text" and "reception" needs to be rethought.

Thus even of his own presumed original period of stability and authoritative hegemony, Tov is forced to conclude:

> [T]he period of relative textual unity reflected in the assumed pristine text(s) of the biblical books was brief at best, but in actual fact it probably never existed, for during the same period there were also current among the people a few copies representing stages which preceded the completion of the literary composition.[54]

There was, Tov admits, actually no moment of textual unity, for there existed already by the time of stabilization other text-forms and other "people," for example Josephus, who used and deemed authoritative these other forms. Yet Tov sidesteps their existence by claiming that their versions were not actually completed; there was more work left to do (unbeknownst to those readers and writers, however). Of course, for the community of rabbinic Judaism the final form of the text had yet to be finalized; but this would also require the work of the Masoretes, who were many centuries in the future.

Moreover, Tov admits to a serious problem within the proto-MT tradition:

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53. For Greek corrections towards MT, see D. Barthélemy, *Les devanciers d'Aquila* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); for a brief discussion of non-aligned texts see Emanuel Tov, *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible and Qumran* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 148-49.

54. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 189.

> There has never existed any one single text that could be named the Masoretic Text…In other words, although there indeed existed the express wish not to insert any changes in the Masoretic texts, the reality was in fact paradoxically different, since the texts of the M group themselves aleady differed one from the other. Thus there existed a strong desire for textual standardization, but this desire could not erase the differences already existing between the texts. The wish to preserve a unified textual tradition thus remained an abstract ideal which could not be accomplished in reality. Moreover, despite the scribes' meticulous care, changes, corrections, and mistakes were added to the internal differences already existing between members of the M group.[55]

Does Tov here substitute his desire for the ideal original text for that of first-century scribes? Textual standardization, he admits, never existed; at the moment of telic completion, there was internal difference and conflict. At the origin stood not harmony or substantial identity, but complexity. What kind of final form is this? What sort of origin?

Paradoxically, Tov elaborates: "Even though the scribes of M meticulously preserved a uniform text, breaches in the unity are nevertheless visible."[56] How can something be uniform *and* have breaches in its unity?[57] Tov posits an identity for MT (its singular nature, the uniformity underlying its manifold appearances) yet admits to its contradictory concrete instantiations. Whenever one looks for "the text of Jeremiah," one sees only cracks in the edifice of the concept of "Jeremiah"; yet this in no

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55. Ibid. 28-29.

56. Ibid. 26.

57. Tov lists, for example, 250 consonantal differences between eastern and western manuscripts; numerous vocalization differences, and up to 1566 examples of ketib-qere and up to 200 examples of sebirin that attest to a lively textual tradition post-"stabilization." See Ibid. 64.

way dampens the notion that the text of Jeremiah in some sense exists as such. What Tov (perhaps unwittingly) sets forth is the problem of universals: how can it be that concrete particulars are the "same thing" yet noncoincidental? How can they share an identity, and yet exhibit significant differences? While Tov sets forth a theory that seems to privilege one historical text-form, he gestures here in another direction entirely: namely, a theory that admits to– and perhaps privileges– the breaches themselves.[58]

Instead of the implicit narrative of origin, corruption, recovery, perhaps scholars could view the entire history of the text as just that - namely, the history of the text. Perhaps there is not just one moment that naturally, or objectively, defines its pure essence, and there is no objective chronological, geographic, or socio-religious limit to the alterations that may be made to the text. Surely there are mistakes, such as spelling errors, that enter into the history of the text, but there are also additions - for example, the early harmonistic alterations within the pre-Samaritan Pentateuch and the later particular religio-political alterations made to the Samaritan Pentateuch - that also create versions of the biblical text, and should be treated as such. Though individual scholars have important and valid religious convictions that may impinge upon their own view of which text is the "right" version of the Bible, these remain religious opinions, and cannot be claimed as constitutive for scholarly study of the field as such.

In summary, Tov holds the following:

> During textual transmission, many complicated changes occurred, rendering the reconstruction of the original form of the text almost impossible. These difficulties, however, do not undermine the validity of the assumption of an original text.[59]

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58. See section 3.2 below for elaboration.

In response I would claim: During textual transmission, many complicated changes occurred, resulting in many different forms of the biblical text. These differences require scholars to assume that at no point along the complicated genealogies of the text did the text become something other than one simple witness to the overall development of the text. In short, there is no manuscript or text-form that is either final or original, and certainly no manuscript or text-form that is both.

Why call the proto-Masoretic text from the first century CE "original," or an *Urtext* at all, if it is composed by means of rewriting and redacting a long history of diverse earlier works? There is, undoubtedly, a general stability to the transmission of the proto-MT tradition, but even the putative "original" proto-MT itself is derivative of a much larger, much longer textual history. Any origin located in the first century CE is no origin. Moreover, the pluriform text history that existed in Second Temple Palestine as attested by the scrolls found at Qumran pushes away simple formulations of an *Urtext* located in time and space. There were always breaches.

Furthermore, the manuscript record proves that no biblical text has ever been *final* in any sense other than a retroactively ideal form. It is quite clear that scribes continued, even through the Masoretic period, to add, subtract, and reconfigure elements of the text. Tov himself notes the various systems used to add vowels to the consonantal text,[60] the addition of accentuation and division into sections,[61] paratextual interpretive elements,[62] and most important, the actual emendations to the con-

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59. Ibid. 177.
60. Ibid., 39-49; note the allowance for significant difference from the presumedly original vowels, p. 41.
61. Ibid., 50-54.
62. Ibid., 54-58. Note that inverted *nun*, puncta extrordinaria, litterae suspensae and enlarged letters constitute scribal marginalia that at times altered the consonantal text and certianly have exerted influence on readers up to the present.

sonantal text known as *tiqqunê soferim* as well as the inner-textual inclusion of variants known as *Ketib-Qere*.[63]

It seems quite logical that scribal errors such as haplography, dittography, and the like may be treated as errors, but what about intentional changes, such as *tiqqunê soferim*? More important, if scribal errors are obviously corruptions then what does a text-critic do with a scribal error that occurred before the moment of the transition from "composition" to "transmission", such as the proto-Masoretic version of 1-2 Samuel, which is rife with haplography?[64]

As text criticism itself proves, the text is still decidedly *not* stable; text critics apparently still have work left to do. For example, the discovery of 4QSam[a] has convinced many text critics to count as authentic a section of text in between 1 Samuel 10 and 1 Samuel 11 that had been excised, presumably by scribal error.[65] While others have argued that the "lost" text is a late midrashic expansion and should not be included as part of the original text,[66] Tov makes a convincing case that the variant is not late, but early, and that it was lost from the MT.[67] Thus, the construction of the final form of the text is itself altered by the text-critics who look for the supposedly

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63. Ibid., 58-67.

64. See especially Frank Moore Cross Jr., "The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of Discoveries in the Judaean Desert," *The Harvard Theological Review* 57 (1964): 281-299; Eugene Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1978).

65. Frank Moore Cross Jr., "The Ammonite Oppression of the Tribes of Gad and Reuben: Missing Verses From 1 Samuel 11 Found in 4QSamuel[a]," in *The Ammonite Oppression of the Tribes of Gad and Reuben: Missing Verses From 1 Samuel 11 Found in 4QSamuel[a]* (eds. H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld; Jerusalem: Humanities Press, 1983). For a brief overview of the issue, see Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* 342-344.

66. A. Rofé, "The Acts of Nahash According to 4QSam[a]," *IEJ* 32 (1982): 129-133.

67. See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* 343-344.

stabilized final text, and with some very concrete ramifications: as a result, some modern translations have added this once lost text to the end of 1 Samuel 10:27 (cf. NRSV). Though these scholars seek to find the final/original text, their scholarly work itself disturbs the history of the transmission of the text: grafting the extra text from 4QSam^a onto the MT, as the NRSV does, likely creates a wholly new text that has heretofore not existed. Since the MT version of 1 Samuel 16-17 contains additions not found in the proto-OG texts such as 4QSam^a, yet the NRSV retains the MT for 1 Samuel 16-17, the NRSV then forms a composite text-type that may reflect a text at one point in history, but if it does not, it reflects an entirely new text. Even if the text is not entirely new, its text form would derive from a time before the stabilization of the MT; ostensibly what the NRSV is aiming for is the text as it should have been but never was. More surely, within the eclectic project of the Oxford Hebrew Bible there are bound to be some novel text forms. The point is this: the text is not yet done changing, because it continues to be read and studied.

Yet perhaps a community had the authority to make one of the myriad variants be the final and original text-form, even though transmission-composition history continued to alter the text. How does Tov understand such authority?

2.2   Tov's Authority

Perhaps the most important concept within Tov's schema of textual criticism is the problematic concept of "authority" that determines which textual moment achieved "finality/originality." Given the complicated trajectory of a text's development, a trajectory in which the text, at every attested stage, is realized in several divergent versions, which community has the authority to determine the point of "origin" for all other communities? Where does this authority come from? And who gives it? How

does one recognize the marks of this authority, and what are its limitations?

There have been many groups that have considered the biblical books to be authoritative in some way, and they have done so with various literary editions of the same book. Not only is there a difference among the broad categories of Christians and Jews, but within these groups there are various sub-groups that treat different texts (and even canons) as authoritative. How does one know which group held the proper authority to consider the text authoritative?[68]

For Tov, authority emanated from the Second Temple:

> [A]lthough...textual plurality was characteristic for all of ancient Israel, it appears that in temple circles there existed a preference for one textual tradition, i.e., the texts of the Masoretic family.[69]

Here, Tov relies upon Paul de Lagarde.[70] De Lagarde, as Rosenmüller before him, ar-

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68. Tov does note that earlier (as well as later) versions of books were accepted as authoritative by various communities, but claims that the object of text criticism is the "authoritative final 'copy' or "tradition,' although in some instances earlier authoritative editions should be kept in mind as well." (See Ibid. 172). When defining how one knows the difference between the "final" authoritative version and an "earlier" authoritative version, Tov argues that "by definition literary structures" created later than the MT "should not be brought to bear on the original text of the Hebrew Scriptures," because "scholars take into consideration the authoritative status conferred on these compositions by Judaism at a later stage." (See Ibid. 178.) This argument is unpersuasive, because particular historical religious communities do not "by definition" hold the authority to define for scholars the supposedly objective "pristine" text; moreover, Tov gives the authority to determine which authoritative version is *truly* authoritative to a particular later religious community. This seems to make the historical moment of the "original" text a retroactive construction, which in turn deprives the moment of any supposed originality or the community and text of self-justifying authority.

69. Ibid. 191.

70. See Ibid. 189 for Tov's endorsement of de Lagarde's position. Tov allows for earlier literary editions, but still holds that an Urtext (or perhaps "various pristine texts") existed.

gued that every single manuscript representing the Hebrew Bible descends from a single 'model-codex,' the form of which was normative for rabbinic Judaism.[71] The evidence for this is primarily Talmudic: Tov lays out several references to *maggihim,* or professional "correctors" employed to safeguard the text.[72] Tov also argues for the authority of proto-MT by the quantity of manuscripts found post-70 CE: the preponderance of texts found in the Judean Desert that date from the first century CE exhibit proto-MT, and several Greek corrections towards proto-MT date from near the same time.[73] Tov assumes that, since the proto-Masoretic text was copied quite often and exhibited a general consistency as a base text within the Second Temple period it must be identical to the texts claimed to emanate from the temple precincts.[74] In another publication, Tov extends this claim:

> Identity between two or more texts could have been achieved only if all of them were copied from a single source, in this case (a) master copy (copies) located in a central place, until 70 CE probably in the temple, and subsequently in another central place (Jamnia?). The textual unity described above has to start somewhere and the assumption of master copies is therefore necessary. The depositing and preserving of holy books in the temple is parallel to the modern concept of publication...[75]

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71. Paul de Lagarde, *Anmerkungen zur griechischen Übersetzung der Proverbien* (Leipzig: FA Brockhaus, 1863) 1-2. See also Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Old Testament Text," in Frank Moore Cross and Shemaryahu Talmon, *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1978) 14.

72.   See *b. Ketub* 106a; the reference to a "corrected scroll" in *b. Pesah* 112a; "uncorrected scroll" in *b. Ketub.* 19b; the three (differing!) scrolls in the Temple and the procedure used to adjudicate variants in *y. Taᶜan.* 4.68a; the exhortation to accuracy in *b. Sot* 20a. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* 32-33.

73. See Ibid. 28-29.

74. See Ibid. 28-29.

75. Tov, *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible and Qumran* 177.

There is, however, no direct evidence that one exact scroll representing the proto-Masoretic text held absolute pride of place in the Temple.[76] Rabbinical texts, like the Bible, cannot be cited at face-value for its historical information: these are traditional texts that incorporate several layers of ideological and theological inter-pretation, and any conclusions drawn from them must be tentative.[77] Furthermore, rabbinic literature does not always seem to prove de Lagarde's argument: *y. Ta⁽an.* 4.68a seems to claim that there were conflicting versions of the biblical text used at the temple,[78] and the priest Josephus - who claimed to use sacred books taken from the Temple precinct itself - quoted extensively from a form of Joshua-2 Samuel de-rived from the proto-OG (attested by 4QSam[a]), not MT.[79] Thus if "publication" or "making public" was enacted by depositing a text in the temple, then several non-co-incidental texts seem to have been published. This model may apply to a document such as a treaty, but a collection of many different centuries-old traditional texts that already had many variant editions and variants within each edition does not find an objectively final form merely because one particular collection could be counted among the scrolls deposited in the temple.[80] Concerning the impressive care with

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76. For a detailed overview of the literature on this topic and a convincing line of argument, see Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the "Editor" in Biblical Criticism*, 60-79.

77. See the comments in Bertil Albrektson, *Reflections on the Emergence of a Standard Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 57.

78. See B. Barry Levy, *Fixing God's Torah: The Accuracy of the Hebrew Bible Text in Jewish Law* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 7ff.

79. See Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, and Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*, 9. For a discussion of *y. Ta⁽an.* 4.68a see Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Three Scrolls of the Law That Were Found in the Temple Court," *Text* 2 (1962): 14-27, but see also an effective refutation of Talmon's use of *y. Ta⁽an.* 4.68a in Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the "Editor" in Biblical Criticism*, 65-79.

80. For a careful argument that the proto-MT scrolls were not given pride of place in

which certain types of proto-MT manuscripts seem to have been transmitted in first and second-century Palestine, John Van Seters helpfully separates copying from text-type: texts that "were most carefully copied and collated so as to avoid the usual copyist errors" do not therefore have an ontologically superior text-type.[81]

Tov himself posits that a "conscious procedure [of choosing one master-copy] never took place" since "different Bible texts continued to coexist with the master codex."[82] Perhaps the proto-MT scrolls do exhibit a striking similarity and thus might derive from one or more similar "master copies"; yet how does this justify the marginalization of the text-forms used by others in the Jewish community and beyond at that exact time?[83] While MT did, or course, become the privileged text within Judaism, Ulrich points out that this selection happened late, and was likely a highly arbitrary decision based not on textual purity (as MT 1-2 Samuel attests) but rather on possession: different sects simply used and later canonized the forms of the biblical texts that they had on hand.[84] Ascribing "authoritative" status and thus retroactive necessity to a particular text-form developed and selected by means of a highly contingent set of historical circumstances is simply a theological gesture; it is not suprising that communities of faith accept this logic, but on what grounds can a post-Enlightenment scholar justify reproducing the theological gesture as a judgment that is *wissenschaftlich*?

According to Tov, the new identity of a text as "authoritative" leads to a

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the temple, see Lange, "They Confirmed the Reading," 29-80.

81. See Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the "Editor" in Biblical Criticism*, 72.

82. Tov, *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible and Qumran*, 181.

83. Proto-OG texts, SamPent texts, other variant editions such as R. Meir's scroll, and even Greek translations were used as sacred scripture by various communities in firs-century Palestine; see Ibid. 181-188.

84. Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*, 32.

change in the manner in which scribes treat a text; it cannot be redacted further, since it is "authoritative."[85] This argument has, in recent decades, undergone significant critique particularly in light of the textual pluriformity found at Qumran.[86] Even Tov admits the holes in this argument:

> Many scribes took the liberty of changing the text from which they copied, and in this respect continued the approach of the last authors of the books...This free approach taken by scribes finds expression in the insertion of changes in minor details and of interpolations.[87]

Tov notes the vast number of minor alterations and interpolations in the proto-MT edition of Ezekiel; the proto-OG edition, an extant earlier edition that the proto-MT enlarged, is to Tov a "non-final" text.[88] Yet why should these late scribal exegetical interpolations be classified as "authorial" and part of a "pristine" texts, but the scribes who altered "seventh" to "sixth" in pre-SamPent Genesis 2:2 be said to have created a non-"preferred" reading?[89] Tov separates these two examples by claiming that the Ezekiel alterations function together as a "large-scale literary layer" and thus present a literary, as opposed to textual, alteration.[90] Yet the pre-Samaritan Pentateuchal redactions are clearly "literary" in the sense that they are a coherent exegetical redac-

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85. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 190, where Tov draws "qualitative and quantitative" distinctions between "authors-editors" who worked before the moment of the authoritative text and "copyists" who worked afterwards.

86. See Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* 1-50 and Sæbø, *On the Way to Canon: Creative Tradition History in the Old Testament* 36-46 for basic overviews of the challenge posed by textual pluriformity at Qumran.

87. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 189; see 258-285 for an introduction to the various types of intentional scribal alterations and interpolations found in proto-Masoretic and Masoretic texts (which may be termed "corruptions," but may also be termed "redactions".)

88. See Ibid. 282-283; 333-334.

89. See Ibid. 270 for details.

90. Ibid. 283.

tion of a source text; why are the "authors" of the final layer of Ezekiel given the free-dom to alter the text, while the "copyists" of the pre-Samaritan Penteteuch are not creating a "pristine" or "original" or "final" text? Perhaps Tov relies on the famed ex-actitude of proto-Masoretic scribes; yet the pre-Samaritan edition, as well, "was copied with great precision, like the texts belonging to M," after the layer of redactio-nal literary (or as Tov would claim, post-literary) development that created its textual tradition; yet this precision still did not stop scribes from changing the text.[91] Even after the pre-Samaritan text, the Samaritans redacted it again; even after the last lay-er of Ezekiel, Masoretic scribes altered it time and again. How can one textual form be objectively "final" because of its "authoritative" status if the text was still in multi-ple modes of flux?

Thus the proto-Masoretic text gained relative authority - but never absolute hegemony, as the still-living Samaritan community gives witnesses - gradually through the diachronically dispersed forces of "tradition." The notion of any moment of "becoming authoritative" or "publication" is not only anachronistic, but always-only provisional. As Sæbø writes: "The text was never something that *was* (*Gewe-senes*) but in total something that *became* (*Gewordenes*)."[92] One might add: and is *becoming* still.

In response, Tov argues that since the proto-Masoretic textual tradition is rel-atively stable and may have been more common than other versions in Palestine dur-ing the Second Temple period, this version of the biblical text contained, at one point, the "pristine" text. But at what point in time was this text "considered authori-tative" by the proper authorities? Though he does not mention a precise date, Tov

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91. Ibid. 85.
92. Sæbø, *On the Way to Canon: Creative Tradition History in the Old Testament*, 46.

places the moment of textual originality/finality soon after the events of 70 CE:

> [T]hose who fostered [the Masoretic text] probably constituted the only organized group which survived the destruction of the Second Temple. Thus, after the first century CE a description of the transmission of the text of the Hebrew Bible actually amounts to an account of the history of M.[93]

By claiming that (a) only one "organized group" that used biblical texts continued to exist post-70 CE, and (b) that this hegemony coincides with the relative textual stabilization of proto-MT, Tov justifies his scholarly determination that biblical texts shifted from a period of composition to a period of transmission. But we have already seen that, contrary to Tov's assertion, rabbinical adherents to proto-MT were not the only organized group living in the post-70 CE landscape: the Samaritan Pentateuch continued to be the base text for the Samaritans, and the variant editions presented by the OG became, at least for a time, the base text for Christians.[94] The history of the transmission of the biblical text only amounts to a history of MT if one forgets to mention the other forms of the text and their authority-granting communities, too.

Of course, modern considerations shape the concept of the final text as much as the content of it. Ultimately, Tov confesses that the norms of the religious tradition of Judaism are operative in his decision to define the final form as he does:

> [Readings] created after the crystallization of the editions contained in M should not be brought to bear on the original text of Hebrew Scriptures. That corpus contains the Holy Writings of the Jewish people, and the decisions that were made within this religious

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93. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 195.
94. See Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*.

community also determine to a great extent the approach of the scholarly world towards the text.[95]

While it is beyond doubt that rabbinic Jews have, by and large, treated the Masoretic Text as their sacred scriptures, how is this one community's valuation determinative as an objective statement about the "origin" of the biblical texts themselves? Already within the Second Temple period, some Jews within Palestine seemed to regard several textual traditions as sacred.[96] Moreover, Samaritans consider their own version of the Pentateuch to be authoritative; why are their views not considered normative?[97]

If Tov were claiming that his own religious identity were normative for *his* practice (and the practices of those also in his religious community), this would be compelling; but instead, Tov claims that "the approach of the scholarly world" (and thus the normative scholarly definition of the "original text") is also constrained by these religious norms. Perhaps this is the case, but *should* it be so? As in the canonical debate, is it the role of scholars to prescribe (rather than describe) norms and, in the process, declare some textual traditions "more right [or more original, more final, more pristine] than others"?

In other words, not only were there always-already other editions, there were always-already other variants within each tradition. One might posit that there was an "original author" and "original text" to a given biblical book, but by the time any

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95. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 179.

96. See. for example, the essays in N. F. Marcos and W. G. E. Watson, eds. *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2000) and Stanley E. Porter and C. D. Stanley, *As It Is Written: Studying Paul's Use of Scripture* (SBL Symposium 50; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008).

97. See collected essays in A. D. Crown, ed. *The Samaritans* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989).

group deemed a text authoritative, there were already large and small-scale differ-ences within the textual tradition. Picking a "pristine" text-form out of many differ-ent ones can take the form of either an emic description, which would then only be valid within the historical community that made that particular selection, or an etic judgment, which would require some sort of universally valid objective criteria in which the proto-MT would then reveal its superiority. If Tov is describing the "pris-tine" text in an emic sense, then this description is not sufficient to justify Tov's argu-ment that the diverse and at least nominally objective project of modern scholarship should call the proto-MT "pristine" and the Samaritan Pentateuch "corrupt." If Tov is making an etic judgment, however, that the proto-MT is objectively superior to other text-forms, he presents no universally valid criteria to prove his claim, referring in-stead to the authority of certain communities (while excluding all other communities and their texts in the process.)

Here, too, Tov admits the shortcomings of his own theory. Even within the particular lineage of proto-MT Tov admits to a short-lived moment of the final liter-ary version that was the origin of transmission: "…it certainly did not last long, for in the following generations it was soon disrupted as copyists, to a greater or lesser ex-tent, continuously altered and corrupted the text."[98] In fact, there were always-al-ready "vulgar" text-forms that existed alongside the "official" temple text-forms, and so even at the moment of the true existence of the pristine, authoritative text - one might say the full presence of the biblical text itself - there were "unofficial" divergent texts whose simultaneous appearance silently questioned the exclusive truth of its existence.[99]

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98. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 189.

99.   The   tripartite   division   into   "authoritative   books   kept   in   the   Temple," "authoritative popular books used by the general public," and "inferior texts" (or *vulgar*

The central problem in Tov's argument is this: the originality and authority of the proto-MT is a diffuse retroactive effect created by the practices of a number of diverse later religious communities that understood and used texts in a manner different that that of Second Temple Judaism. Judaism did not confer authority upon the text-form of the MT at one moment in time; rather, authority developed in a diffuse process that coincided with the construction of a legendary past explaining the origin and development of the text.

Compounding this problem is the nature of the mechanism by which Judaism conferred "authority" on the proto-Masoretic text. There *was no moment* at which the Masoretic text simply "became" necesarily authoritative: there was no council at which the convention of a universally and objectively authoritative group conferred its authority to a particular (pristine) manuscript of the (already pluriform) biblical text. We have no direct evidence concerning which versions of scrolls were held in what descending order of authoritativeness by any Jewish group, let alone by the Temple scribes, and it is not certain that medieval or modern Judaism would have discarded the MT had it been discovered that the proto-OG version was considered the "original" version by a central religio-political group in Second Temple Palestine.[100]

It is difficult to imagine something occurring in the history of the develop-

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texts) derives from Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission, Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E. - IV Centruy C.E.* (2nd ed. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962). Tov collapses this schema in to "official" and "vulgar" texts; see Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 192-195.

100.   Some scholars have resorted to counting scrolls at Qumran to rank the assumed relative authority of various texts, and thus Deuteronomy is highly valued, etc. But quantity does not necessarily reflect presumed authority, and if it does, then Jubilees must be understood as an authoritative text, and Esther banished from the canon.

ment of the biblical text that would force scholarship *objectively*–that is, by the very merits of the text itself–to view any particular tradition of the text as *necessarily* "natural" or "pristine" or even "superior" to any other. Certainly, there are particular manuscripts and even whole traditions in which copying errors abound; but this is precisely the case of MT Samuel, which is declared "pristine" in Tov's opinion. Ultimately, the rabbinic Jewish community came to recognize one particular form of the text as authoritative by the sheer accidents of history in the wake of the Jewish revolts.[101] As Eugene Ulrich points out, each community that adopted a particular version of the biblical text - namely, the Samaritans (proto-SamPent), the Christians (OG), and the rabbinic Jews (MT), did not choose their version based on reasoned debate. It simply happened to be the version that was used most frequently by that particular religio-social group. Of course, if one asks the question, "what is the 'original text' for rabbinic Judaism," the objective answer is "the Masoretic Text," because this question concerns the norms of a particular group; but the answer to the question, "what is the original text of the Bible *for scholars*?" cannot assume that the group norms of Judaism are operative for the "world at large." It is in this way that Tov comes close to the canonical text-critical formulation of Childs:

> The first task of the Old Testament text critic is to seek to recover the
> stabilized canonical text through the vehicle of the Masoretic
> traditions. This process involves critically establishing the best

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101.   See Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible,* 85. See also A. S. Van der Woude, "Pluriformity and Uniformity: Reflections on the Transmission of the Old Testament," in *Sacred History and Sacred Texts in Early Judiasm: A Symposium in Honour of Adams S. Van Der Woude* (eds. F. Martínez and J. Bremmer; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1998), who argues for a unified tradition at the temple; even if this unified tradition existed, it would not logically require scholars to value the proto-MT more than other text traditions.

Masoretic text which is closest to the original text of the first century.[102]

Seeking the early forms of the proto-Masoretic text is a noble goal in itself, and does much in the way of service for the synagogue and church alike. But surely the task of textual criticism is something far more broad, and the goal of finding the earliest achievable forms (and perhaps even abstracting a singular form) of the proto-Masoretic text is only one justifiable goal among many.

Yet when the term "authority" enters into critical discourse, scholars must begin to ask serious questions about the source and extent of the authority cited. Authority creates norms and hierarchies that are self-justifying, that turn the historically contingent into the necessary; a reference to authority in the midst of scholarly debate draws attention away from lack of evidence or aporetic gaps in logic. Critical scholarship does not accept "authority" for an answer; rather, it uncovers the contingent conditions that allowed for the cultural arrangement within which particular voices carry central authority while others babble on in their own vulgar tongue at the margins.[103]

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102. Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 101.

103. Tov has at times hedged his more static (but still very influential) model of the original text: in a 2002 article, Tov stated that he had "second thoughts" on the linkage between the "definition of the original text with the canonical status of MT." In his revised view, Tov claims that "all these literary stages were equally original, or alternatively, none of these stages should be thought to constitute 'the original text.'" Thus Tov called for textual critics to "...record these variants without evaluation in parallel columns so as to facilitate our understanding of these texts... An unbiased edition of the Bible will present the reader with all the textual evidence that has an equal claim of representing the Bible... In sum, the text of the Hebrew Bible is represented by the totality of its textual witnesses." These claims appear to call off entirely the quest for the original text, and all its attendant problems. Yet, if it is true that the totality of witnesses are in some sense the biblical text, why is it that the Septuagint must be, as Tov

3   R. Hendel and M. Fox: From Urtext to Archetype

3.1   *Ronald Hendel: Containing Diversity*

Not all textual critics, however, eschew textual plurality: Ronald Hendel, the editor in chief of the recent Oxford Hebrew Bible project, recently outlined his editorial theory of textual criticism, which seems to respect textual pluriformity.[104] The OHB project is unique, because it aims to be a genuinely eclectic edition of the biblical text; instead of adopting a single manuscript as the "base" and adding merely a critical apparatus underneath as in a diplomatic edition, the OHB will not seek to replicate any existing manuscript. Eclecticism allows the OHB to pursue a reconstruction of the hypothetical "earliest inferable textual state" since it does not have to replicate any variants extant in a particular manuscript; thus the OHB can emend– or, in Hendel's words, "restore"– the text to its "earlier" state.[105] Furthermore, "in cases in which… multiple editions are recoverable," each edition (e.g. proto-MT, proto-OG) will receive its own parallel column to present its text.[106] As far as possible, "a common ancestor to the extant editions will be reconstructed"; practically, each reconstruction

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claims, retroverted into Hebrew and based exclusively on the proto-OG Hebrew in order to "be" the biblical text? See Emanuel Tov, "The Status of the Masoretic Text in Modern Text Editions of the Hebrew Bible: The Relevance of Canon," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 247-250. For a discussion of Tov's malleability on this point, see Lemmelijn, "What Are We Looking for in Doing Old Testament Text-Criticism Research?"

104.   Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition." For a critical review of this project, see Hugh G. WIlliamson, "Do We Need a New Bible? Reflections on the Proposed Oxford Hebrew Bible," *Biblica* 90 (2009): 153-75.

105.   Ibid. 334.

106.   Ibid. 326.

will approximate the "archetype" of an edition, which is equivalent to its "earliest in-ferable textual state."[107] Where one alternative edition is not obviously the ancestor of the other, the ancestor will be "reconstructed."[108] Based on Hendel's fascinating examples, an eclectic text such as the OHB is an enormously helpful contribution to the field.[109]

At first glance, the OHB project appears to appreciate textual pluriformity and diachronic difference within the various textual traditions of the Bible. However, Hendel admits that the "original text" functions in his methodology as an "ideal goal or limit," and cites Tov's definition of the "original text" approvingly.[110] What Hendel revises is the object of recovery: Hendel claims that the original is an "ideal goal or limit" that is "beyond our evidence", but the "archetype" - or the "manuscript at the top of the stemma" - is more achievable.[111] That is, Hendel claims that the "original text" existed, but is unrecoverable based on the current level of scholarly knowledge; what scholars can do, however, is recover a particular form of the text that *derives from* (and thus likely also deviates from) the original text but that nevertheless re-mains the "ancestor" of known editions. Hendel's revised goal is then to "determine or reconstruct the best set of readings. These are the earliest or more original read-ings, approximating the archetype."[112] And for Hendel, "Approximating the archetype is a step towards the 'original text.'"[113] While Hendel does distance his project from

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107.   Ibid. 329-333.

108.   Ibid. 330.

109.   See the examples in Ronald Hendel, "Qumran and a New Edition of the Hebrew Bible," in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Scripture and the Scrolls* (ed. JH Charlesworth; Waco: Baylor University, 2006).

110.   Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," 333; see Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 177-79.

111. Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," 333.

112.   Ibid. 331.

the 'quest for the original text' he nevertheless shows how his project leads us quite a bit closer to it. Hendel illuminates the historical dimension of the quest for the "original text" when he forwards a theoretical justification for eclectic editing.[114] Developing an idea from Pier Giorgio Borbone, Hendel writes:

> [A] critical text is actually the opposite of eclectic, since it attempts to reverse the eclectic agglomeration—from diverse times, places, and scribal hands—of secondary readings in the existing manuscripts…[115]

In this description, the goal of Hendel's eclectic method is a single, unified, historically located text that minimizes diversity within itself. One might say that it seeks the moment before "reception" of the text, symbolized by the "agglomeration" caused by the text's movement through "diverse times, places, and scribal hands" that produced "secondary readings."

Thus, substituting the concept of the "archetype" for that of the *Urtext* does not change the practice or the goals of textual criticism in a radical manner. Like Tov, Hendel still privileges "earlier" and "more original" readings, and accepts them as the "best" readings.[116] To this end, Hendel claims that the text critic must "distinguish… primary from secondary readings" as such: "primary readings" are defined as "earlier and text-critically preferable", whereas "secondary readings" are defined as either "revisions" or "errors."[117] According to this schema, the primary readings are valuable for text criticism, while the secondary reading's value is "for the study of the reception of the biblical text" prior to "stabilization of the text."[118] Thus, Hendel draws a

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113.   Ibid. 332.
114.   I have no quarrell with the concept of eclectic editing; but it does not seem correct that eclectic editing necessarily creates a more original text.
115.   Ibid. 335.
116.   Ibid. 331.
117.Ibid. 327.

line between the "original" text and its "reception," again using the period of the "stabilization" in the late Second Temple period as a definitive dividing line (albeit with some elements of reception occurring before this line). Hendel cites Tov's statement that a text is "finished" when it is "considered authoritative" to bolster his argument.[119] Like Tov, Hendel does not elaborate on what immanent criteria separates a "primary reading" from a "reception" other than its temporal location on the other side of the supposed stabilization of the biblical text; the external assessment of later religious groups again serves to draw the line for the scholar. In short, Hendel seems to replicate Tov's boundary between "original" and "reception" without significant alteration.

Hendel returns to Tov's definition of the "moment of origin": that is, "at some point" composition "becomes" transmission.[120] Hendel then argues that this moment corresponds to a general shift from "major to minor textual intervention".[121] Perhaps this historical shift does in fact exist; but as discussed above, why does a general lessening of scribal intervention render "secondary" the alterations that scribes did undertake? How can a general scribal trend be used as evidence for assigning a moment of "origin"?

The OHB will, however, represent within its own critical text multiple editions of biblical texts (e.g. proto-OG Daniel and proto-MT Daniel) whose multiplicity clearly derives from before the period of stabilization. Thus Hendel does assert that the text underwent a long and varied process of composition and that this process had*, at least sometimes,* divergent end points. Yet at the same time, Hendel sets

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118.   Ibid. 327.
119.   Ibid. 333.
120.   Ibid. 332.
121.   Ibid. 332.

forth a highly limited representation of pluriformity: any readings that occur after the creation of an archetype are declared "secondary" and excised from the critical text. Instead of Tov's singular determinate original, Hendel admits to a severely limited number of determinate originals. Thus, each one of Hendel's originals may face the same line of questioning as Tov's singular original.

In the case of Daniel 4-5, for example, the proto-OG edition and the proto-MT edition are both expansions of some now unrecoverable "original" text which itself had a long, complicated, un-original and clearly unfinalized textual history when it was read and reworked by the proto-OG and proto-MT scribes.[122] As John Collins concludes, "both texts show signs of redactional expansion, and neither can be identified as the original form of the story."[123] Let us rehearse the situation: before the original text of either MT or OG existed, at least one Hebrew *Vorlage* was likely "stabilized". At different points in time, two separate sets of "authors-editors" decided to add to, remove from, and re-arrange the text, creating the OG and MT editions. These editions then were altered repeatedly, as witnessed by the history of their "transmission".[124] How are scholars to tell the difference between the "primary" and "secondary" interventions in a case such as this? Hendel explains that after the transition from composition to transmission,

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122. See L. M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1990), 87-121; P. Grelot, "La Septante De Daniel IV et Son Substrat Sémitique," *RB* 81 (1974): 5-23.

123. See John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 220; see also 2-38.

124. For example, in OGDan 4:43a, Ms. 88 and Syro-Hexaplar read "whoever are caught saying anything," as opposed to Pap. 967, which reads "whoever shall say anything." One might quickly dismiss Ms. 88 and Syro-Hexapla's reading as a later interpretive addition, but what besides sheer volume of changes differentiates this later alteration to the OG from the "original" OG alterations to the now-lost *Vorlage?* See Ibid. 213.

> Some scribes became major partners once again, when the changes
> were so thoroughgoing as to create a new edition. In these cases, new
> textual production occurs after the period of textual transmission has
> begun.[125]

Thus, some scribes managed to re-open the process of textual production, stepping behind the ontological divide that separates "authors-editors" from mere "copyists." How did they do this without having their alterations deemed "secondary"? It seems that "new textual production" describes the process that led from the presumed Hebrew *Vorlage(s)* of Daniel 4-5 to the proto-MT and proto-OG editions, but it also describes what the Samaritans did to the proto-Samaritan Pentateuch, and it also describes what happened with the well-known additions to Esther and Daniel.[126] That which lies on the "secondary" side of the ontological divide seems suspiciously identical to that which is named "primary."

While Hendel argues that the search for the archetype is "practical", his hedging about "approximating" the archetype puts it in the "ideal" realm; in this sense, the archetype looks quite like the "original text" that Hendel sets aside in favor of pragmatism. Moreover, Hendel retains Tov's rigid ontological boundary between "original" and "reception" without providing a different justification for the divide. Yet neither is Hendel writing off the idea of the original text: he acknowledges that the original text is unrecoverable, but repeatedly claims that it does, nevertheless, *exist*. As Hendel writes: "We cannot have unmediated access to the master text; it is beyond our evidence".[127] While the "master" (or "original") text is currently beyond our

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125.   Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," 334.

126.   See Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions* (AB 44; New York: Doubleday, 1977); Crown, ed., *The Samaritans*.

127.   Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," 350.

grasp, it is not *completely* absent: it is mediated by its archetype (which is itself mediated by manuscripts). The absence of the original text is not an ontological problem for Hendel; it is an epistemic one.

In fact, Hendel critiques M. Goshen-Gottstein and Shemaryahu Talmon on this very issue: Goshen-Gottstein claims that, in the absence of "strict philological evidence" to the contrary, "we have to look upon conflicting readings in our primary sources as alternative readings, none of which must be considered as superior to the other," while Talmon argues that the text-critic must accept various readings as "pristine" because there is "no objective criteria for deciding which reading is original."[128] In response, Hendel notes that Talmon and Goshen-Gottstein are essentially arguing that there *could* be "objective criteria" and "strict philological evidence" to make these sorts of decisions, but scholars currently lack the data to do so. As such, Hendel defers to the words of Tov: "one's inability to decide between different readings should not be confused with the question of the original form of the biblical text."[129] As Hendel continues:

> In other words, Talmon has taken a methodological or epistemological problem (our inability to know which is the archetypal reading) and made it into a statement of essence or ontology (there is no archetypal reading).[130]

Thus, Hendel refutes Goshen-Gottstein and Talmon by noting a category error: they

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128.   Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "The History of the Bible-Text and Comparative Semitics: A Methodological Problem," *VT* 7 (1957): 195-201; Shemaryahu Talmon, "Textual Criticism: The Ancient Versions," in *Text in Context: Essays By Members of the Society for Old Testament Study* (ed. A. D. H. Mayes; Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 152.

129.   Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 174, quoted in Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," 341.

130.   Ibid. 341.

agree that there is an epistemological problem, but as a result make claims about the text's "nature."

What Hendel does not seem to consider, however, is that Talmon and Goshen-Gottstein may hold incorrect epistemological assumptions: in other words, the problem may stem from the supposed scientificity and objectivity of textual-critical claims. Hendel asserts that we do not *now* have the ability to find or deduce the "original text", but this state of affairs is *our shortcoming*, because (it is assumed) the original text *really is* out there, somewhere just beyond the limits of our knowledge. Thus, the paradigm of the asymptotic ideal "archetype" appeals to Hendel's assumed epistemology *and* ontology of the biblical text. But how does Hendel *know* this to be the case? If there really is a single pristine text of any biblical book, then it must have become pristine at some telic point during the long composition process. But who decides which point along the line is the "pristine" point? Here, Hendel must rely on Tov's concept of authority, with all its problematic assumptions. But at what point would an objectively final/original/archetypal text present itself?

What this question provokes is a reversal of Hendel's critique of Talmon and Goshen-Gottstein: perhaps the notion of an epistemological shortcoming is not the real problem? In other words, text critics note the structural impossibility of recovering the exact true words of the text, and so consign themselves to asymptotic structures: we will recover the original text as far as we can based on our limited knowledge, etc. Yet if we had the knowledge, that is, if there were no epistemological shortcoming, we would then know how the original text or archetype read. But, as I have argued above, the epistemological problem is in fact primarily an ontological problem: namely, text critics cannot be sure of their full recovery of the naturally privileged form of a text because there is none. The problem is not with our perception of the history of the text; the problem is rather that the history of the text in it-

self presents forms of the text that both exceed the expected textual ontology and fall short of it. The surplus of variants and editions for the books of the Pentateuch exceed the concept of the "single original text," and yet no particular manuscripts have been able to claim the title of "the text of the Pentateuch." When thinking about how these surplus-yet-insufficient manuscripts relate to each other as well as about the universals to which they supposedly correspond (i.e. the names of the biblical texts), it appears that the field needs a developed ontology of biblical texts more urgently than it needs to discover even more manuscripts (as if more conflicting information would solve Hendel's epistemological problem).

Hendel appears to argue, along with Tov, that whatever was "considered authoritative" by a community denotes the "primary" and "pristine," but he also agrees with Arie van der Kooij that the critic "should go as far back as the textual evidence allows and requires."[131] These are quite different and mutually conflicting ontological claims. Not only are scholars unable to pinpoint any specific moment when the text "became authoritative," it seems odd for a scholar to make an ontological judgment that a text *actually became pristine* simply because a group of people felt that they were finished with redacting it. This uncertainty is especially daunting since by the time any group declared the text sacred, there were already multiple editions of biblical texts in many uniquely varying manuscripts available in Second Temple era Palestine, and at least one community held multiple editions without classification (namely, Qumran).[132]

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131. Ibid. 333-34; Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 177; Arie Van Der Kooij, "The Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible Before and After the Qumran Discoveries," in *The Bible as Book: The Hebrew Bible and the Judaean Desert Discoverie*s (eds. Emanuel Tov and Edward D. Herbert; London: British Library, 2002), 174.

132. See Eugene Ulrich, "The Bible in the Making; the Scriptures Found At

For example, what would the "archetype" of the "original text" of the book of Daniel present? It seems clear that Daniel underwent several radical revisions over time: Loren Stuckenbruck has argued that at Qumran, texts found alongside copies of Daniel may simultaneously show something of the "tradition-historical background of the biblical book" (4Q242; 4Q530),[133] "contemporary Danielic traditions" (4Q243-245; 4Q552-553),[134] and "the creative use of Daniel" (1QM).[135] Moreover, with the help of "higher criticism," scholars can comfortably assert that Daniel 7-12 reflect quite a different historical situation than that of Daniel 1-6,[136] and thus the

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Qumran," in *The Bible At Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation* (eds. Peter Flint and T. H. Kim; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

133. 4Q242, known as 4QPrayer of Nabonidus, is very similar to an episode in Dan 4:22-37, but "Since it is highly unlikely that 4Q242 would have altered the name from Nebuchadnezzar to Nabunay while depending on Daniel 4, the text supplies strong evidence for a formative tradition that gave rise to the Nebuchadnezzar story of Daniel 4. Significantly, though the manuscript was produced well after the composition of Daniel (early Herodian period), it provides a clear example of pre-Danielic tradition." Loren Stuckenbruck, "The Formation and Re-Formation of Daniel in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Scripture and the Scrolls* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Waco: Baylor University, 2006), 106.

134. 4Q243-244 and 245, known respectively as 4QPseudo-Daniel[b] and 4QPseudo-Daniel[c], and 4Q552-553, known as 4QFour Kingdoms, seem to develop elements of the Daniel story as well as elements of other sacred scrolls. See Ibid. 113-120.

135. 1QM, known as the *War Rule*, "integrates the angelology of Daniel into a more explicitly dualistic scheme." See Ibid. 128-130.

136. Daniel 1-6 reflects no knowledge of the Hellenistic era or the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes, whereas this conflict is in full view in Daniel 7-12. Moreover, linguistic differentiation between Daniel 2-7 and the rest of the book raises questions about the compositional chronology. It would seem that independent stories about Daniel circulated among stories of other brave Jewish nonconformists (cf. Daniel 3) and that these Aramaic stories eventually coalesced into the first half of the book of Daniel, whereas chapters 8-12 depict a keen interest in Palestinian historiography and the revival of the Hebrew language (cf. Daniel 10-11). Chapter 7 is written in Aramaic but depicts Daniel in quite a different light than chapters 1-6; it is very similar to chapters 8-12 in form, and thus likely was written prior to the Hebrew sections but after chapters

composition and addition of Daniel 7-12 constituted a later edition of the book of Daniel. It is, however, highly unlikely that any critical edition would *not* include Daniel 7-12 within its reconstruction of the "book of Daniel."[137] Since the authors and redactors of Daniel 7-12 altered a text in order to compose and produce a "primary," "pristine" edition, how is it that the authors and redactors of the Hebrew or Aramaic version of the "Story of Susanna" and those redactors that connected this story to the book of Daniel were producing something "secondary" and *less than* "pristine"?[138]

And if the "additions" to Daniel (and how does this term *not* include Daniel 7-12?) such as the "Story of Susanna" *are* considered in some way pristine, then which version is the pristine one - the likely older OG text, or the longer and more well-known edition preserved in Theodotion's text?[139] Both are certainly *literary* editions of the same story, but exhibit very important differences: for example, the famous bathing scene only occurs in Theodotion's edition.[140] Furthermore, if the critical edition is to include these stories with the text of Daniel, even more ontological problems arise: for example, the order of the stories could follow manuscript P. 967, in which Bel and the Dragon comes before the story of Susannah, or the Theodotion-Daniel manuscripts, which place Susanna before "chapter 1"; after all, narrative or-

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2-6. Chapter 1, written in Hebrew though sharing the same form as chapters 2-6, was likely written after Daniel 2-6 was compiled. See Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel,* 12-29. For the return of Hebrew near the Hasmonean period, see Seth Schwartz, "Hebrew and Imperialism in Jewish Palestine," in *Ancient Judaism in Its Hellenistic Context* (ed. C. Bakhos; Leiden: Brill, 2005).

137.   One may note that Collins does treat Susanna as well as Bel and the Dragon in an appendix, but does not treat the additions to Daniel 3. On Daniel 1 and 7-12 as clear additions to the book fo Daniel, see Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel,* 26-29.

138.   See Ibid. 420-439.

139.   See Ibid. 3.

140.   See Ibid..

der is not inconsequential to the ontology of a book.[141] If some of these editions are excluded, on what grounds are they inferior to Daniel 7-12? If they are all included, does it not seem that the historical development of the biblical text demands a much more complex ontology than drawing a line between "primary" and "secondary", or "original" and "reception"?

Rather than assume that the epistemological problem is that "not enough information exists to find the true, original text," I would propose that the real epistemological problem is this: how can critical scholars believe that these fault lines, these boundaries between "original text" and "reception", between "primary" and "secondary," simply occur as natural "givens" that scholars dispassionately seek? How can one justify making an *ontological judgment* that Isaiah 40-66 and Daniel 7-12 are "primary" or "pristine" or "original," whereas the corrections, alterations, and deletions in 1QIsa or Bel and the Dragon are "secondary"?[142] Hendel's methodology would support the inclusion of Susanna, since he writes that "the critical text includes all the textual compositions that are ancestral to the existing texts and editions."[143] Yet Theodotion-Susanna most likely redacted OG Susanna, and thus scholars possess the ancestor; does Theodotion-Susanna merit inclusion as a separate "pristine" text, or no?[144] At which point along the line does this more-than-sec-

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141.   See Ibid..

142.   See J. Koenig, *L'herméneutique analogique du judaïsme antique d'après les témoins textuels d'Isaïe* (VTSup 33; Leiden: Brill, 1982) for an argument that the small additions to 1QIs[a] form a coherent group of redactions that function by means of an analogical principle much like the rabbinic use of *gezerah shava*h*;* see also Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 236-281 for a plethora of examples of variants in 1QIs[a], which include the analogical examples from Koenig but also cover a wider array of alterations.

143.   Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," 334.

144.   That is, OG and *kaige*-Theodotion; see n. 119.

ondary text have its "pristine" moment? This judgment requires an *ontological* distinction that has no clear *epistemological* justification.

Hendel seems content enough to recognize diversity by approving of a critical edition of multiple ancient editions of a given text, but this strategy in fact aims to limit and contain diversity: text-critics must find an "original" (or "archetype") of each one of a small number of authorized, authoritative traditions.[145] Yet from the discussion above, it is clear that the book of Daniel, for instance, shows a *vigorous complexity* in its production/transmission history, and many hands and many traditions have handled and altered its contents. Where along these divergent historical lineages can one pick a point that is *ontologically pristine*? And how could one know, with objective *epistemological certainty,* that this point was "it", that any changes that occurred afterwards were "secondary," and that they thus belonged to the "history of reception" instead of the "history of composition"?

Hendel's ontology of the biblical text, like Tov's, assumes determinate historical moments that held the embodiment of the full presence of the text itself. Moments beforehand had not yet formulated every essential element to the text, and thus there was still work to be done to bring the text into being. Moments afterward were mere witnesses to the lost presence of the text itself, since corruptions and alterations made extant manuscripts become something other than the "primary" text. From what we can deduce about the history of the text, however, this moment is a pure chimera; biblical texts are all in some way a development of some text, or motif, or genre that pre-existed it.[146] Perhaps alternative ontologies of the biblical text could

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145.   On "strategies of containment" used for the simultaneous desire for and repression of a totality, see Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), 52-53.

146.   One may push this point further by taking into account source-criticism: For example, the book of Genesis appears to be a diverse collection of texts that do not

better explain the manuscript and redaction-critical evidence: for example, one could claim that biblical texts exist as a series of divergent yet interwoven lineages that contain no naturally privileged or "pristine" moments.[147] Of course, there are periods of greater or less change in the history of the development of any text. But that variation does not necessitate or justify any decision made concerning the ontological status of the text. There is no naturally occurring, hermetically sealed moment of pure textual presence, and it is probably not useful to posit an ideal moment in lieu of an "actual" one.

3.2   *Michael Fox: Imagining Intention*

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originate at the same time, place, or scribal hand. Even if a text critic were able to isolate each bit of text that was "proper" to a particular place, time, and scribe, much of the tradition underlying each bit of text would actually derive, like the Noah story, from literature that existed at some point before the text was written, thus pushing the "moment of purity" ever further back in time and space. In short, at every point along its production history, each biblical text was always-already diverse with respect to its socio-historical influences. The stories of the ancestors most likely existed in some form or another before they were written down, and they seem to have gone through a number of times, places and hands before finding a home in the putative "original text". And, working in the opposite direction, every biblical text has always-already escaped any moment that may even be considered to be "primary" or "original" and has moved into countless other "secondary" situations in which it was made into another "original" or "primary" text, only to be altered again.

147.   On this point, Hendel critiques Talmon's understanding of historical lineage: We may lack sufficient evidence to construct a viable history of the readings in many cases, but our lack of knowledge does not mean that the different textual versions are pristine and historically unrelated. Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," 334. While scholars do have a lack of knowledge concerning the development of the biblical text, but we know enough to know that no one person, place or time has ever had the ability to make a text remain "final" once it leaves their short grasp.

In another presentation of editorial rationale for the OHB project, Michael Fox advances a critique of this very conclusion. He begins by distancing himself from the project of locating the *Urtext* of Proverbs, pointing to its complicated and diverse history of textual production and the resulting impossibility of locating one layer as "the" original text:

> Anyway, in a sense the book of Proverbs is all additions, since it is an anthology of anthologies, themselves agglomerations of proverbs, epigrams and poems, some deriving from oral literature, others having antecedents in written wisdom. At what stage do "additions" become "later additions?" In the case of Proverbs, we are dealing with a snowballing text, and the Ur-snowball is not only beyond recovery, it is beyond conceptualization.[148]

Here, Fox admits that one cannot assign various ontological statuses to different levels of revision within a textual history that is replete with revisions and, in some sense, is "all quotation." Proverbs are, by definition, traditional sayings in general use, and are all at least secondary when written down for the first time. As a result, proverbs are not amenable to any discussion of originality. Furthermore, the "collections of quotations" obviously derive from various temporal, socio-cultural and geographic locations and thus show the involvement of multiple hands.[149] In light of this evidence, no edition of Proverbs in its entire textual history could possibly be the goal of Hendel's "reverse eclecticism," because to do so would be to dismiss the whole book as "secondary".[150]

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148. Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible," 5.

149. See Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 18B; New Haven: Yale University, 2009), 499-503; see also 753-765.

150. As Hendel writes, citing Borbone: "[A] critical text is actually the opposite of

But after this admission, Fox surprisingly asserts that what he is looking to re-

construct is a *hyparchetype,* or "reconstructed variant carrier."[151] That is, Fox simply

displaces Hendel's displaced original text one step further, from archetype to hypar-

chetype. Like Hendel and Tov, Fox admits that his new object of study is ideal:

> Hence the text I am aiming at never had physical existence. It is a
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> construct. It can be defined as the proto-MT as it should have been,
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> what the authors, conceived as a collectivity (see below) wanted us to
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> read. This goal is, of course, heuristic, not fully attainable.[152]

First of all, Fox constructs another ideal object one step removed from the ideal ob-

ject of Hendel, who created his ideal object one step removed from that of Tov. Just

as Hendel claimed that the search for Tov's *Urtext* was not a practical goal, Fox calls

Hendel's archetype a "phantom" for which any quest is "doomed."[153] Yet Fox declares

the hyparchetype of proto-MT Proverbs his new goal, while admitting that it, too, has

the ontological status of a phantom. The aporia of the "final/original" text, which is

the confusing moment wherein "production" simply becomes (or *should* have be-

come) "transmission," forces anyone who attempts to conceptualize it into ideal, ab-

stract territory. Fox here challenges Tov and Hendel's terminology but nevertheless

repeats the exact structure of their concept - merely using different terminology.

Second: Fox shifts from discussing the multi-stage snowball-like development

of the book of Proverbs to selecting one "moment," albeit ideal, in this textual history

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eclectic, since it attempts to reverse the eclectic agglomeration—from diverse times, places, and scribal hands—of secondary readings in the existing manuscripts..." See Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," 334.

151.   Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible," 6, quoting Paul Maas, *Textual Criticism* (trans. Barbara Flower; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

152.   Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible," 7.

153.   Ibid. 13.

as the privileged moment. Fox does not seem to weigh arguments for the relative merit of each version; the moment of the proto-MT text "as it should have been" (but admittedly never was) carries seemingly natural superiority to the proto-OG version, which may be "unrecoverable" but is nevertheless like the proto-MT in this respect. How did hyparchetype-MT simply "become" the object of study, especially since Fox seemed to be unsure about locating a definitive layer of Proverbs to "be" the *Urtext*?

It is not the lack of a Hebrew *Vorlage:* Fox agrees that there likely was a Hebrew text for the proto-OG version, and that it is in part recoverable:

> There are a large number of LXX pluses, consisting of lines, verses, and even full poems. These are of considerable interest to the reception-history of the book, but they are not part of the history of the hyparchetype under consideration and do not belong in the eclectic edition. Even when I think that they had a Hebrew basis and that I can retrovert them, I will confine them to the textual commentary.[154]

Fox here excludes the Hebrew basis of the OG from the critical text, but assigns them to the "reception history of the book." Only pages before, Fox had built an impressive argument for considering the entire textual tradition of Proverbs under the category "reception history".[155] How then did only OG–Proverbs, then, end up on the "reception" side of the boundary between "original" and "reception" when OG–Proverbs amounts to a layer of additions to a text that is, at its core, an agglomeration of quotations? One might assume that, as in the case of Tov, the reason derives ultimately from religious identities. Here, I should be clear about my own role in this critique: I am no enemy of religious convictions; in fact, I hold many religious convictions my-

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154.   Ibid. 7.
155.   See Ibid. 5.

self. As such, I am extremely sympathetic to the textual commitments of particular religious groups. But is the OHB critical edition of the Bible a religious project, or not? If it is not concerned with presenting the text of a particular religious community, that is, if it aims to present not one religious community's reception of the text but rather the text itself or an objective, universally valid archetype or hyparchetype of the text itself, then what grounds can Fox cite in order to justify privileging one form of the text over the other?

And even if we grant the goal of labeling the (ideal) proto-MT as "the book of Proverbs" is granted, how does anyone know what the text "should have been"? Here, scholars leave the world of critical historicism and enter into another discourse altogether. That is, by what standards can one adjudicate the "correct hyparchetype of the Masoretic Proverbs"? One may suggest many possible answers to this question: perhaps least controversial would be to emend obvious spelling errors and the like; but many variants present more complicated choices. Between two variant readings that equally seem to fit the literary context, does one decide on aesthetic merits, or perhaps depth of profundity? Perhaps one could suggest that "the more original reading," should prevail, but we have already seen that this is a problem of infinite regression for the book of Proverbs.

To answer this difficult question, Fox points to the work of Thomas Tanselle, who argued that the editor must "use authorial active intention as a basis for editorial choice."[156] Fox first grants that Proverbs has "innumerable and indeterminate" individuals responsible for the formation of its text, but then defines the "author" of Proverbs as a "construct comprised of that collectivity."[157] Thus, the text critic must

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156.   G. Thomas Tanselle, "The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention," *Studies in Bibliography* 29 (1976): 211, quoted in Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible," 8.

divine or somehow reconstruct the collectivity of authorial intentions in order to se-

lect the appropriate variants. Fox explains:

> Proverbs is the work of individuals who intended us to understand
>
> certain things. I don't know what we can read for—or write for—other
>
> than the communication of intention...Nothing other than the
>
> intended text is worth the reader's time.[158]

Several difficulties arise from this line of thought. First: setting aside issues of simple

error, every alteration to the text has some sort of scribal intention as a motivating

factor. By obeying the agglutinative intentions of all authors, the text critic would

create a novel textual monster. For example, the addition of several lines (probably,

as Fox agrees, in Hebrew) to Proverbs 9:12 that is reflected in OG certainly had as

much "authorial intention" lying behind it as any other bit of Proverbs.[159] Yet is it "re-

ception" and not "composition"? Furthermore, some sort of thought assuredly ac-

companied the gloss to Proverbs 5:22a that exists in MT but not OG or Peshitta, but

Fox declares that he will "excise" this addition because "it was absent from the text

when LXX's and MT's lines diverged."[160] Why is that moment of divergence given

precedence, but the divergences that occurred before it and after it belong to "com-

position" or "reception"? And isn't this gloss part and parcel of the "collective author-

ship" of the book? Surreptitiously, lines have appeared in the midst of the massive

"collective author" that divide the *actual historical authors* into two camps: legiti-

mate authors and their legitimate intentions, and illegitimate authors and their ille-

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157.   Ibid. 9.

158.   Ibid. 9.

159.   Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and*
Commentary (AB 18A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2000), 418ff.

160.   Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible," 6.

gitimate intentions. Does the moment of textual divergence between MT and OG really justify this sort of categorization? Second: how can "recovering authorial intention" possibly be the goal of editing a book such as Proverbs, given that Fox has already outlined the secondary nature of every inscription of a proverb?

Questions arise concerning the concept of intention, as well: whatever Hezekiah's scribes had in their heads when they wrote down Proverbs 25-29 cannot possibly be the ultimate arbiter of the "meaning" of that section of text, let alone the definition of its "correct" edition. Even they did not assign themselves this responsibility: the scribes explain their own activity in Proverbs 25:1 with the word העתיקו: that is, the scribes "moved" (עתק) or "transcribed" the text of Proverbs 25-29.[161] The intentions of the "authors" of Proverbs 25-29 are by no means the "ground of being" of these words, and neither do the scribes claim even to *be* authors. In effect, the "intentions" of these scribes are no more important to assigning their meaning or the limits of their mutability than any other reader or writer who has come across them ever since. Though they did doubtless think about how to arrange the various sayings that comprise Proverbs 25-29 in a particular manner, this intention has been altered by scribes who inserted their work into a larger work, one that included diverse texts such as Proverbs 1-9 or Proverbs 31:10-31.[162] Why is it that the intentions of the scribes who inserted Proverbs 31:10-31 are considered part of the "collectivity" whose intentions are determined to influence modern scholarship's construction of the ontology of the book of Proverbs, but the scribe who added the gloss of Proverbs 5:22a is part of another collectivity altogether, the "reception history of the text"? These questions confront even the OHB, an edition that seeks to recognize (a limited) mul-

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161.   See Fox, *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,* 776-778 for a helpful overview.

162.   See Ibid. 499-508.

tiplicity of biblical text-forms.

In defense of his methodology, Fox sketches a critique of the alternative: what he calls the "relativistic acceptance of any and every text-form as a "textual moment" of irreducible validity."[163] He wonders,

> If everything is equally valid for every kind of edition, is there any point in anything other than a Kennicott-Rossi type assemblage, indeed, whether there is sense in any editorial activity at all.[164]

In this question, Fox combines a number of assumptions: first, the question of "validity" contains at least several different valences of meaning that are conflated here. Every textual moment may in fact be "valid" in the sense that it presents a text that is *a priori* equivalent in ontological status to all other textual moments, but this does not mean that every edition should contain everything, or that there are no standards for editing at all. The accusation of "relativism" seems to imply a slackening of scholarly standards, but this is not necessarily so. Fox's response seems much like the proverbial parent who is upset that every child is called "special," because that means "no child is special at all." What this parent does not imagine is this: children can each be special in very different ways. In the same way, one may claim that each text-form is valid as a particular text-form - that is, each text-form exists on an ontological plane equal to all other text-forms - but that not all text-forms are *equivalent answers to any question asked about the text*. To return to the analogy of the "special" children: in order to find out what makes each child special in their own way, one needs to ask *particular* and *limited* questions, such as "who is the best reader in this group?" or, "who is the best runner?" In the same way, textual critics can examine a

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163.   Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible," 13.
164.   Ibid. 13.

particular manuscript of Proverbs and think, "in what way did this function as the text of Proverbs?" One can edit an edition of Proverbs that is meant to reproduce a text that was used by medieval Masoretes, or one can edit an edition of Proverbs that is meant to reflect an edition used by second-century BCE Alexandrian Jews. These are not exclusive choices, and one edition is not naturally better or worse.

What a "relativistic acceptance of any and every text-form" may instead imply for a scholarly community is the following: that one would have to define each and every manuscript as well as every critical text as an *ontologically limited* presentation of the "text itself." Calling the proto-MT "the Bible" or claiming that the proto-OG is "reception of the Bible" but not the "Bible itself" in some sense is a universalizing gesture that obscures the text at hand as well as the act of scholarly (re)production. If one is seeking to replicate an ideal form of the proto-MT, perhaps it should merely be labeled as such, and a quest for the proto-OG would only be "reception history" insofar as the quest for the proto-MT is itself "reception history" of texts from an earlier time. Or, perhaps editions of known texts could be published alongside hypothetical, eclectic reconstructions of a text that predates any of them, and neither could be deemed "less original" or "the domain of receiving the text" instead of "a form of the text itself." This is not "anything goes" relativism: in fact, it is far more historically specific and less arbitrary than privileging one contingent historical moment (or an ideal representation of one) as "the original," "the primary," "the intended form," or "the work." One may, for example, discuss actual historical texts and contexts instead of otherworldly apparitions such as "collective authors" and "ideal texts."

In an epigram before his article on the OHB, Hendel quotes J. L. Borges' discussion of translations of Homeric epics: "The concept of the 'definitive text' corre-

sponds only to religion or exhaustion."[165] Hendel returns to this quotation in the body of his essay in order to underscore his claim that the OHB does not seek to be the definitive critical edition of the Bible.[166] This stance is admirable in its humility, but it does not seem to take Borges' quotation far enough. If applied to the critical edition, we can, along with Fox and Hendel claim that all modern editions are but flawed "texts" that seek to approximate the ideal "work", and as such can only asymptotically approach their goal. But this quotation can mean something else altogether if it is applied to the source text, which is implied by the sentences immediately before the Borges quote taken by Hendel:

> To assume that every recombination of elements is necessarily inferior
>
> to its original form is to assume that draft nine is necessarily inferior
>
> to draft H- For there can be only drafts.[167]

Concerning the text of the book of Proverbs itself, and not merely the modern critical editions, there are only drafts, because no one person or group has had the authority to compel an end to the process of redrafting this text. One may claim that there *was* an end to this process of the development of the book of Proverbs, but as is evident anyone who does so is forced to speak only of the ideal realm, because we can see the evidence to the contrary inscribed into every variant manuscript, the phantoms that haunt every critical apparatus that clings to the page's edge in scholarly editions. To claim that scholars must accept a singular provisional edited text merely because we do not have enough information to find the true archetype sounds more akin to ex-

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165. J. L. Borges, "The Homeric Versions," in *The Total Library – Non-Fiction 1922-1986* (ed. E. Weinberger; London: Penguin, 1999), quoted in Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition." 324.

166.   Ibid. 328.

167.   Borges, "The Homeric Versions," 74.

haustion than religion, but in either case Hendel and Fox seem to think there is something other than a draft at the hidden headwaters of the Nilotic biblical text.

4   S. TALMON AND M. GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN: THE GREAT DIVIDE

Moshe Goshen-Gottstein and Shemaryahu Talmon, the two consecutive chief editors of the Hebrew University Bible project, have started their text-critical venture from a different set of assumptions than either Hendel or Tov. Perhaps most important is their shared assertion that there is no recoverable *Urtext,* and thus variant readings may be regarded as equally acceptable. To this end, Goshen-Gottstein and Talmon have included four separate apparatuses that include variants from the early translations of the biblical text, Hebrew texts from the Second Temple period, and medieval rabbinic manuscript readings.[168] A plethora of variants are offered to the reader, but the editors offer no judgments concerning their priority. No conjectural emendation, such as is found in the OHB, is allowed.[169] As Goshen-Gotstein argues, the HUB will

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168.   The Hebrew University Bible project uses the Aleppo Codex as a base text, and includes a voluminous critical apparatus that offers all extant witnesses without editorial comment, including ancient versions, Hebrew texts from the Second Temple period, and medieval Masoretic codices. Currently published are: Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, ed. *The Hebrew University Bible Project: The Book of Isaiah. Sample Edition with Introduction* (Jerusalem: Magness, 1965); Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "The Hebrew University Bible, the Book of Isaiah," (1995); C. Rabin et al., *The Hebrew University Bible: The Book of Jeremiah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997); and Shemaryahu Talmon et al., *The Hebrew University Bible: The Book of Ezekiel* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2004).

169.   Incidentally, this is also the view of the BHQ, the new edition of the BHS. R. Wies, an editor of BHQ, writes: "The purpose of BHQ in relation to its primary audience is to provide them with a clear statement of what the BHQ editor judges to be the earliest attainable form of the Hebrew/Aramaic text that can be discerned on the basis of the surviving manuscript evidence." This is a combination of Hendel's quest for the "most original" text possible and Talmon and Goshen-Gottstein's positivist orientation. R. Weis, "BHQ and the Making of Critical Editions of the Hebrew Bible," *TC: A Journal of*

"present nothing but the facts."[170] In this respect, both Talmon and Goshen-Gottstein critique the *Urtext* theories that derive from Lagardian textual criticism, but they both continue to use several concepts that nevertheless divide an *original* period from *later* reception of the biblical text. Important to both Goshen-Gottstein and Talmon are the concepts of (a) the "Great Divide" that precipitated the stabilization and fixity of the biblical text,[171] and (b) the establishment of the Masoretic tradition as the eventual *telos* of biblical development.

Goshen-Gottstein and Talmon are both skeptical of the possible success of any quest for the original text; as Goshen-Gottstein writes, the

> axiomatic assumption that there was such a thing [as an Urtext] and...the positivistic utopian effort to recover them remains a legitimate goal, though unattainable... We do not look out any more for the veritas of an Urtext, but are satisfied with recapturing its reflex pragmatically, as far as our evidence allows.[172]

Thus Goshen-Gottstein does not deny that there may have been in the distant past an *Urtext,* but he sees the goal of textual criticism as a more pragmatic study of extant

Textual Criticism 7 (2002) [http://purl.org/TC] §16, accessed 4/12/2012.

170.   Goshen-Gottstein, ed., *The Hebrew University Bible Project: The Book of Isaiah. Sample Edition with Introduction*, 7.

171.   See the helpful typology of biblical scholars' views on the precise nature of this Divide, its causes and its relations to the various textual traditions of biblical texts in Lange, "'They Confirmed the Reading' (*y. Ta'an* 4.68a): The Textual Standardization of Jewish Scriptures in the Second Temple Period," 31-45. In this sense, Goshen-Gottstein and Talmon agree with the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project, as does Tov. See D. Barthélemy, "Text, Hebrew, History of," in *Text, Hebrew, History of* (ed. Kieth Crim; Idbsup; Nashville: Abingdon, 1976) and James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics of Text Criticism," *Text* 18 (1995), 7 n.9.

172.   Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "The Development of the Hebrew Text of the Bible: Theories and Practice of Textual Criticism," *VT* 42 (1992): 206.

texts. It would appear that Goshen-Gottstein retains the concept of the *Urtext,* but in a "weak" form. Though he allows for its merits, Goshen-Gottstein has questioned the ideal quality of this goal:

> ...we are allowed to ponder how large is the functional difference between the theologian's attempt to establish the "true unchanged word of God" and the philologist's endeavor to recapture archetype or Urtext.[173]

Though Goshen-Gottstein does not deny the past existence of an *Urtext,* he does compare the text-critical attempt to recover it to a purely theological task. In other words, the *Urtext* is a noumenal, not phenomenal, object. What besides theological convictions could lead one to divine the secret textual identity of the massive and pluriform biblical tradition?

Yet it appears that Goshen-Gottstein shares, at least to some degree, the spirit of this theological venture: when discussing the relative text-critical merits of variant traditions, he writes:

> The Massoretic type appears to us to be a main current in the centuries before the period of the Destruction, but there are rivulets flowing side by side with it - and investigations have already shown that it is sometimes in them that the pure water flows.[174]

Implied is this: some of the "water" is pure, and some is contaminated. Some of this contamination is within the Masoretic tradition itself, and thus calls to be corrected. In other words, some variants are more equal than others. How is one to

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173. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament: Rise, Decline, Rebirth," *JBL* 102 (1983): 373.

174. Goshen-Gottstein, ed., *The Hebrew University Bible Project: The Book of Isaiah. Sample Edition with Introduction* 17.

know what is contaminated and what is not?[175] Goshen-Gottstein sets forth an editor-

ial theory that seems to respect the textual validity of "alternative readings":

> [U]nless and until we are forced by strict philological evidence to
>
> regard a certain reading as secondary or corrupt, we have to look upon
>
> conflicting readings in our primary sources as alternative readings,
>
> none of which must be considered as superior to the other.[176]

Here, Goshen-Gottstein claims that there are cases in which alternative read-

ings should be allowed to stand as true alternatives, and not be subordinated one to

another. In this sense, Goshen-Gottstein's work has paved the way for the questions

that I have posed above. Yet his statement also harbors something keenly observed

by Ronald Hendel: namely, Goshen-Gottstein's egalitarian textual ontology appears

only where there is an epistemological lack. That is, various readings are only consid-

ered equal "alternatives" when there is no "strict philological evidence" to prove their

inferiority. The American legal dictum "innocent until proven guilty" comes to mind:

the "alternatives" are under temporary epistemological reprieve. As Tov sagely ar-

gues, for there to be secondary readings at all, there must be primary readings, and

this judgment implies that Goshen-Gottstein thinks that there is, somewhere unbe-

knownst to us, proper philological evidence that *could* and *would* let scholars know

what the "secondary and corrupt" readings are and, by comparison, the "original" or

"uncorrupted" readings.[177] Yet in general, scholars lack such evidence, and thus

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175.   One may here ask questions along the lines already set forth in §2.1 and §2.2:
And why should the currents considered "central" or "peripheral" in the ancient world be
thought of as "central" and "peripheral" within modern scholarship? Of course, when
thinking of the ancient world, scholars should note the relative social and theological
positions of each textual tradition, but why should the "main current" of the ancient
world simply become our "main current"?

176.   Goshen-Gottstein, "The History of the Bible-Text and Comparative Semitics:
A Methodological Problem," 198.

Goshen-Gottstein falls back on a default position of ontological openness to "alternative readings".

Thus, recognition of textual pluriformity holds itself in a subordinated position to the superior, but unreachable, goal of recovering the *true* text. Hendel uses this opportunity to argue for the necessity of positing an ideal "original" text, whether achievable or not; in contrast, it seems more prudent to hold that there is not, and never was, a necessarily and objectively ontologically-privileged form of these traditional texts. There are, to be sure, particular religious communities who have their own faith-based reasons for adjudicating between versions and editions; but these are not "givens," or positions that are justifiable outside of a certain set of theological assumptions. Rather, they are theologically speculative. It is not that we do not know *enough* to judge. It is that the act of judging itself here requires a resignation of the mantle of "critical scholar," or "objectivity," or "disinterestedness." One can only make these sorts of claims from an interested, committed viewpoint; the possibility of recovering an *Urtext* persuades only, as Goshen-Gottstein argued earlier, the theologian, not a putatively objective philologist.

And, in their editorial choices, Goshen-Gottstein and Talmon do signal their communal commitments quite clearly. For the base text of the HUB that is then supplemented by the apparatuses, the editorial team chose the Aleppo Codex, which is, according to Goshen-Gottstein, "the manuscript on which Maimonides relied, and that it is correctly ascribed to Aaron ben Asher."[178] This is in contrast to the first edi-

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177.   As Tov writes: "those who claim that a certain reading is preferable to another actually presuppose one original text." See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 168.

178.   Goshen-Gottstein, ed., *The Hebrew University Bible Project: The Book of Isaiah. Sample Edition with Introduction,* 17; see also Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "The Aleppo Codex and the Rise of the Massoretic Bible Text," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 42

tion of Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica,* which followed the rabbinic tradition of using the Second Rabbinic Bible of 1525 as the *textus receptus,* as well as the more recent editions, BHS and BHQ, which are diplomatic editions of the Leningrad codex, the oldest complete Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible.[179] According to Goshen-Gottstein, the Aleppo codex *should* be used as the base-text for scholarly editions because it is older and closer to Aaron ben Asher than Leningrad, though it lacks the Pentateuch up to Deuteronomy 28 and is missing several other sections. As it is the "oldest" text available, "there still is no other codex more suitable to serve as the basic text. On this central question no other decision seems possible."[180] Goshen-Gottstein's universal claims contain some rather puzzling features: first, why is the oldest *codex* the clear choice for a base text? Of course, this preserves a particular canonical context for these works, but codex *qua* "bound volume" seems like a strange place to look for the "best" base text of, for example, Isaiah, especially when 1QIsa[a] has been discovered. If age is a factor, why not use the Dead Sea Scrolls as much as one can for base-texts, as they are available?[181] Goshen-Gottstein explains:

(1979): 145-63.

179.   See Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "Editions of the Hebrew Bible–Past and Future," in *Sha'arei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* (eds. S. Talmon et al.; Eisenbrauns, 1992) for an overview of this process.

180.   Goshen-Gottstein, ed., *The Hebrew University Bible Project: The Book of Isaiah. Sample Edition with Introduction* 17.

181.   Goshen-Gottstein would object that accents and vowels are a necessary part of a critical edition of the Bible, and J. A. Sanders would doubtless link this suggestion to the historical tenacity of Luther's rejection of Masoretic vowel pointing. Certainly these elements are a necessary part of any critical edition of the *Masoretic* text, but surely not every scholarly critical edition of an ancient text must necessarily conform to a particular sub-unit of medieval scribal conventions, no matter how historically influential.

> [The Aleppo codex is] the most important witness in our possession of
> that type of Massoretic tradition which has become dominant
> throughout Jewry. In this case it must be regarded as the best
> 'substitute' for Aaron's manuscript which we ever shall be able to
> obtain.[182]

Here, Goshen-Gottstein lays his theological cards on the table. The *true* base text,
which is (seemingly always, under any name) just beyond scholarly reach, is in
Goshen-Gottstein's estimation the codex prepared by Aaron ben Asher that was then
approved by Maimonides.[183] Goshen-Gottstein's approval of Aleppo as the essence of
the Masoretic tradition leads him to downplay the importance of Codex Leningrad, a
"mixed" text corrected towards the Ben Asher text-form, revealing a hierarchical de-
termination that he justifies with "objective" text-critical metrics:

> [C]omparison showed the two codices for what they are: the Aleppo
> Codex - the perfect original masterpiece which authenticates itself by
> internal criteria; the Leningrad Codex - a none-too-successful effort to
> adapt a manuscript of a different Tiberian subgroup to a Ben Asher
> Codex...No scribe in his right mind would go to the trouble to adapt an
> existing manuscript to another model [as in the case of L] unless he
> recognized its authority.[184]

Goshen-Gottstein's "internal" criteria include the "almost complete harmony be-
tween text and massora," which validates its "original status" as the first production

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182. Ibid. 20.
183. For a more detailed argument, see MH Goshen-Gottstein, "The Authenticity
of the Aleppo Codex," *Text* 1 (1960) and Goshen-Gottstein, "Editions of the Hebrew
Bible–Past and Future."
184. Goshen-Gottstein, "The Aleppo Codex and the Rise of the Massoretic Bible
Text" 150.

of a codex of the entire massoretic Hebrew Bible.[185] But this is, confusingly, an emic evaluation that is used to justify an etic proposition. That is, Aleppo is "pure" and "perfect" only insofar as one accepts that the Tiberian subset of the Masoretic form of the Hebrew text of the book of Jeremiah is in some way something more pure than proto-OG Jeremiah, for example. Leningrad's mixture of subtypes is only a lesser creature if we take the already-mixed-up layer-cake of a text that we call the "Hebrew Bible" as an unmixed whole, unalloyed in and of itself. It is striking to think that a traditional compilation of heavily edited texts could, thousands of years into its textual development, finally find its most pure state in the hands of a particular group of medieval scribes; perhaps it is true, but it would take more than "internal criteria" to prove that this is so. Goshen-Gottstein thus reveals one of his dividing lines by which he measures the "true" text over against the other, less pure, forms. To start one's search by looking for the most internally consistent masorah in an early Masoretic codex of the complete Hebrew Bible is not to start on particularly objectively stable ground, since this "origin" is itself a complex amalgam of materials. Is this really "nothing but the facts?" The impassioned selection and defense of Aleppo reveals that the choice of a base text is not an insignificant detail, and the inclusion of all possible variants in critical apparatuses will not diminish the force of this decision.

Of course, neither is Leningrad necessarily or logically superior, either; these two manuscripts are simply two manuscripts that represent the text at two different places at two different times. Perhaps one was written by a more proficient class of scribes, or one is in fact a mixture of two previous textual types; but how does one draw axiological implications from these conclusions? Clearly, even the best of the

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185.   Goshen-Gottstein, "The Aleppo Codex and the Rise of the Massoretic Bible Text" 149. See also Goshen-Gottstein, "Editions of the Hebrew Bible–Past and Future."

masoretic scribes were preserving a so-called "corrupt" text of 1-2 Samuel;[186] what is the ontological status of a "pure" and "perfect" copy of a garbled text? Barring theological commitments, there is no more reason to base a scholarly edition of "*the* text of *1-2 Samuel*" upon Codex Aleppo than there is to base it purely on what remains of the texts of the Judaean desert.

That the Ben Asher school produced remarkable texts on many levels and that they are truly important to the development of the biblical text and the sustenance of the Jewish faith is beyond question, and the same can be said for Maimonides; but they hold no particular authority to select the "most suitable base text" for scholarly use. The emic religious convictions of these sub/objects of study should not necessarily be allowed to set the terms for the modern scholarly field at large. By the time Aaron ben Asher and Maimonides produced the fruits of their thought about the relative purity of textual traditions, the text already existed in other "base" forms that they excluded *a priori* on religious, not textual, grounds.[187] Why should we, whoever "we" are, be bound by those decisions? But perhaps the act of presenting any singular edition of "the Bible" requires selecting some religious assumptions over others if one is to construct it in any way at all; in the end, one may be forced to rely upon emic points of view, since there exists no objective, etic perspective on a socio-religious construction such as "the Bible."

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186.   For the textual problems in MT 1-2 Samuel, note Tov's discussion of 1 Samuel 16-18 in Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* 334-336 and J. Trebolle, "The Story of David and Goliath (1 Sam 17-18): Textual Variants and Literary Composition," *BIOSCS* 23 (1990); J. Lust, "The Story of David and Goliath in Hebrew and in Greek," *ETL* 59 (1983); for the whole of 1-2 Samuel, see Cross, "The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of Discoveries in the Judaean Desert"; Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus.*

187.   That is, Maimonides has a good excuse to describe LXX as deviant, because it deviates from *his* recieved tradition.

Goshen-Gottstein suggests an external metric, as well, for periodizing the textual history of the Bible: namely, the "Great Divide" that developed at the close of the Second Temple Period. As he writes: "[I]n any case, the Destruction of the Temple...is the main dividing line in textual history as far as it can be recovered."[188] In this sense, Goshen-Gottstein shares his views with Talmon, who calls this boundary the "crucial period of the Great Divide" that "decisively determined the totally different transmission of the biblical books by 'normative Judaism' and by the Community of the Renewed Covenant [i.e. Qumran]."[189] While Talmon emphatically asserts that "the textual multiformity" at Qumran "refutes modern views which profess allegiance to Lagarde's Urtext theory" and supports a theory of "various pristine texts," he then shifts to a discussion of "post-divide" textual transmission that (according to Talmon) recognizes textual stability and is equivalent to the canonical and theological views of the rabbinic tradition.[190] In the "pre-divide" world, the text was pluriform and variable, existing (in at least some Jewish communities) in several adaptable forms; but in the post-divide world, these textual traditions became a "handed down corpus of biblical *books*, the culminations of a long process of growth of an earlier diversified biblical literature in oral and written transmission."[191] True, the rabbinic tradition with its rhetoric of the fixed text developed a robust existence after the "Great Divide," and the Qumran community and very likely other now-lost textually pluriform traditions did not survive, but the biblical text *manifestly did not* simply

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188.   Goshen-Gottstein, ed., *The Hebrew University Bible Project: The Book of Isaiah. Sample Edition with Introduction* 15.

189.   Talmon, 147. One should note that the scrolls found at Qumran attest to a wider availability of pluriform biblical texts, since the vast majority of scrolls show no sectarian influence. Likely, these scrolls reflect the situation in Palestine at the time. See also Barthélemy, and Sanders, "Hermeneutics of Text Criticism.", 7 n.9.

190.   Talmon, "Textual Criticism: The Ancient Versions," 147.

191.   Ibid. 157.

become "fixed" or "stabilized" as a whole in the "post-divide" period for at least two reasons:

1. *The text had already developed into several different and still living traditions*, including the Greek-speaking Jewry of the Mediterranean world, various early Christian communities and the Samaritan community, and these different textual traditions continued to exist straight through the period of the "Great Divide", providing multiple exceptions to the univocally "stable" text in the post-"divide" period (to say nothing of translation, which produces its own transformative effects that continued in these exceptional textual traditions);[192]

2. *The text continued to develop even in the supposedly "fixed" textual tradition of "central Judaism"* after the period of the Great Divide and into the period of the Masoretes;[193] these developments *include* the retroactive adoption of a "primary" text for each book[194] and the subsequent categorization and correction of manuscripts towards that particular text,[195] as well as the development and application of

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192. See, for example, the use of the Greek text in Jewish communities of the Roman and Byzantine period in Tov, *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible and Qumran* 184-188.

193. There are no references to vowel pointings in the Talmud, which allows for 500 CE as a rough estimate of the beginning of Masoretic work, and the system of Masoretic notation and correction was in flux until after Aaron ben Asher. Thus the stabilizing system itself was developing nearly a millennia after the so-called "Great Divide." For a discussion of textual differences within MT see, for example, the evaluation and examples supplied by H. M. Orlinsky, "Prolegomenon: The Masoretic Text, a Critical Evaluation," in C. D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Ktav, 1966). xx-xxiii.

194. As Ulrich argues, the gathering of the uneven group of texts that comprise MT was not a decision or series of careful selections so much as a legitimation of the texts at hand, similar to the accidents of history that led to the Samaritans and Christians with their respective groups of biblical texts. Thus MT Ezekiel, Samuel, and Hosea were not culled for their textual problems. See Ulrich, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hebrew Scriptural Texts," 80-81.

195. As in the case of Codex Leningrad, the correction towards the ben Asher text

technologies of textual stabilization and correction, such as the invention of various vowel systems,[196] scribal textual interventions,[197] direct scribal alterations such as *tiqqunê soferim*,[198] the inscription of textual corrections into the margins of texts by means of *Ketib/Qere* and *Sebirin*,[199] and the technical apparatus of the *Masorah* itself as guard and pedagogue.[200] As the well-known "observer effect" would predict,[201] the remarkable Masoretic work meant to "stabilize" the "already fixed" text in fact altered the history of textual development in its own way.[202] Moreover, variations even

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led to what Goshen-Gottstein calls a "mixed form," which is in fact a novel form of the text. See Goshen-Gottstein, "Editions of the Hebrew Bible–Past and Future."

196.   Note the spatio-temporal variety of vowel systems, even within singular traditions: the Tiberian system, for example, including the "Tiberian Non-Receptus" system found in Codex Reuchlinanus; see Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "The Rise of the Tiberian Bible Text," in *Biblical and Other Studies* (ed. A. Altmann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1963), 26 n.49. For an overview, see Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* 39-49; see also Goshen-Gottstein, "Editions of the Hebrew Bible–Past and Future"; E. J. Revell, *Hebrew Texts with Palestinian vocalization* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1970).; S. Morag, "The Yemenite Tradition of the Bible - The Transition Period," *Estudios Masoréticos* (Proceedings of the 5th Congress of IOMS, Madrid, 1983).

197.   See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 50-76 for examples such as different types of accentuation, text-division, inverted nun, puncta extrordinaria, litterae suspensae, and enlarged letters; these interventions constitute scribal marginalia that at times alter the consonantal text and certainly have attested to a continuing development of the textual tradition.

198.   See Ibid. 64-67 and accompanying bibliography.

199.   See Ibid. 58-64.

200.   See Ibid. 72-76.

201.   Thus, the purity of the past cannot be fully recovered by means of technologies of correction; this brute fact of history necessitates the asymptotic structure of modern text criticism. See, for example, the fascinating study of D. M. Risinger et al., "The Daubert/Kumho Implications of Observer Effects in Forensic Science: Hidden Problems of Expectation and Suggestion," *California Law Review* 90 (2002).

202.   One may see this at work in the fact that the stabilization systems themselves have become such a part of the "text itself" that their alteration or removal is unthinkable, leading to the OHB's anachronistic application of the Tiberian vowel system to retroverted proto-OG text; see Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New

within this stabilization system ensured the continual variations would continue.[203]

While there was a polemical and theological drive towards recognizing one "pure" form of scripture in the rabbinic tradition, there was simultaneously an "acute awareness of the existence of variants in manuscripts of biblical books."[204] This acute awareness and rejection of variant readings reveals their continuing existence post-70 CE;[205] the variants found in Josephus, Philo and Rabbi Meir's Torah are witnesses to this continuing diversity.[206] When it comes to traditional texts, stability and fixity are rhetorical devices, not ontological realities.

One might note here the similarities between the activities of modern textual critics and the Masoretes; for both groups, the creation of critical editions is a productive, not archaeological, activity. Correction requires a correction *towards* something else, and thus assumes one privileged text-form and ultimately one manuscript (either a diplomatic base-text or eclectic edition) as a "center" of the manuscript group(s). This moment of selection is itself a massive intervention into the history of textual development and imposes, rather than closes, an era of intense textual change.[207] Is not the modern shift from local biblical manuscripts towards the text of

Critical Edition."

203.   This variation was clear even to ca. 12th c. Mishael ben Uzziel, who systematically compared the ben Asher and ben Naphtali systems. See L. Lipschütz, *Kitāb al-khilāf, The Book of Hillufim* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1965).

204.   Talmon, 157.

205.   As evidenced also by Greek corrections towards MT, such as Aquila, Symmachus and *kaige*-Theodotion; these traditions also vary with MT, yet attempt to conform to it, which continues the variance that it means to correct. See Barthélemy, *Les devanciers d'Aquila*.

206.   See Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*, for example.

207.   As Ulrich shows that the selection, or merely arbitrary adoption, of given text-forms was not carried out on rational or text critical principles but rather was a matter of chance, the law-like imposition of MT as a normative text-form in rabbinic Judaism "by breaking away from its origin, interrupts the genealogical" development of the text; yet

the Second Rabbinic Bible, then to Codex Leningrad, and now towards Codex Aleppo, proof that the "text of the Bible" continues to see changes?[208]

Moreover, the variants found within the Talmud and rabbinic midrash itself signal that the text was not quite as fixed as some would have it: as the Tosafists explained, הש״ס שלנו חולק על הספרים שלנו "Our Talmud disagrees with our Scriptures."[209] One may point to discrepancies between the order of books as given in MT and the divergent canonical lists given in halakhah,[210] or actual textual differences that emanate not from poor memory but actual textual differences.[211] Even within "central" Judaism alone, the biblical text remained in flux and does so still; Goshen-Gottstein's review of the history of text criticism recounts the many twists and turns of the modern quest for the best text of MT, and this is itself a history of textual variation, not

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this development itself constitutes a new history at the same moment that it suppresses another. Post-70 CE, the text does not suddenly become ahistorical, though the mechanism that ensures its development attempts to appear so. See Jacques Derrida, "Before the Law," in *Acts of Literature* (ed. D. Attridge; New York: Routledge, 1992) 194.

208.   In another sense, textual productions of imagined past texts recreate community only has recourse to the texts already in the possession of the community, and thus the whole venture takes for granted a given starting point, even if extant texts are carefully analyzed. Thus, 1-2 Samuel could not help but suffer from the haplography in 1 Samuel 10-11, since this alteration affected all MT manuscripts; in this case, "correction" and "purity" have at best a mediated sense. See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* 342-344.

209.   At *b. Shab.* 55b; see Sid Z. Leiman, "Masorah and Halakhah: A Study in Conflict," in *Tehilla Le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (eds. M. Cogan et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 292. See also the compendium of rabbinic disagreements with MT in V. Aptowitzer, *Das Schriftwort in der Rabbinischen Literatur* (4 vols.; reprint; original 1906-15; New York: Ktav, 1970); Orlinsky, "Prolegomenon."

210.   Note *b. Bat.* 14b and the order of BHS; see Leiman, "Masorah and Halakhah: A Study in Conflict," 292 for a list of Jewish halakhah that endorse the Talmud over against MT, with no opposing voices represented in the rabbinic tradition.

211.   See Aptowitzer, *Das Schriftwort in der Rabbinischen Literatur.*

one of stability.[212] If the text were so fixed, why would the work of modern textual criticism be continuing some half-millennia later without even so much as replicating the stable, fixed text?

Of course, the quantity of textual developments decreased in the years after 132 CE relative to before 132 CE.[213] Yet Goshen-Gottstein, Talmon, Tov, Barthélemy, Sanders, and many other scholars use this historical development to subtly assume the "natural" priority of MT, and moreover of TMT, after the Divide. At the same time, these scholars seem conveniently to forget that other communities were still using the same text-forms found at Qumran. Drawing the line of the "Great Divide" seems to justify an exclusion of non-TMT text-forms and the shift from an acceptance of textual pluriformity to an aversion to it. On the contrary: a decrease in the quantity of textual difference does not naturally force one particular text-form into a hegemonic status. The "meaning" of the Great Divide must be imposed either by a theologically committed group at the time of its supposed rupture or from a more recent vantage point. The tolerance of textual pluriformity pre-70 CE allowed by Talmon and Goshen-Gottstein suddenly disappears, and thus the divide between "original" and "reception" re-inscribes itself at the boundary.

One might push this point even further: Talmon writes that, in contrast to the adaptations of biblical traditions in the texts found at Qumran,

> The Sages adopted and promulgated one exclusively legitimate version of Scripture. The production and transmission of quasi-biblical compositions revolving on biblical themes and traditions was evidently discouraged.[214]

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212. See Goshen-Gottstein, "Editions of the Hebrew Bible–Past and Future."
213. See Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible.*
214. Talmon, "Textual Criticism: The Ancient Versions," 157.

This statement is consistent with the theological rhetoric of the rabbis, but it over-looks the lively and important "production and transmission of quasi-biblical compositions revolving on biblical themes" within rabbinic Judaism: namely, haggadic and halakhic midrash, including the Mishnah and Talmud.[215] One may add to this, as well, the various Targumim. Perhaps Midrash and Targum were not viewed by the rabbis themselves as "scriptural," but they nevertheless attest to the continued life and development of these texts and traditions after the so-called Great Divide.

Thus, the very logic Talmon uses to critique the Lagardian tradition of *Urtext*-oriented textual criticism can be directed against the "post-divide" period. Just as "[w]e have no objective criteria for deciding which reading is original and which derivative" in the pre-divide era, we may say of the variants within and without the Masoretic tradition in the post-divide era: "[t]herefore both have the same claim to be judged genuine pristine traditions."[216] Just as "the earliest attainable biblical manuscripts give witness to a wide variety of textual traditions which were current in Judaism in the pre-divide stage of transmission," biblical manuscripts give witness to the continued existence of a wide variety of textual traditions in the post-divide stage.[217] Perhaps Talmon would agree with this line of reasoning; but then why is there a "base text" of the HUB, and why would it be the Aleppo codex?

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215.   Talmud not only occasionally disagrees with MT; it develops it. See *b. Bat.* 15a-b for development of the story of Job, incorporating biblical text with commentary and expansion not completely unlike the textual practices within Second Temple Judaism.

216.   Ibid., 164.

217.   Ibid., 163. The Samaritan text-form and, especially in translation, the OG/LXX text-form certainly continue use even to this day. Of course, some of these manuscripts are in Hebrew (such as the Samaritan Pentateuch), and some of these manuscripts are in Greek, or Aramaic, but why should the linguistic criteria of Hebrew become a "dividing line" within the history of textual transmission when it did not divide Daniel, or Ezra, or Jeremiah's "pristine" status?

In terms of method, Talmon agrees with Goshen-Gottstein's practical refor-
mulation of the project of textual criticism:

> Ideally the critical analysis aims at recovering the original wording of
> the sacred writings. However, in actuality the target cannot be
> attained because of the unavailability of reliable ancient sources from
> a time close to the creation of a biblical book. Scholarly analysis can
> only attempt to recapture primary formulations underlying the
> current major Hebrew and translational versions, but cannot achieve
> the reconstitution of one primary text from which they derive, much
> less the biblical authors' *ipsissima verba.*[218]

In other words, the text-critical project must recognize the asymptotic impossibility
of the recovery of the original text, and thus must allow for the diversity of ancient
readings, which the multiple apparatuses of the HUB aim to represent. Yet within
Talmon's writing, much like that of Goshen-Gottstein, one may find a certain textual
preference that covertly manifests itself within otherwise "objective historiography."
For example, in his overview of textual criticism, Talmon tells the story of the com-
position and development of the biblical text in four main stages: in the first stage,
Talmon plainly states that "variant wordings" of the early transmission characterize
the biblical texts, and that during this stage "multiformity" predominated over
"uniformity."[219] This statement appears to lay aside notions of the "pure origin" of
any biblical texts, but it quickly becomes apparent that Talmon simply displaces the
ipsissima verba from a point of origin to a historical *telos.* As Talmon writes, the
modern four-stage history of the text delimits the text's "history" between two end-
points: namely,

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218.   Ibid. 141.
219.   Ibid., 147.

between the inception at varying times of the books contained in the

corpus and the stabilization of the text which probably achieved its

essential form at the height of the Second Temple period.[220]

Thus, the biblical texts have a particular "stabilization" point that marks the moment of their "essential form[s]." Of course, many of these texts had already been "stabilized" at other times and in other communities, but the "unified and stabilized text" that occurred among the community of "'normative' Judaism" serves as the "natural" bookend to this (still in some ways ongoing) process. No doubt, factors such as the rise of the liturgical use of the Bible in the synagogue, the textual focus of rabbinic study, and the rabbinic concern that the world of the Bible had become something 'different' than the world of the rabbis with the fall of the Temple are extremely important moments within the history of the development of the biblical text; but nevertheless, the importance of these moments does not justify the scholarly conclusion that these moments are normative for the "text itself" or the "world at large." In other words, the rabbis thought that they should not (openly) meddle with the text any longer; but why does this lead anyone to argue that the Aleppo codex is thus the "natural" choice for a base text of the Bible? Can a line really be drawn at the "Great Divide" that somehow legitimates the future Aaron ben Asher text and delegitimates other text-forms, declaring the former "The Bible" while relegating the latter to "reception"? Does the canonization of the text in one particular religious group have retroactive significance for all previous "stabilized" and all future "stabilized" forms of the text?

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220.   Ibid., 147. For the background of this four-part division, see Barthélemy, "Hebrew, History of," and Sanders, "Hermeneutics of Text Criticism," 7 n.9.

5   E. ULRICH AND J. BOWLEY/J. REEVES: PLURIFORMITY IN CONTEXT(S)

Eugene Ulrich is one of the preeminent readers and editors of Judean Desert texts
and has served as Chief Editor of the Biblical Scrolls for the Scrolls International
Publication Project; as a result, he has faced squarely the consequences of the textual
pluriformity found within those same scrolls.[221] Ulrich's research focuses on the long,
diverse composition process of biblical texts and the resulting variants at Qumran;
these variants, variant editions, and "parallel presentations" of biblical traditions (in
the words of Talmon) lead him, like Talmon and Goshen-Gottstein, to question not
only the goals of textual criticism but the very existence of the original text.[222] Ulrich
asks very difficult questions about the ontological status of various textual editions
and seems content at times to accept ambiguity and uncertainty.[223] Like Talmon and
Goshen-Gottstein, Ulrich begins the process of re-thinking textual criticism from the
grounds of a pluriform text; these grounds are not entirely stable, but they seem to
give rise to more honest and careful assessments of the historical record. But also
like Talmon and Goshen-Gottstein, Ulrich at times (though it should be stressed, not
often) establishes a boundary between "the original period" and "later reception" by
positing an "end" to the process of textual development. Conceptually, this line func-
tions in many ways as a structural analogue to Lagarde's line of "origin."

Concerning the composition of biblical texts, Ulrich points out that the
method by which the literature was produced should guide text critical methods for
delineating that same text. Israelite literature in general seems to have been woven
together over time from a series of discrete oral and written texts that themselves

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221.   Ulrich has also edited *DJD* volumes 9, 11-12, and 14-17.
222.   See Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*, 13.
223.   See, for example, Ibid., 48-49.

came into being through their continual retelling in different contexts in somewhat different forms; thus text criticism should find a line between "text criticism" and "literary criticism" hard to find. Even more difficult to locate would be any "original" text: Ulrich posits at least eight possibilities for the meaning of the term "the original text", each of which can be understood as a possible legitimate object of the text-critical search. One can for example, search for the source behind the biblical text (e.g. Canaanite stories "behind" the biblical texts),[224] an original "document" (P, for example), the earliest complete edition of a book (e.g. the earliest connection of P and non-P material that became "Genesis"), the earliest moment at which the book became sacred, authoritative or canonical (e.g. Genesis in the late Second Temple period), or perhaps only the proto-Masoretic version of the consonants, or otherwise a particular Masoretic version with vowels, punctuation, and interpretation added by the Masoretes.[225] More pointedly, one can look for an edition between any of these "earliest" editions - say, a later edition that was accepted as authoritative (e.g. Theodotion-Daniel), and not the "first" version that was accepted as such (e.g. proto-MT Daniel). Ulrich gives as another example the development of the text of Exodus:

> After...repeated reformulations during the monarchic period and the
> early postexilic period, a Hebrew form of Exodus emerged that was
> eventually translated into Greek. That form can be labeled edition
> n+1, where n stands for the number of revised literary editions the text

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224. One may point to the various ANE backgrounds to certain stories such as the flood narratives of Mesopotamia and Genesis 6-9; see Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1-9," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 40 (1977): 147-155; or one may also note the geographic, theological and literary variations that signify different contexts of production for the various family cycles in Genesis 12-50; see Rolf Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), 29ff.

225. See Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*, 8.

had undergone prior to becoming the Hebrew Vorlage of the OG of

Exodus. A subsequent edition, n+2, was produced when some editor

systematically rearranged the section with chapters 35–39 into the

form present now in the MT. Yet another revised edition of Exodus,

n+3, was formed when the many large expansions visible now in

4QpaleoExod[m] were added to the text of edition n+2. The SP of

Exodus may or may not be considered a new edition, n+4, dependent

upon whether quantity or significance is the chief criterion, since there

are only two or three small changes beyond 4QpaleoExod[m], but those

changes determine the community's identity.[226]

Ulrich shows that neither the "original" text nor the "final" text are entirely deter-

minable, since (1) the "origins" of the text lie in a traditioning process not compatible

with the concept of originality, and (2) the text develops well past the form later as-

sociated with MT, and in several directions. Thus, Ulrich urges that text criticism

should recognize the diverse forms in which these biblical texts exist, and not at-

tempt to collapse texts into an "original" text that never existed *as such*. Qumran in

particular reveals pluriformity of textual witnesses, and is, according to Ulrich, likely

"representative of the shape of the Scriptures elsewhere in Judaism."[227] Yet Qumran

is not alone in its witness: as noted above, others, too– Josephus, Samaritan Penta-

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226.   Ulrich gives further examples as well: "Similarly, the editions of Joshua can
be traced through the witness of 4QJosha (corroborated by Josephus), the somewhat
fuller LXX-Joshua, and the yet fuller MT-Joshua. Some further examples are the LXX-
Jeremiah enlarged into the MT-Jeremiah, the MT-Daniel enlarged into the LXXDaniel,
and the MT-Psalter enlarged into the 11QPs[a–b]-Psalter (11Q5–6)." Ulrich, "The Dead Sea
Scrolls and the Hebrew Scriptural Texts," pages 77-100 in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the
Hebrew Scriptural Texts*, vol. 1 (ed. J. Charlesworth; Waco: Baylor University, 2006),
96.

227.   Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*, 11.

teuch, LXX, Philo, the New Testament, Rabbinic quotations, for example– testify to a pluriform text continuing well into the "post-divide" era. Thus, according to Ulrich, the MT is "simply one form of that book as it existed in antiquity."[228] Even rabbinic scribes were constantly "actively handing on the tradition," which included copying but also at times included "attempting to make [the text] adaptable and relevant."[229] This principle of "resignification" (a term borrowed from J.A. Sanders) is, Ulrich reminds us, the very mechanism by which the sacred text matters to any community at all; the text is "capable of having new significance" in each new context in which it is read.[230]

Yet Ulrich, like Talmon and Goshen-Gottstein, posits a *terminus ad quem* of the "end of biblical composition" to replace textual criticism's *terminus a quo* of the "original text." Ulrich writes: "[T]he same process that characterized the composition of the Scriptures from their beginnings was still continuing all the way through the Second Temple Period."[231] Yet this "all the way through" has its limit at the *end* (or just after the end) of the Second Temple Period: "it appears that the organic or developmental process of the composition of the Scriptures was brought to a halt," and the *second* Jewish revolt of 132 CE "appears to be a more likely setting for the crystallization of the view that a single form of the text was a necessity."[232] Thus, for Ulrich the end of textual composition is only "the abrupt interruption of the composition process for external, hostile reasons (the Roman threat or the Rabbinic-Christian debates)."[233] Ulrich explains:

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228. Ibid., 11.
229. Ibid., 11.
230. Ibid., 11.
231. Ibid., 11.
232. Ibid., 12.
233. Ibid., 14.

It was not so much a "stabilization" of the biblical texts as a loss of the

pluriformity of the texts and the transition from a dynamically

growing tradition to a uniform collection of "Scripture."[234]

Yet pluriformity was lost only *from the perspective of each community,* and not from

the viewpoint on the process of textual change itself. Rabbinic and early Christian

communities developed preferences for particular sacred texts and grew to discour-

age altering them, but they talked about scripture as if it were a fixed, stable text.

This does not mean that something *actually fixed and stable* was objectively present,

rather than something rhetorical, ideal, and sectarian. If something stable had

arisen, then Origen's Hexapla and the Masoretic endeavor would never have been

necessary. It seems rather clear from debates within and between Jewish and Christ-

ian communities that all parties acutely felt the continuing pluriformity of biblical

texts in the supposedly stabilized period– whereas one can imagine indifference to

pluriformity during the Second Temple Period as it was not yet a problem. But it cer-

tainly became a problem afterward.[235] This problem is fundamentally a conceptual

one: namely, how do readers understand a sacred text that has several forms? The

existence of the problem validates not the unmet ideal, but rather the material incon-

sistencies that bedevil any attempt to fully reconcile them.

For his part, Ulrich concludes that the "object" of the text critical "search"

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234.   Ulrich, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hebrew Scriptural Texts," 99.

235.   Note, for example, the debate between Julius Africanus and Origen
concerning the validity of Susanna and other clearly interpolations to the book of Daniel;
Julius argues that there is no known Hebrew *Vorlage* for Susanna, and thus it should not
be considered part of the book of Daniel. But Origen replies that the Christian tradition
has adopted the Septuagint and with it the "additions," admonishing Julius not to
"remove the ancient boundary marks set up by your fathers" (Prov 22:28); see *PG*
11:41-85.

should be "the text as it truly was," which denotes "the organic, developing, pluriform Hebrew text - different for each book - such as the evidence indicates."[236] What if the evidence indicates that the biblical texts remained developing and pluriform?

A recent article by James Bowley and John Reeves pushes Ulrich's arguments even further:[237] "Succinctly stated, 'the Bible' is not and furthermore never was."[238] Since "canon" was not "a category employed by ancient Judaism" it is "therefore anachronistic" to think of Second Temple Jews having a "Bible" as such.[239] To speak of the "original text of the Bible" is to "impose upon the texts' authors and/or readers alien categories" that were used only by later communities.[240] These texts were not held together, bound as a codex, and separated from all other texts, but rather from all archaeological remains it appears that biblical texts were seen in the Second Temple period as a diverse collection of texts with rather hazy (or even non-existent) "edges". Alternate editions, paraphrases, parabiblical narratives, harmonistic and creative editing of biblical texts, and commentaries were held together at Qumran without apparent distinction.[241]   Bowley and Reeves also argue that Jubilees and 1

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236.   Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible,* 15.

237.   Note also the arguments of A. P. Hayman, "The Original Text: A Scholarly Illusion?," in *Words Remembered, Texts Renewed: Essays in Honour of John F. A. Sawyer* (eds. J. Davies et al.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995). Hayman argues forcefully that the final form is a historical accident, and that the search for an original text is an unhelpful construct. Yet Hayman, too, draws a line at the Second Temple period (understood as the original context of production) as a boundary, since the "circumstances under which the texts were created" determine how they can be analyzed; see p. 443.

238.   James E. Bowley and John C. Reeves, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible': Some Theses and Proposals," *Henoch* 25 (2003): 4.

239.   Ibid., 5.

240.   Ibid., 6.

241.   See Ulrich, "The Bible in the Making; The Scriptures Found at Qumran."

Enoch, for example, were not seen as "rewritten Bible" but were understood by many in Second Temple Judah to be as authoritative and sacred as Genesis itself. Thus, although later religious groups selected Genesis to be part of "the Bible" but saw Jubilees as "a later attempt to rewrite the Bible" (while Chronicles, which is clearly a later attempt to rewrite the Bible, remained a part of "the Bible"), we are not bound to retroject such selections back into the period of the composition of the biblical text itself. For this reason, Bowley and Reeves claim that "we can no longer speak of the 'final form' of any particular text."[242] As they write: "Any particular text one might use is one exemplar from one stage in a long and complicated genealogy."[243] The methodological result is that scholars cannot talk about "*the* text," or "reading the text itself," but rather any reading of any biblical text must be preceded by the choice of *which* particular form of a particular text one is to read.[244]

The principle of selection is not inherently given; there is no necessarily "wrong" or "right", no "pure" or "corrupt," no "original" or "secondary" texts to read. There are only texts, which can be sorted based on historical, social, aesthetic, theological, and any number of other grounds. But there is no *given* or *necessary* method to sort them. Even more than Ulrich and Talmon, Bowley and Reeves test the boundaries of the "Great Divide" between the "original period of composition" and the "reception" of biblical texts.[245]

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242.   Bowley and Reeves, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible': Some Theses and Proposals," 10.

243.   Ibid., 10.

244.   Ibid., 17.

245.   There are many scholars who agree in the abstract that the search for the urtext is methodologically misleading, yet continue to return to privileging a particular point in time as the moment of necessary text-critical focus. Note, for example, two juxtaposed quotes from one study, the former swearing off the Urtext, and the latter re-inscribing the concept in another form: "Today's textual criticism is generally said not to

Bowley and Reeves offer a provocative and compelling argument, but they seem to harbor something of a historical "imposition" in their own work: they claim that the concepts of "canon" and "Bible" are "anachronistic," "alien" and "imposed" by modern scholars because they were not used by the "authors" of biblical texts, who apparently fit within the category of "ancient Judaism."[246] But if their arguments concerning the lack of *finality* of any biblical text are correct, then how is it that these texts have discrete authors, given historical contexts of production, and given historical categories that must be used to read these texts correctly?

Bowley and Reeves claim, "Modern theologians and historians are not in a position to make demands of ancient writers."[247] Within this radical dismissal of boundaries (between Bible and non-Bible, original and derivative) there suddenly appears a surprisingly strong division–a "Great Divide," as it were–between modern scholars and ancient writers. How is this possible if the text never had a definite, given "original" or "end point"? In other words, it seems strange that the Second Temple era pre-canonical scribes hold the authority to create ontologies for texts that they were anachronistically resignifying (and thus not "originating") while the textual ontologies, however anachronistic, assigned by medieval scribes and modern scholars are so easily dismissed.

Several assumptions are at work here. One implicit assumption is that the au-

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have its first talk in reconstructing the original text or so-called Ur-text. Many scholars even doubt the existence in se of such an original and unique text of the Old Testament." Yet a few pages later: "Textual criticism then would try to discover the history and development of the text of the Hebrew Bible in its different textual forms, and this in particular for the period of the 4th to 3rd centuries BCE." Both quotes from Lemmelijn, "What Are We Looking for in Doing Old Testament Text-Criticism Research?"

246.   Bowley and Reeves, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible': Some Theses and Proposals," 5-6.

247.   Ibid., 13 n. 46.

thors of a text hold "correct" understandings of a text's ontology. A derivative assumption is that an author's "intentions" (in the general sense) hold an interpretive matrix that it is necessary for a scholar to uncover in order to read the text "naturally," in a sense that is "un-anachronistic" or perhaps "chronistic." Reading the text without these assumptions would violate the text's essence, imposing something "alien" that necessarily results in a poor, garbled, or nonsensical reading. But why are the intentions, concepts, and reading protocols of one segment of ancient Jewish scribes acting as the ontological arbiters for biblical texts?

Bowley and Reeves do not define the nature of biblical texts in terms of one particular textual moment in the midst of a given text's genealogy, but they critique scholars who do by *claiming that they are reading the text "out of context"*– which assumes that there *is a correct context within which to read each biblical text*. Instead, what I argue is this: *Since there is no naturally privileged final historical form of a biblical text, it follows that there is no naturally privileged final historical context* within which to read any biblical text. In the end, it appears that Bowley and Reeves *do* implicitly imagine that one particular period in the genealogy of these texts holds the key to their essence, and it is one *before* the end of the Second Temple period. The dividing line, in Bowley and Reeves' point of view, is one of *proper historical context*–and this conclusion I analyze in chapters four and five. But for now, let us turn to another question: what should text critics do, if not search for the original text?

The Concrete Universal: An Alternate Ontology of Text

> In actual textual criticism 'original' functions in a somewhat different way, for it is used relatively: given the fact of different readings, a normal and probably a necessary way of ordering, classifying, and understanding them is to ask which of them may probably be considered secondary and derivative in relation to others; and what is thus perceived to be not secondary and derivative in relation to other readings is in that respect more 'original'... [it is] doubtful whether any serious thinking about the text at all can be carried out without this piece of the conceptual apparatus.

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JAMES BARR

> Léfebure, ce n'est pas mal.

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JACQUES DERRIDA

1   INTRODUCTION: MILTONESQUE TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Though the scholarly search for the original text of the Hebrew Bible has taken many forms, some of which even disown the term "original" while nevertheless retaining its function, these forms seem to share one underlying conceptual narrative. In schematic form, the basic narrative of the "original text" is as follows: at one point in time, there was a text– either an "original text," an "autograph," a "pristine" copy,

one that was "considered authoritative," a "final form" of the text or merely a rela-tively "more original" version– that stood at the end of a process of composition and– simultaneously– at the beginning of a process of copying. At that paradoxical point in time, alterations to the text ceased to be compositional and henceforth be-came corruptions. Authors became copyists. Thus, the long history of the post-origi-nal text becomes a history of *transmission*, which emphasizes the fundamentally passive role of the one who transmits the already-completed content of the text, as opposed to the previous history of *composition* carried out by authors.

The many changes to the text in the last several millennia include both inten-tional and unintentional changes, expansions and emendations, translations and misspellings.[1] But whatever their cause, they pose the problem for textual criticism: these alterations detract from the purity and authenticity of the text. Paradise is lost.[2] Textual critics mourn for the lost original and marginalize non-original texts by means of several literary tropes: namely, the binary tropes of *degradation* ("corrupt text", "incorrect text" or "errors" versus "pristine text" or "correct text"),[3] *marginal-ization* ("secondary readings", "inauthentic texts" or even "daughter versions" versus "primary readings," "authentic texts" or "central texts"),[4] *pathology and perversion* ("deviating texts" versus "corrected texts" or thinking in terms of "textual integrity"),[5]

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1.   See Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd rev. ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 22-71 for the alterations occurring in the MT alone.

2.   Some textual critics admit that there could be multiple originals scattered among these various forms, such as OG and MT, but the general preference for the eclectic Göttingen edition of the LXX, since it claims to recover "the text as it left the hands of the translators," reveals that the bias against 'unoriginal' alterations remains even if multiple 'originals' are accepted. S. Olofsson, *The LXX Version: A Guide to the Translation Technique of the Septuagint* (ConBOT 30; Stockholm: Almqvist, 1990), 79.

3.   See, for example, n. 8., p. 26.

4.   See, for example, Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 18.

5.   See, for example, McCarter, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the*

and *decline* ("transmitted text" versus "original text"), [6] among others.[7]

Yet the narrative does not end there: paradise is not merely lost; it can be regained. Into the mess of textual corruption, the modern textual critic brings rational analysis and historical artifacts that allow him or her to discard the accumulations and confusions produced by the fallible transmission-history of the text. With the swords of *recensio* and *selectio*, the textual critic cuts away the barnacles of impurity surrounding the text. By analyzing the existing manuscripts and identifying corruptions, the textual critic re-traces the history of corruption, hopefully finding traces of the moment of pristine textual origin that emanated from the hand of the author and offering an argument that justifies a particular reconstruction of the moment of origin.[8] "Recovery" is thus a key motif in the conceptual narrative undergirding textual criticism. Overall, this basic narrative of loss and recovery narrative begins with *purity*, follows with a fall into *corruption*, and then advocates a method which will *redeem* the lost purity. This three-stage narrative (*purity*, *fall*, *redemption*) should sound eerily familiar to those working in biblical studies. Here, we find that textual criticism adumbrates the basic Christian theological narrative.[9]

Hebrew Bible. 12.

6. See, for example, Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 8.

7. For a discussion of the construction of binary oppositions, see Jacques Derrida and Henri Ronse, *Positions*, 41: "One of the two terms governs the other...or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy."

8. Note the subtitle of P. Kyle McCarter's text-critical handbook: "Recovering the Text." P. Kyle McCarter, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986).

9. One may notice the similarities between the narrative underlying modern text-criticism and the basic theological narrative of Christianity, namely that of pristine origin, the fall and its pathological consequences, and eventual salvation. For an example of the above narrative, see Ibid., 11-13, which follows this outline rather closely. For more examples, see especially the sections in this chapter discussing Tov and Hendel.

One may here notice the optical illusion played by charts of the development of the biblical text to make it seem as if this is not the case: unfailingly, at the "top of the chart," placed before the proto-OG, proto-SP, and proto-MT, is found a unifying "Hebrew *Vorlage*," which implies a unified group of texts and a stable form of each. Yet this map of seemingly brief transitions between stable forms with a determinate anchor in a moment of stable, uncomplicated origin is merely covering over the crack in the system, or rather sweeping it under the rug: namely, the variegated "literary development" that functions like anything but an "origin" and contained no such set form is hidden beneath the image of the *Vorlage*.
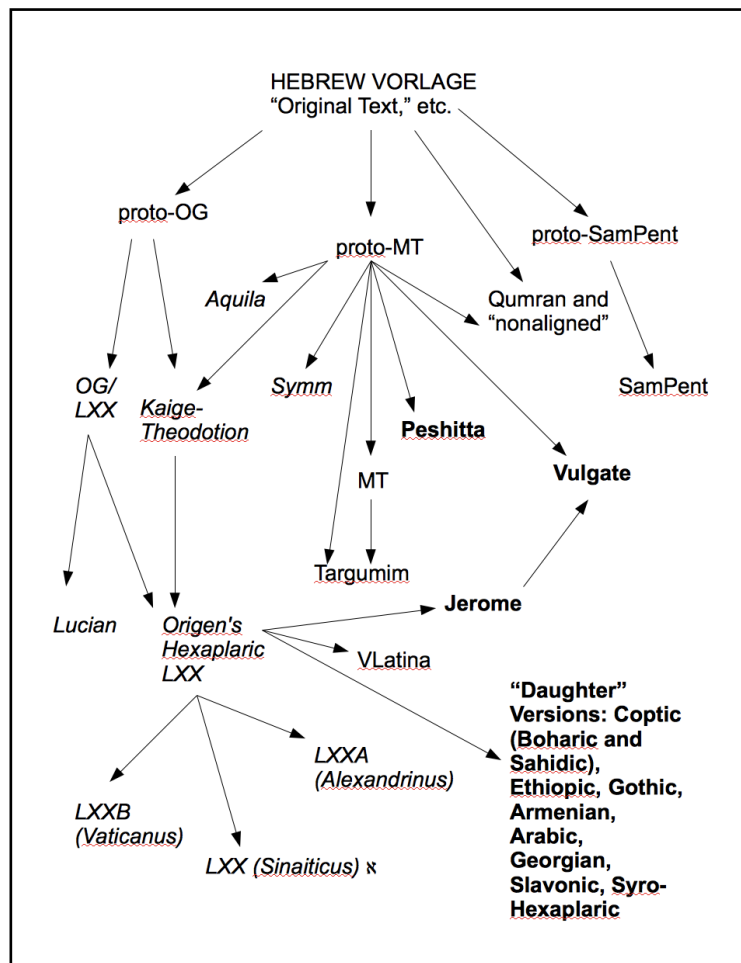
fig. 3.1: A Diagram of the Textual Transmission of the Hebrew Bible

Ironically, the great strides made in critical biblical study over the past few centuries have their own complicated roots in the work of scholars who recognized the complexity of even the *Vorlagen* and questioned the ideology of fully-formed authorial or divinely-issued texts. For example, Jean Astruc in 1753 (but Simon and Spinoza before him, and Ibn Ezra and Julius Africanus before them, as well)[10] argued that, due to repetitions and multiple names for the deity, the composition of the book of Genesis must derive from multiple sources, and these sources come from diverse historical and cultural backgrounds.[11] The resulting field of source criticism sought to understand the complexity of these "original accounts" (in Astruc's wording, "mémoires originaux")[12] that themselves were diverse; thus, even the strongest advocates for the "unified authorship" of the Yahwist (e.g., van Seters)[13] or the Deuteronomist (e.g., Noth)[14] admit that their original author relied upon and incorporated quite unoriginal sources and traditions.

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10.   For Astruc, see Jean Astruc, *Conjectures sur la Genese* (Bruxelles: 1753). For Simon, see Richard Simon, *Histoire critique du vieux testament* (new ed.; ed. Pierre Gibert; Montrouge: Bayard, 2008). For Spinoza and Ibn Ezra, see Nancy K. Levene, *Spinoza's Revelation: Religion, Democracy, and Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004), 77-135; for Julius Africanus, see *PG* 11:41-85.

11.   As Astruc writes: "Il y a dans la Genese des répititions fréquentes des mesmes faits, qui sautent aux yeux... Dans le texte Hebreu de la Genese, Dieu est principalement designé par deux noms differents... Si Moyse avoit composé de son chef la Genese, il faudroit mettre sur son compte cette variation singuliere bizarre... N'est-il pas au contraire plus naturel d'expliquer cette variation, en supposant, comme nous faisons, que le Livre de la Genese est formé de deux ou trois mémoires, joints & cousus ensemble par morceaux..." Astruc, *Conjectures sur la Genese*, 10, 13.

12.   Ibid., title page.

13.   See, for example, J. Van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

14.   See, for example, Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien; die sammelnden und bearbeiten Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1957).

Later, form criticism opened another frontier of the complex origin of biblical texts: Gunkel pioneered this field by classifying texts based on literary patterning, allowing the careful scholar to trace a text's prior oral genre and historical-social context, thus showing that traditional speech-forms were passed on, and later users adopted and altered the conventional formal patterns and inherited content.[15] Likewise, Redaction criticism pushed biblical scholars to carefully assess the way in which biblical authors and editors stitched together their source materials by focusing on how the biblical text functions together as a historical and literary patchwork.[16]

Text criticism, however, tends to push all of these complications of origin into the tidy category of "literary criticism," allowing the text critic to seek out an "original" and yet "final" text (or stabilized text, or authoritative text, etc) that stood at the end of this "literary process."[17] Unfortunately, this simple categorization ignores the textual pluriformity that is now well known at every step of the compositional-transmissional process. Thus, even the most proto- of proto-MT, the arche- of archetypes, is not "original" in any sense, but is a work in progress, a "draft" in Borges' sense, a traditional production that continues to live in its tradition and was (and still is) only one witness to the pluriform biblical text.

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15. See J. Begrich and Hermann Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933).

16. See, for example, Gary A. Rendsburg, *Redaction of Genesis (*Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986), or the examples provided in Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, eds. *Farewell to the Yahwist?: The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 34; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006).

17. See, for example, Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, chapter 7. For an incisive critique of the distinction between literary and textual criticism, see H.-J. Stipp, "Das Verhältnis von Textkritik und Literaturkritik in neueren alttestamentlichen Veröffentlichungen," *BZ* 34 (1990): 16-37.

Why does the Miltonesque narrative continue to drive the field of textual criticism? I argue that this narrative structure flows not from an objective analysis of the data gathered by textual critics; rather, it flows from the general conception of what a biblical text *is*. In other words, our *ontology* of the biblical text determines our approach to textual criticism. In this chapter, I describe the prevailing ontology of biblical texts within biblical studies, and examine its effects on the theory and practice of textual criticism. That is, I ask: what do textual critics think a biblical text *is*, and how does that conception shape the study of biblical texts? I then propose an alternate ontology, one that affirms the processual and differential qualities of the biblical text, and as such might prove more productive for text-critical research.

2   LIVING IN POTTERSVILLE: THINKING WITHOUT AN ORIGINAL TEXT

In the epigraph to this chapter, James Barr claims that text critics must organize texts into a hierarchy of "more or less" originality, concluding that "[it is] doubtful whether any serious thinking about the text at all can be carried out without this piece of the conceptual apparatus."[18] While Barr simply asserts his opinion and then moves on to other matters, let us pause for a moment and ask: is it, in fact, possible to think without the concept of the original text? Like George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life,* let us imagine what the world would look like if the concept of the original text had never been born. Would it really be as foreboding as Pottersville, chock-full of unsavory nightclubs and spinster librarians? Is Bedford Falls actually as pristine as we once thought?

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18.   James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1983), 85.

2.1   Is Thought Possible Without an Original Text?

To begin: if there were no original text, then there would be a general acceptance that a biblical text could appear in various contradictory guises. What a given scholar of-fers as the "original," "final," "stabilized," "authorized," or "published" text would then merely present one particular form of a text that a particular historical reader had selected to read at a particular time.[19] This statement holds for any determina-tion of (1) the proper *canon* of the Bible,[20] (2) the proper *editions* or *text traditions* of each book of the Bible, or (3) the proper *readings* from among the many manuscripts in that tradition. Without the concept of a hierarchy of manuscripts, none of these answers to these questions would be *natural* or *given*. Determinations would either be *ad hoc* (i.e., "here's a version of this text, let's read this one") or made by means of a specific criteria (i.e., "here is the most literarily coherent, or theologically profound, or aesthetically pleasing version").

The broadest issue would be the definition of the *canon*: that is, an editor of a critical edition of the Bible must decide what *books* to include and exclude.[21] Without

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19.   One may, of course, categorize manuscripts and text-forms on the basis of many different criteria, but none of these criteria are simply "given," and none of these exerts universal authority. Scholars could organize texts around the value of "most original text" or "earliest inferable state," to be sure, but these forms of a text are not naturally superior to later text-forms. Historical priority is not even the only basis by which to hierarchically categorize manuscripts: scholars could value texts by their aesthetic merits, or their theological profundity, or even by their length. Perhaps Jorge Luis Borges' fantastic encyclopedia could suggest alternative classificatory schemas; see J. L. Borges, *Selected Non-Fictions* (New York: Viking, 1999), 231.

20.   The complete canon need not be defined, but citing even one phrase of "the biblical text" presumes that the text cited is included in the canon.

21.   For an introduction see the various perspectives in Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002).

the concept of the original text, what books would be in, say, the *New Interpreter's Bible*? Though the questions of canon and the original text may appear to address quite different concerns, a brief look at the literature surrounding the canon debate, as well as the practice of canonical criticism, will show how crucial the notions of "final" or "original" text are to those interested in canon.[22]

While many scholars ostensibly approach this question from a neutral perspective, it is difficult to offer any answer that does not treat the particular theological decisions of a particular religious tradition as universally valid. The alternative is probably less appealing: namely, the compilation of a monstrous collection of all editions of sacred texts that have appeared in any textual tradition, which would contain at least three books of Genesis (MT, OG, SamPent), and so on. Such an edition is imaginable, but would not seem to present a "Bible."

So perhaps it seems natural that, as an alternative, all current critical editions of the Hebrew Bible assume the Tiberian Masoretic Text [TMT] as a base text, even though this text assumed pride of place relatively late in one tradition and not at all in others.[23] Since Kahle, most scholars have used Codex Leningrad as their base text, since it is the oldest completely extant Masoretic codex of the Hebrew Bible.[24] Other scholars favor Codex Aleppo, since it is possibly the only ben Asher text of the complete Bible, though now damaged.[25] This is, however, a limited diversity: a tiny frag-

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22. See Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979), 56-57 and J Sanders, *Canon and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984), 21-45.

23. The OHB will, at least for some books, also allow space for the *Vorlage* of several OG texts. BH3, BHS and BHQ use Codex Leningrad, while HUB uses Codex Aleppo.

24. See Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "Editions of the Hebrew Bible–Past and Future," in *Sha'arei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* (eds. S. Talmon et al.; Eisenbrauns, 1992).

ment of the Tiberian Masoretic textual family, namely Leningrad and Aleppo, forms the boundaries of almost all critical projects.[26] To push the point: would it ever cross the minds of critical scholars to put the name "Biblia Hebraica" on a critical edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch? Tov, for one, has recently proposed that the *Biblia Hebraica* series should instead be titled *Biblia Masoretica,* helpfully putting the identity of the religious community claiming the text *as* Bible in the title.[27] Could we imagine a series of critical texts such as these, producing editions of texts selected by specific communities?

Concerning the canon, the selection of TMT puts critical editions of the Hebrew Bible at odds with *halakhah*, since a Talmudic *baraita* orders the prophets and writings quite differently than MT;[28] as Sid Leiman writes, "No dissenting view is

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25.   See Ibid.

26.   Though note the appearance of *Biblia Qumranica, Minor Prophets* (3B; Leiden: Brill, 2004). The BQ project presents text from Qumran scrolls that later counted among "biblical" texts alongside MT and OG versions; see also M. G. Abegg et al., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: The Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999). This project boldly places "Jubilees" within the Pentateuch, reflecting what seemed to be the authoritative status of this book at Qumran as Mosaic literature. Though the binding of these texts into one continuous volume with determinate ordering is clearly not representative of the shape of sacred texts at Qumran (see Eugene Ulrich, "The Bible in the Making; the Scriptures Found At Qumran," in *The Bible At Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation* (eds. Patrick Flint and T. H. Kim; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001)), this *de novo* canonical arrangement may effectively communicate the function of Jubilees at Qumran in a way accessible to the modern lay reader. It is, of course, entirely misleading, but perhaps in a constructive way.

27.   See Emanuel Tov, "The Status of the Masoretic Text in Modern Text Editions of the Hebrew Bible: The Relevance of Canon," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), and Emanuel Tov, "The Many Forms of Scripture: Reflections in Light of the LXX and 4QReworked Pentateuch," in *From Qumran to Aleppo: A Discussion With Emanuel Tov About the Textual History of Jewish Scriptures in Honor of His 65th Birthday* (eds. A Lange et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 14 n. 9.

preserved in rabbinic literature."[29] As a result, TMT as presented in BHS is not actually the rabbinic canon. Perhaps even more confusing is the amalgamation of the Christian and Jewish traditions in the division of books: the BH series effectively divides Samuel into 1-2 Samuel, Kings into 1-2 Kings, and Ezra-Nehemiah into two books following the Christian fashion, but does not note this in the table of contents.[30] Thus it seems that at least two canons find some sort of expression in the text of BHS, and a third is technically normative for the very tradition *of* the text.[31] What has happened in the course of creating these critical editions is what inevitably happens to all critical editing projects, ancient or modern: namely, in the quest for objective recovery of the pure origin, a contemporary pastiche emerges. What claimed to recover authenticity instead produces novelty. In Bedford Falls, we must banish these novel forms as aberrations. In Pottersville, however, we simply say, "ok, that's another form of the text."

For the citizens of Bedford Falls, the cruel reality is that critical scholars are doomed to produce novelty, since there *never was an objectively universal canon.*

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28.   See *b. Bat.* 14b for the Talmudic order of biblical books. Note the difference in the ordering of the writings: the Talmud order them as follows: Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, and Chronicles. BHS, representing MT, disagrees: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Eccleisastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles. Not too the Talmudic order of later prophets: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve. The order preserved in BHS is as follows: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve.

29.   For a list of halakhic codes that uphold the Talmudic order, including Maimonides' Code, see Sid Z. Leiman, "Masorah and Halakhah: A Study in Conflict," in *Tehilla Le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (eds. M. Cogan et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 291-292.

30.   Though, it must be noted, the text runs continuously between each of the breaks indicated by the shifts in the header (Samuel I becomes Samuel II with no new title page).

31.   Some scholars do argue that the ben Asher family were Karaites rather than rabbinic Jews for this very reason.

Different canons developed over long stretches of time within various religious groups for various reasons; each particular canon was never *naturally* true outside of the rationality of each particular defining group. Thus, any choice of one particular canon as "*the* canon" is based on the faith-based pronouncements of particular religious communities, and as such privileges one group and marginalizes others.

As Ulrich is at pains to point out, the concept of canon likely did not exist *per se* in Second Temple Judaism, and the broad acceptance of many now "apocryphal" or "pseudepigraphal" books challenges these very categories.[32] To claim that TMT frames the borders of the Hebrew Bible (as the OHB, HUB, *and* BHQ implicitly do) is to accept the contingent theological convictions of Jews from one place and time and reject the theological convictions of Jews from other places and times. On these grounds, the problem of canon seems objectively undecidable. From *within* the perspective of a particular religious community, that answer is *of course* decidable; but is this what scholars intend to produce– sectarian critical editions? Based on the rhetoric of the scholarly field (e.g. HUB, OHB, BHQ), the clear answer is *no*: these editions and their editors frame their work as a search for the "original," the "authoritative," the "archetype," the "pristine," the "pure."[33] Yet these text-critical projects want to have their cake and eat it, too: that is, they want to reproduce the canons that are accepted by particular contemporary religious communities but they want to do this in the role of an objective scholar who remains faithful to the methods of critical historicism. Perhaps scholars think that they are not endorsing a particular canonical matrix when they "merely reproduce" Codex Leningrad; but presenting one particu-

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32.   See Ulrich, "The Bible in the Making; the Scriptures Found At Qumran."

33.   Tov and Hendel, at least, would respond in the negative; they clearly seek to present "the text of the Bible" as far as current research allows. Fox seems to admit his subjective choice in the matter.

lar group of books as "(*the)* Biblia Hebraica" reproduces more than just *text*. It also reproduces a particular *canon*, which has never been and will never be universal. To offer an old truism, there was no table of contents that was given at Sinai. People argued about it then, and they are arguing still. We might think we live in Bedford Falls, but Pottersville unfolds all around us. Without the concept of the objectively original text, we must simply admit the sectarian roots of our canons, and even of our discipline. Presumably, however, this state of affairs does not incapacitate our thought. Without a "natural" hierarchy, one could still ask all the same questions of canon hermeneutics and canon formation that one could ask before. Why search for Bedford Falls when, as it turns out, you can do everything you want in Pottersville?

Beyond the question of canon, there is the problem of *variant editions*: MT, proto-OG, and the Samaritan Pentateuch are not even the extent of text-types (or as Tov calls them, "texts") that are represented at Qumran– Tov points to at least one, and perhaps three *more* "unaligned" texts-types that have witnesses there.[34] What if we could not adjudicate these groups by means of the original text? Could we still think?

Perhaps, like the question of canon, we find that we *have been thinking in this situation all along*. Even if one *could* find a single canon that would be acceptable as "*the* Canon" from a scholarly point of view, one would be faced with the daunting question: which edition, or which text tradition, should scholars publish as "the text of the Hebrew Bible" in the event of disagreement? While MT is the default option in biblical studies, Ulrich points out that there are many possible ways to declare other texts or editions more "original" or more "final" or more "accurate."[35]

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34.   See Tov, "The Status of the Masoretic Text in Modern Text Editions of the Hebrew Bible: The Relevance of Canon."

35.   See Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*

For example, the proto-OG Jeremiah is most likely older than the proto-MT version, which most likely expanded and altered the proto-OG text.[36] If chronology is the deciding criteria, and the earlier edition is the "true" text, then MT Jeremiah is not properly the text of the Bible. If the later edition is the "true" text, then proto-MT Pentateuch is trumped by the Samaritan alterations to proto-SP. Either way, these chronological evaluations do not seem convincing, and no editions have yet chosen either option presented here.

If textual "purity" or "proximity of its reproduction of the original source" is the deciding factor, then MT Samuel loses out to proto-OG Samuel, which preserves a much less confusing (and likely prior) text.[37] This approach also seems difficult to defend, because it relies upon an ideology of "originality": that is, it privileges a moment as the moment of *origin*. Biblical texts, however, are *products of diachronous traditioning*; this complicates any discussion of originality and leaves open the door to future textual changes in the same way that textual changes brought the text– in whatever form one find– into being.[38] Though other criteria could be used to discern between variant editions (e.g., theological profundity, or narrative coherency, or aes-

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(SDSSRL; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 8.

36.   See Emanuel Tov, "The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Its Textual History," in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (ed. J.H. Tigay; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1985); P.-M. Bogaert, "De Baruch À Jérémie: Les Deux Rédactions Conservées Du Livre De Jérémie," in *Le Livre de Jérémie* (ed. P.-M. Bogaert; BETL 54; Leuven: Leuven University, 1981).

37.   Though it would be difficult to know what purity or accuracy means, in this case: how can one measure accuracy when aiming at a target of undefined edges, and how can one find a pure specimen when the difference between the substance and the contaminant seems to be relative to one's theological tradition? See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible.*.

38.   See Magne Sæbø, *On the Way to Canon: Creative Tradition History in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998).

thetic effect, or historical importance, or scribal intention, or simply the oldest extant version), the preference for MT in biblical studies is clearly a result of particular modern Jewish and Christian communities' theological commitments to using MT as their biblical text. I myself, as a Christian who prefers the Masoretic Text, am implicated by this problem; but I can find only specific, not universal, justifications for my preferences: one may point to theological justifications, or aesthetic justifications, or purely historical justifications (e.g., "what versions of the text did they have available at such-and-such a place and time?), but one cannot point to universal justifications (e.g., purity, originality, finality, priority, etc.) By no means do I assume that advances in archaeology, codicology and critical historiography will eventually prove my canon the "correct" one. But surely, I can still think about texts, I can order them in diverse ways, I can study their history of composition and transmission. I simply cannot claim that one is naturally better than the rest. Is Pottersville really so sterile after all?

Even beyond the question of variant *editions* and *text traditions*, one must face the further problem that every "edition" and "text tradition" itself contains numerous variants. What if there was no original text: could we make any distinctions at all concerning variant readings?

It is unquestioned that OG/LXX carries a significant variance within its text-tradition,[39] but many scholars deny or downplay the existence of variants within MT. Yet these variants exist: as Orlinsky has shown, the consonantal text and vocalization may have been *thought* to be finalized or stabilized in MT, but the existence of vari-

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39.   See for example the variants presented in the editio critica maior of the Göttingen Septuagint Project. One example: the Book of Job attests to a shorter, systematically edited OG version and a longer composite that includes material from Theodotion. See Peter John Gentry, *The Asterisked Materials in the Greek Job* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1995).

ants in manuscripts of the MT (however secondary or minor), variant modes of vocalizing the text that produce *Ketib/Qere*, variant readings within rabbinic Judaism such as those found in Talmudic literature, and the references to variant scrolls such as the Severus Scroll, Rabbi Meir's scroll and others attest to the minimal de-stabilization of the text even in the Masoretic context.[40] As Orlinsky writes:

> There never was, and there never can be, 'the masoretic text' or 'the
> text of the Masoretes.' All that, at best, we might hope to achieve, in
> theory, is 'a masoretic text,' or 'a text of the Masoretes,' that is to say, a
> text worked up by Ben Asher, or by Ben Naftali, or by someone in the
> Babylonian tradition, or a text worked up with the aid of the masoretic
> notes of an individual scribe or of a school of scribes.[41]

Some scholars have argued that Orlinsky's evidence, much like that of Kennicott, do not constitute "real variants," which presumably means variants that witness to an earlier variant base text dating from before the "Great Divide."[42] But the existence of a variant need not come from a more ancient source to be a "real" variant;

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40.   See James E. Bowley and John C. Reeves, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible': Some Theses and Proposals," *Henoch* 25 (2003): 10, n. 34: "One thinks of the notorious 'book(s)' of R. Meir (see S. Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine [2d ed.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962], 24-7) as well as the so-called Severus Scroll which reportedly featured numerous variant readings (see H. Albeck, Midrash Bereshit Rabbati [Jerusalem: Mekitze Nirdamim, 1940], 209-12)." See also Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 118-121.

41. H. M. Orlinsky, "Prolegomenon: The Masoretic Text, a Critical Evaluation," in *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (ed. C.D. Ginsburg; New York: Ktav, 1966), xxiii as quoted in Bowley and Reeves, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible': Some Theses and Proposals," 12 n. 39; see also xxix-xxxi; xxxii ('there never was any such thing as "the masoretic text" in existence'); xxxv-xxxvii. See pp. 1-8 for evidence of variations in late MT manuscripts.

42.   See, for example, Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979). 94.

that variation exists among related texts at any point along their historical genealogy

is enough warrant to claim that *"the"* Masoretic text is another ideal, never fully real-

ized text.[43]

At work here are powerfully linked concepts of *legitimacy* and *filiation*, the

seemingly natural authorization of a historically contingent compilation of a seem-

ingly random assortment of texts as bearers of the true lineage. Other texts, in con-

trast, were bastardized by people who were not authorized to do so. Constructions of

legitimate textual filiation, however, are always after-the-fact "retro-projections"[44]

developed to protect the questionable legitimacy of the groups they struggle to up-

hold. According to this line of thought, the Samaritans do not have the "real Hebrew

Bible," because the proper inheritors of the biblical text in its "true form" were the

Masoretes, themselves authorized by either the temple or by rabbinic authority,

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43.   Though, MT may come so close to uniformity as to convince readers that the remaining cracks in the edifice are inconsequential. It is often repeated that the Masoretes were incredibly skilled, and accordingly that the differences between manuscripts are so minor as to not amount to important differences. Variation within MT is, to be sure, minimal given the historical and geographical breadth of its use, showing that these stabilization technologies accomplished their goal to some degree. Yet minor differences remain differences, as evidenced by Goshen-Gottstein's passionate lobbying for the priority of Codex Aleppo. As Frank Cross writes: "… the history of the text of the Hebrew Bible has been obscured by an assumption or dogma on the part of the ancients, rabbis and church fathers alike, that the Hebrew text was unchanged and unchanging, unaltered by the usual scribal realities that produce families and recensions over long periods of transmission." F. M. Cross, "The Fixation of the Text of the Hebrew Bible," in From Epic to Canon (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 207. Quoted in Bowley and Reeves, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible': Some Theses and Proposals," 12.

44.   To use Lange's term; see Armin Lange, ""They Confirmed the Reading" (*y. Ta'an* 4.68a): The Textual Standardization of Jewish Scriptures in the Second Temple Period," in *From Qumran to Aleppo: A Discussion With Emanuel Tov About the Textual History of Jewish Scriptures in Honor of His 65th Birthday* (eds. Armin Lange et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2009), 51, 77.

which was derived from groups already legitimate before 70 CE. Yet this is unsatisfactory because (a) this leads to an infinite regression of authority, since the groups that supposedly gave authority to certain scribes to protect and transmit one perfect form of the text were themselves deemed authoritative in some manner and so on, all the way back to some group that simply claimed itself authoritative without any such authorizing body, which of course carries no necessary and objective authority itself;[45] (b) this lineage of filiation is contested by the mere existence of other lines of filiation that hold a different text, such as the Samaritans, and even the existence of illegitimacies within any given tradition.[46] The scholar is presented with a situation not unlike the hearing of the last will and testament of a recently deceased wealthy scion, to which arrive the various legitimate and illegitimate children, spouses in various states of legal filiation and illicit lovers, all claiming their share of the inheritance. Is there a law code that may aid the scholar in assigning legitimacy to certain texts and not others? If so, who gave the code, and from whence does it derive its legitimacy? In terms of the legitimacies of "true variants" and "untrue variants," who can say which group "got it right" in anything other than a theological sense?[47]

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45. Here we find the general problem of authority and its rhetorical cousins: who deems authorities authoritative, and why should we take their authority as valid? See Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (trans. G Bennington; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 241-258.

46. As Bowley and Reeves write: "According to *Sifre Deut* §356 (ed. Finkelstein, 423; also *y. Ta'an.* 4.2, 68a; *Soferim* 6.4), there were three slightly divergent Torah scrolls archived within the Temple precincts which were used for corrections; it is unclear whether the 'courtyard scroll' of *m. Mo'ed Qa*t 3:4 represents an additional archetype." Bowley and Reeves, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible': Some Theses and Proposals," 10 n. 34; see also Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Three Scrolls of the Law That Were Found in the Temple Court," *Text* 2 (1962): 20-25.

47. Of course, from a theological perspective, this particular standard of textual purity may be upheld. The question is: does commitment to a particular theological project hinder, or sustain, scholarship? See below.

By this reasoning, each variant does represent a different form of the text, and apart from theology scholars cannot justify making ontological claims about the relative purity, priority or acceptability without specifying what *relative* grounds they are using to justify these *necessarily limited* claims. A given scholar may be looking for the "most beautiful" or "earliest known" or "earliest possible" or "earliest known proto-Masoretic" or "shortest" text, and of course any scholar can justify prioritizing manuscripts among these lines; but none of these are *universal* judgments. They are *necessarily limited judgments.* One can certainly think in terms of necessarily limited judgments, *pace* Barr. One simply has to take the extra step of proposing a limited set of criteria whereby distinctions will be made. To be clear: organizing manuscripts into historical lineages, or stemmas, is not a bad thing. On the contrary, this is a very helpful and interesting endeavor. But stemmatics brings us no closer to knowing which text we *should* use at any particular time; it gives us no insight into the relative *worth* of texts.

Furthermore, while it is helpful that the OHB shows textual pluriformity by presenting side-by-side editions of proto-OG and proto-MT where they reflect different archetypes, the focus on *archetypes* and other ideal constructions that represent the source of a later line of tradition continues to privilege a point of *origin* over derivative forms. This is not, however, representative of the actual pluriformity of biblical texts; each edition existed, as Orlinsky has argued, in various forms that changed throughout time, and it is senseless to label some of these "pristine" or "best" while others are merely "secondary" or "corrupt." Perhaps spelling errors or metalepsis exhibit poor copying skills; but a text that is copied poorly may still be– and may sometimes be *even more–* authoritative for a particular community because of its alterations.[48] What is from one perspective a scribal error can be, from the perspective of a community reading that text, divine writ. What is from one perspective the

"translation character" of the LXX is, from another perspective, simply the text itself. Copying errors, translation errors, and the like– these distinctions only degrade the worth of a text if we seek a pristine, original text. If we imagine that there is no original text, then we must affirm the existence and value-neutrality of every aspect of the complex situation that we find in the world. If, of course, we propose to distinguish texts by means of the criteria of correct spelling, then we may arrange the texts in that way.[49] But this arrangement would only be an answer to a limited question, not a universal one. It is, however, an act of thought nonetheless.

The "final text" text fares no better on this account than the "original text." While Talmon does recognize a period of textual pluriformity *before* the "Great Divide," he characterizes the period afterwards as a period of "stabilization" that led to a more or less fixed text.[50] Yet the apparatuses of the HUB do show variation, which means that the MT is *generally* stable, or *relatively* stable as a text-form.[51] Even positing this relative stability as a "goal" for text criticism is problematic, because structurally this *telos* or "final text" is a mirror of the *original* text. By the time the

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48. One may look throughout Christian and Jewish traditions for creative and theologically provocative ways that readers read "corrupt" texts; one famous example includes the debates between Augustine and Jerome over the status of the Hebrew text in Christian tradition. While Jerome sought the Hebrew *veritas*, Augustine wanted to retain OL, derived from LXX, as the base text of Christianity in order not to disturb the faith of Christian readers. Origen, too, counseled Julius Africanus not to reject the later additions to Daniel for similar reasons. See Adam Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1993), 41-72.

49. Though, it must be said, ordering texts by means of spelling would be a difficult endeavor, given that these texts were produced in an age without regulated spelling.

50. See Lange, ""They Confirmed the Reading" for a typology of scholarly views concerning this "divide."

51. See, for example, C. Rabin et al., T*he Hebrew University Bible: The Book of Jeremiah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997).

MT had stabilized, there were at Qumran *already variants within the proto-MT texts* and there were *already other* editions and variations within those other editions. Stabilization never did away with pluriformity, it just sought to retroactively minimize it. From even this minimal pluriformity, how can textual critics justify taking one element of the pluriform and derivative text (say, Codex Leningrad or Codex Aleppo) and call it something more than one witness among many? The final or stabilized text turns out to be as complex as the putative original text. Surely, some contexts exhibit more textual variation, and some contexts exhibit less variation. This is not in question. But if we find a variant that was produced in a context of minimal textual variation, does this diminish the existence, or purity, or meaningfulness, or profundity of the variant? And if not, does this reduce our ability to think about, or arrange, the text?

Ultimately, a basic principle confronts textual criticism: when one looks for origins of any kind (even the origin of the final text) and expects to find something simple, pure, self-justifying, and fully self-present, disappointment is bound to arise, because *when one finds a putative origin, one finds something that is already complex.*[52] Complexity problematizes the root of any and every origin, and this is especially evident in the case of ancient traditional texts. As a result, I am forced to conclude: *there is no Bedford Falls, and there never has been.* We have always been living in Pottersville; there is no original text, and any thought that has ever been thought about the biblical text has emerged in the radical absence of any original biblical text. There is no going home; we have been right at home this whole time. We have always been thinking without an original text. Perhaps, however, it would bene-

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52. For an invigorating discussion of this problem, see Geoffrey Bennington, "Foundations," *Textual Practice* 21 (2007): 231-49.

fit us to affirm this state of affairs, and take up a new perspective from which to see the world in which we have always been living.

Recall Chesterton's fable of the yachtsman, which may as well describe our journey:

> I have often had a fancy for writing a romance about an English yachtsman who slightly miscalculated his course and discovered England under the impression that it was a new island in the South Seas... There will probably be a general impression that the man who landed (armed to the teeth and talking by signs) to plant the British flag on that barbaric temple which turned out to be the Pavilion at Brighton, felt rather a fool... His mistake was really a most enviable mistake; and he knew it, if he was the man I take him for. What could be more delightful than to have in the same few minutes all the fascinating terrors of going abroad combined with all the humane security of coming home again?... How can we contrive to be at once astonished at the world and yet at home in it? How can this queer cosmic town, with its many-legged citizens, with its monstrous and ancient lamps, how can this world give us at once the fascination of a strange town and the comfort and honour of being our own town?[53]

We have always been thinking without the original text: now we just have to think without thinking about the original text.

2.2   *Thinking without Hierarchies*

Barr's primary argument in the epigraphic text is that the concept of the original text allows for classification into primary and secondary categories. Here Barr hits the nail on the head: the "original text" creates a "hierarchical axiology"[54] that is capped by an ideal *moment*, a privileged present wherein the text was somehow perfect or at

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53.   G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: John Lane, 1908), 14.

54.   See Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (trans. S. Weber; Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1988). 93, for a discussion of binary oppositions leading to hierarchical axiologies in the Speech-Act thought of Searle and Austin.

least "finished," "complete," "authoritative," "pristine," and as yet uncorrupted. In other words, the ontological distinctions (primary versus secondary)[55] serve to map all extant readings in relation to an asymptotic ideal text, subordinating the "secondary" readings in the process. What is more, the *ethico-ontological axiology* (that is, a hierarchy that assigns moral values such as "pristine" and "corrupt") organizes the value of texts in some rather odd ways: for example, calling a particular reading an "error" or "corrupted variant" because of the scribe's lapse in fidelity makes a historical judgment that privileges the mental state of the scribe, whereas later readers may hold the "error" to be, in retrospect, a far superior reading, whether theologically, aesthetically, or politically speaking. Using "fidelity to the original" as a standard to value the worth and meaning of particular manuscripts is in fact historically reductive, since the "worth" of many readings can only be judged by taking into account the value-judgments of later readers, for whom "the error" may in fact be "the true text."[56]

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55.   One might say "ethico-ontological" distinctions, since the language used to demarcate these ontological distinctions has an implied ethical import ("preferred readings," "pristine", etc).

56.   McCarter begins his manual of textual criticism with a story of a medieval priest who had memorized a misprinted breviary, and thus pronounced a word incorrectly at every mass (mumpsimus instead of sumpsimus); the priest never changed his reading, however, even when the error was explained. McCarter compares resistance to text criticism to the old priest; while McCarter is justified to question scholarly reticence to note textual variants, his zeal for the "original text" as the only uncorrupted version seems to suffer from the same tunnel-vision. Instead of the received text, he has substituted the original text as his solitary focus. In a similar vein, Derrida notes a section of the Course in General Linguistics wherein Saussure berates seemingly incorrect pronunciations of the name "Lefébvre" introduced by "sonic deformations". Derrida responds: "Where is the evil?...Lefébure is not a bad name." The point is this: supposed deformations often are simply changes, and carry no "natural" ethical or ontological defect as such. A scribal error such as haplography, dittography or misspelling could (and surely at times has) created texts that can be read, can be used

This attitude pervades biblical studies: for example, one may note the dispute between partisans of Aleppo and Leningrad over which is superior, or the general mode of evaluating of readings in terms of "preferred" readings. Likewise, when Tov introduces the Nash Papyus under the category "Additional Witnesses," he claims that its "relevance for textual criticism is limited" because it is a "composite text" and for "liturgical" use.[57] This recalls the treatment of the so-called "daughter versions" as "derivative" and "mostly worthless" value to textual criticism, who as translations of a translation are the most debased of all. Yet these "daughters" are rewritings of rewritings *not* of stable, fully-present texts, but rather of *texts that were never more than rewritings*.

Indeed, even the word "variant" presupposes[58] that there is something unvarying, solid, permanent, real, present that occupies a "central" space from which a particular reading diverges. One might also imagine that a *witness* testifies to the solid identity of something that actually exists. Instead, in the wake of Qumran we can now see clearly that there was and is nothing but variants, and the only unvarying "thing" they witness to is not a particular wording of the text that is "correct"; rather, they witness to the space of difference that renders judgment between them a matter of speculative theology.

Text critics tend to speak of textual production as an entirely necessary process, and textual transmission as an entirely contingent one. In other words, the alterations that occurred within the history of textual production are in some way legitimate and directed towards the singular *telos* of the "final" or "original" text (or

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liturgically, etc., and that one may evaluate as follows: "Where is the evil?" Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (trans. G. Spivak,; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1998), 41-2. McCarter, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible*. 11.

57.   Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 118.

58.   See Ibid. 18.

the archetype, or the edition that is authoritative for a particular community, etc),
while the later transmission of this final/original text is subject to the deleterious ef-
fects of chance. What I am proposing is that every stage of the text's development is
in fact *contingent,* which is to say that it exists without necessary logical justification
for its particular constitution. That is, there is no necessary version of the text, be-
cause any local necessity (the authority conferred by a particular group, etc.) it itself
historically contingent. It *could have happened* that the Masoretes ended up with the
proto-OG Jeremiah, or that the Samaritans became the dominant religious group
and their canon became the normative one. In the end, the only necessity is the *ne-
cessity of the contingency* of every particular instantiation of a biblical text, and this
implies with it the contingency of every necessity.[59]

    As a result, I can push Barr's point even further: text-critics do not use the
concept of the original text to *clarify* hierarchies– no, they use the concept to *create*
hierarchies.[60] Text critics *manufacture* classificatory schemes as modern external
supplements to the texts, and by their own logic these schemes are clearly *unoriginal*
to the *Vorlage,* requiring their excision.[61] Even gestures towards ancient communi-
ties' conferment of authority as the moment of "origin" recognize a historical supple-
ment as that which grants full "originality" to the text; late Second Temple communi-

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59.   See Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of
Contingency* (London: Continuum, 2010).

60.   Much like the innovations introduced by the Masoretes in the interest of
defining the text in order to protect it, these creations alter the text in their very pursuit
of finding it.

61.   That is, unless later supplements are deemed allowable - in which case these
classificatory schemes could continue, albeit in a limited, relativized manner, alongside
other textual supplements marginalized by those very schemes. The use of "supplement"
does not require the usual assumption of an "original" which is then supplemented; see
the following note.

ties were as much historically removed inheritors of a textual tradition as are modern text critics, and thus their classificatory judgments (if they can be known at all) are merely less-modern supplements. Strangely, these supplements seem to create the originality of that which they supposedly merely represent. As Derrida writes: "The strange structure of the supplement appears here: by delayed reaction, a possibility produces that to which it is said to be added on."[62] Authority, whether modern scholarly authority or that of ancient communities, cannot present an original biblical text, but in its place they produce an originalizing textual supplement that carries out its assigned task with varying modes of success.[63]

To say "there is no original, final, or privileged text" is to reject the fixation on an idealized "now" and embrace the identity of the biblical text (and canon) as pluriform, recognizing the value of each variant of the text as "naturally" equal to any other.[64] And yet: not having anything but variants is a strange conclusion, to say the least. Lacking a single justifiably "original" or "final" text that is given to or deduced by the critic presents a difficulty: if countless uniquely different instances of the book

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62. Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (trans. DB Allison; Northwestern University Press, 1973), 89.

63. Of course, the success of any given authorization is always an open question, since later generations might choose an "authorized" version hitherto rejected. Currently, the *BHS* has attained the unofficial status of "received text" within the scholarly community, but time will tell if other contemporaneous, previous or future projects will unseat it. One thinks of projects such as the *Polychrome Bible* that were innovative and cutting-edge with respect to scholarship but failed because of technological and economic conditions; it is thus painfully obvious that not only pure logic or historical acumen that define the hegemonic form of the text at any given time.

64. Unless, of course, one claims membership within a theological community that offers a transcendental viewpoint by which one claims to order and value texts. One wonders, however, how these communities themselves would go about defending their version of the text if questioned: would not the logic proceed in a manner similar to that within the scholarly community outlined in this chapter?

of Proverbs *are equally* "the book of Proverbs," for example, then how does one read, analyze, and comment upon the book of Proverbs at all?

3   THE ONTOLOGY OF THE TEXT: IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE

How does a critic read "*a* text" when no two physical representations of this assumedly extant text agree? Scholars claim that numerous physical artifacts are the same thing, yet they exhibit a range of differences, and thus no concrete example can be the thing itself without excluding other members from the group. Scholars' responses to this problem flow from their general conception of what a biblical text is; in other words, our ontology of the biblical text determines our approach to textual criticism. Permit me to sketch the basic outline of this ontology.

First, biblical scholars tend to think of biblical texts in essentialist terms. This is not surprising, since Plato and Aristotle, of course, were dealing with a problem very much like that of textual critics. When trying to explain shared elements of identity between manifestly different things, biblical studies confronts one of the world's oldest conceptual problems: namely, the problem of universals. To take an example: one might suppose that all circular objects share the property of "being-circular." Yet every circular object is different and differently circular in its own way. No circle is perfectly round, and circles come in different sizes; thus what is a circle itself? If I rephrase the example in terms of text criticism, it is as follows: all manuscripts of the book of Proverbs share the property of "being-Proverbs." Yet every manuscript of Proverbs is different; thus what is Proverbs itself? In other words, how can one distinguish the core of identity that stands behind the observable variety?

3.1   Realism: Recovering the Ideal Work

Plato famously posited as his solution the so-called *realist* approach: namely, that "the ideal circle" is a real thing, later called a *universal.* Textual critics have tended to follow suit by thinking in terms of the "ideal book of Proverbs," for example. Thus particular concrete things, such as actual manuscripts of the book of Proverbs, instantiate to varying degrees their universal - in this case, the ideal form of the book of Proverbs.[65] That is, each manuscript of Proverbs stands in more or less of a relation to a universal form of Proverbs that exists on another plane, accessible only through the particulars that instantiate it.

Felicitously, Plato chose terms familiar to textual critics to describe his ontology: he called the ideal universal form the "model," and all local manifestations of the ideal he called "copies." Plato argued that a copy should closely resemble the model; thus copies should be judged and ranked by their degree of similarity to the model. Authentic copies faithfully replicate the pristine model and thus minimize divergence from the ideal, whereas poor copies introduce differences, innovations, corruptions. Thus Plato called these poor copies "phantasms," ghostly things, since they misleadingly simulated, but did not actually present the essence or reality of, an ideal form. Today, this word is usually translated by the term "simulacrum." Thus Plato's ontology builds a qualitative hierarchy based upon the degrees of resemblance to an ideal form, with an important distinction between good copies and bad simulacra. In general, things that minimize difference are seen as better than things that innovate

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65.   Though Platonic metaphysics posits abstract objects (in which the abstract object is non-spatio-temporal) and realism posits the existence of universals (in which universals are instantiated by different particulars), for the purposes of this general overview the two positions will be briefly conflated.

or introduce change. The strengths of Plato's theory are clear: this theory establishes how it can be that two concrete particulars can share in an attribute. Yet Plato's theory carries with it some unhelpful baggage.

Here, I highlight three aspects of this essentialist ontology: (1) it imagines that identity is static, fixed in the ideal form, and is thus invariant; (2) it judges the worth of objects by means of their degree of deviation from the ideal form; and (3) it thinks about difference from the standpoint of identity, and thus defines difference in a purely negative manner - as simply a lack of resemblance. This table and this chair are different merely because they do not resemble one another. Differences thus have no actual being; they are simply failures to resemble the ideal. Many influential textual critics tend to think in these essentialist terms, claiming that each biblical book has a single fixed form that defines the true identity of that book. Sometimes this fixed form is referred to as the original text, or the Urtext, or the final authoritative copy, or the archetype, or the hyparchetype; all of these ideal constructions play the role of a normative ideal form. Moreover, particular manuscripts as well as text groups and versions are then sorted and judged according to their degree of deviation from these normative ideal forms; for example, one hears that the Old Greek is of particular worth for textual criticism, since it contains some original readings, whereas the so-called daughter versions are mostly worthless for textual criticism, since any differences they may present are surely novelties, not part of the true identity of the biblical text. In this way, the daughter versions play the role of poor copies, simulacrum, diverging from their ideal form and losing their identity along the way.

The influential textual critic Thomas Tanselle and, following him, Michael Fox posit a Platonic distinction between the immaterial *work* and the material *text;* in this sense, all manuscripts of Proverbs participates to varying degrees in the ideal

work of Proverbs.[66] According to Tanselle's logic, the texts inscribed on artifactual manuscripts are physical incarnations of the author's intentions; any instantiation of physical text is suspect, and likely needs correction towards the work. Though the work has likely never existed fully in any manuscript (as, for example, spelling errors may have infected it from the beginning), recovering the work is the goal of the text critic. Fox explains:

> What I am aiming at is not the Urtext or even the archetype of Proverbs, but the correct hyparchetype of the Masoretic Proverbs, that is to say, the proto-Masoretic text. Insofar as the result is accurate, it will represent a work, as Tanselle defines it: an "ideal verbal construction.[67]

The work is ideal, Fox holds, because physical instantiations of it are liable to be corrupted:

> It is very unlikely that there ever was a manuscript that held this text. That is because changes, deliberate and unintended, were surely introduced at different times, some even before the later parts of the book were added. Hence the text I am aiming at never had physical existence...Texts go through transmutations; the work has sort of platonic existence, abstracted from any particular textual manifestation. The editor aims to reconstruct the text that best represents the work.[68]

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66. See Michael V. Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible," _JNSL_ 32 (2006): 1-22, and G. Thomas Tanselle, _A Rationale of Textual Criticism_ (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1989).

67. Ibid. 15; quoted in Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible," 8.

68. Ibid.

And, as Fox continues, the "correct" thing to be sought is whatever was in the mind(s) of the author(s): "It can be defined as the proto-MT as it should have been, what the authors, conceived as a collectivity (see below) wanted us to read."[69]

Thus, Fox (following Tanselle) deals with the classic philosophical problem of *identity and difference* by positing a perfect, nonmaterial and atemporal ideal that may only be approached through thought, via the imperfect data transmitted by the sensuous manuscripts. Fox makes clear his a metaphysical assumption: that there *is* one correct version of Proverbs, and consequently that a scholar may go about trying to find it.[70] Here we see the hallmarks of essentialist ontology: a static ideal work exists apart from the manuscripts that attempt to represent, or resemble, it, with varying degrees of success.

If we follow Fox's claim, the result is that the clear textual diversity of the book of Proverbs evidenced in the historical record is but a phantasm, a corrupted witness to something far more real (the idea of the "work") that is inaccessible from the historical record itself: that is, the text critic's reason may "find" the work, but the senses cannot. One troubling aspect to this schema is its marginalization of all physical manuscripts: for Fox, the ideal work is "the real thing," whereas the material representations are "not real," and thus have no identity proper to themselves - that is, they are only *witnesses* to the real, of which they are not properly a part. In that sense, they all bear more or less *false witness*, as they point imperfectly to the "real

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69.   Ibid., 8.

70.   This pursuit of pure forms is nothing new to biblical criticism: within the realm of form-criticism, psalms are often understood as more or less "pure", the impure psalms missing essential elements or incorporating elements of other genres so as to become "mixed." As has been noted, Gunkel held an implicit essentialist belief in "pure forms" that undergirds his methodological innovations. See Martin J. Buss, *Biblical Form Criticism in Its Context* (JSOTSupp 274; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 187-208.

thing." Ontologically, the manuscripts seem like phantasms: ghosts are a mere apparition, and as such do not have any other proper identity.[71] In Tanselle and Fox's point of view, the physical artifact and the text it presents are non-presences, things that exist only as witnesses to something *real,* in the Platonic sense: namely, the intention of the author.[72]

In this vein, P. Kyle McCarter follows the platonic work/text distinction, but he notes the dual promise of physical presence: namely, both endurance and change:

> Copying...is a source of both both survival and corruption for a text;
> the very process that preserves the text also exposes it to danger... [A]
> text, because it has been exposed so often to the danger of copying, is
> especially liable to corruption.[73]

Assumed in this quote is that change in general is dangerous, and that exposure to time and space leads to changes. Change introduces difference, and introducing differences threatens the purity of the identity of whatever it is that has entered time. In the words of text critics, the changes are "corruptions," or deviations from a pure identity; this value-laden term demonstrates that the stable identity of the work is considered an important, precious thing that one must guard. Since any materiality necessitates change and thus difference (and thus a complex ontology), any pure identity can only be found in the ideal realm.

Thus McCarter, like Fox, appeals to the intentions of the author as the ideal

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71.   See the discussion of "hauntology" in Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning & the New International* (trans. P. Kamuf; New York: Routledge, 1994).

72.   I will set aside the formidable question of authorial intent for the next chapter, but for now I will tacitly accept that the "author's intention" can be a plausible heuristic for text criticism. See my comments above, 2.2.2, on the problematic nature of "intention" specifically for the book of Proverbs.

73.   McCarter, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible.* 12.

font of purity that can only be muddled by the thoughts of others. The only *thing* in Fox's discussion that is *actually itself* is the *ideal.* Everything else– every version ever written– is not the book of Proverbs; it bears false witness in this regard. As a consequence, the only real, true book of Proverbs is the one that existed in an author's mind. Any manuscript of Proverbs is not a real, true book of Proverbs.[74]

However, this bifurcation poses some problems: for one, can we really believe that there exists, in the mind of some author or "collective author," a perfect yet immaterial form of Genesis? How could we think this, in light of the complex and multifaceted composition history of that text?

3.2   *Nominalism: Every Manuscript is an Island*

While there is some upside to realism in light of text-critical editorial practice, one wonders if these metaphysical assumptions harm text critical scholarship more than they help. One alternative to realism is *nominalism,* which rejects the existence of universals altogether. Instead, the nominalist argues that only concrete particulars exist, and the apparent relations between these particulars are in some way merely linguistic fictions.

In his article on the OHB, Fox offers a nominalist counterargument to his Platonic conception of text criticism. Fox mentions the so-called "diachronic" perspective which he claims holds that the work exists "in fluctuating and multiple forms, while each text-form is an autonomous "textual moment."[75] He calls this an "ex-

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74.   Ronald Hendel, as well, writes in favor of the "substance" and "accidents" distinction with respect to a copy-text; see R Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," *VT* 58 (2008): 344.

75.   See Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible." 8.

treme" position that he avoids:

> [The diachronic perspective is a] relativistic acceptance of any and every text-form as a "textual moment" of irreducible validity…one must query whether, if everything is equally valid for every kind of edition, there is any point in anything other than a Kennicott-de Rossi type assemblage, indeed, whether there is sense in any editorial activity at all.[76]

In short, Fox sees the main alternative to platonic idealism as nihilistic and "relativist acceptance" of radical diversity with no room for identity. While completely nihilistic relativism is hard to locate within the field of biblical studies, less extreme nominalism has been suggested by several scholars. As David Clines proposes:

> The old textual criticism was devoted to marginalizing – and ultimately to ignoring – all its actual evidence, which is to say, all the existing manuscripts, in favour of and in the quest for the presumed but never glimpsed original. A postmodern textual criticism invites us to a new adventure with manuscripts, to consider the extant manuscripts and their texts in and of themselves – for what they witness to, whether the conditions of their own production or the purposes for which they were produced. In a word, an interest in originals is a modern interest; an interest in copies is a postmodern interest. Or rather, it is a postmodern perception that the distinction between original and copy is problematic and one that needs wrestling with and not taking for granted.[77]

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76.   Ibid. 18.

77.   David J. A. Clines, "Pyramid and the Net: The Postmodern Adventure in Biblical Studies," in *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967-1998,*

Clines critiques the platonic structure of text criticism, envisioning instead an intense study of individual manuscripts and their historical and social locations (see chapters 4 and 5). Such a mode of study is not to be discouraged, but one may ask: is there really *no relation* between different manuscripts of the book of Proverbs? Does each act of copying Proverbs produce something entirely *de novo* that may be explained in its entirety by reference to its context of (re)production? One might rather suppose that plenty of scribes throughout the history of transmission of the book of Proverbs did not re-claim every word for their own historical context; it is easy to imagine a copyist-author befuddled by some obscure phrase or symbol, as clearly happened in the course of biblical transmission, and yet copying it down.[78] If this is true, then the manuscript of a biblical text cannot be understood entirely in relation to its context of production, because the biblical text that it contains was not produced, at least in large part, in the particular context that produced the manuscript. One cannot claim the inverse to be true, however: the biblical text as a traditional text does not come from any one place, but is the amalgamation of various productive and reproductive efforts deriving from many different times and places.[79] The biblical text is thus balanced carefully between the poles of alterity (the otherness of the tradition) and identity (the local reality of the manuscript and its peculiar features). But whereas the platonic view of text criticism argued that manuscripts were nothing other than their witness to something that they were not, the nominalist view seems to tack hard in the other direction, claiming that manuscripts are

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Vol. 1 (JSOTSupp 292; Sheffield: JSOT, 1998), 147.

78.   Note, for instance, the inverted nunim in MT, which signal a scribal lack of comprehension, or the *puncta extraordinaria* which seem to predate the Masoretes, who nevertheless copied them without passing down any reason for doing so.

79. Perhaps traditional texts are best understood as always *becoming-local,* but never entirely localized.

nothing more than what they are in and of themselves. Fox posits that manuscripts are pure alterity, and should be studied only for what they are not, while Clines seems to argue that manuscripts are pure identity, and should be understood "in themselves" without reference to other manuscripts of the same biblical text. In short, Clines argues that "the conditions [or "context"] of [manuscript] production" will best explain the text.

In other fields, this same attitude has led to a revived interest in the "material text," the "bibliographic codes" and manuscript studies that seek to do away with the ideality of the (as Fox calls it) "platonic" ideal of the "work." The material text is emphasized, and each seemingly unique textual product is analyzed within its own original context (wherever it was produced, copied, etc). Yet this does not solve the problems inherent in textual criticism; it only reinvents them under a different name. As addressed above, the problem of the original text cannot be solved by nominalism, which proposes that each text is its own original text. This overlooks the genealogical relationships between versions of each biblical book. The author-editor-scribe who added Susanna to the book of Daniel did not create the book as a whole; the scribe took something from the past and changed it in some way. Incorporating materiality, manuscripts and bibliographic codes into textual criticism is essential, but giving them exclusive prominence distorts the traditional, diachronic aspect of these texts.

In order to analyze this trend towards codicology and bibliography, we must briefly discuss the distinction between ideality and materiality. We can do this quite quickly by returning to the work of Saussure. Saussure's discussion of the sign stopped short of claiming that the signifier was the "material" aspect of the sign: instead, he called the signifier a "sound-pattern" and stressed that it was yet "ideal," in a sense (though defined purely negatively). In defense of Saussure, the signifier "dog"

is not pure materiality; it is a transcendental effect of many particular, yet all minimally different, empirical utterances that may be distinguished as a particular set of utterances (that is, the utterance "dog"). The empirical/transcendental or material/ideal duality does not, in this instance, separate nicely.[80]

In the same way, many critics of text-critical "ideality" have championed the study of the "materiality" of particular manuscripts as an alternative. It must be said that, in the world of text criticism, a return to an appreciation of manuscripts qua manuscripts is a helpful event. Recent scholarship has separated the "bibliographic code" from the "linguistic code"; this division helpfully highlights the signifying elements of the material aspects of the particular manuscript that have often been ignored in favor of the ideal "work" in textual criticism (i.e. size, material, binding, textual format, introductory materials, etc).[81] These aspects (for no particular text is devoid of at least one material format) form the material context of each particular manifestation of a text, and they certainly influence the modes in which the linguistic codes are interpreted. For example, as Eugene Ulrich has shown, the material aspects of Qumran texts must influence our notions of the development of the biblical canon.[82]

Yet it would be unhelpful to assert any primacy of the material over the ideal. For instance, perhaps a biblical scholar would agree with the argument so far, but then conclude that the next step is to separate every physical manuscript that contains a biblical text, find the date and location of its writing, and analyze each manuscript as a *sui generis* historical event, to be understood completely in light of its mo-

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80. See Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida,* 26-34.
81.   See McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 60.
82.   See Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*, 20 for an example of how bibliographic codes may influence scholarly study of linguistic codes.

ment of production and its material construction. This interest may also include or even privilege the concept of "social production," which would prioritize the social nature of textual production, and thus look to analyze any text within the social matrix of its production and reception.[83]

One may contrast two points of view within the realm of rabbinic literature embodied by the debate between Chaim Milikowski and Peter Schäfer in *JJS* 37-40. While Milikowski defined textual criticism as the "essential task of reconstructing the text of the work as best as one can," Schäfer pointed to the rather open and mobile nature of rabbinic texts that undermines traditional text-critical ideology. As Schäfer writes: "[I]n rabbinic literature… are there texts that can be defined and clearly delineated, or are there only basically open texts which elude temporal and redactional fixation?"[84] Schäfer then posits two options for text-critical work on rabbinic literature, of which he supports the second: (1) to look at rabbinic literature as a "whole," and assume the "synchronicity of all works," or (2) "reach back to the manuscripts," tying to fix each one in time and space in order to make "more concrete historical statements."[85] As Schäfer warns,

> [This approach] woild not lead to the Urtext…[but it] would tell us
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> something about the history of texts and their reception. This means
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> that it is not 'the' text as such that is to be fixed in time and space, but

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83.   Jerome McGann argues for a "social theory of texts," and affirms:"The fully authoritative text is therefore always one which has been socially produced; as a result, the critical standard for what constitutes authoritativeness cannot rest with the author and his intentions alone." McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, 75.

84.   Paul Schäfer, "Research Into Rabbinic Literature: An Attempt to Define the Status Quaestionis," *JJS* 37 (1986): 139-52.

85.   Ibid. 151.

rather the history of the text as reflected in the transmission of its manuscript traditions.[86]

In these statements, Schäfer tempers concern for the materiality of the text and the historical contexts in which each text was written with his caution that "the" text cannot be reduced to "concrete historical statements" by being "fixed" in space and time.

While taking an interest in bibliographic codes approach yields important aspects of the signifying structure of any physical text, over-reliance on the concept of the "material" or "artifactual" would distort the object of study as much as a purely ideal interest in the "work" (versus the text). This is so primarily because the text's identity is not fully present in any one of its physical manifestations; the text written in a biblical manuscript "comes from" somewhere else and is "going to" somewhere else, as well, and to cordon off one physical manuscript to put "in its context" is to ignore its primary function, which is to transmit traditional material from the past into the future. Any "present" is limited by the text's own differential existence elsewhere (and else-when, and else-what) as well as its primary function, which is to transmit something from one context and into another. Of course, the social context within which a text is produced is an important element to consider, but texts leave contexts with ease, since this is what they are designed to do. Also, the bibliographic codes are themselves not fixed to one point in time (and neither is the social construct that Mc-Gann suggests gives "true" authority), because they, like the linguistic code, are semiotic codes "from" an earlier time, and are moving somewhere else, as well.

Moreover, semiotic codes in general are composed (at least in part, though we will revisit this question) of signifiers, which complicates any concept of the fullness of the "identity" of any particular manuscript. To think of a sign, or even a text, as

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86. Ibid. 152.

something all by itself is to, in the words of Saussure,

> [I]solate it from the system to which it belongs...On the contrary, the system as a united whole is the starting point, from which it becomes possible, by a process of analysis, to identify its constituent elements.[87]

In biblical terms, a tenth-century Masoretic manuscript of the book of Jeremiah does not "stand on its own," since it is not a function of merely that time and place; it is a function of a much larger system of literature and should be considered by scholars (especially text critics) as such. How can its particular place in that larger system can be determined not merely by its own "positive" features, but rather by its differences?[88]

While nominalism dispenses with the elaborate hierarchies and ideal forms found in platonic realism, it continues to think of difference as something purely negative– that is, differences between manuscripts are understood as simply a lack of resemblance between disparate, even essentially different objects. Thus, nominalism seems to retain the logic of essences, but simply grants to each individual its own, self-identical essence, ensuring its radical difference from its neighbors. In the end, the textual ontologies of realism and nominalism both retain modes of essentialist thought, and as a result have not helped textual critics to conceive of both the identity and the differences that one finds working with biblical texts.

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87.   Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 112.

88.   In the midst of his gesture towards nominalism, Clines shifts and stresses the priority of the copy: "it is a postmodern perception that the distinction between original and copy is problematic." The copy occupies an odd ontological space, as sketched out above: something in between, but not merely a compromise between, the poles of alterity and identity. Ibid. 147.

3.3   Text as Process, Différance, and Concrete Universal

3.3.1   Text as Process

I turn now to my construction of a non-essentialist ontology of biblical texts. Among text critics working in fields other than biblical studies, there have been concerted efforts to enunciate more complex textual ontologies. One such field is medieval studies, in which text critics also work with traditional materials that developed over time and thus exhibit many variants among different manuscripts. Two such scholars, Paul Zumthor[89] and Bernard Cerquiglini,[90] focus on the particular innovations and alterations that appear in individual manuscripts and dispense with the ethico-ontological hierarchy that labels alterations as "errors" or "corruptions." For Cerquiglini, both "best-text" editing[91] and stemmatic, eclectic approaches that search for an ideal original text[92] misrepresent the "*variance*" that is integral to the identity of such traditional texts. As Cerquiligni writes:

> In the Middle Ages the literary work was a variable... The fact that one hand was the first was probably less important than this continual rewriting of a work that belonged to whoever prepared it and gave it form once again. This constant and multifaceted activity turned medieval literature into a writing workshop... Variance is the main

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89.   Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972).

90.   Bernard Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la variante: histoire critique de la philologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1989); English edition Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology* (Parallax: Re-visions of Culture and Society; trans. B Wing; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University).

91.   As with HUB and BHS, which replicate Aleppo and Leningrad, respectively.

92.   As with OHB.

characteristic of a work in the medieval vernacular; a concrete difference at the very basis of this object. This variance is so widespread and constitutive that, mixing together all the texts among which philology so painstakingly distinguishes, one could say that every manuscript is a revision, a version.[93]

Cerquiglini points to the Song of Roland, a medieval poem that developed over time through repetitive oral performance and exists only in irreducibly variant textual forms. Cerquiglini asserts that one must hold together these disparate textual forms as all realizations of the same epic, even through their differences. In other words, Cerquiglini argues that difference is part of the identity of these works: they exist in pluriformity, and to represent them otherwise is to misrepresent them.[94] As he concludes: "To reduce this plurality into one unique and supposedly established text loses something that is there."[95]

Though his remarks are brief and often enigmatic, Cerquiglini offers resources to critique both essentialism and nominalism as they intersect with textual criticism. First of all, Cerquiglini argues that the identity of ancient and medieval traditional texts, including biblical texts, is not static, but is rather dynamic, and thus includes change over time. *Identity includes variance.* Difference is part of the identity of these works: they exist in pluriformity, and to represent them otherwise is to misrepresent them.[96] The variation found within individual manuscripts, furthermore, only carry their full impact if one is aware of the broader tradition against which the variant can be understood.

Thus, difference is not simply a lack of resemblance– e.g., "this table does not look like this chair, thus they are different." On the contrary, Cerquiglini conceives of

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93.   Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant,* 38.
94.   Ibid., 37-40.
95.   Ibid., 39.
96.   See especially Ibid., 37-40.

difference *in a positive manner.* The difference itself is still not a *thing,* but the difference between manuscripts, like the pressure differential between a warm air mass and a cool air mass, can produce something new. In other words, Cerquiglini's differences are not simply phantasms or simulacra: a scribal addition *is a real thing*, it can be a productive force, a dynamic and constructive element precisely because it does not resemble its model. Scribal alterations actually produced the biblical text, so the productive power of difference has already proven itself. An important question is this: at what point do we imagine that the world lost this productive power of difference?

In short, Cerquiglini thinks of traditional texts as processes, not essences.[97] Unlike homogenous, unified essences, processes are typically divergent; the unfolding points of a process do not necessarily bear close resemblance to the origin of the process.[98] Moreover, the identity of a process is not fixed like an essence, and neither is it located at one point in its development; rather, the identity of a process is defined progressively, through time. Processes create no natural ontological hierarchy; the moths of today, for example, are not judged by their degree of resemblance to the moths of ninety thousand years ago.

If one adopts this ontology to the practice of textual criticism, then the manuscripts of biblical texts should not be judged by their resemblance to a textual form at a particular moment wherein the biblical text was considered finished by a particular group of people. Biblical texts were produced by means of lengthy processes, and those processes did not culminate in a clear telos of a naturally pristine version. Like-

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97.   Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant,* 3, 68.

98.   On the structure of processes, see M DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2002), chapter 1, and also see chapter 6 of this dissertation.

wise, there is no "more authentic" version of the text, no "more pristine" version, no "primary" version, no necessary preference for "earlier" or "later" or "finished" forms, nor is there a version with "more integrity," and there is no such thing as a "corruption."[99] There are scribal misspellings, to be sure, but even these are not "bad" *per se.* Some have been hermeneutically productive. There are just differences.[100] To pick one version of a text and claim that it is the natural endpoint of production and the natural beginning of reception is to disguise a process as a product.

Thus, the identity of a biblical text is a contested space wherein multiple, different, texts actually *claim to be the same thing*. We have quite enough information to know that, empirically speaking, the text never was and never will be *singular*. Thanks to the immensely helpful work of Eugene Ulrich, biblical scholars can refer to the pluriformity of the biblical text. Too often, however, this pluriformity is treated as a past phenomenon, spoken of in the past tense: at Qumran, there was great plurifor-

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99.   Yet there are not merely "a thousand different flowers blooming" wherever we find various manuscripts of one text, because the proverbial thousand different flowers are all still flowers, not trees and grass. Where we have various manuscripts of Proverbs, for example, we can recognize the differences between them, but we can also recognize the differences between Proverbs-manuscripts and Daniel-manuscripts.

100.   One may be reminded again of Derrida's reaction to Saussure's disgust at the (mis)pronunciation of a particular name, "Lefébvre," Derrida responds: "Where is the evil?...Lefébure is not a bad name." ("Lefébure, c'es pas mal.") The point is this: supposed deformations often are simply changes, and carry no "natural" ethical or ontological defect as such. A scribal error such as haplography, dittography or misspelling could (and surely at times has) created texts that can be read, can be used liturgically, etc., and that one may evaluate as follows: "Where is the evil?" Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 41-2. McCarter, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible*, 11. Žižek's repeated misquotation of Hegel here adequately expresses the same sentiment: "Evil resides in the gaze itself which perceives the object as evil." See Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London; New York: Verso, 1999), 381.

mity, but after the period of stabilization, there is now stability. Yet the text remains pluriform; these texts from Qumran continue to exist. The text remains pluriform as long as Samaritans read their Pentateuch and Eastern Orthodox Christians read their Septuagint, as long as Syriac-reading lectors call out the words of the Peshitta. It remains pluriform as long as scholars create new critical editions, and as long as there continues to be variance even within the famously precise Masoretic Text. As long as Ketiv and Qere stare at one another, we find pluriformity and variance even within a single manuscript. The period of stabilization gave us not a stable text, but at best multistable texts within multistable textual groups. The identity of, say, the book of Proverbs is a function of differences that are logically and ontologically prior to any such identity.

To summarize: both realist and nominalist formulations of textual criticism deny plain facts: realists deny the very manuscripts they read, while nominalists deny the relationship between two copies of the same book. I am arguing that we should instead conceive of biblical texts as processes–processes that we may imagine function in an odd way *as* a universal.

Textual critics can then re-conceive their task as a mapping of the process of textual development, a charting of the trajectories and changes that the form of the text has always undergone. Textual critics can dispense with the construction of ontological hierarchies and the unhelpful heuristics of "originality" and "authenticity," since the biblical text is at its most authentic when it reveals its internal variance. Textual critics can offer a sketch of the differential identity of a text instead of imposing a Procrustean ideal form to create substantial identity. Perhaps most importantly, textual critics can affirm the continued and continuing pluriformity of the biblical text, insisting that the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Peshitta, the Targums, the so-called daughter versions, the non-aligned texts from Qum-

ran, as well as the variants within and among all these groups, are not failed witnesses, phantasms, simulacra, but are rather fully legitimate expressions of an ongoing process of textual development.

3.3.2 Text and Différance

In order to clarify the identity of a process, or shifting network, we can approach this problem from another angle: what *is* a text, exactly? We could respond with the near tautology, "A text is a network of signs." While this answer may not seem to help us much, Hans Zeller stresses that signs–that is, the things that make up texts–function in particular ways, and these functions impact the type of "identity" texts may have. As Zeller writes:

> My conception rests on the linguistic idea of the text as a complex of
> elements which form a system of signs… Seen in this way, a version is
> a specific system of linguistic signs, functioning within and without,
> and authorial revisions transform it into another system.[101]

Zeller points out that texts are comprised of networks of *signs*. Generally, texts are made up of linguistic signs, such as words, phrases, and the like, but other sorts of non-linguistic images accompany many texts, and recent scholars have pointed out that many elements of a material book or scroll also function as signs.[102]

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101. Hans Zeller, "A New Approach to the Critical Constitution of Literary Texts," *Studies in Bibliography* 28 (1975): 240-42.

102. Jerome McGann initiated the study of such "bibliographical codes," wherein the material "code" is studied in relation to the "linguistic code," or the abstracted words of the text. See Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1991)., 62; see also McGann's extremely influential earlier work: Jerome J.

Re-arranging the network of signs in any way creates a new network that can be distinguished from the older one. As Zeller continues:

> [I]n principle a new version comes into existence through a single variant. Since a text, as text, does not in fact consist of elements but of the relationships between them, variation at one point has an effect on invariant sections of the text. In considering different versions one must therefore not confine one's attention to the variants. This is most clearly exemplified when the title of a work is altered. Fundamentally, therefore, whether the variants are numerous and of far-reaching effect is not a necessary condition for the constitution of a version.[103]

Zeller points out something quite interesting about texts: namely, that they are *not* simply composed of self-contained linear blocks. Replacing one word with another changes more than that one word, because texts are *a network of relationships*. Signs are not hermetic; they are inherently relational, and work together as groups. If one were to remove one key block from a wall, it could cause the whole edifice to collapse; as such, the network of signs that comprises a text is entirely interrelated, and moving one small jot or tittle can re-make the whole.

This insight, paralleled by statements from Cerquiglini, casts the acts of biblical text critics in a new light: collapsing a literary tradition into one of its many forms erases countless other ancient works that likewise deserve a hearing. As concerned as Tanselle, Fox and McCarter are to preserve and care for the authentic voices of ancients that are threatened by the corruptions of time, it is surprising that so many

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McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983). Ulrich has discussed the material aspect of the scrolls and the implication this has on the canon debate; see Ulrich, "The Bible in the Making; the Scriptures Found At Qumran."

103. Zeller, "A New Approach to the Critical Constitution of Literary Texts," 240-42.

other voices must perish to save just one.[104] Perhaps a large critical apparatus such as one finds in the HUB is a gesture towards those lost literary voices, but as Zeller points out, the atomization of variants obscures the overall effect of one particular series of variants found in a particular manuscript. Rather than treat "variants" as marginal fragments at the edges of an intact central form of the text, Zeller pushes text critics to respect the relationships that exist within a text by looking at texts holistically.

Yet the nature of signs also helps us to confront Fox's concern that this leads inevitably toward the path of textual nihilism, because the relationship-function of signs is not their only important aspect. Fox wants to claim that a particular proto-MT manuscript of Proverbs and an LXX manuscript of Proverbs share some *identity,* albeit in a relationship of subordinated ontology (that is, as George Orwell might say*,* "some texts are more equal than others.")[105] Signs, however, present an alternative conception of identity that relies upon the central role of *difference.* And this alternative conception of identity provides the building-blocks for a new ontology of the biblical text.

In short, signs are useful precisely because they can be used over and again by various people in various circumstances and yet be recognized as the "same thing" in each instance.[106] Each use of a sign, then, will introduce some sort of variation: at

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104.   One may ask of those who seek to preserve the "authenticity" of the supposedly original author's message by eradicating the glosses of time: are not the additions to Daniel as "authentic" as the redactional elements of the "non-additions"?

105. See Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible," 10-12.

106. For the general source of the content of the following presentation, consult Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, 23-41, and Geoffrey Bennington, "Saussure and Derrida," in *The Cambridge Companion to Saussure* (ed. Carol Sanders; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005). These are discussions of Derrida's reading of

minimum a variation of time, since one cannot utter something twice at exactly the same moment. But signs are recognized even at surprisingly high rates of variations, as in the case of speakers shakily conversing in a shared tongue alien to both. Because of the *essential repeatability* of signs, there is a potentially limitless variety of users of any system of signs (you cannot wear signs out) and a limitless variety of situations in which the sign will function (there is no space in which these words cease to be recognizable). In theory, a sign will still function in any potential context emitted by any potential user. For example, if a robot mindlessly scrawls the word "dog" on the surface of the moon, this will not inhibit its function as a sign from the English language, and any English-speaker who later sees it will be able to read it, regardless of author or context.

Since it has already appeared above, let us take the example of a particular linguistic sign, namely "dog." This sign, like any sign, is useful precisely because we can identify it as the "same" sign even in its nonidentical repetitions, such as alterations in spoken tone, accent, and pitch, or alterations in written handwriting or font. "Dog" is the same word as "dog," even though the first letter-shape varies between the two signs, and "dog" is the same word as *"dog,"* even though the letter-shapes of the second sign are slanted in relation to the first.

I can likely rule out the platonic thought of a "perfect form" of every sign that may be found in a non-spatiotemporal realm, of which all earthly manifestations are but shoddy representations. There is no *one* exact way to enunciate "dog," because neither the southwestern American or the northeastern American, the rural English or the urban Australian, the native French speaker or the native Urdu speaker, have

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Saussure; see Derrida, *Of Grammatology* and Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (trans. Wade Baskin; London: Peter Owen Limited, 1959) for detailed background to this discussion.

the right to claim that there is only one acceptable sound-pattern for the pronunciation of English words. Any claim of "standard dialect" is not descriptive, but normative. Likewise, there is no "correct font" in which to write "dog," nor do serifs make a sign as unrecognizable when compared to the same sign *sans* serifs.

But I can also rule out radical nominalist claims that there is no shared identity between signs. There is certainly some sort of identity to the word "dog"–otherwise nobody could read it. But signs have an identity quite different from the concept of identity text critics often rely upon when they posit a "perfect, pristine, original, central" text. There is no perfect, pristine, original, central way to pronounce "dog," because signs function by retaining their identity in spite of, but also only because of, differential repetition. That is, signs are, by definition, things that can be repeated in different contexts and yet still refer to the same thing.

This line of argumentation derives from Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who stressed that the sign was composed of two different components.[107] Saussure's definition of the linguistic sign posits an irreducible relationship of a signifier (i.e. the ideal sound-pattern of a spoken word) and a signified (i.e. the particular concept associated with the sound-pattern).[108] For the moment, we will focus on the signifier, or the "material" aspect of the sign (the shape of the letters that form the sign "dog," or the sound-pattern of the spoken sign), because it is the signifier that shows clear variation whenever it appears.[109]

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107.   Ibid. 65-67. For his part, C.S. Pierce argues for three elements of the sign instead of two: the sign, the object, and the interpretant, which adds the role of interpretive context and ramification to the simpler Saussurian dyad; but argument concerning the identity of the "material" signifier/sign applies to both semiotic systems. See Charles S. Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1992), 13-17.

108.   Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 65-70.

109.   The signified, or the "concept" of the signifier, will recieve attention in chapter

Saussure constantly reminds his readers that the signifier is not the material sound or shape *per se*, because these vary significantly: instead, he uses the phrase "sound-pattern" to evoke the close but not exact repetition of a pattern. The "sound-pattern" or signifier is an *ideal*, Saussure concludes; as G. Bennington writes,

> We must be able to recognize that it is the same sign in spite of all these variations, and this implies that what ensures this sameness through the repetitions must indeed by an ideal-ity: the signifier is thus never purely or essentially sensible, even at the level of its phonological or graphological description.[110]

Yet this ideality is not the pure, privileged, fully-unified transcendental ideality of the platonic model; there is no one absolutely pure way to pronounce the word 'dog', and thus we must find another way to think of this ideal identity of the signifier.

Again: instead of one pure way to pronounce the word "dog," there are many varying ways of doing so without ontological deficiency. Problems occur when someone says something indistinct, or something that sounds indistinguishable from something similar - like "bog," or "doc," for example. We may say that the ideal of "dog" is not a singular positive thing: instead, the ideality of "dog" is merely the minimal differential space between any possible pronunciation of "dog" and anything else that it might be confused with ("bog," "doc," etc.). In other words, the ideality of "dog" is *purely negative*. As Saussure writes:

> [Signifiers] are constituted solely by differences which distinguish one such sound pattern from another...although in general a difference

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110.   Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida,* 32.

presupposes positive terms between which the difference holds, in a
language there are only differences, and no positive terms.[111]

Thus, the ideal sound-pattern of any word is nothing but the space one may make for
it that is not currently occupied by other sounds. Saussure continues:

> What characterizes these units is not, as might be thought, the specific
> positive properties of each; but simply the fact that they cannot be
> mistaken for one another. [Signifiers] are first and foremost entities
> which are contrastive, relative and negative…The values of letters are
> purely negative and differential.[112]

Thinking of identity by means of difference creates quite a different way of thinking
about what a text "is." As Geoffrey Bennington explains:

> Signs achieve their identity (i.e. their potential recognisability or
> repeatability as the signs that they are in distinction from others), not
> through any positive or substantial features, but just insofar as they
> are different from other signs.[113]

This is a difficult way to think of identity, to be sure, but it rewards the careful reader.
If one begins to think of the identity of a given text - texts are, of course, composed of
chains of signifiers - as in some sense *purely negative and differential,* this will allow
us to analyze biblical texts while avoiding the traps into which text criticism seems to
keep falling. In particular: text criticism has a difficult time thinking of identity and
difference because its logic, method and vocabulary derives from a metaphysical sys-
tem that determines things in terms of *presence.* For instance, the term "variant"
presupposes that there is some positive, present and knowable constant from which

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111.   Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 120.
112.   Ibid., 117-18.
113.   Bennington, "Saussure and Derrida," 192.

one may measure deviance.[114] For example, Tanselle defines textual criticism as follows:

> Textual criticism is the term traditionally used to refer to the scholarly activity of analyzing the relationships among the surviving texts of a work so as to assess their relative authority and accuracy.[115]

Analyzing relationships is clearly of major importance in textual criticism, but the concepts "authority" and "accuracy" as the imposition of an axiology requires the already-justified presence of a single privileged text (extant or not) in order to function. However, establishing relationships does not need to bring with it an ethico-ontological hierarchy, especially one that relies upon a singular transcendental identity by which to subordinate the known manuscripts. Furthermore, we know from the textual evidence that there is no necessarily privileged constant in the textual genealogies of any biblical book; every manuscript, Fox would argue, contains some sort of variants. By thinking in terms of *differences*, we can say that there is no positive, unified transcendental "work" by which one can measure variances in particular empirical manuscripts– because there are only variants.

But this does not relegate us to nihilism, as Fox worries: the word "dog" can be thought and recognized despite variations, so long as it is distinct from other words. The text of the book of Proverbs can also be thought and recognized despite variations so long as it is distinct from other texts. The ideal "book of Proverbs" is in this case a negative space, something that exists in the gaps in between every posi-

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114.   Whlie this term may seem helpful, the myriad examples in §2, such as the development of the book of Daniel, should render moot the concept of "variant" as an aberration over against some stable presence.

115.   G. Thomas Tanselle, "Textual Criticism," in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (eds. Alex Preminger et al.; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1993), 1273.

tive, substantial, historically extant text of the book. Thinking about the "original/final text" in this sense (i.e. as a purely negative ideal for which there are no positive terms) will challenge text criticism in many ways: most importantly, any proposed ethico-ontological hierarchy can no longer be used to organize the mass of manuscripts, since the privileged lynchpin of the system - the transcendental, ideal version of the text - cannot be said to "exist" in any meaningful sense. There is no substantive center; there are only differential relationships.

For this reason, the replacement of the concept of "autographs" or an actually recoverable original text with the asymptotic ideals of "the archetype," "the hyparchetype," and so on (always with the caveat "as best as we can recover them," or "an ideal text which may never have existed as such," etc.) is not sufficient, since an ideal limit can function as a "lynchpin" as much an empirical object can within an ethico-ontological system. Replacing an actual despot with an idealized despot is not the same thing as instituting democratic reforms. Likewise, there is no "more authentic" version of the text, no "more pristine" version, no "primary" version, no necessary preference for "earlier" or "later" or "finished" forms, nor is there a version with "more integrity," and there is no such thing as a "corruption."[116] There are scribal misspellings, to be sure, but even these are not "bad" *per se*. There are just differences.[117]

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116.   Yet there are not merely "a thousand different flowers blooming" wherever we find various manuscripts of one text, because the proverbial thousand different flowers are all still flowers, not trees and grass. Where we have various manuscripts of Proverbs, for example, we can recognize the differences between them, but we can also recognize the differences between Proverbs-manuscripts and Daniel-manuscripts.

117.One may be reminded again of Derrida's reaction to Saussure's disgust at the (mis)pronunciation of a particular name, "Lefébvre," Derrida responds: "Where is the evil?...Lefébure is not a bad name." The point is this: supposed deformations often are simply changes, and carry no "natural" ethical or ontological defect as such. A scribal

This also means that there is no one part of a biblical text that is "essential." If a redactor excised Proverbs' well-known chapter 8, it would still be a "book of Proverbs," albeit one relatively more liable to be confused for something else (though this is still remote).[118] At Qumran, there are several manuscripts which are composed of excerpts from various biblical texts (4QFlorilegium, for instance); one would not mistake an excerpt for the whole of the book from which it came, or mistake the whole group of excerpts for a biblical book.

In the same way, the identity of each biblical book is a function of its own internal differences, and the limits or edges of its identity (that is, where a manuscript

error such as haplography, dittography or misspelling could (and surely at times has) created texts that can be read, can be used liturgically, etc., and that one may evaluate as follows: "Where is the evil?" Derrida, *Of Grammatology.* 41-2. McCarter, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible.* 11. Žižek's repeated misquotation of Hegel here adequately expresses the same sentiment: "Evil resides in the gaze itself which perceives the object as evil." See Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology,* 381.

118.   On similar grounds, Carol Newsom offered a critique of the genre-definition exercise carried out in *Semeia* 14, in which the SBL Apocalypse Group published a chart delineating the intersection of various apocalyptic texts with the most commonly occurring features of apocalyptic literature. When reading a text that appears to be "apocalyptic," the scholar must then add up the number of features instantiated in the text in order to establish whether the text is, in fact, apocalyptic. Thus, the Apocalypse Group created an essentializing schema, understanding "apocalypse" as a static category with fixed elements; particular concrete examples of the genre could, however, be more or less deficient (by not lacking an otherworldly mediator, for example). See Carol A. Newsom, "Spying Out the Land: A Report From Genology," in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (eds. Ronald L. Troxel et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005). But in the words of Raymond van Leeuwen, "the mere enumeration of 'generic' features does not establish membership in a kind of genre." Raymond Van Leeuwen, "Form Criticism, Wisdom, and Psalms 111-112," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (eds. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003). Genres are not timeless, static ideals, but are themselves established by even the "impure" examples. The same is true of the biblical text.

becomes "something else") is a function of the differences between its self-differential identity and the self-differential identities that are recognizable as "something else." This theory finds some kinship with Hans Walter Gabler's theory of the "total text," but instead of his positive determination that the text comprises "all its authorial textual structures" and is thus "conceived as a diachronous structure that correlates different synchronous structures," the negative determination without positive terms better represents the identity of variant texts. That is, the "total text" is something of a monster, having many different beginnings and ends; the negative identity of the "differential text" recognizes that there is no exact beginning or end, but only relative differences between different versions.[119] In his worries about textual "relativism," Fox seems to assume that difference is necessarily absolute difference - that is, each different version is something absolutely "itself," with its own hermetic identity. Using Saussure's discussion of the identity of signifiers, this would be akin to claiming that each slightly different pronunciation of "dog" is a different word altogether. Saussure helps us to see that admitting the existence of different pronunciations of the word "dog" without any positive standard of perfection does nothing of the sort; rather, it allows us to note networks of relatively minor and relatively stable differences that are yet differentiable from other such networks of differences. The differential network of pronunciations of "dog" is rarely confused with the differential network of pronunciations of "cat," for example.

In terms of reference, Saussure posits that for each signifier there is a "signified," which is the "thought-pattern" associated with the signifier.[120] Signifiers do not

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119.   See the instructive article by HW Gabler discussing a pluriform critical edition of *Ulysses*. Hans Walter Gabler, "The Synchrony and Diachrony of Texts: Practice and Theory of the Critical Edition of James Joyce's" Ulysses"," *Text* 1 (1981): 305-326.

refer directly to a referent that is "in the world," because if that were so, there would be only proper nouns. The signifier "tree," for example, must first link to the *concept* of a tree, which can then refer to a number of different material referents that all may be categorized under the concept of "tree."[121] We will later directly question the concept of the "signified," but we can see from this brief discussion that the identity of any "tree-in-the-world" is already caught up in the same sort of differential network that creates the identity of signifiers.[122]

There is no "one real tree" that functions as the platonic form of tree, the substantive foundation for any discussion of tree-ness. One does not hold up the sycamore as the "real" or "original" tree, from which other trees differ in terms of corruption, falling away from the pristine. No; on the contrary, there are a number of differential networks (e.g. Sycamore, Pine, Oak) that are also different from each other, and the "identity" of any one of these concepts (e.g. Oak or Tree) cannot only refer to one material referent. The identity of "Oak" cannot be collapsed to one particular object in the world; it must allow for differences between possible referents and not base itself on purely substantive, positive referents. To do so would be to invent a different name for every different tree.[123]

We might imagine that the term "the Bible" or "the Book of Proverbs" functions in the way proper nouns are supposed to, at least in theory: that is, they have only one in-the-world referent that the proper noun invariably points to whenever it is used. On the contrary, we have seen that the sign "the Book of Proverbs" does not have one substantive, positive in-the-world referent to which it flawlessly refers. We

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120.   Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 15.

121.   Ibid. 66.

122.   Ibid. 117-18.

123. This is the terrible situation described in Borges' story "Funes the Memorious." J. L. Borges, *Ficciones* (New York: Grove, 1962), 107-116.

have a choice: either we posit that there is no book of Genesis, or that there is in fact a "Book of Proverbs," but it functions in a Platonic sense (an ideal form not in-the-world to which the sign refers), or we posit that the "Book of Proverbs" must allow in itself for difference and variation that is not logically or necessarily hierarchical (and thus it refers precisely to *nothing* substantial except a network of differences, which are minimally distinguishable from other networks of differences). It seems more logical, more historically grounded, and less metaphysical to eschew nominalism and platonism and accept the non-essential definition of any particular biblical text.[124]

3.3.3   Text as Concrete Universal

In practice, this reformulation of the identity of texts would use the same data as current text-critical practices, but it would interpret such data in a new light. Harry Orlinsky anticipated this mode of text-critical thought in his famous discussion of the Masoretic text, in which he claimed:

> There never was, and there never can be, 'the masoretic text' or 'the text of the Masoretes.' All that, at best, we might hope to achieve, in theory, is 'a masoretic text,' or 'a text of the Masoretes.[125]

As Orlinsky argues, there is no "center" of the Masoretic tradition; there are only related manuscripts which differ one from another *more than* they differ as a group

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124.   Believing in the Platonic pristine, pure form of "Genesis" is no less theological than believing that a particular community of faith was directed by a divine spirit in selecting and editing their own scripture. Believing that there is no such thing as Genesis can be seen in an oddly similar light, much like believing that there are no stars, but only illusions in the night sky.

125.   Orlinsky, "Prolegomenon: The Masoretic Text, a Critical Evaluation." xxiii.

from other groups of such texts. There is, precisely, *nothing substantial* at the center. Instead of picking one side in the debate between de Lagarde's "from the one to the many" stemmatic reconstruction and Kahle's "from the many to the one" *vulgare-texte* theory, I would push textual critics to think in terms of "from the many-as-one to a different many-as-one," emphasizing that the "one" is a purely formal category suggested by the closely related but nevertheless different witnesses.[126]

On the contrary, one might be tempted to retain a content-filled "one" by thinking "essentially," that is, to find the areas of textual content that all (or most) manuscripts of a particular biblical book share, and then to declare those pieces the "core" or "essential parts" of the book, and to think of the other sections as "variant sections." To take a biblical example, we can think about the book of Daniel: the proto-OG and proto-MT "editions" of the book of Daniel agree significantly (though, as always, with some variants) for chapters 1-3 and 7-12, probably both deriving from an earlier base text. Yet there is a problem between the agreed-upon older and "more original" material, particularly among the proto-OG and proto-MT versions of Daniel 4-6. In chapters 4 and 6, the MT is much shorter than the OG, but chapter 5 exhibits a longer MT and a shorter OG. As a result, Ulrich and others have concluded that "in Daniel 4-6 *both* the MT and the Old Greek are apparently secondary, that is, they each expand in different directions beyond an earlier common edition that no longer survives."[127] Moreover, the OG apparently translated a Semitic *Vorlage* that preceded it; in other words, we have two ancient versions of a now-lost base text which it would be impossible to now reconstruct. Some might harbor the dream of recovering the lost base text of chapters 4-6 and using it as part of the "original" book of Daniel,

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126.   See James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics of Text Criticism," Text 18 (1995): 4.

127.   Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible*, 71.

but here is the problem: the older version would not necessarily be in any way supe-rior to the later revisions, since it was clearly not the "end" of any process, and was not adopted as stable or fixed by any known community (and certainly not the com-munities that altered it. Nor was it the "original" book of Daniel, since it is also clear that Daniel was written in historical stages, with the Aramaic court stories (chapters 2-6) written as a whole earlier than the Maccabean-era chapters (especially chapters 7-12).[128] It is here that the common distinction between "work," "text" and "artifact/manuscript/document" breaks down: in this typology, a unified original "work" is presumed, and the particular manuscripts are understood to fulfill the sole function of pointing back to the original work. In a traditional text, however, this relationship is inverted: what do we call a particular manuscript that does not primarily "witness" to a previous work, but rather creates a new "text" and thus reshapes the content of the ideal "work" in a retroactive manner? Such a manuscript plays a part in re-chart-ing the boundaries of the differential identity of the text itself.

But what about the problem of the biblical text, wherein there are multiple non-coterminous texts that supposedly "have" the same identity at the exact same historical moment? We do not find substantial identities that are merely a bit differ-ent at each manuscript "snapshot"; we find instead a contested space wherein multi-ple, different, texts actually function as the *same thing*. The existence of other, differ-ent texts (historically prior and co-extant texts, as well as any future different texts) compromises any claim to full substantive identity advanced in favor of any particu-lar manuscript *or* any unified conception of an ideal "work."

As mentioned above, the oft-misunderstood problem of the development of

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128.   See John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

the biblical text is not to be found in our epistemological shortcomings: rather, this chapter argues that we have quite enough information to know that the text never was and never will be *singular*. We must take seriously the variegated history of the development of the text, which prompts the return of the filial metaphor: the *genealogy* of texts. A familial metaphor ("genealogy") can be here useful if redeployed in a sense other than a courtroom scene ruling the legitimacy of various relatives. "Family" can signify both likeness and difference: people do not come into being *ex nihilo*. They look and act somewhat like their parents, but have differences, nonetheless. No one person "is" the family, but neither is the family merely the central overlap of the venn diagram of identities, the small substantive space shared by all of its members. Rather, "the family" is an open and developing concept that members of the same family struggle to define, and that contains no *a priori* substantive "core". One result of this conception is that the biblical text, as in any genealogical system, can have no given *telos* that "ends" the struggle to define the core of identity. The genealogical process is an inherently open one, and one that every generation can claim to have closed, only to see the next generation (and thus any potential future generation) reopen.

The "identity" of the book of Daniel is not one that can every actually *be* closed, though the work of scholars is in many ways to try to create a closure many generations after the fact. In this sense, the identity of any biblical text is necessarily an open question. Another way to phrase this conclusion: *variance itself* is a necessary and essential part of the identity of biblical texts. Identity is a function of differences that are logically and ontologically prior to any such identity. Medieval textual critic Bernard Cerquiglini helpfully compares Gaston Paris' stemmatic heirarchization of extant texts to Joseph Bédier's practice of analyzing each manuscript in isolation from any other manuscripts of the same text. Cerquiglini points out that both of

these approaches distort the identity of a given textual work, since neither accounts for *variance* as an element of the identity of the work itself. As Cerquiglini writes: "Bédier's antimethod, as much as any other, reduced medieval works to the stable, closed, authorized texts of modernity."[129]

Perhaps some text critics will still want to think of literary identity in a positive manner—namely, they will want some*thing* to point to in order to say "*this* is the book of Daniel, or at least part of it." But the relationship between the OG and MT of Daniel does not allow for this solution: clearly chapter 4-6 are a part of the book of Daniel, but the only versions we have are *already* secondary. Should we then cut out chapters 4-6 from our critical editions of Daniel, or only publish parts that agree with both versions, since the resulting part will be beyond doubt entirely from "the [real] book of Daniel"? This, too, seems strange, since from the start chapters 4-6 have been part of the book of Daniel; the problem is that they *only exist in variants, and there is nothing but variants.* If we take seriously Zeller's argument that differences in one part of a literary text affect more than just the immediate vicinity of the differences, then these variants are not confined to chapters 4-6; they impact the rest of the book, however it is constructed.[130] There is, then, no "center" to the pluriform versions of the book of Daniel, but this center-less field is still made up of *versions of the book of Daniel.* The OG and MT editions are quite different, but the two of them can be distinguished from other biblical stories, and thus are still one (self-differential) book.

Some may argue with this statement: for example, Bowley and Reeves write,

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129.   Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology,* 70.
130.   E.g., Nebuchadnezzar's characterization in chapter 4 changes what readers may think of him in chapters 1-3, the different characterizations of kingship may alter perceptions of the rulers in chapters 5-12, etc.

concerning the problem of the identity of "the Bible":

> Instead of 'the Bible,' there are 'Bibles,' containing particular forms of certain texts in one or more specific arrangements used in individual communities. Nothing of a concrete nature warrants the common use of the singular number and the definite article as if there was an inalterable form and content to 'the Bible.' Succinctly stated, 'the Bible' is not and furthermore never was.[131]

The statement notes, correctly, that there is diversity among different communities' canons of the Bible (hence, the nominalist "Bibles.") But this diversity is then contrasted against identity understood as "[something with] a concrete nature" that would have "inalterable form and content." Using Saussure's discussion of differential identity, one can say "the Bible" to signify the differential field of various constructions of "the Bible," much as one can say "the Book of Daniel" to signify not one "concrete" and "inalterable" text, but rather a pluriform field of texts that are minimally distinguishable from other texts. There are other alternatives to positing a *concrete* identity besides positing various concrete sub-identities; by saying "Bibles" instead of "the Bible," one has merely substituted the problem of identity for another, somewhat more circumscribed, problem of identity. We may say "the Protestant canon," for example, but this would only replicate the problem of identity on a smaller level, and so on.[132] That is, the alternative to "one unvarying and concrete Biblical canon" is not just "many smaller unvarying and concrete Biblical canons," but there also exists the concept of differential identity, which allows us to speak to one anoth-

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131. Bowley and Reeves, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible': Some Theses and Proposals," 4.

132. As, for example, Anglicans have a marginal identity within protestantism and also have a marginal canon.

er of "the Bible" without compromising or invalidating each other's differing constructions of the putative object.

Since realists believe that there is some determinate true content that "is" the text of each biblical book that may be discovered, they hold that extant conflicting manuscripts may be categorized and measured by how close they approach (or how far they deviate from) that content. Nominalists, on the other hand, defuse the conflict between conflicting manuscripts by pluralizing their terms (Bible*s*) and denying any relationship between the conflicting particulars: that is, "of course they are conflicting, but this does not cause alarm because they are completely different things and should not have been expected to agree in the first place..." Both formulations of the problem, however, are forced to deny plain facts: realists deny the very manuscripts they read, while nominalists deny the relationship between two copies of the same book. Perhaps there is not "a definite universal" or "no universal," but rather the differential network described above functions *as* a universal, a "concrete universal."[133] Any particular exemplar will of course not quite fulfill the whole breadth of the universal–for example, OGDaniel *and* MTDaniel contain both pluses *and* minuses–but particulars will continue to stand together in conflict, creating the field of differential identity in their very dissonance.

As confronts any reader of the biblical text who confronts the magnitude of historical variations on their chosen textual theme, no particular manuscript or even textual form of any biblical book can function as the exemplar of its entire genealogy without falling short of its task. Daniel is not confined ot the borders of MT, nor is

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133.   On the Hegelian concept of the concrete universal, see Robert Stern, *Hegelian Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford Universty, 2009), 143-176. On its Deleuzian interpretation, which I am referencing here, see Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2003), 43-44, and James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Logic of Sense: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2008), 96.

Daniel summed up by OG, or Theodotion. These variations struggle to be the center that the "book of Daniel" lacks, and any attempt to either deny their relation or lift one up to *be* the universal will overlook the quasi-ontological structure of the "book itself." As Derrida explains, this notion of a

> "text" that is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network... Thus the text overruns all its limits assigned to it so far (not submerging or drowning them in an undifferentiated homogeneity, but rather making them more complex, dividing and multiplying strokes and lines.[134]

McCarter was right about the dangers of writing, but perhaps this situation is not merely dangerous to any particular enunciation—it is also the way that any enunciation comes to be. We must be careful to see that the very corruptibility that text critics bemoan is the ground of possibility for what they are trying to recover and protect; the only problem is that this openness is structurally impossible to close, and this means that texts remain open to rereading and rewriting without possibility of complete stabilization or absolute finality. The "gap" between original and later, between composition and reception, seems to be largely mythical and a function of a particular metaphysics. Instead, the gaps *within* each differential textual identity and the spaces between one such textual identity and others seem to be more fruitful for such thinking of identity. Relocating the "gap" or "divide" from the "moment of pure presence" to the internal and external differences of texts could push biblical scholarship past now stale, unhelpful debates.

Yet even if one grants the thesis of this section—namely, that there is no "orig-

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134.   Jacques Derrida, "Living On/Border Lines," in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (trans. J Hulbert; New York: Continuum, 1979), 69.

inal" or "final" or necessarily privileged form of a biblical text, but only differential networks– one may think that the divide between "original" and "reception" lies somewhere other than textual criticism and the material text. Many biblical scholars claim that their goal is not to find the original text *per se*, but rather it is to reconstruct the historical context that produced a particular version of the text. In this model, there is a historical "moment" that defines the utterance of a text, which allows the scholar to pin down what it "meant." The divide between reception history and the "original," then, would not be a divide in the form of the text, but rather a divide in the *meaning* of the text: that is, "reception" denotes an understanding of the text that is qualitatively different than the original because it was read in a different context. What, then, is the nature of this divide in the context of production and the context of reception that allows a methodological line to be drawn?

The Concept of the Original Context

...only something which has no history can be defined...

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

1   INTRODUCTION: THE ANCHOR AND THE SPANDREL

In light of the biblical text's pluriformity, textual criticism does not offer the re-
sources to identify the boundary between the original text and its reception. One
could always, however, locate the boundary between the original and its reception
somewhere else. Quite often, in biblical studies as elsewhere, the concept of "the
original context" fills this role.

Scholars who seek to contextualize biblical texts in their original contexts are,
in essence, attempting to draw the boundary between original and reception. By
means of "context," these scholars separate meanings proper to an original setting
from from later, unoriginal meanings that could not have existed within that context.
They define the proper meaning variously as the *author's intention,* as the under-
standing of the *original audience,* or more broadly as the interpretive possibilities
opened by the semantic, cultural, and historical *context* of the text's production. All
of these definitions agree that a boundary of some sort divides the *proper meaning*

of the text from *later meanings,* the former constituting the domain of biblical criticism and the latter constituting the domain of reception history.[1] If this is the case, then what forms the barrier between the original context and later contexts? The answer, if deduced, would allow for a rigorous formulation of reception history.

But what if this concept of context is incorrect? Modern criticism has shown decisively that biblical texts are composed by means of many sources, traditions, and compositors, so the boundary between any original and later meaning is bound to be muddled. Just as textual pluriformity complicates any boundary drawn by textual criticism, the multiplex and multi-contextual biblical text may confound contextual criticism.

In order to condense the confrontation of these two points of view, I here juxtapose two tropes: namely, the *anchor* and the *spandrel.*

When defining the relationship between a text and a historical context, bibli-

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1.   Proponents and practitioners of "reception history" also appeal to this logic, claiming the later, unoriginal "other part" for their data domain: the Blackwell Bible Commentary series, for example, predicates its mission on this very distinction, as the series editors' preface claims that the series is "devoted to the reception history of the Bible," which "is based upon the premise that how people have interpreted, and been influenced by, a sacred text like the Bible is often as interesting and historically important as what it originally meant." D. M. Gunn, *Judges Through the Centuries* (Blackwell Bible Commentaries; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), ix. Thus there is an "original meaning" (or one may say "plain sense") of each text that had some historical existence; later interpretations are thought to be categorically different than this meaning, but the "reception" shift is the assertion that these meanings are "as" important as the original one. Scott Langston, author of the Blackwell commentary on Exodus, claims that his goal is to "[e]xplore the book's impact beyond its original environment." Scott Langston, *Exodus Through the Centuries* (Blackwell Bible Commentaries; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 2. On one side of the divide: the "original environment," whose analysis is properly the domain of traditional critical methods. On the other side: "beyond the original environment," which constitutes another, equally valid domain of study, and requires some different methodological tools.

cal scholars tend to rely on metaphors of anchorage. As John Barton explains: "In reading a text, one needs a sense of its anchorage in a particular period."[2] Likewise, Chip Dobbs-Allsopp uses the image of the tether: "[biblical texts are] past texts that remain tethered in important ways to that past."[3] Others use images of pinning, rooting or containment.[4] The semantic field of *anchorage* connotes a fixed location, and thus stability and integration with the surrounding environment. According to this logic, the failure to respect such fetters leads inexorably to misreading: as John Barton warns,

> some readers detach the Bible from its historical moorings and allow it to float freely in a timeless realm, thereby making it unable to exist 'back there,' at the beginning of the tradition, and so witness to the tradition's roots.[5]

Three assumptions undergird this trope of the *anchor*: (1) Every biblical text is a form of utterance in that it has a specific historical context to which it belongs; (2) Every biblical text must be read "in" this context if it is to be understood properly and thus yield the meaning that is truly *original* to it, and (3) Every biblical text has already escaped this context and now is to be found outside of it. The inherent ten-

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2.   John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 187.

3.   F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Rethinking Historical Criticism," *Biblical Interpretation* 7 (1999): 261.

4.   Note, for example, Barr's metaphor of containment when he claims that readers must respect "the historical situatedness of the text." J Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 587, or Levenson's remark that historical-critical scholars assume that "the Bible can never be altogether disengaged from the culture of its authors." J. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 123.

5.   John Barton, *People of the Book?: The Authority of the Bible in Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 41. Note also the nautically-themed "historical moorings" in Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 80.

sion between the first two assumptions and the third assumption creates the central problem of so-called "historical-critical" biblical research and, one may venture, all criticism and interpretation.[6]

Following this logic, biblical criticism is the task of reading a text within its now-disappeared historical point of origin in order to determine what it *did mean* or *could have meant* and, subsequently, to separate this hermeneutical wheat from the chaff of later misunderstanding.[7] If one "weighs" the textual anchor by reading the text in another context, this leads to anachronism and interpretive chaos, leaving the text with no stability whatsoever, adrift aimlessly upon the surface like a castaway on a plank. Texts were not made to drift: instead, as Barton claims, "witnessing" to its anchor-like "roots" is the true task of any text. Yet it is evident that biblical texts are instead always found unanchored, drifting though history, constantly witnessing to something else. As a result, biblical scholars must return the drifting texts to their proper harbors and restore the missing anchors. John J. Collins describes this procedure as "placing the Bible in its historical context."[8]

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6.   A quote from K. M. Newton, often deployed by Jacob Neusner, recapitulates this arrangement: "The central concern of hermeneutics as it relates to the study of literature is the problem created by the fact that texts written in the past continue to exist and to be read while their authors and the historical context which produced them have passed away in time." K. M. Newton, *Interpreting the Text: A Critical Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Literary Interpretation* (New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1990), 40-41.

7.   "[B]iblical criticism has always taken for granted that the meaning a text has is connected with its origins in a particular historical and cultural setting - what some would call its "original" sense… This is most obvious at the level of language." Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 80.

8.   John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Augsburg: Fortress, 2007), 13. Likewise, Chris Rowland, one of the general editors for the series, also writes: "Unlike other commentaries which have included history of interpretation (such as EKK, BNTC and NIGCNT) in our commentaries the quest for the origin and the original meaning of the texts and the effects on the original readers have not been give

Yet perhaps a biblical text cannot be fully contained or explained by any single context. As any visitor to Rome's *centro storico* has doubtless noticed, the city displays an impressive collection of ancient structures that over time have been converted from temples to churches, theaters to palaces, and markets to convents to museums.[9] At times, the ancient architecture seems to integrate gracefully with its more recent brick and stucco surroundings, while at other times one notices fragmentary arches that jut out unneeded into space, walls that slice through otherwise orderly floor plans, and columns that extend past the roofs they seem otherwise to support.

As a result of their piecemeal conversion over thousands of years, the adapted ancient ruins have at least several historical contexts in which they function as meaningful parts of a larger whole. To focus solely on their ancient origin is to ignore that they have more than one origin. Every architectural recontextualization reproduces the ruins, granting them another context of production.

In 1979, Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin referred to these sorts of architectural recontextualizations in their critique of "adaptationist" theories of evolutionary development. Noting that adaptationist theories tend to break up an organism into various traits and propose disconnected narratives that explain the neces-

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priority. What we have attempted to do is to study biblical books through…a representative sample of the different interpretations of the text, in a variety of media." Christopher Rowland, "A Pragmatic Approach to *Wirkungsgeschichte*: Reflections on the Blackwell Bible Commentary Series and on the Writing of Its Commentary on the Apocalypse" (paper presented at EKK Biannual Meeting, March 21-23, Germany, 2004). Rowland here acknowledges the existence of an "origin" and an "original meaning" of each text, as well as specific "effects" upon "original readers" of biblical texts. In Rowland's formulation, the shift to studying reception is essentially a re-valuation of "different interpretations of the text" that occur in later contexts, arrive at later meanings, and derive from later readers.

9.   See Philip Jacks, "*Restauratio* and Reuse: The Afterlife of Roman Ruins," *Places* 20 (2008): 10-20.

sary development of each trait, Gould and Lewontin favor an alternate paradigm, later dubbed "exaptation," which emphasizes the contingent and retroactive aspects of Darwin's theory.[10] Whereas "adaptationism" assumes that every existing trait appeared and was selected in order to ensure the success of the species within its environment, "exaptationism" argues that traits tend to find uses for which they were never selected, since organisms repurpose traits to cope with always-changing environments.[11]

Gould and Lewontin use the architectural feature of three-dimensional spandrels in Byzantine architecture as an example. Even though one may look upon the central dome of San Marco in Venice and marvel at how the mosaic program seems to integrate perfectly with its Byzantine architectural canvas, the "traits" of the mosaic program did not evolve in lock step with the architecture. Rather, the architectural programs developed first out of pre-existing forms, and then the artistic program developed in light of the architectural constraints.[12] Thus the choice to create

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10. See Stephen J. Gould and RC Lewontin, "The Spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian Paradigm: A Critique of the Adaptationist Programme," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London: Series B* 205:1161 (1979): 581-598; Stephen J. Gould, "The Exaptive Excellence of Spandrels as a Term and Prototype," *Proceedings of The National Academy of Sciences* 94:20 (1997): 10750-10755; Stephen J. Gould, "Exaptation: A Crucial Tool for an Evolutionary Psychology," *Journal of Social Issues* 47 (1991): 43-65.

11. For example, concerning the small bones in human middle ears: "Now used for hearing, two of these bones (the malleus and incus) were originally part of the lower jaw of our reptilian ancestors, who used them for chewing." V. S. Ramachandran and S. Blakeslee, *Phantoms in the Brain: Probing the Mysteries of the Human Mind* (New York: William Morrow, 1998), 210.

12. This had all happened long before San Marco; the acceptance of domed basilicas as the style of Byzantine churches likewise derives from contingent circumstances. Early Eastern Roman Christian churches simply inherited a particular architecture and then later developed artistic motifs that used the space effectively. The number four carries particular significance since there are four canonical gospels, and so the four pendentives in Byzantine domes tend to be adorned with images of the four

mosaics of the four Evangelists in the spandrels under the dome did not then lead to the selection of a dome as the architectural form of the ceiling; rather, images of the four Evangelists presented a convenient solution to the problem of four awkwardly shaped spandrels that resulted from the building of the dome.[13]

Likewise, Gould and Lewontin point to biological traits that organisms developed that were later repurposed and thus became quite useful: for example, flightless birds *first* developed feathers for warmth and only much later repurposed them as a mechanism allowing for flight.[14] Furthermore, some traits are genetically linked such that selecting one trait necessarily selects another useless trait that only later may prove of some use (or hindrance). Vestigial organs, for instance, are examples of still extant but no longer adaptive traits. It would be a mistake to assume that the vestigial organ is an evolutionary dead-end, since a change in our environment may allow for their repurposing, perhaps rendering these traits highly important to the survival of our species. In other words, the meaning and proper function of a trait is never a settled matter.

When we look at organisms and their traits in relation to a larger ecosystem, we find that traits are not "anchored" to a particular function within an unchanging environment but are constantly fluctuating just like their environment. Both the organism and its environment are always in the process of find new purposes for

evangelists. See John Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (Phaidon, 1997), 227-270.

13.   Gould and Lewontin, "The Spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian Paradigm: A Critique of the Adaptationist Programme," 581-583. Technically these spaces are pendentives, but they could also be considered a type of spandrel. See Gould, "The Exaptive Excellence of Spandrels as a Term and Prototype."

14.   Another example can be found in fish lungs, which were later repurposed as gas bladders. See Colleen Farmer, "Did Lungs and the Intracardiac Shunt Evolve to Oxygenate the Heart in Vertebrates?," *Paleobiology* 23:3 (1997): 358-372.

their existing traits even as they develop new, underdetermined traits.[15] Upon closer inspection, what may seem like a perfectly-ordered adaptationist teleology looks like a protean chain of chaotic contingencies forming and re-forming meaningful patterns throughout. As a result, all organisms are always open to re-forming their traits as well as the meaning or purpose of those traits. In the same way, all architectural features are able to change their function depending upon their adaptive reuse, and some features may be unused for a time before they are repurposed. What we find with both of these examples is an *essentially open* relationship between elements of a structure and their individual purposes (or what one might call their *meanings*). Spandrels are not fixed; by nature they travel through always-new contexts, and are always open to being repurposed in new structures. This does not mean one can do "just anything" with a spandrel; careful repurposing requires attention to what it can do. But what the spandrel teaches us is that it can do many things, even some things that are as-yet unthought.

Concerning the scholarly study of "spandrels," should an architectural historian claim that the Markets of Trajan can only be understood in their *original state*, and not as they have been repurposed in the early medieval era as various palaces, or as a garrison, or later as the Convent of St. Catherine of Siena? Should an evolutionary biologist claim that bird feathers can only truly be understood as a means of keeping warm, and that their subsequent use for flight is a derivative and thus less important, or less authentic, or less meaningful phenomena? In the same way, questions concerning the concept of textual recontextualization or adaptive reuse confront the biblical scholar. The foundations of modern biblical criticism consist of the

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15.   See, for example, Gilbert Simondon, "The Genesis of the Individual," in *Incorporations* (ed. J. Crary, S. Kwinter; New York: Zone Books, 1992): 297–319

discoveries of various literary strata within the structure of each biblical book, and it is the continuing task of biblical criticism to confront the issues that result from this discovery. Scholarly biblical criticism rightly argues that adaptive reuse exists within the confines of biblical texts,[16] but many scholars argue that each biblical text contains a limit to its adaptive reuse, a boundary-point at which re-reading and re-purposing meaning turns from "redaction" into "reception."[17]

In the previous chapter, I argued that the external forms of the text of each biblical book cannot be divided into the categories of "original" and "witnesses." In this chapter, I will argue that the internal content or meaning of each instantiation of a biblical book cannot be divided into "original meaning" and "reception." Just as concepts such as "authority," "stabilization," and "final" gave textual critics an excuse to present a given form of a biblical text as objectively "original," the concept of *context* and its correlates "authorial intention" and "original audience" generally confuse discussions concerning the meaning of biblical texts. My argument is that spandrels, not anchors, are more constructive metaphors for biblical scholarship.

2   THE ROLE OF CONTEXT IN BIBLICAL CRITICISM

So-called historical criticism is alive and well in the field of biblical studies.[18] Despite

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16.   The approaches of form criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, and tradition criticism, for example, are predicated upon the constitutive role of adaptive reuse in the production of biblical texts.

17.   See chapter 2, and my discussion of E. Tov, R. Hendel, M. Fox, and others.

18.   As Dale Martin has concluded in his research concerning the pedagogy of biblical studies in American theological institutions, historical criticism, or the theory that "the primary meaning of the text [is] what its meaning would have been in its original ancient context," is "still the dominant one." Dale B. Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible: An Analysis and Proposal* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 3. Note,

various apocalyptic warnings to the contrary, even many so-called postmodernists accept the normative claim that within scholarly discourse a text should be read with reference to its context of production.[19] There are, of course, scholars who claim otherwise; critics engaging in reader-response or philosophical hermeneutics have generally stressed that readers have no choice but to admit that their own contexts influence their reading practices.[20] But overall, the vast majority of biblical scholarship seems to operate under the assumption that the context of a biblical text's production should determine its analysis.[21]

This line of thought rests upon two simple wagers: first, that contexts function

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though, Barton and Barr's laments that postmodernism is displacing historical scholarship: "There is much talk of a 'paradigm shift' away from historical methods and towards 'text-immanent' interpretation which is not concerned with the historical context and meaning of texts; it is widely felt that historical criticism is now itself of largely historical (or 'academic'!) interest." John Barton, "Historical-Critical Approaches," in *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (ed. John Barton; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), 9.

19. See, for example, the remarks of Thomas L. Thompson: "In order to try and read and understand the Bible- or any other ancient text- as its authors intended it to be understood, or as it was understood during its formative period, we need historical contexts." Thomas L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 231.

20. Reader-response names a broad field of methodological and theoretical concerns that are loosely concerned with the role of readers in the production of textual meaning. See Jane P. Tompkins, "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism," in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (ed. J. P. Thompkins; Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1980). Scholars associated with Philosophical Hermeneutics such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hans-Robert Jauss and Paul Ricoeur argue, following Heidegger, that readers are unable to simply remove themselves from their own contexts; this situation is not problematic, however, since the reader's context allows for productive reading. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (trans. J. Weinsheimer, D. Marshall; 2nd rev. ed. New York: Continuum, 1989).

21. See, for example, the reader-oriented yet historically-contextualized approach in J. M. Trotter, *Reading Hosea in Achaemenid Yehud* (JSOTSupS 328; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001).

roughly like Saussure's *langue*. For Saussure, individual speech-acts (or *parole*) are comprehensible because they derive from the overall linguistic system, or *langue*. Since the synchronic linguistic system is a pre-given whole known to the speaker and audience, the utterance derives from and is constrained by the linguistic system.[22] In the same way, biblical scholars tend to assume that the context makes the utterance comprehensible while also constraining its potential meaning.[23] It is as if the context is a structure that holds the proper code by which to read a given text.[24] Thus, locating the proper context must precede valid interpretation. One must know where to drop anchor; returning the textual boat to the wrong harbor is the same as setting it adrift. In other words, if the wrong code is consulted, the text produces garbage.

As for the second wager, biblical scholars often assume that biblical texts are utterances akin to Saussurean *parole*, or individual events of language use emanating from a particular subject located at a singular point in time and space.[25] Locating the source of an utterance in a subject allows for internal coherence or meaning, while locating the utterance at a precise moment ensures its existence within a specific synchronic linguistic structure as well as its possible reference to a certain representable state of affairs.

In order to illustrate the use of the concept of context within historical-critical biblical studies,[26] I will interact with several important biblical critics, including

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22.   See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Translated by Harris, R. Illinios: Open Court Publishing, 1983), 11-24.

23.   See below, §3.

24.   See the essay "Langue and Parole: Code and Message" for a discussion of this substitution, in   Roman Jakobson, *On Language* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1990).

25.   Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 11-24.

26.   Or as Barton and Barr would have it, "biblical criticism." See Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism,* 2, and James Barr, *History and Ideology in the Old*

James Barr, John Barton, and John J. Collins.

Collins, for example, explains his basic practice as follows: "I view the text in its historical context, relating it where possible to the history of the time and respecting the ancient literary traditions."[27] Here, Collins gestures towards the three main ways in which biblical critics "contextualize," or *anchor,* a text: namely, they (1) attempt to read a given text within the linguistic parameters that existed at the time of its inscription, (2) read the text as a species of a cultural genus such as a genre in order to clarify the intentions of the author and expectations of the audience, and (3) reconstruct the "history of the time [of the text's production]" to clarify the text's historical referents and reduce the ambiguity of cultural practices, economic processes and political structures which are represented in the text. In short, a biblical scholar contextualizes by means of semantic structures, generic expectations and historical circumstances. All of these modes of "contextualizing" a text have the same goal: namely, to reduce the ambiguity of a text's sense and reference, rendering the correct "meaning of the text." I shall describe each of these three modes in turn.

3   SEMANTICS AS CONTEXT

In *The Semantics of Biblical Language,* Barr insists that biblical studies recognize Saussure's absolute distinction between the synchronic and diachronic aspects of the study of linguistics.[28] Within the diachronic mode, a linguist may study morphologi-

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Testament: Biblical Studies at the End of a Millennium (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 40.

    27.   Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 13-14.

    28.   James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University,

cal, syntactical, or lexical changes within a language over time. In contrast, synchronic linguistics takes as its subject a "language-state," or a language as it existed "during a certain span of time during which the sum of the modifications that have supervened is minimal."[29] In other words, synchronic linguistics studies a "static" model of a given language at a given point in time. Saussure argues that truly *semantic* analysis can only take place within synchronic linguistics, since the meaning of a word in the distant past - its etymology - does not likely influence the meaning of a word at the moment it is spoken. For instance, contemporary English speakers do not consider the word "silly" to *really* mean "lucky" merely because of its etymological roots in the West Germanic term for "happiness" (it is after all a distant cognate of German *selig,* or "blessed.") No, the word "silly" now means something more like "trivial" or "foolish." All that matters in synchronic analysis is the meaning of the word or statement as it functions within its language structure at the moment of its utterance.

What is perhaps less obvious is that this model presupposes a moment of enunciation by a single speaker, based upon Saussure's presupposition that the *speaking subject* is the true subject of linguistic analysis. Saussure presumed that texts are dubious bearers of linguistic information: writing, as a durable image of the spoken word, exposes the utterance to all sorts of diachronic changes.[30] Yet here we find the central tension within the practice of the contextual analysis of texts, a paradox of diachrony and synchrony: writing remains, but its context quickly disappears. Thus the assumption of a unitary and singular historical moment of a speaker's

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1961), 100-106.

29.   Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 101.

30.   Ibid., 31. This was thought to be proven by Saussure's example of the invention of the name Lefébure.

enunciation becomes crucial for Saussure's analysis, since his very separation of diachronic from synchronic rests upon it. At the moment of enunciation, a certain linguistic structure existed that was not subject to the non-semantic whims of diachronic change, and if one can reconstruct this synchronic system, then one can pin down the semantic value of the utterance.[31]

As a result, according to Barr, a given text "means something only as a functioning unit within the synchronic language system of a certain time."[32] Since one truism of biblical literature is that every biblical text is to some extent a composite text, this statement necessitates the division of biblical texts into various strata that each emanate from a single delineable historical moment. Thus Genesis must be divided into P and non-P and the redactional layers therein (if one is bold, then into J and E).[33] Moreover, each strata must be assigned a relatively identifiable time and place of enunciation within a relatively consistent synchronic linguistic structure.

As Barr clarifies: "The words of (say) the prophet Amos must mean what they meant in the language system of the time of Amos, [but] the words of a commentator or glossator three centuries later must be understood as they functioned in the language of his time."[34] Thus, the primary critical task confronting biblical scholarship is

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31. Of course, the supposition of a speaker's intention and the determination of a singular meaning also derive their possibilities from this division into synchronic and diachronic aspects.

32. James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1983), 85.

33. For an overview of recent developments in Pentateuchal source criticism, see Thomas Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, eds., *A Farewell to the Yahwist: The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (SBLSymS 34; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006).

34. Barr, *Holy Scripture*, 85. Barr has also argued in *Semantics of Biblical Language* that etymologies of words cannot yield semantic data of use to the analysis of a particular text, since the synchronic moment of discourse does not necessarily refer to

the identification of various unified textual strata, while the derivative tasks involve identifying each strata's historical context of production, recreating the synchronic language systems of those contexts, and then reading these texts within the semantic constraints of those language systems.[35] If the scholar fails to do so properly, disaster awaits: "Serious mistakes can be made by reading biblical Hebrew words with the sense that the same word had some centuries later."[36]

For his part, John Barton agrees with Barr's approach: "Criticism certainly entails situating texts in the context of their origin,"[37] which then allows the critic to access "the sense that the text has when considered in its own historical setting, rather than as taken by later generations."[38] Barton dispels any simplistic critiques of this practice:

> Where we do not know who wrote the text or what he or she meant by it, we may still be able to say that the text 'could mean A' or 'could not mean B' on the basis of our knowledge of the language in which the text is written... So-called 'historical criticism' has the task of telling the reader what biblical texts can or cannot mean, not merely what they did or did not mean; to say of this or that interpretation, 'No, the text cannot possibly mean that, because the words it uses will not bear that meaning.'[39]

Barton claims that even if an author or determinate meaning are unknown, the bibli-

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the etymology of a word, but rather uses the word within a semantic unit such as a sentence. In other words, "past" and "future" meanings cannot be attributed to an utterance. See Barr, *Semantics*, 100-106.

35.   I will set aside for now the epistemological problem of circular logic that emanates from this mutual identification of text and context, since reconstructing the synchronic language system relies upon the very texts that are in question. What interests me even more is the ontological problem that lies behind this epistemological problem; see chapter 5.

36.   Barr, *History and Ideology*, 43.

37.   Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 68.

38.   Ibid., 71.

39.   Barton, "Historical-Critical Approaches," 17-18.

cal scholar may adjudicate the limits of possible meanings of a biblical text by means

of the linguistic structure as it existed during the production of the text.[40] One still,

however, needs to know the general time and place of enunciation in order to avoid

making what Barr calls "serious mistakes" of anachronistic interpretation.

John Collins, as well, takes the notion of synchronic contextualization to be

fundamental to historical-critical methodology:

> Historical criticism so understood strives for objectivity by assessing
> the plausibility of any interpretation in light of historical and literary
> context, including historical philology, or the range of meanings that
> may be assigned to a given word in a particular context...Historical
> criticism sets limits to that conversation [of scholarship in general] by
> limiting the range of what a text may mean in a particular context.[41]

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40.   Barton elsewhere claims that "We [biblical scholars] are searching for what
[texts] actually mean as opposed to what...they might be thought to mean." Barton, *The
Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 84. Note that this challenges Barr's critique of Fewell and
Gunn: "The idea that historical criticism was 'the correct method to seek' the one right
meaning and was thus 'the summit of the interpretational pyramid' seems to me to be
remote from reality. People did not think as Gunn and Fewell imagine them to have
thought. No one said the sort of thing that they put into the mouths and minds of the
scholars of that time. In particular, I would question whether historical criticism was
thought of as a mode for determining meaning." Of course, this section proves that Barr
overstates his case. Barr, *History and Ideology*, 36.

41.   John J. Collins, *Encounters with Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress,
2005), 2. Collins, like Barton, allows for limited multivalence: "Contrary to what is often
asserted, this does not mean a text has only one valid meaning. Many texts are
ambiguous or multivalent, and texts can acquire new meanings in new contexts.
Historical criticism, properly understood, does not (or at least should not) claim that the
original historical context exhausts the meaning of a text...In contrast to some (not all)
postmodernists, historical criticism does try to set limits to the meaning of a text, so that
it cannot mean just anything at all." Ibid. One might quibble with Collins' straw figure of
the "postmodernist," since I think it would be difficult to find even one scholar who
thinks texts can mean "anything at all." What "postmodernists" (if that term can be used
generously to gather together many disparate points of view) do tend to assume is that
the "original" meaning of a text, if one does in fact exist, has no logical or ethical priority
over any other potential meaning. Even within the semantic limits set by historical

In Barr, Barton and Collins' estimations, historical-critical scholars work by locating the limits of the possible range of meanings of a text. These limits simultaneously function as boundaries dividing "the conversation [of biblical criticism]" from other disciplines, such as reception history or theology.[42]

As an example of this practice, Barton uses the particular instance of nineteenth-century English novelist Anthony Trollope:

> [I]n the novels of Trollope we often find a female character saying that a male friend 'made love to her the whole evening.' It is crucial in understanding Trollope to realize that in his day this expression meant showing a romantic or sexual interest in someone, not having sexual intercourse with them. Otherwise, we would get a very distorted idea of what happened in Victorian drawing rooms.[43]

It does seem rather clear that Trollope did not intend to portray drawing rooms as bordellos, since the context did not allow for that meaning of the phrase "make love."[44] The text is an utterance by a temporally and culturally located subject, and the context has well defined and known rules that make plain what can be meant and what cannot. Trollope is, at first glance, a winsome example.

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philology, there are potentially limitless ways to read a given text, as Collins agrees.

42. This is the logic set forth in Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*. and John J. Collins, "Is a Critical Biblical Theology Possible?," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters* (eds. D. Knight and G. Tucker; Atlanta: Scholars Press,1990) 1-17.

43. Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 80.

44. It should be noted here that, while Trollope may have written in a unified linguistic context, for biblical texts this assumption may be problematic. For a helpful overview of this entire conversation, including a balanced and thorough summary of Avi Hurvitz' views, see Ian Young et al., *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (1-2; London: Equinox, 2008); Ian Young, *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003); Ian Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993).. Note also the opposing views presented in Avi Hurvitz, "Can Biblical Texts be Dated Linguistically? Chronological Perspectives in the Historical Study of Biblical Hebrew," pages 143-160 in *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (eds. A. Lemaire and M. Saebo; SVT 80; Leiden, 2000).

Upon closer inspection, however, the example of Trollope is hardly analogous to a biblical text.[45] Conceptualizing texts as utterances banishes the diachronic from view in hopes of finding a pure synchronic meaning; this is easier to accomplish with texts clearly written by one person at one time. But with complex compositions such as biblical texts, it is impossible to ignore that any biblical synchrony is already shot through with splinters of diachrony.[46] Trollope wrote his works within the span of a few decades; in contrast, Genesis is the product of hundreds of years of varied types of oral and written processes that span several cultures and locations. From which of these contexts does the text emanate as an utterance?[47] Where can one drop an anchor in this discontinuous seabed of tradition?

The problem of the text is ultimately a problem of *internal recontextualization*. James Sanders has dubbed this phenomenon resignification, while other scholars use the term relecture, and other approaches, such as inner-biblical interpretation, overlap with these concerns.[48] Biblical texts are, for all intents and purposes,

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45.   As Barr has argued quite convincingly, the bearer of meaning (in his terms, "theological statement") "is usually the sentence and the still larger literary complex and not the word or the morphological and syntactical mechanisms." Barr, *Semantics*, 269. According to Barr, noting that "love" did not mean "sex" in Victorian England does little to elucidate the function of this word in its larger semantic unit. We are left with the problem of innumerable potential meanings even within a particular synchronic structure.

46.   It would be easy to imagine an author like Trollope carefully crafting his novel in his study, meaning something specific with his unified literary utterance, though it should be pointed out that this notion will itself undergo scrutiny in chapter 5. In any event, biblical texts did not develop in a manner analogous to the novels of Trollope.

47.   This question will be addressed in detail in chapter 5.

48.   James A. Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984), 22. For an overview of the Anthological school and their use of the concept *relecture,* see Stephen L. Cook, "Relecture, Hermeneutics, and Christ's Passion in the Psalms," in *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Heremeeutics and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001). For inner-biblical

palimpsests, textual forms of spandrels, bearing the marks of multiple re-inscriptions well before any supposed state of finalization. Recall Barr's example of the book of Amos: Amos' words *must* mean what they meant at the time of Amos, and the glossator's words *must* be understood in the language of his time. But what does one do when the *same words* are the words of Amos *and* the words of a redactor? How does one adjudicate the ownership of the same set of words that have been used twice, in different ways? John Sawyer provides a compelling example of this very problem by noting a scribal re-writing within the biblical text that divides Amos' meaning from a later reading:[49]

> What does wehelilu sirot hekal in Amos 8:3 mean? It seems likely that wehelilu sarot hekal 'the palace singing-girls will wail' is what Amos actually said, and that he was addressing this judgment oracle to the high-living royal establishment at Samaria. The reasons for the change to sirot hekal in the masoretic tradition would then be straightforward: hekal in Jerusalem denoted 'temple' rather than 'palace'...and while there may have been sirot 'songs' in the temple, there were certainly no sarot 'singing girls'. For the masoretic tradition, followed by AV and RSV, the original meaning of these words, as they were understood in Samaria in the eighth century BC [sic], would have been of purely academic interest, whereas the words as they stand are addressed to Jerusalem and foretell the destruction

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interpretation, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1989).

49.   Sawyer's entire second chapter on "context" provides a background for my comments in this chapter. As Sawyer argues, "the original *Sitz im Leben* of biblical language, however fascinating and academically rewarding a subject for research, is not the only situational context in which it has meaning... Timeless compositions like the psalms have been contextualized in many situations from the time they were first composed, which may actually have been before they were adapted for use in Israelite worship, right down to modern times. The same is to some extent true of any piece of literature... no biblical semantics would be complete without taking into account this wider notion of contextualization." John F. A. Sawyer, *Semantics in Biblical Research: New Methods of Defining Hebrew Words for Salvation* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1972), 7.

> of the temple in 587 BC [sic]... The decision on what it means today
> [i.e. in translation] depends on arbitrary considerations...[50]

Sawyer here demonstrates the recontextualization and thus multiplicity of semantic possibilities *for a single text within the production-history of the biblical text itself.*[51] Amos was describing Samarian female palace-singers, but the redactors cer-

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50.   Ibid., 5. Also see J. Jeremias, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 145 for a defense of חיכל as "palace," and J. L. Mays, *Amos: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1969), 141 for a defense of the interpretation of חיכל as "temple."

51.   While Sawyer points out the many-layered linguistic contexts that haunt the Hebrew Bible, for the purposes of his semantic study he decides to read the text "synchronically" in one context in particular. Sawyer chooses the Masoretic period; he admits this is a somewhat arbitrary choice. M. G. Brett questions Sawyer's decision, claiming that there was no synchrony of Classical Hebrew in the Masoretic context. Classical Hebrew was long dead outside of its frozen literary state; thus one cannot situate the Hebrew Bible synchronically anywhere. Brett explains with the analogy of hansom cabs, or horse-drawn taxis, which still exist in New York City: hansom cabs do not mean the same thing they used to mean, since they now "should be understood as serving the function of nostalgia." M. G. Brett, "Four Or Five Things to Do With Texts: A Taxonomy of Interpretive Interests," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield* (eds. D. Clines et al.; Sheffield: Sheffield University, 1990). Yet Hansom cabs do not *only* signify "nostalgia" in today's context, though they might often do so. A hansom cab can signify dread to someone once hit by a hansom cab, or relief to the parent of a fussy but horse-loving child. The hansom cab is not locked into a pure signifying function in any synchronic slice of the history of Manhattan, since the linguistic structure even in a clearly defined synchronic moment is flexible and recontextualizable; this is why language is so useful in the first place. Classical Hebrew did not necessarily signify "nostalgia" to the Masoretes; doubtless is signified different things at different times even to the same person; now holiness, then boredom, then relief, then loss. There is no end to the possible signifying relationships a hansom cab or Classical Hebrew may enter into at any point in time with any viewer, no matter how overdetermined the context might be (let alone the significations of any of its internal semantic elements). Moreover, the fact that the Masoretes could still read Classical Hebrew tells us that whole past systems can continue to operate within each successive present moment, adding complexity to any presumedly pure synchrony.

tainly understood this phrase - and the masoretes pointed it as - a description of laments ringing through the temple, understood to be a reference to the temple in Jerusalem. Barr's distinction between "Amos' words" and the "glossator's words" is a misleading distinction, since the same words are sedimented with multiple meanings before the book of Amos was "finished." And what if Amos was quoting words from an entirely different source with a different meaning, or what if these are words added or changed by an early scribe to enhance Amos' words? How many other meanings are historically sedimented within those words but remain invisible to the modern scholar's eye?[52] This question brings to the fore all quotations and interpretations within and between biblical texts: for instance, are the words of Isaiah 11:6-9 that are quoted, centuries later, in Isaiah 65:25 the words of Isaiah or the later Isaianic author?[53] One could here cite a plethora of examples of resignification, all of which demand a reconsideration of semantic synchrony.[54]

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52.   Barton claims that biblical criticism searches for the "'Historical meaning' of texts, that is, the meaning that texts had in their original context. This rests on the belief that a text is not free-floating but belongs in a historical context." Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 33 fn.4. Yet Sawyer's example of Amos 8:3 puts to rest this false opposition between "free-floating" and "a historical context," that is the opposition between a single context/meaning and complete nihilism. There are many possible contexts from which to read any biblical text within the period of its production. This is not to say the text "means anything one wants it to mean," but it is to say that every biblical text is the product and re-production of many different contexts, and as such one context or one set of possible semantic limits does not naturally dominate the others. When given the choice between eighth-century Samaria and sixth-century Judah as the proper linguistic context for the text of Amos 8:3, it is not natural or given that the former context provides the "meaning." In the same way, it is not clear that one (or perhaps none) of the sister-wife stories in Genesis 12, 20, and 26 has a "meaning" and the others, clearly later derivations with only slight changes, do not.

53.   See the detailed discussion of this quotation and others in prophetic texts in R. L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets* (JSOTSupS 180; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 240-329.

54.   For an example that highlights the interplay of diachrony and synchrony in

Perhaps a more striking example is provided by Barton himself when he refers to J. L. Borges' work, "Pierre Menard: Author of the Quixote." Borges' text is a fictional literary review of modern French writer Pierre Menard's fragmentary line-for-line "recreation" of *Don Quixote*.[55] Borges compares quotations from Menard and Cervantes' works, noting semantic differences between passages composed of identical words. According to Barton, Borges' story shows that "the meaning [of a text] is historically bound,"[56] and that "it absolutely requires that the provenance of a text should be taken into account - it requires, that is, what biblical scholars call Introduction."[57] Barton's conclusion, however, may take for granted something that Borges' story calls into question: namely, the identity (or difference) of Menard and Cervantes' words. It is perhaps important that Menard does not simply either recopy the Quixote *or* happen to write the same words in a completely different text. Borges writes:

> Those who have insinuated that Menard dedicated his life to writing a
> contemporary Quixote calumniate his illustrious memory. He did not

semantic terms, see the discussion of שגיות in Psalm 19:13 and כראי in Nahum 3:6 and Psalm 22:17 in David Flusser, *Judaism of the Second Temple Period: The Jewish Sages and Their Literature* (trans. A. Yadin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 162-171. Note also the examples supplied by Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd rev. ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 41-43, which include Deut 12:5 and Josh 21. For more general examples of rereading, resignifying, or relecture, see the discussion of the redaction of Psalms in J. C. McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOTSupS 159. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), especially the essays by Mays and Breuggemann therein. Also see the various perspectives on the redaction of the minor prophets in J. D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney, eds., *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (SBLSymS 15. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2000), and the redaction of the Pentateuch in Dozeman and Schmid, eds., *A Farewell to the Yahwist*. Both of these works take for granted the resignification inherent in redactional processes.

    55.   See J. L. Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote," in *Ficciones* (New York: Grove, 1962), 45-55.

    56.   Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 83.

    57.   Ibid.

> want to compose another Quixote—which is easy—but the Quixote
> itself. Needless to say, he never contemplated a mechanical
> transcription of the original; he did not propose to copy it. His
> admirable intention was to produce a few pages which would
> coincide—word for word and line for line—with those of Miguel de
> Cervantes.[58]

In short, Barton too quickly assumes that this story shows that the same words mean different things in different eras. On the contrary, what this story shows is that *the Quixote itself* can be read within different semantic contexts, as the fictional narrator claims to do:

> Shall I confess that I often imagine [Menard] did finish it and that I
> read the Quixote —all of it—as if Menard had conceived it? Some
> nights past, while leafing through chapter XXVI—never essayed by
> him—I recognized our friend's style and something of his voice in this
> exceptional phrase: "the river nymphs and the dolorous and humid
> Echo."[59]

A close reading of this short story does not allow for Barton's conclusions: rather, *"Pierre Menard"* puts forth a series of examples or the *same text* read within different synchronic moments, much like Sawyer's discussion of the text of Amos. What *Menard* suggests is that the redactors of the Pentateuch were reading and rewriting the *same text* that was written by P, for example, but that they were probably reading it quite differently than P.[60] Thus, these differences are not foreign to the text at hand, but rather are internal to it. The point is that Amos, for example, did not become a *different work* when copied and pointed by the Masoretes.[61] Rather, the Ma-

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58.   Borges, "Pierre Menard," 48-49.

59.   Ibid.

60.   One should here point out that one can notice adaptive reuse in the editing of sources, such as the compilation of the Pentateuch: the assumed prior documents or fragments were now construed in such a way that it changed quite significantly the meaning of each fragment or document by recasting is as part of a larger whole.

61.   Here, the otherwise helpful work of Grigley runs down the same path. Like

soretes revealed semantic possibilities inherent within the text itself as it existed in their era. Crucial to this argument is an important quality of texts, namely their *durability,* that allows them to break with any context of production and yet to continue to function as texts.[62]

From this analysis, one may hazard a theory that a biblical text is not equivalent to an utterance. A biblical text cannot be read without reading at least some of it anachronistically, since even one supposedly "synchronic" edition of a biblical text or one manuscript copied at a precise point in time carry the sedimented languages, meanings and contexts that comprise its extended contexts of productions.[63] As Collins argues, some historical critics appreciate ambiguity, but even those critics "often argue that one meaning is primary - either the author's intention or what the text would have meant in its original setting."[64] On the contrary, I have argued that

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Danto, Grigley argues that Borges' work proves that the historical context of production "penetrate[s], so to speak, the essence of the work." J. Grigely, *Textualterity: Art, Theory, and Textual Criticism* (Ann Arbor: Univ of Michigan, 1995), 104. On the contrary, what it shows is that the same work may itself be recontextualized to quite different effects.

62.   This quality of texts will be assessed in detail in chapter 5.

63.   Take Psalm 20, for instance, which seems to have been a Phoenician song first before its conversion into a Hebrew poem. Is it possible for the Judahite scribe to function as the speaker of this utterance as if he wrote it in its entirety? This is why sociological studies of scribal culture will never locate the true secret of the biblical text: while it is interesting and important to know such information, the scribe is not the only subject enunciating the biblical text. The biblical text is always heteroglot, speaking in several contexts at once. See C. F. Nims and R. C. Steiner, "A Paganized Version of Psalm 20: 2-6 From the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," *JAOS* (1983): 261-74; R. C. Steiner, "The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script: The Liturgy of a New Year's Festival Imported From Bethel to Syene By Exiles From Rash," *JAOS* 111 (1991): 205-207 ; Ziony Zevit, "The Common Origin of the Aramaicized Prayer to Horus and of Psalm 20," *JAOS* (1990): 213-28. See also the opposing view of G. T. M. Prinsloo and T. Marthinus, "Psalm 20 and Its Aramaic Parallel: A Reappraisal," *Journal for Semitics: Tydskrif Vir Semitistiek* (1997): 48-86.

there is ample reason to question the concept of "original setting" for complex traditional texts, and thus to question the concept of their hierarchization into "primary" (and presumably secondary) meanings. Moreover, even if one accepts that there are several possible semantic contexts that are acceptable for biblical criticism to study, then how does one differentiate between those multiple possible meanings that a given biblical text "originally" had at various points during the context of its production and *receptions,* which are meanings that come after the putatively original ones? Barton and Barr have tried to draw this line with purely semantic boundaries ("the words of Amos," for example). Yet biblical texts traverse semantic boundaries and multiply semantic possibilities, and thus some other principle must govern the placement of the boundary between original and reception.

4   GENRE AS CONTEXT

Historical-critical scholars have also argued that a text must be read within the generic expectations of the broader culture that exists at the moment of that text's enunciation. For Barton, this is in fact the essence of biblical criticism: his first "thesis" concerning the "nature" of biblical criticism states that "Biblical criticism is an essentially literary operation, concerned with the recognition of genre in texts and with what follows about their possible meaning."[65]

Doubtless, form criticism is a helpful operation that contributes much to the

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64.   John J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 14.

65.   Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 5. Note also Barton's declaration that all methods in biblical criticism share a concern for genre; John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (2nd ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 199.

study of ancient texts. Well-worn examples never seem to lose their explanatory power: consider the peculiar world of fairy tales, which cannot be understood as historical accounts but rather are expected to convey fantastical stories involving impossible situations. Thus, Genesis 3 makes sense as a fable, replete with talking animals, magical objects, and moral lessons, and as such cannot be a historical account.[66] Socio-literary conventions function much like linguistic structures, in that genres allow readers to exclude some meanings as invalid within the specific context of the text's utterance.[67] Yet for this very reason biblical texts, which as complex traditional texts are unlike utterances, resist collapsing into one particular temporal manifestation.

In her article "Spying out the Land: A Report from Genology," Carol Newsom surveys various theories of genre.[68] Central to Newsom's presentation is the observation that "genres are dynamic," and as a result "some of the most interesting issues in genology are precisely those of genealogy."[69] Yet not only genres have a genealogy:

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66. See, for example, Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 38.

67. Note Barton's reliance upon a quote from J. A. Burrow: "We may see genre as ne manifestation- the prime manifestation in literature- of a principle which governs all human communication... At the level of whole utterances which is where the question of genre chiefly arises- speakers and writers construct utterances which can be recognized and construed by readers and listeners as utterances of a certain *kind."* J. A. Burrow, *Medieval Writers and Their Work: Middle English Literature 1100-1500* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1982), 56 quoted in Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 110.

68. See Carol A. Newsom, "Spying Out the Land: A Report From Genology," in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (ed. R Boer; Semeia Studies 63. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007) and Carol A. Newsom, "Pairing Research Questions and Theories of Genre: A Case Study of the Hodayot," *DSD* 17 (2010): 270-288. Though some biblical scholars conceive of genres primarily in terms of prescriptive classification, Newsom raises several objections to classificatory approaches and offers alternative modes of conceptualizing genre. Defining genre is not at issue in this chapter, though I imagine that the structure of the concrete universal, offered as a proposal for textual criticism in chapter 3, may be of some use in this conversation.

69. Newsom, "Spying Out the Land: A Report From Genology," 26.

texts, too, have genealogies that include several genres in which they have participated during the course of their production. As such, these genealogies cast doubt upon genre's ability to demarcate an "original" meaning from a "reception."

Since its inception, form criticism has argued that genre provides the anchor with which to fix a text in its appropriate context. Hermann Gunkel, for instance, brilliantly argues that each genre of psalm derives from a particular cultic setting, shares a set of thoughts and moods, and shares formal elements.[70] Though the genres of psalms "arose from the cult," Gunkel does admit to their diachronic development. As Gunkel argues, psalms later "turned their back on [the cult]" and poets began writing "mixed genre" psalms so confused that "here and there a complete formlessness occurred."[71] Showing his preference for the "original" genres, Gunkel admonishes students to begin thinking in terms of "pure genres" and only after these are "clear" allow oneself to read mixed-genre psalms such as Psalm 119, which derives its odd construction from the shift away from production in the cult towards "individual poets."[72]

Gunkel's distaste for diachronic shifts in genre are well known, but more pressing for my concerns are generic shifts undergone by particular texts.[73] For example, according to modern scholarship Psalm 30 is an individual thanksgiving psalm commemorating a recovery from illness, yet its superscription declares it to be "a song of the dedication of the house" (שיר־חנכת הבית), presumably a communal function un-

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70. Hermann Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (Macon: Mercer University, 1998), 16.

71. Ibid., 20.

72. Ibid., 19-20.

73. For a more detailed theoretical explanation of texts shifting between genres as well as the example of the seven penitential psalms, see Harry Nasuti, *Defining the Sacred Songs: Genre, Tradition and the Post-critical Interpretation of the Psalms* (JSOTSupS 218; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

connected to illness.[74] Thus, in every extant manuscript containing this psalm, we find a superposition of at least two generic matrices. Since the superscriptions are generally understood to have been added after the composition of the poem,[75] many scholars assume that this psalm was retroactively re-read as a communal thanksgiving.[76] Concerning Psalm 30's apparent *Gattung*, Gunkel writes:

> [L]ater usages prove nothing about the origin of the poem. In Ps 30, an individual "song of thanksgiving" has been used at the temple consecration, apparently at a time much later than the time of its origin. So if one wishes to research the type of a literary branch, one may not begin with its last tributary. Rather, one must begin at its origins. If we are to make any progress, we must immerse ourselves in the oldest worship service.[77]

Gunkel, like Barr above, argues that the genre of a text at its moment of enunciation holds the key to the text's original meaning, and that later developments are more akin to a fall from grace than a progression or unfolding.[78] In the same way,

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74.   See, for example, Erhard Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part 1: With an Introduction to Cultic Poetry* (FOTL; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 133. Some have argued that this is a reference to the Temple in Jerusalem, and others have argued the contrary. The exact reference (if there is one) matters not for the purposes of this argument; regardless of the reference, the implication of generic recontextualization remains.

75.   Note G. H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (SBLDS 76; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985). on superscriptions.

76.   See, for example, James L. Mays, "The Question of Context in Psalm Interpretation," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (ed. J. C. McCann; JSOTSupS 159; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 17. See also Walter Breuggemann's comments on the matter, which helpfully question the reification of genre itself, Walter Brueggemann, "Response to James L. Mays, 'The Question of Context'," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, and also Newsom, "Spying Out the Land: A Report From Genology."

77.   Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, 8.

78.   It is not to be understated that this individual thanksgiving psalm was read and re-framed as a dedication song within the context of production of the biblical text

Barr argues that the meaning of Amos' words in the eighth century BCE is to be pre-
ferred over the repointing of later glossators, and the original genre of a psalm is to
be preferred over its later generic recasting. Barton himself advocates for this under-
standing: "It is not too much to say that it is impossible to understand any text with-
out at least an implicit recognition of the genre to which it belongs… the meaning de-
pends on the genre."[79] A text belongs to a genre; when confronted with a text that
traversed multiple genres during the literary production of the text itself (since
Psalm 30 is not Psalm 30 without its superscription), Gunkel, like Barr, chooses the
earlier version as superior. Likewise, Barton describes how recognizing genre re-
quires detecting the "discrete earlier existence" of "texts that have in each case a par-
ticular genre."[80] Other than the assumption that "an origin is more authentic than a
development," what reason is there to prefer the earliest genre among the choices?
Clearly the structures and genres of Hebrew psalms derived from still earlier
Mesopotamian hymnody; should we then leave behind the Israelite worship service
in favor of locating the original branch from which the Israelite worship service, in-
cluding its songs, is merely a tributary?[81]

Israelite cultic song genres, to be sure, are influenced and derived from earlier

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and before the era of textual stabilization. Why is the rewriting of the redactor any less of
a valid meaning than the supposed meaning within its "original" *Sitz im Leben*? But then
again, why would the re-contextualization of the redactor have any necessary priority
over the context of the psalm when it was recognized as an individual thanksgiving
psalm? Surely a scholar cannot adjudicate this impasse; an individual historical-critical
scholar can read the psalm from any perspective provided from within the development
of the text itself, but that scholar cannot prove that their choice is natural, given, or
objectively privileged.

79.   Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 18.
80.   Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 64-65.
81.   See Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious
Lyric of Israel*, 16.

songs and worship rites. But in the same way that the etymological fallacy insists that

the origin of a word is not necessarily *present in* nor *definitive for* any particular use

of that word, the supposedly original *Sitz im Leben*, literary structure, or constraints

on meaning imposed by a particular historical moment in the development of a genre

cannot be definitive for later derivative genres or texts.[82] This is even more important

in light of the diachronic development of biblical texts, since genres developed, were

created, and were forgotten *during the development of the text itself.*

In another example, the intra-psalm prose text called *David's Compositions*

(11Q5 27.2-11) found in the psalms scroll 11QPsa suggests that at least some Second

Temple reader-redactors recontextualized psalms as participants within prophetic

and wisdom, rather than cultic, genres:

<div dir="rtl">

ויהי דויד בן ישי חכם ואור כאור השמש ¹ סופר

</div>

And David, son of Jesse, was wise, and a light like the light of the sun,
/and/ learned. (11Q5 27.2)

<div dir="rtl">

כול אלה דבר בנבואה אשר נתן לו מלפני העליון

</div>

All these [psalms] he [David] spoke through prophecy which had been
given to him from the Most High. (11Q5 27.11)[83]

David, cast as a prophet and sage, is named author of the known psalms (and thou-

sands of others), thus authorizing a particular set of reading practices that are not in-

cluded within the various *Sitze* generally attributed to psalms. Moreover, based on

the position of "literary" and "didactic" psalms such as Psalms 1, 73, and 119, it does

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82.   See Barr, *Semantics.*

83.   See James A. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPsª)* (DJD
4; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965); Martínez García, Florentino. et al., *Qumran cave 11.*
(DJD 23; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). See also Eugene Ulrich, "From Literature to
Scripture: Reflections on the Growth of a Text's Authoritativeness," *DSD* 10 (2003): 11.
Note also 4QPsalms Pesherª, which interprets Psalm 37 as if it were an oracle addressed
to the Qumran community itself.

appear that other Second Temple period reader-redactors understood Psalms primarily as a text meant for intensive private study, effectively divorcing the texts from their cultic *Sitze*.[84] Yet it is also likely that these selfsame psalms continued their use within certain cultic situations throughout the Second Temple period.[85] All of these *Gattungen* reflect particular *Sitze,* proving not the fixedness of a text within a genre but rather the fundamental openness of texts to new settings.[86] Even during their process of composition, the psalms were already circulating amongst various genres. Any line delineating genres, like that of semantic structures, runs precisely *through* the biblical text. To Barton's claim that texts are only understandable within their genre of enunciation, I must ask: whose enunciation, among the various enunciations of these texts?

Thus, Barton's claim that "literary competence" is defined "principally as the ability to recognize genre" runs aground on the multiplicity of genres to which these texts have already opened themselves even within their context of production. It seems unjustifiable to create a hierarchy of genres by which to separate the "original"

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84.   See Gerald H. Wilson, "The Shape of the Book of Psalms," *Int* 46 (1992): 138. See, on the contrary, R. N. Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book* (JsOTSupS 222; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 36-87.

85.   See the various arguments for Second Temple cultic use of psalms throughout D. J. Human and C. J. A. Vos, *Psalms and Liturgy* (JSOTSupS 410; London: T & T Clark International, 2004).

86.   Among various other examples, one could also gesture to the development of the genre of law code from its Mesopotamian context to its literary context within the Hebrew Bible, including the likely shifting of genres during that journey. Take, for example, the biblical law codes. Whether one subscribes to the "evolutionary" theory, (such as A. Alt, E. Otto and B. Jackson) the "literary" model of legal development, (such as Fitzpatrick-McKinley), or to another theory altogether (R. Westbrook and J. Watts) there is little disagreement that Israel's laws have participated in several genres thorughout their inscriptional history. See an overview of this discussion in Raymond Westbrook, "The Laws of Biblical Israel," in *The Hebrew Bible: New Insights and Scholarship* (ed. F. Greenspahn; New York: New York University, 2008).

from "unacceptable" ones. Perhaps genre functions not as a contextual anchor fixed to one determinate point in time, but rather as a spandrel. As the selfsame text moves between different contexts even within the "biblical" period, it may resonate with various genres and settings-in-life.[87] Psalm 30, for example, may be actualized in at least several genres, but perhaps it contains the resources to actualize itself in genres not yet developed. Such an understanding of genre at least accounts for the development of the biblical text itself, and should that not be of primary interest to historically minded biblical critics? If there *is* a line separating the original meaning of a text from later meanings, genre-determination cannot adjudicate the placement of this divide.

5   HISTORY AS CONTEXT

Collins claims that another important aspect of "viewing the text in its historical context" is the practice of "relating [the text] where possible to the history of the time."[88] In its most broad outlines, biblical criticism "relates" the text to history by reconstructing the text's *referents and situating the text amongst its general cultural milieu.*[89]

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87.   For an exploration of this process, see Nasuti, *Defining the Sacred Songs*.

88.   Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 13-14. Note the phrase: "*the* time." As biblical texts are traditional, there are always at least several "times" and "histories" to which the text relates.

89.   Barr and Barton are both quick to distance their practice from crude caricatures of "historicism" by stressing the "literary" nature of their approach to biblical criticism. As mentioned above, Barton relies upon form criticism, which itself does not seek a specific moment of enunciation or precise historical referents for biblical texts. Instead, form critics prefer to abstract literary conventions from sets of similar texts. Though Barton claims that this work is not necessarily "historical-critical" in the specific

For example, when readers know the actual positions of particular geographical locations referred to in biblical texts, this creates a richer experience, and it may reduce ambiguity in certain texts. Moreover, knowledge of ancient Near Eastern political and military history can help one read the prophetic counsels of Isaiah with more historical precision.[90] In the same way, knowledge of general cultural customs, ritual practices, economic realities, literary motifs, and other aspects of the broader cultural "reservoir" may also reduce textual ambiguity or reveal semantic subtleties. This practice of clarifying the *particular referents and general milieu* of biblical texts carries great importance in the field of biblical criticism.[91]

At times, "viewing the text in its historical context" requires knowledge of cultural, political, or economic realities that were extant at the time of the production of

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sense of judging historical veracity or naming precise authors, it is vaguely "historical" in that Barton works with texts from the past that need at least broad semantic and social contextualization. Form critics still locate "speaking subjects" for texts, but their subjects are historical generalities such as particular roles (i.e. a supplicant, a defendant) and not a singular individual (i.e. Ezra wrote this text). Moreover, form critics also focus on clarifying historical referents of the text, but they merely limit the referents in question to literary complexes and social situations (i.e. when discussing psalmic Gattungen, form critics are generally eager to discuss such things as cultic rituals).

90.   See, for example, the comparative work of Matthijs J. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets: A Comparative Study of the Earliest Stages of the Isaiah Tradition and the Neo-Assyrian Prophecies* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) and Göran Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda: Images of Enemies in the Book of Isaiah* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009).

91.   There may be dissonance between the presentation of a historical reality in the text and that historical reality itself, which leads to questions concerning the representation of the referent in the text. As Collins himself states, proponents of "traditional historical criticism" of the Bible "view the text as a reflection of historical situations." Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 19. The textual representation may be judged as more or less accurate; this concern for veracity accompanies an approach to biblical literature that seeks to establish the actual history of ancient Israel that lies "behind" the ideologically biased and perhaps fictive text.

the text but were not referents of the text *per se.* For example, knowledge of the scribal class in Jerusalem as it existed in the Second Temple period may help "contextualize" biblical texts that do not mention scribes or even writing at all.[92]

There are, to be sure, several problems that confront any biblical critic looking to "contextualize" a text. Most striking are the epistemological problems: how does one (1) identify the temporal and social location of the text's production, (2) determine what the text is actually referring to, and (3) discern which "background" details are important or necessary to read the text, and which are extraneous?[93]

Identifying the socio-cultural location of a biblical text is extremely difficult, primarily because ancient Israelites did not seem concerned with historical authorship. Authors did not sign their literary products anywhere in the ancient Near East, and later ascriptions of authorship to important ancients seemed to be a literary convention rather than a historical signature.[94] Mostly anonymous scribes produced, compiled, and redacted literary, legal, and religious texts alike. What is more, even general identifications of authorship are quite difficult, since traditional texts such as the Bible see the hands of many scribes in many different temporal and geographical

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92.   This sort of contextualization seeks to clarify the location of the text's production, as the interpreter may then be able to understand the text's referential function. For example, biblical scholars contextualize Daniel not on the basis of the text's explicit referents (i.e. the time of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem), but rather by reading the text as a product of scribes writing in much later contexts. See, for example, P. R. Davies, "Reading Daniel Sociologically," in *The Book of Daniel* (ed. A. S. van der Woude; Leuven: Brill, 1993).

93.   On this methodological question, B. Strawn, "Comparative Approaches: History, Theory, and the Image of God," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen* (eds. J. LeMon and K. H. Richards; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

94.   K. van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2007), 28-39.

locations. Some scholars use the criteria of literary cohesion to identify "J" as an author of the "J" document in the Pentateuch, but even if this unitary author existed, naming *when* or *where* is by necessity speculative.[95] Many such guesses rely on identifying either datable *real* referents[96] or datable *displaced* referents[97] in the text. Yet these identifications must remain epistemologically tenuous, since literary works do not *necessarily* refer to realities outside the text. As Sándor Hervey observes, "The analysts' formulation and reformulation of contexts of situation in such a way that they meet explanatory needs constitutes a form of begging the question."[98]

For example, it is as possible to write about a divine promise of land in a context of landlessness (i.e. Exile) as it is in the context of newly acquired land (i.e. Persian Period) or disputed land (i.e. the period of Seleucid and Ptolemaic competition for Palestine). Or, the book of Job could be seen as an Exilic text because it "relates" to the pain of the Exile, but it could equally be seen as a post-Exilic text because it "relates" to the pain of Persian-period disappointments or it could "relate" to the period of suffering under Neo-Assyrian domination, say post-701 BCE. Moreover, the suffering may not be societal; perhaps the book of Job "relates" to a personal episode

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95.　See, for example, J. Sasson, "On Choosing Models for Recreating Israelite Pre-Monarchic History," *JSOT* 21 (1981): 3-24.

96.　For example, the argument that camels were not domesticated in Bronze-age Palestine, so references to domesticated camels in Genesis need to have been written at a later time when this was true. See this argument in Wolfram von Soden, *The Ancient Orient: An Introduction to the Study of the Ancient Near East [Einführung in die Altorientalistik]* (trans. DG Schley; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 93fn.13.

97.　For example, because of the references to the promise of the land, the Pentateuch must have been compiled and this motif written into the text during a time when the need for land was great, such as the time of the Exile. See this argument throughout Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T & T Clark, 2005).

98.　Sándor G.J. Hervey, "Context, the Ghost in the Machine," in *The Problem of Context* (ed. R. Dilley; New York: Berghahn, 1999), 68.

of suffering, or a purely theological crisis.

The problem is simple: many biblical texts relate so easily to different societal, historical, and personal circumstances that it becomes nearly impossible to prove which circumstances are the "right" ones. Very likely, these texts' method of production itself caused this problem. Psalms, for example, has clearly been edited to make the psalms more easily appropriated by almost anyone.[99] And perhaps the lengthy and uneven editorial process that a text such as the Pentateuch underwent makes it all the more "relatable" to many, not just to one or even a delimitable few, contexts.

Even if one discerns the proper identity of a single speaking subject responsible for the text, another problem immediately arises: how does one discern which circumstances determine the text?[100] Which circumstances are simply white noise? Even before the observer enters the picture, we seem to face a difficult choice between an infinite regression of inclusion or an "arbitrary reductionism" of exclusion.[101]

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99.   Patrick D. Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 52-54.

100. The question is an important one, not easily dismissed by pragmatic approaches to biblical criticism. As Bronislaw Malinowski, famed linguist and anthropologist who coined the phrase "context of situation," remarked: "[U]tterance and situation are bound up inextricably with each other and the context of situation is indispensible for the understanding of the words...[A] word without linguistic context is a mere figment and stands for nothing by itself, so in the reality of a spoken living tongue, the utterance has no meaning except in its context of situation." Bronislaw Malinowski, "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages," in *The Meaning of Meaning; A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (eds. C. K. Ogden et al.; London: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1946), 150. If Malinowski is correct, then determining which elements determine the context is an important, and quite real, problem.

101.   Hervey sums up this difficult situation: "[I]f every object of description needs to be externally contextualized in order to be interpreted, then every context used in explaining some other object is, itself, an object that needs to be contextualized...and so

This conclusion renders problematic the *representational* or *referring* function of texts described above. Texts do not merely *refer* to an already-fully-given context; they relate particular linguistic and non-linguistic elements to each other, sometimes in novel ways. As Frederic Jameson writes, a text is a "simultaneous production and articulation of 'reality.'"[102] While the following chapter will examine the relationship between text and historical reality, here I will focus on the justification for defining the boundary between "original" and "reception" based on the historical context that surrounded the production of a given text.

James Barr struggles with this very issue in his vast work on biblical theology. In his introduction, Barr notes that much of the "biblical theology" movement seeks to read biblical texts "outside" of their "original contexts," which does not uncover theology "as it existed" at the time the text was produced. As Barr writes: "The term 'biblical theology' has clarity only when it is understood to mean theology as it existed or was thought or believed within the time, languages and cultures of the Bible itself."[103] Barr stresses the importance of maintaining the divide between the original context and later contexts that undergirds modern biblical scholarship:

> Only so can [biblical theology's] difference from doctrinal theology, from later interpretation, and from later views about the Bible be maintained. What was thought about the Bible by Irenaeus or by

on ad infinitum. The upshot of this argument is that the requirement for external contextualization leads to infinite regression. On the other hand, if every object of description needs only to be internally contextualized, relative to other objects in the same closed system, then objects of description and interpretation merely explain one another mutually and reciprocally. The conclusion from this argument is that a requirement for internal contextualization leads to inherent descriptive circularity." Hervey, "Context, the Ghost in the Machine," 70.

102. Frederick Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986* (1; London: Routledge, 1988), 141.

103. Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*, 4. See also Collins, "Is a Critical Biblical Theology Possible?"

> Calvin is thus something quite other than biblical theology as here
> understood. What we are looking for is a 'theology' that existed back
> there and then.[104]

Thus Irenaeus and Calvin are "later," and so "doctrinal," readers of biblical texts, whereas "biblical theology" is contained within the "biblical period" and is thus the proper referent of biblical texts. Barr then defines reception history as a focus on the "history of the effects of writings rather than on origins," a methodology that examines texts "after they were composed, after they were finalized."[105] At the moment of composition, finalization, "back there and then," lies the domain proper to biblical criticism. Just after that moment and also everything long after that moment constitutes the domain of reception history.

One problematic fact troubles this clean distinction: biblical texts are not utterances of individuals emanating at singular points in time for specific purposes but are, rather, fluid texts formed from amalgams of discrete traditions, genres, and materials that themselves are obscure or otherwise complex at the moments of their own origins. Knowing this, Barr hedges his concept of "back there and then":

> If it is asked how closely we define 'then,' e.g. whether we refer to the
> time of the events referred to, or to the time of the original writing of
> the texts, or to the time of their finalization, the answer is that any or
> all of these are included or may be so. All of these count, for my
> purpose, as 'biblical times and cultures.'[106]

Implicitly, Barr agrees that biblical scholars are aiming at a moving target: "back there and then" encompasses a wide variety of settings, a long scope of time, and a rather broad array of literary, linguistic and social contexts. With this hedge, Barr is

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104. Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*, 4.
105. Ibid., 447.
106. Ibid., 4.

at odds with his own comments on semantics: "back then and there" could encompass *both* of Sawyer's reconstructions of Amos 8:3, one describing the palace-girls and one foretelling laments in the temple. Multiplicity remains within the text, confusing what is "biblical" with the "doctrinal" within the "biblical" itself.

Another problem confronts Barr's division: there is no "back there and then" that can function as a discernible unit. Differences between pre-exilic, exilic, Persian, and Hellenistic periods cannot be synthesized into one block of "biblical cultures" that allows for a clear differentiation from later "doctrinal" readers. For example, were the Qumran interpreters "back then and there" practicing "doctrinal" or "biblical" theology with their pesharim?[107] If Qumran is *not* part of the "original context," how are Qumranic rewritings of biblical texts "doctrinal" while the similar act of compiling and rewriting various Pentateuchal sources in the Persian period is considered "biblical"?[108]

Ultimately, the question is this: how does one justify a separation between the variegated "back then" from everything else that has come after? Barr calls the time of textual "finalization" a "biblical time." Following Ulrich, Tov, and Talmon, this period of "finalization" lasted between 70 CE and 132 CE.[109] How is it that Irenaeus is so clearly something "else," more "here and now" than "back there and then," though he himself was born in 130 CE?

It is clear that Irenaeus was a Christian, and so was certainly reading the book

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107. See the various interpretations of pesharim in K. De Troyer and A. Lange, eds., *Reading the Present in the Qumran Library: The Perception of the Contemporary by Means of Scriptural Interpretations* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

108. Much recent redaction and source-critical work in the Pentateuch argues for a Persian period combination of P and non-P sources; see Dozeman and Schmid, *A Farewell to the Yahwist* and J. W. Watts, ed. *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2001).

109. See chapter 2 for a discussion of this topic.

of Daniel in a Christological sense that was not possible when the court stories of Daniel 2-6 were written, likely some four hundred or so years before Irenaeus' time.[110] Perhaps Barr could argue that Irenaeus' reading is "doctrinal" because it takes into account concepts that were not available in earlier contexts in which the text was written and read (and re-written). But the same could be said for Philo, or Josephus, or any of the various sectarian elements that composed late Second Temple Judaism, though that period qualifies as "a biblical culture" in Barr's sense. Most late Second Temple era Jews were closer in reading practices and theological presuppositions to Irenaeus than to the much more ancient author(s) of Daniel 2, let alone P or J.[111] Moreover, what would Barr say about the *Tannaim:* since they co-existed with the "finalization" of the biblical text, are they then "biblical," and are their beliefs in resurrection, strict monotheism, the oral Torah, and so on "biblical?"[112] Or, is Josephus' understanding of Daniel 8:11 as referring to the events of 70 CE a part of "biblical times?"[113] Perhaps in Barr's estimation these views are too late to be "biblical," but then, problematically, the stage of "finalization" would not itself be biblical.

Of course, one need not even leave proto-MT Daniel to feel the tension between "back there and then" and "here and now." Individuals unquestionably within the realm of "biblical cultures" read and re-wrote Daniel in ways unavailable to previ-

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110.   See Collins, *Daniel*, 38.

111.   See, for example, the helpful overview of Second Temple conceptions of monotheism, resurrection and messianism provided by Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice from the Exile to Yavneh* (London: Routledge, 2000), 210-231, 271-291.

112.   See, for example, the way biblical texts find new contexts and radically new interpretations in Isaac Kalimi, *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy: Studies in Scriptures in the Shadow of Internal and External Controversies* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

113.   Collins, *Daniel*, 85.

ous readers-writers of the book; Daniel 12:1-3 itself presents a theological thought, namely resurrection, that was not thought by the readers-writers of earlier elements within the book of Daniel.[114] It is likely that readers from the time of the composition of Daniel 12 would have found precedent for their ideas in earlier biblical literature that originally did not connote resurrection; for example, Daniel 12:1-3 draws on earlier texts such as Ezekiel 37 and Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Though when produced Ezekiel 37 and Isaiah 52-53 described the political revival of Israel, by the time of Daniel 12:1-3 they were read as a description of revivification of the dead.[115] How can such an "out of context" application nevertheless be "biblical?" If it is "biblical," then how does one exclude Philo for just this sort of "doctrinal" activity? In short, the contextual differences *internal to* "biblical times" are as extensive as differences between "late biblical times" and "early non-biblical times," casting into doubt the periodization itself.

Barr's framing is not objective: rather, by constructing a contradiction it seeks to protect an ideology of reading that valorizes the concept of origin over anything derivative. Where nothing quite original can be found, and where no clear hierarchy between different derivative forms or meanings presents itself, the historical-critical method posits its presuppositions as regulative ideals, bringing to life specters of "the original text" and "the original meaning" which thereafter haunt scholarship. Just as with semantic and literary structures, the "historical context" does not provide a clear or internally consistent justification for distinguishing between original meaning and receptions. Biblical texts such as Psalms reveal the openness of the "biblical period" to spandrel-like retroactive recontextualization that constitutes just

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114. See Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University, 2006), 181-200.

115. See Ibid.

the sort of activity that Barr, Barton and Collins are trying to dismiss from the practice of biblical criticism.

Strangely, the practice of "contextualization" in historical-critical biblical studies generally avoids an analysis of the concept of context itself. Though modern biblical scholarship has advanced our knowledge primarily *because* of its concern for historical contextualization of texts, "context" often functions as a catch-all term that at times references linguistic synchrony, at other times references literary conventions, and at other times references the world of historical events, including authors and their intentions. Perhaps the concept of "context" has eluded analysis because it is, to the observing scholar, a horizontal phenomenon: "like the horizon or peripheral vision, it by definition eludes direct examination; when examined directly, it is no longer peripheral."[116] In the next chapter, I will develop a concept of context that takes into account the production-history of the text, which by necessity will appeal more to the metaphor of the spandrel than to that of the anchor.

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116. E. A. Schegloff, "In Another Context," in *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon* (eds. A. Duranti and C. Goodwin; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 223 fn.4.

CHAPTER 5

Parts/Wholes, or Partings/Holes: Re-Thinking Context

> If I can caricature a little and say that the historian will always
> want to put [the text] back into its context (the tiger is out of the
> cage, the historian always wants it put back inside), then Derrida
> will always also be urging the question: "How did it escape in the
> first place?"

<div align="right">

GEOFFREY BENNINGTON

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1   INTRODUCTION: ON TIGERS AND CAGES

Within the world of biblical studies, it is quite common to find simple assertions that the proper meaning of a text is its meaning in its original context, namely the original author's intention. Michael Fox, for example, claims that his "main concern in approaching a text is essentially... to ascertain the meaning of the text, which is to say, the authorial intention."[1] For Fox, the meaning of a text is singular, and it is to be found only in the ancient context as the possession of the text's author. This is what John Collins means by his phrase "placing the Bible in its historical context," so that the interpreter can locate its meaning.[2]

Imagine biblical scholarship as a zoo in which all the textual animals keep es-

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1.   Michael V. Fox, "Job 38 and God's Rhetoric," *Semeia* 19 (1981): 53.
2.   John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Augsburg: Fortress, 2007), 13.

caping their contextual cages, and we scholarly zookeepers are kept very busy captur-

ing and returning them. So busy, in fact, that we have not often asked *why* it is that

the cages do not ever seem to fulfill their assumed function of containment. The truth

is that texts *always* leave their contexts, especially their putative original contexts,

and contexts never seem to do anything to stop them. Actually, the situation is even

worse: original contexts simply disappear into the mists of time while the texts romp

around in the present. Biblical scholars are not only busy catching escaped texts but

are even more busy (re)building their proper habitations from its fragments that re-

main. How *do* texts escape, in the first place? Is there something wrong with con-

texts, or texts, that prompts this escape?

No, there is nothing wrong with texts *or* contexts, since one of the defining

characteristics of "text" is its *durability*. That is, texts are things that remain readable

long after any act of inscription: from this characteristic, I conclude that the skill of

escaping contexts is not an anomaly or problem but in fact a central feature of texts.[3]

Escaping contexts is simply what texts do, and if they did not do this very thing, then

they would not be very useful at all. Letters, rituals, poems and laws are written pre-

cisely to be taken and read out of their original contexts, and in other contexts, un-

derstood in light of the contexts of the readers as well as the writers.

At times biblical scholarship focuses so much on the moment of the inscrip-

tion of a text that it overlooks the moment of reading, which generally occurs well

outside the context of inscription. Thus, the *very function of a text is to be readable

outside of its context of production*.[4] Texts are almost always read somewhere other

or at some time later than where or when they were written; thus, the practice of

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3. See Jaques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (trans. S. Weber; Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1988), 7-8.

4. Ibid., 12.

reading depends upon the ability of texts to function precisely *out of* any putative original context. As Bennington writes, "Reading [is] what opens texts up always beyond their historical specificity to the always possibly menacing prospect of unpredictable future reading."[5] Any historical specificity in texts is already disturbed by their opening towards a reader, any reader.

Some biblical texts thematize this uncageable contextual openness of reading. Deuteronomy 5:3, for example, claims:

> לא את־אבתינו כרת יהוה את־הברית הזאת כי אתנו אנחנו פה היום כלנו חיים
>
> YHWH did not make this covenant with our ancestors, but with us, ourselves, these ones here today, all of us who are living.

Taken literally within its diegetic world, Moses' statement is a bald-faced lie: Moses speaks these words to the "new generation," the people who most certainly were not present at the mountain. Here, Moses presents the covenant as something radically unanchored from its context of production, so unanchored that in fact it did not address those who first heard it. Rather, the true addressees of the covenant are "us," the ones "here today." And who are "we," and when is "today"? Perhaps one could claim that the true addressees are those characters in the text, the new generation poised to take possession of the land. Yet Deuteronomy 5:1-5 may have been written during the period of the exile, and if so the true addressees were the rhetorical targets of the Deuteronomists– namely, the exilic community, poised to return to the land.[6] And yet: the hortatory style of Deuteronomy seems designed not merely to address the one generation living during the writing of the book, but as Deuteronomy

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5.   Geoffrey Bennington, "Derrida's 'Eighteenth Century,'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40 (2007): 392.

6.   See Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 128-32.

4:9 says, "to your children, and your children's children" (לבניך ולבני בניך; cf. Deut 4:10, 25; 6:2, 7, 20-21; 11:19-21).

Deuteronomy's reliance on deictics, also called indicators or indexicals (e.g. *here, now, this, you, us*) is telling in this regard. Indicators are quite unusual since they have no constant referent; what is the meaning of "I" except, as Emile Benveniste writes, "the person who is uttering the present instance of discourse containing I?"[7] Instead of providing concepts, indicators "provide the instrument of a conversion that one could call the conversion of language into discourse."[8] Indicators allow for the reappropriation of language itself, and Deuteronomy exploits this feature of language in order to open itself up to re appropriation beyond the borders of any named addressee, beyond the borders of any context, cage, or harbor. In the case of Deuteronomy 5:3, indicators simply pile up in an ungrammatical mess, comprising the entire second half of the verse (אתנו אנחנו אלה פה היום כלנו חיים). To what do these indicators refer? To nobody in particular– and thus precisely to anybody who reads them, since this hortatory function seeks to preach to unknown generations yet to come. Emphatically, Deuteronomy shows us, whoever "us" might be, that some textual tigers were never meant to be held in contextual cages.

In order to re-think the concept of the "original context," I put forward three pairs of concepts that function in current biblical criticism to explain and support the practice of "reading the text in its context." These pairs are (1) text and context, (2) author and audience, and (3) meaning and significance. A close look at these concepts will show that the historical-critical scholar rightfully asks questions about contexts, authors, meaning, and history. But when these concepts are asked to play the

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7.   Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics* (trans. M. E. Meek; Coral Gables: Univeristy of Miami, 1971), 218.

8.   Ibid., 220.

part of the zookeeper– that is, when scholars claim that *only* authorial intentions are meanings, or that texts can *only* be read within one particular context– then these concepts obscure more than they reveal. Choosing to read a text as one imagines its author understood it, or choosing to read a text as a particular recipient might have understood it, is a *contingent,* not a *necessary,* choice.

2   TEXT AND CONTEXT: A DISJUNCTIVE SYNTHESIS?

While scholars use the term "context" in various ways, the general concept presupposes a distinction between a focal point and the environment surrounding the focal point.[9] In other words, "context" re-presents the familiar problem of parts and wholes, or how individual elements relate to larger systems.[10] As it is used in biblical studies, "context" implies that the identity, function, and meaning of an individual element of a system is ambiguous unless it is considered in light of the environment of which it is a part.[11]

Literary contextualization asks how a given passage hangs together with the rest of the text of which it is a part. Assumed is this: the meaning of particular parts of a text must be comprehensible in light of the other parts of the text and in light of the text as a whole.[12] Context, understood as the network of *circumstances* surround-

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9.   A. Fetzer, *Recontextualizing Context: Grammaticality Meets Appropriateness* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004), 3. For an historical overview of the concept of context as it applies to the practice of interpreting texts, see R. M. Dilley, "The Problem of Context in Social and Cultural Anthropology," *Language & Communication* 22 (2002): 437-456, and P Burke, "Context in Context," *Common Knowledge* 8 (2002): 152-177.

10.   See my comments on the problem of particulars and universals in chapter 3.

11.   Burke, "Context in Context," 153.

ing and producing an utterance, may take into account the *macrocontext* of broad categories such as the language in which the utterance is uttered, the general cultural significations that may determine the meaning of the text, or the social configuration of political and social networks extant at the time of the utterance. On the other hand, *circumstances* can also include *microcontextual* data such as *paralanguage* (gestures, intonation, expressions, and the like in speech, or font choice or formatting in a printed text), the *local situation* (the facets of the objects and people in the immediate vicinity of the utterance), any relevant *intertexts* (texts or utterances which impinge upon the given text or utterance, such as what-was-just-said or even the genre of the utterance), and so on. Furthermore, inquiry into the particular thoughts or intentions of a writer as they relate to a written text developed as another facet of the *circumstantial* context.[13] Some scholars search for "actual" intentions, or the thought process of the historical author, while others search for the intention as represented in the text regardless of the psychological process of the author.[14]

In all of these instances, scholars attempt to locate an utterance within larger fields of significance, or contexts, known technically as historical-semantic synchronic structures. Even divergent theories of contextualization overlap in their concern for the state of affairs at the moment of the utterance and the conviction that a proper reconstruction of this state of affairs will reduce the number of valid meanings

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12.   One may find this as a staple of hermeneutical thought from Schliermacher through Dilthey to Gadamer and Ricouer. See Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (trans. J Weinsheimer; New Haven: Yale University, 1997), 91-120.

13.   See G. Cook, *Applied Linguistics* (Oxford Introduction to Language Study Series; Oxford: Oxford University, 2003), 49-59.

14.   Eco notes the difference between *intentio auctoris* and *intentio operis,* the intentions of a historical author or of the "text itself." See Umberto Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (trans. S. Collini; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 25.

that an utterance may have.[15]

My counter-argument will begin with the notion of context itself and then move to examine the role of text within context. First, I claim that historical contexts themselves do not resemble a system of parts that neatly fit together in pre-determined ways, forming a unified whole. Rather, historical contexts exhibit the odd characteristic of internal multiplicity even at the moment of their historical occurrence. Then, I will show that, even if historical contexts are objectively determinable, a problem remains: namely, texts cannot simply be tied to one context, since it is their very nature to pass between contexts. Finally, I turn to biblical texts, which exemplify this textual characteristic of mobility.

2.1   *Contexts are Open, Not Closed*

I begin my critique of "context" with a commonplace argument: every context is impossible to reconstruct in its totality. In general, biblical scholars frame this as an epistemological issue: one cannot know everything there is to know about the ancient context, since the historical record remains fragmentary, and extant ancient texts

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15.   Though they share several basic commitments, forms of the concept of context differ widely in practice. For example, J. L. Austin and Searle have argued that the intention of the speaker of an utterance is of utmost importance to its meaning and effect, but that the broader situational context matters as well. See J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1962) and J. R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1970). In contrast, E. D. Hirsch distances himself from the psychologism implicit in Austin and Searle's work, focusing more intently upon the synchronic state of the language at the time of production, the generic categories available at that time, and the particular linguistic construction of the utterance as the main contextual constraints on meaning. See E. D. Hirsch, "Objective Interpretation," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 75 (1960): 463, 470-75.

present only biased snapshots.[16] Yet these critiques assume that the assumption that an actual past context empirically exists, albeit beyond the limits of reconstructive efforts.

However, even the most circumspect scholars cannot ignore an important aspect of the concept of context: namely, that reconstructing a context also requires creating a context. As systems-theoreticians G. Spencer-Brown and Niklas Luhmann have convincingly shown, the act of drawing distinctions, of delimitation and articulation, must precede any act of indication, description, or analysis.[17] For example, it is only by externally articulating a "Second Temple period" – a variegated period to say the least – that one can organize a study of it. Once delimited, scholars must determine what data inside the frame counts as "signal," and what is "noise." As Howard Eilberg-Schwartz argues,

> Cultural wholes are complex and thus there are numerous ways in which the interactions among cultural elements can be construed. Since it is impossible to see everything as related to everything else, the interpreter is forced to make a decision as to which elements in the system are related.[18]

In other words, contexts do not come prepackaged; time flows without presenting natural self-demarcations, and vague systems such as cultures, literary traditions,

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16.   See M. Nissinen, "Reflections on the 'Historical-Critical' Method: Historical Criticism and Critical Historicism," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen* (eds. J. LeMon and K. H. Richards; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009). for an overview of these concerns.

17.   As G. Spencer-Brown writes, "We cannot make an indication without drawing a distinction." *Laws of Form* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 1. Luhmann and Spencer-Brown helpfully point out is the radical contingency of distinctions and their incommensurability when compared. See N. Luhmann, "Kultur Als Historischer Begriff," in *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik: Studien zur Wissenssoziologie der modernen Gesellschaft* (4; Frankfurt am Main: Surhkamp, 1995), 40-47.

18.   H. Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University,1990), 95.

languages, and historical events cannot be simply "presented" since they exist nowhere as such.

Pressing this point further, I argue that even at the time of an event's occurrence, the identity and significance of any of its elements or relations are *underdetermined.* Whereas an overdetermined state occurs when there are multiple, overlapping contextual causes for a particular identifiable event, "underdetermination" signifies an event or context that may be explained in various convincing, yet irreducibly conflicting, ways. Others, including linguists and philosophers have used the term "underdetermination" to connote a state, especially of language, that lacks a clearly determinate context.[19] Through the famous "Gavagai" example, many readers will be familiar with Quine's theory of the "indeterminacy of translation," which presents an ontological notion of underdeterminacy.[20] According to Quine there will never be a perfect translation, since there can always be multiple adequate transla-

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19.   See: R. N. Boyd, "The Current Status of Scientific Realism," in *Scientific Realism* (ed. J. Leplin; Berkeley: University of California, 1984), 41-42.

20.   WVO Quine, Word and Object (Cambridge: MIT, 1960), 26-80. I am employing the concept in a manner similar to Quine, yet I follow Bennington's caveat concerning the "stimulus" itself. See Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, Jacques Derrida (trans. G. Bennington; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 119-20: "[W]e can say that the self-identity of the "stimulus" in its meaning, before we have to decide, in Quine's example, whether " Gavagai" is to be translated as "passing rabbit" or "rabbit passage," must presuppose the possibility of repetition, and therefore the possibility of an ideality, and therefore also of differences, traces, and différance, which alone could justify the assumption that two interlocutors (native and ethnographer in the fable of radical translation) receive the same "stimulus," marked by the deictic in the ethnographer's question, "What do you call that?" Whether we try to secure it on the side of the subject or on that of the object, the passage to language presupposes not a prior meaning that signs would then only have to express, but a certain continuity that we are here calling "the same" (and which is none other than différance.) ...In referring to a stimulus or a self-presence of the subject, we are not finally referring to a fundamental presence with respect to who we might then comfortably envisage all the ambiguity one might wish, but still to a network of traces."

tions that cannot be adjudicated. Quine also called this state "partially determined" or "indeterminately determined" instead of underdetermined. While Quine seems to assume an objective, determined stimulus, and thus only assigns indeterminacy to the language system which seeks to refer to it, philosopher Gilles Deleuze preferred to speak of "determinable" yet undetermined multiplicities.[21] According to Deleuze, the stimulus *itself* may be determined in conflicting ways, yet without mis-representing it. That is, events and stimuli are underdetermined, not merely human language.

This is not to say that elements and their relations are completely open to any determination imaginable. On the contrary, as Eilberg-Schwartz argues, the parts of a context can always play multiple roles– but not *just any* role– within the context itself. Contexts are not pre-given wholes like a puzzle in which every piece has only one place to fit within the larger picture. Rather, contexts more closely resemble a set of building materials in which the contours of each element allow for certain connections, but not others. These structural contours allow for a multiplicity of constructions that are not identical, but each exhibit a certain stability. One of the consequences of this line of thought is that there is no whole context, since there is no pre-given determination of the parts.[22]

Consider a hypothetical element, such as a particular American flag, within a hypothetical context, such as the courtyard of a government building in the spring of 2003. Even at the moment of that flag's full historical "contextuality," its identity and meaning are underdetermined; is it a symbol of freedom and peace, or hegemonic dominance and empire, or a meaningless fixture, or a meeting place, or a pretty pat-

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21.   See Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (trans. M. Lester and C. Stivale, ed. C. Boundas; New York: Columbia University,1990), 100-01.

22.   See Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2002), 9-41. DeLanda gives a thorough analysis of the problem of manifolds, which comes to this very conclusion.

tern, or a kitschy ironic gesture? Also underdetermined are its references (does it connote the institution of the military, or the American people as a whole, or the notion of 'freedom,' or radicals protesting war?) and relations (who owns it, who wants it, who takes care of it, who will make a fuss about its presence or use, who ignores it?).[23] Any historical figure who attempts to determine the meaning and relations of that flag at a particular moment in time - say, a student protesting a contemporary war in front of it– does not and cannot determine the "essence" of the flag– since there is no unchanging essence that determines it for all contexts and all observers. Instead, the flag always remains open to counter-determinations at that precise moment; the flag is determined for that protestor, but the flag remains open for others. Multiple parties may symbolically determine that flag simultaneously in disjunctive manners. The significance of the flag is thus metastable, allowing for alternate determinations, none of which are central or superior to the others. What those parties as

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23.   Gilles Deleuze also offers the helpful example of a battle, always "actualized in diverse manners at once," since different participants and observers will "grasp it at a different level of actualization within its variable present." That is, the battle is completely different for the general and the private, the hiding child and the stray dog, and yet it *is* the same thing ("the battle") even though there is no point from which to see the "real" battle or to sum the battle up in perfect objectivity. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 100-01. James WIlliams contemplates Deleuze's use of a battle for his example: "This is not controversial if it is taken as the common view that many different perspectives exist on any given battle, but this is not Deleuze's lesson. He is not giving us a theory of interpretation where different standpoints cannot be reduced to one another and where a complete interpretation faces the challenge of bringing together an open-ended set of incommensurable perspectives without reducing them to one another. Instead, Deleuze asks himself... What does this condition imply for the perspectives, for the battle and for all other conditioned actual things? We do not have a number of perspectives on an actual battle, but rather a virtual batle as sense and event rendered through those perspectives and the illusion of the one true actual conflict in the battlefield." James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Logic of Sense: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2008), 96-97. Deleuze's concept of the "virtual" will be explored in more detail in chapter six.

well as any scholarly observers or (re)constructors lack is a clearly objective, already-given determination of that flag.[24] Moreover, the flag is only one element of this framed context; every other element within that same context lacks a definitive determination, as well. Not only is the scholar unable to ascend to a transcendental position from which to objectively adjudicate such a dispute: more importantly, there *is no such position,* since the truth of the event is the immanent dispute over what is essentially open to dispute. In other words, there is no single "real meaning" or one "real set of relations" lurking behind–or defining from above–any context or any element in a context.[25]

As an example of a context that presents several incompatible but nonetheless irreducible determinations, let us look at the conflicts within Jerusalem between 168-164 BCE. When scholars reconstruct this context, they must refer primarily to the texts that describe it. A number of Jewish writings from this time period, including the Enochic *Animal Apocalypse* and the *Apocalypse of Weeks* as well as Daniel 7-12, each take a distinctive perspective on the conflict.[26] Moreover, several later Jewish

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24.   See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (trans. B. Massumi; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987), 7-8.

25.   Recent historiographical theorists have noted that historians must make determinations and thus "emplot" relations is a manner that is possible, but that cannot exclude all other possible emplotments. But "emplotment" is not limited to historians: the historical actors themselves must emplot their world, since the world does not present ready-made plots. See Carol A. Newsom, "Rhyme and Reason: The Historical Resumé in Israelite and Early Jewish Thought," in *Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes* (eds. B. Kelle and M. B. Moore; 446; London: T&T Clark, 2006) and S Weitzman, "Plotting Antiochus's Persecution," *JBL* 123 (2004): 219-234 for recent discussions of emplotment within biblical scholarship.

26.   Also note the *Testament of Moses,* Judith, Qumran's *pesher Habakkuk,* and possibly other Qumranic texts, such as 4QHistorical Text (= 4Q248), 4QpapPesudo-Ezekiel[e] (=4Q391), 4Q246 , and possibly *pesher Nahum.* See D. Dimant and J. Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4: Parabiblical Texts, Pseudo-prophetic Texts* (DJD 30; Oxford:

historiographical works, such as 1-2 Maccabees and the works of Josephus, also determine the events differently, as do some later Greek and Roman historians such as Diodorus and Tacitus.[27] While these various sources agree on the broad outlines of the conflict, several irreducible historical problems remain, most notably the strange anomaly of Antiochus IV's religious persecution.[28]

A close look at the various sources does not demonstrate that the historiographical problems rise merely from garbled source material or historiographical errors; rather, it becomes clear that at least several factions understand the same ele-

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Clarendon, 2001), 55-57, 112-16, 208-12, 228-32; S. L. Berrin, *The Pesher Nahum Scroll from Qumran: An Exegetical Study of 4Q169* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 100; H. Eshel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 13-29; D. J. Harrington, *The Maccabean Revolt: Anatomy of a Biblical Revolution* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988).

27.   Josephus' account may be found in *Ant* 12.237-264. For text and translation of Diodorus's account, see M. Stern, "Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism" Jerusalem, 1974).

28.   For overviews of scholarly positions concerning Antiochus IV's persecution, see Eric Gruen, "Hellenism and Persection: Antiochus IV and the Jews," in *Hellenistic History and Culture* (ed. P. Green; Hellenistic Culture and Society 9; Berkeley: University of California, 1993); D. Schwartz, "Antiochus IV Epiphanes in Jerusalem," in *Historical Perspectives: From the Hasmoneans to Bar Kokhba in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Fourth International Symposium of the Orion Center, 27-31 January 1999* (eds. D. Goodblatt et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2001); Weitzman, "Plotting Antiochus's Persecution," 219-22. For varying attempts to reconstruct the Seleucid perspective, see Eric Gruen, "Seleucid Royal Ideology," *SBLSP* 38 (1999): 24-53; E. R. Bevan, *The House of Seleucus* (London: Edward Arnold, 1902), 2:153; K. Bringmann, *Hellenistische Reform und Religionsverfolgung in Judäa: Eine Untersuchung zur jüdisch-hellenistichen Geschichte (175-163 v. Chr.)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 111-40. For reconstructions of various Jewish perspectives, see E. J. Bickerman, *The God of the Maccabees: Studies on the Meaning and Origin of the Maccabean Revolt* (SJLA 32; trans. H. Moehring; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 61-62, 76-92; A. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (trans. S. Applebaum; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1961), 186-203; Seth Schwartz, "Israel and the Nations Roundabout: I Maccabees and the Hasmonean Expansion," *JJS* 42 (1991): 16-38.

ments and relations in contradictory ways. Indeed, Bickermann argues that at least four very different versions of the persecution exist:[29] (1) pro-Seleucid sources argue that Antiochus IV merely stopped in Jerusalem to put down a local rebellion, while (2) anti-Jewish sources argue that Antiochus IV was provoked only by the particularism of the Jews.[30] Meanwhile, (3) Jewish eyewitnesses such as the author-redactors of Daniel 8-12 place the full blame on Antiochus IV and hardly mention intra-Jewish or Jewish-Hellenistic conflict,[31] while (4) 1 Maccabees stresses the Jewish-Greek divide as the source of the conflict, and 2 Maccabees focuses more on intra-Jewish conflict as the source of the persecution.[32] So as Bickermann argues, one event – such as the rededication of the Jerusalem temple to Zeus Olympios in 167 BCE – was determined in several conflicting ways by the various groups of Hellenistic Jews, Jews resisting Hellenization, Seleucid authorities, and Seleucid-Syrian soldiers stationed in Jerusalem.[33]

Historians often compare these accounts in order to re-create what "really happened." While this is often a very productive endeavor (even if it cannot be con-

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29.   One may disagree with Bickermann's particular reconstructions of these perspectives, but it seems beyond question that several factions understood this event in mutually incompatible ways.

30.   Bickerman, *God of the Maccabees*, 9-19.

31.   John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 65.

32.   For an overview of the rhetorical approaches of these texts, see I. Gafni, "Josephus and 1 Maccabees," in *Josephus, the Bible, and History* (eds. J. L. Feldman and G. Hata; Detroit: Wayne State, 1989), 116-31; R. Doran, *Temple Propaganda: The Purpose and Character of 2 Maccabees* (CBQMS 12; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981).

33.   Bickermann suggests that the rededication of a temple to Zeus Olympios could be seen as a Greek synchonistic practice. For non-Hellenistic and likely some pro-Hellenistic Jews, this act was understood to *be* and *signify* something quite different. Bickerman, *God of the Maccabees*.

clusive), it is very likely that any particular participant in these events would not recognize the bare facts of the matter as "what really happened." Each group determined their situation through the lenses of different symbolic worlds.[34] While the Seleucids and Jews participated in different general symbolic worlds, various subgroups ramified these differences. What is more, any individual provides a particular perspective within his or her sub-group's symbolic world. Would a completely objective recreation of the true events of 168 BCE fit cleanly into any single, or even communal, perspective on the events? In short, the bare, underdetermined facts of what happened were not real for anybody living at the time.

Of course, something really did happen in Jerusalem in 167 BCE, but the fundamental identity of those acts was open to different determinations. Were the actions taken in the Jerusalem temple a sacrifice or a desecration? If one offers an answer, by what authority does one derive that answer? Any answer concedes something to one committed viewpoint over another;[35] thus, an ontology of Antiochus' act only emerges once a side has been taken. If one attempts to describe events in their very underdetermined nature (perhaps by simply saying "a man slaughtered an animal in a building") one does anything but reconstruct a context or contextualize a text.

A given scholar could attempt to describe each point of view faithfully. That

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34. On the concept of "symbolic worlds," see Carol A. Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space: Constructing Identity and Community at Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1-22, 92-95. Cited therein is the helpful work, D. Holland et al., *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2001).

35. I am not claiming that Antiochus and the Maccabees are "both right," but that the means of adjudicating their "rightness" does not lie outside one of these viewpoints, but only within them. See N. Luhmann, *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity* (trans. J. O'Neill et. al.; Palo Alto: Stanford University, 2002), 11-18.

scholar would not then create a "monologic" text, or a propositionally unified account of an affair enunciated in one sustained voice. Rather, that scholar would be forced to write a "dialogic" account of the event, representing "the point of intersection of several unmerged voices"[36] that appears within "a concrete event made up of organized human orientations and voices."[37] A dialogic text does not provide an overarching point of view that sublates various perspectives or reveals the universal truth of the situation that was hidden from all embedded perspectives. On the contrary, a dialogic representation merely juxtaposes perspectives, itself limited to an immanent perspective and thus not able to ascend to a position of objective transcendence. In the same way that biblical scholars point to the variegated claims of biblical texts to disprove "reductionist" attempts to find a "center" to the theologies of biblical texts or themes or referents that "unite" them, the search for a natural "center" of a context that would allow for an objective determination of all other elements in the context is doomed from the start. As Derrida argues, "there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchorage," since no observer can claim the authority to impose his or her center as necessary for all other observers.[38]

This unfinalizable dialogism does not offer a bridge of mutual understanding between various conflicting spaces. Rather, it presents these perspectival differences as constitutive of true reality rather than as mere distortions of it. Without question, there can be historical distortions: 1 Maccabees, for example, clearly reflects a pro-Hasmonean bias. This bias certainly alters the way it tells its story, even perhaps to

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36. Carol A. Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth," *The Journal of Religion* 76 (1996): 5.

37. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (trans. C. Emerson; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984), 93.

38. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (trans. S. Weber; Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1988), 12.

the point of deliberately altering information by ignoring the rebellion of 168 BCE.[39]

But "behind" all the ideological distortions, I am arguing, there is no purely objective, natural account that may allow for a dismissal of all perspectives as merely distortions themselves.

It is not historically accurate to say that Antiochus IV *either* sponsored an 'abomination' (שקוצים, Dan 9:27) *or* called for a proper sacrifice. On the contrary, Antiochus IV sponsored an abomination, *and* he called for a proper sacrifice. Down the middle of this single historical event runs a crack that divides the event from its proper significance, and multiplies its contextual possibilities. In this way, contexts actually preserve the differences and tensions between perspectival positions instead of resolving them; Gilles Deleuze calls this tension a space of "disjunctive synthesis."[40] As Michel Foucault writes, "History appears then not as a great continuity underneath an apparent discontinuity, but as a tangle of superimposed discontinuities."[41] If any context is an underdetermined multiplicity, and if all texts are in some way dependent on their contexts for meaning, then this requires historians to admit that texts are themselves underdetermined in their meaning. At the moment of a text's initial circulation no less than at the present moment, it exists underdeter-

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39.   Schwartz, "Antiochus IV Epiphanes in Jerusalem," 57.

40.   As Gilles Deleuze writes: "It is not at all a question of different points of view on one story supposedly the same; for points of view would still be submitted to a rule of convergence. It is rather a question of different and divergent stories, as if an absolutely distinct landscape corresponded to each point of view." Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense,* 260. Also: "[The] point of view is opened onto a divergence which it affirms: another town corresponds to each point of view, each point of view is another town, the towns are linked only by their distance and resonate only through the divergence of their series, their houses and their streets. There is always another town within the town." Ibid., 174.

41.   Michel Foucault, "Return to History," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault* (ed. J. D. Fabion; 2; New York: New Press, 1998), 429.

mined. Thus the text is always able to be read in different ways by the various disjunctive points of view already comprising its context.

As a result, "contextualizing a text" should include the practice of mapping a text's own "disjunctive synthesis" of various perspectives. One has to ask, what was Daniel 7-12 in a Seleucid context, what was it in the context of the *maśkîlîm,* and would it have been the "same thing" to the Hellenizers? It matters little if we have historical evidence of Seleucids ever reading it. Daniel 7-12 was and is a text, and as such it existed in the late Second Temple period as something that could have been read by Seleucids, Hellenizers, and others. Its openness to reading *constituted* part of the context. Daniel 7-12 is dialogic not only if it represents different perspectives within itself: it is dialogic since it *performs* dialogism, as it has proven time and time again.

Methodologically, the upshot of this conclusion is that:

(a) Scholars create contexts by choosing their boundaries, selecting "important" elements, and interpreting them, and must take responsibility for doing so. Furthermore, scholars must respect that there are plausible justifications for drawing the lines differently. There is no scholarship without drawing lines, but there are no natural, self-justifying lines to simply respect.

(b) Even after drawing lines, reading a text "in its historical context" does not naturally lead to the discovery of "an original meaning," since the originating context is always already a multiplicity, not a unity. Contextualization must be at least open to the multiple points of view present in any context of utterance. As a result, one can read a biblical text from multiple perspectives and still be "within" the context of production, however narrowly that context is drawn. This conclusion begins to complicate any proposed division between "the original meaning" and "reception" that would name the "original context" as the bearer of "original meaning" and thus ap-

portion "receptions" to "later contexts." Reception history, or the study of things other than the original text in its original context, may be all that has ever existed.

2.2 *The Inside of a Context Must Already be on its Outside*

So we have established that contexts are not pre-given wholes. Rather, contexts must be determined by the individuals and groups living within them just as they may later be determined by the scholars who study them. Thus, when historians place a text back into its context of production, there are always already multiple irreconcilable points of view from which to read it and determine its meaning.

However, this essentially synchronic argument leaves untouched the temporal, diachronic dimension of contexts. As Voloshinov points out: "Contexts do not stand side by side in a row, as if unaware of one another, but are in a state of constant tension, or incessant interaction and conflict."[42] In other words, even if every context were to exist as a pre-given, already-interpreted and determined whole, history cannot be understood as a succession of contexts objectively separated from one another, each containing a decodable meaning and self-determinate content. Instead, every moment requires traces of other past and now absent moments for its very identity.[43]

Speaking of the "elements" within a context assumes that these elements already have some intrinsic identity apart from their relations. For example, in the

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42.   V. N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (trans. L. Matejka and I. R. Tuknik; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1986), 80.

43.   The presentation that follows rehearses the basic argument in part I of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* concerning the "trace structure." For an introduction to this material, see Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, 15-83.

context of Jerusalem in 167 BCE, one could recognize as either sacrifices or abominations (or perhaps other things) the Seleucid sacrifices/abominations at the Jerusalem Temple. Perhaps these interpretive possibilities existed because the acts in question looked and functioned much like sacrifices familiar to Seleucids or Syrians, while they were vastly different from the sacrifices familiar to Jews. Perhaps it is appropriate to claim that each act of sacrifice "cited" previous sacrifices, copied them up to a point, and as such repeated them with local differences. In order to understand the local Jerusalem cult, one must look to other cults as well. Thus, the interpretability of those acts depended upon their degree of difference from previous acts, and confusion sets in when Jews and Seleucids or Syrians interpret the same act by means of different sets of previous comparable acts.

> One recalls the famous lines from Epictetus:
>
>> This is the conflict between Jews and Syrians and Egyptians and Romans, not over the question whether holiness should be put before everything else... but whether the particular act of eating swine's flesh is holy or unholy.[44]

The debate about the identity of the particular act– that is, what does it mean to eat swine flesh– can only be presented with reference to the historical traditions of those communities.[45] In other words, the identity of the sacrifice/abomination depended upon its relations to past events that lie outside of the immediate context of 167 BCE. The traces of these past events, their ghostly presence, allowed individuals to recognize and interpret their present.[46] By this same logic, the great problem surrounding Antiochus' acts is the total lack of continuity between the persecution of Jews and the

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44. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.22.4c.

45. See the discussion in Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes towards the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1997) 66-81.

46. This phenomenon, which Derrida has termed the "trace structure," is explained in more detail in Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, 15-83.

official Seleucid position of general religious tolerance.[47] This example demonstrates that the elements of a context are each composed of a network of referrals to other elements of other contexts. As such, the dimension of time enters into our discussion of context.

If every moment requires traces of other past and now absent moments for its very identity, then the act of framing must allow for porous frames; the moment of a speech-act relies upon the super-temporal entity that Saussure dubbed *la langue* as well as the unframeable entity of "culture" and elements from other historical moments– past conversations, for example– that are required for anything like "meaning" to occur within the speech-act. In the words of historian David Harlan, the relevant context for an utterance "may include all of... civilization. And more."[48] In short, the identity and meaning of events and contexts are dependent upon past events and contexts, and as such "contextualizing a text" may require intertextual relations that the moment itself lacks. As such, any element of a context's meaning cannot be determinate strictly within the temporal bounds of its context.

The past is not alone in its strange relationship with the present: the future troubles the present, as well. Events are notoriously difficult to understand as they unfold; take the fall of the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe, for example. The situation was largely undeterminable, and historians kept cautioning that we would have to

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47. See Eric Gruen, "Hellenism and Persection," in *Hellenistic History and Culture* (ed. P. Green; Hellenistic Culture and Society 9; Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 238, 256, 264. Gruen notes on page 255 that some historians have sought to render the persecution interpretable by comparing it to a previous persecution of the Bacchanalian cult in Rome, which Antiochus had witnessed firsthand. This explanation, too, requires prior events to determine the event. One might claim that all historical explanations follow this same pattern of recognition.

48. David Harlan, "Intellectual History and the Return of Literature," *American Historical Review* 94 (1989): 595.

"wait and see" what had actually happened, or whether anything actually had.[49] Rather than introduce a determinable identity into the world, the event of the fall of the Berlin Wall instead added tremendous uncertainty to the political situation.[50] At its moment of coming-into-being, the situation was unbelievably fluid, impossible to comprehend. Even after much time had passed, what had actually occurred could have been drastically re-evaluated depending on later events: was it a failed revolt, or a moment of madness, or a peaceful demonstration, or a shift in the world order itself? It is hard to say if even now, more than twenty years later, we yet know what the fall of the Berlin wall actually *was*. Statements of identity and meaning can be provisionally formulated, even in fairly stable ways, but such accounts always carry the qualification that the future may destabilize them. The "full," unquestionable meaning must be continually deferred, theoretically to the point at which nothing more may happen to destabilize it.[51] One recalls the likely apocryphal story of Zhou Enlai's reply to Henry Kissinger when asked of the significance of the French Revolution: "It's too soon to tell."

In other words, the identity and meaning of events and contexts are dependent upon future events and contexts. Freud called after-the-fact restructuration *Nachträglichkeit*, translated variously as "deferred action," "retroaction," or "ex post facto action."[52] Meaning of any sort is thus a retrospective effect; even an author's meaning is often something that emerges during or even following, not only preced-

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49.   See, for example, R. O. Keohane et al., eds. *After the Cold War: International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe, 1989-1991* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1993), 384.

50.   Ibid.

51.   Here we see Derrida's famous use of both "defer" and "differ" in his neologism *différance*. See Jacques Derrida, "Différence," in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982).

52.   See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, 64.

ing, the act of writing. In this way, history is never a closed book.[53] The meaning of a context is often only found outside of that context, "out of context" itself, past and future.[54] As 1-2 Maccabees show, the meaning and identity of Antiochus IV's actions were open for later generations to re-think, and they themselves could not close the case. Since "the end" has not yet come, there is no possibility for summing up the identity or meaning of any event, and as such the Whole *does not exist as a whole*.[55] No context is closed; all are structurally open, and constitutively heterogenous.

Thus, if a scholar claims that the original context fixes the original meaning of a text, one may respond that the original context is neither original (since after all it derives its identity from the past), and furthermore the context is always not-yet determined (since its meaning is open to the future in general). As such, contextualiza-

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53.   Taking a view of history or reading a historical text from an angle not even available at the time of the event may open a set of possibilities that were possible, contained in the historical moment, but not actualized until the advent of a new way to organize the event. History is not simply an objective attempt to represent the past: history may realize obscured possibilities of the past in order to transform the past itself.

54.   Along the same lines, Walter Benjamin writes about revolution as repetition in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History": a revolution realizes the obscured possibilities of the past, because the past is not a closed set of facts but rather an open possibility. See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* (ed. H. Arendt, trans. H. Zohn; New York: Schocken, 1969), 253-64. This can be seen clearly by the examples of individuals who become heroes after their death, such as saints, who only "become what they really are" (a saint) after the fact of their life, or in the example of a failure that only later is discovered to harbor the potential for great success, as in the after-the-fact invention of vulcanized rubber. P. Le Couteur and J. Burreson, *Napoleon's Buttons: How 17 Molecules Changed History* (New York: Tarcher, 2003), 149.

55.   This statement, expounded in Luhmann, *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity*, 11-18, may be demonstrated formally by means of set theory, as shown in Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (trans. O. Feltham; London: Continuum, 2005), 23-27. Also see Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds* (trans. A. Toscano; London: Continuum, 2009), 109-13.

tion cannot simplify the text or determine it; contextualization puts the text into a complex set of relations between temporally underdetermined elements, and thus multiplies its own possibilities. Independent of an observer's particular perspective, contexts are neither original nor determined.

2.3   Texts as Exemplars of Contextual Mobility

Up to this point, I have highlighted the complexity of "the historical context." As for texts, or that which biblical scholars try to "put in" a historical context, they are peculiarly difficult things to contextualize. This difficulty, I claim, is constitutive of textuality itself, because a text is always, from the start, a recontextualization of other text. That is, the elements of any specific text – the words, phrases, motifs, formal arrangements, and so on – are cited from other contexts previous to the "original" context of enunciation. As Bakhtin argues, every text is composed of citation from various sources outside the moment of enunciation:

> Prior to [the] moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language... but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word...[56]

Texts are primarily acts of adaptive reuse, not pure invention. It is precisely for this reason that language itself is useful to a broad variety of speakers over a long span of time. In order for language to function, signs must be both repeatable in various contexts and identifiable in every local manifestation. The signs and structures that comprise a language must be flexible enough to allow the speaker to adapt that language

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56.   Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (trans. C. Emerson, M. Holquist; Austin: University of Texas, 1981), 294.

to his or her own environment, but the language must also remain identifiable to others at the moment of its enunciation.[57] For a listener to identify the signs used by the speaker, the listener must already have access to the signs, deriving this access from other places and times, other enunciations. What allows for language simultaneously deprives it of full originality.[58] As a result, signs sit somewhat uneasily within contexts of production: they always come from somewhere else, and they are always flexible enough to re-graft into whatever contexts they may float.[59]

Compounding the problem, written signs are not only repeatable, they are also durable. That is, a written text remains long after its context of production has passed away. Durability has long been noted as a productive feature of writing: writers write things down precisely so that readers can read them outside the situational context of writing. Even if I write myself something personal and temporary like a grocery list, I write it so that I can read it in another context – namely, at the store, when I have already forgotten what I need.[60] Any text is useful insofar as it can be read outside of its context of production, leaving behind the singular events of its composition. In other words, writing is useful precisely because it does not lose its readability when it is transported elsewhere and read at another time, even when it is radically separated from its context of production.

The book of Psalms, for example, trades upon this feature of texts. The poems that constitute the book of Psalms were not originally composed as a part of the book

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57. For this very reason, Saussure stresses that the spoken signifier is an ideal sound-pattern not an actual sound. See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (trans. R, Harris; Illinios: Open Court Publishing, 1983), 12-15.

58. See, for example, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (trans. G. Spivak; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1998), 33.

59. See Derrida, *Limited Inc*, 7-10

60. See Ibid., 47-51, for a discussion of the grocery list.

of Psalms; rather, they were written for other contexts, both literary and circumstantial. The "original" "publication" of the book of Psalms offered a set (or, more appropriately, various sets) of previously existing psalms and even previous books of psalms that were further arranged and edited.[61]

Thus, the origin of the book of psalms is unoriginal, already a secondary origin, which is to say it is not an origin at all.[62] Perhaps one might claim that the "original" setting of each individual psalm constitutes its "original context" (e.g. Psalm 15 *is* an ancient cultic entrance liturgy). But surely this is not the original context of the book of Psalms, since the entrance liturgy has little to do with the book *qua* literary work. Moreover, each individual psalm is composed of words, phrases, motifs, and formal elements that pre-date even that "original" setting of the psalm.

Which context, then, is the "right one" in which to read the Psalms? Perhaps this is the wrong question, since the book of Psalms is composed of prayers that have already been decontextualized *so that they may function* as prayers suitable for people in many different contexts.[63] Patrick Miller points to this constitutive feature: "[The Psalms] were composed, sung, prayed, collected, passed on because they have the capacity to articulate and express the words, thoughts, prayers of *anyone...*"[64] Decontextualization seems to be the origin and purpose of the book of Psalms: how

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61. Note the diversity of textual forms, as attested in Qumran manuscripts, MT and OG. See Peter W. Flint et al., *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

62. "The supposedly simple and present origin itself has an origin in something else, and that something else, the origin's origin, is not an origin in the normal sense at all, because it cannot be simple or simply present." G. Bennington, "Foundations," *Textual Practice* 21 (2007): 234.

63. Patrick D Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 18-28.

64. Ibid., 24.

does one then read it in context? And even if a specific context for a psalm were miraculously found, as Miller writes: "The sealed poem breaks out of its context even when given one."[65]

While my particular example of the book of Psalms exploits this feature of decontextualization and recontextualization, all texts continue to find new contexts regardless of writerly, readerly and scholarly attempts to pin them down. This is how texts function. De/recontextualization explains precisely how any biblical text came to be. During this lengthy process there is no single necessary, natural, objective "original context" for a biblical text, since there is no necessary, natural, objective hierarchy of author-redactors. One cannot "contextualize" a composite text that underwent significant redactional work without choosing one particular, highly contingent moment to *become* the moment when the text was "finished."[66]

Within the field of biblical studies, this primordial unoriginality becomes strikingly apparent when speaking of "ancient Near Eastern contexts," which often reveal the derivative nature of Israelite motifs, genres, and even whole literary units.[67] For example, the Noah story is composed of at least two adaptations of diffuse ancient Near Eastern flood traditions. Can either of the "original stories" (one P, one non-P) in Genesis 6-8 be read "in its original context," since both are derivative of something that came before them? Neither can be said to account for the inten-

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65.   Patrick D. Miller, *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 248.

66.   See the discussion of E. Tov in chapter 2.

67.   Arguments for Israelite uniqueness have receded, and tempered arguments for particularly Israelite deployments of ancient Near Eastern motifs have taken their place. See an overview of comparative approaches in Brent Strawn, "Comparative Approaches: History, Theory, and the Image of God," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Bible in Honor of David L. Petersen* (eds. J. LeMon and K. H. Richards; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

tions of the "original" writer of the "original" flood narrative - if there is in fact such a thing. Biblical author(s) did not invent the motif of the boat-bound flood survivor sending out birds to see if there was dry land; it was already used in the Utnapishtim pericope of the Gilgamesh epic. As A. R. George explains regarding the order of release of the birds,

> [the biblical authors] who inherited the story of the birds gave it a different rationale. In doing so they altered some details - as well as confusing the birds' order, they left out the swallow - and, missing the aetiology entirely, failed to appreciate the motif to the full.[68]

While George is most likely correct that the biblical authors adapted an earlier legend, it is also possible that the Gilgamesh epic itself misread an even earlier flood legend, creating an etiology for bird behavior in the process. In any event, why is the Standard Babylonian Version of Gilgamesh "correct," and the Hebrew version a "failure?" For precisely the same reasons Barton considers the MT of Genesis itself "unreadable" and "incoherent:" namely, because it is an alteration of some assumedly "pure" and completely meaningful text. In Barr's words, how could we "respect" a story of the Flood that does not take into account the intentions of the original authors? Perhaps contexts other than "the original context" and texts other than "the original text" are more than worthy of study in their own right. Otherwise, we might as well all become Sumerologists.

2.4   The Many Contexts Within a Biblical Text

All of the above analysis takes for granted that texts are utterances that a single

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68.   A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2003), 517.

speaker enunciates at a particular point in time. Yet this is not at all true of biblical texts, since they are products of a lengthy process of citation, composition and redaction. As I argued at length in chapters 2-3, this process spanned many contexts. If this is true, then there is no single necessary, natural, objective "original context" for a biblical text, since there is no necessary, natural, objective hierarchy of author-redactors. One cannot "contextualize" a composite text that underwent significant redactional work without choosing one particular moment at which the text became "truly itself," which is to say the moment of utterance.[69] More importantly, no author-redactor "meant" the text as an original unity, since much of the material derived from previous sources unoriginal to the author. Such a situation does not qualify as an "utterance," since it shares some commonalities with citation.[70] Without a moment of "utterance" the text only ever exists in several contexts at once, and thus it cannot present a singularly dominant meaning.

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69. Barton prefers to divide the text into small units that clearly belong to a determinate genre, since he believes that identity within a genre establishes a text's authenticity and originality. John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (2nd ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996). This approach falls into the very trap it tries to sidestep. Fragmenting a text into units that fit squarely within determinate genres requires de-contextualizing the work of the later redactors, who created the composite work. With a traditional text, declaring any piece of the text "original" effectively chooses one scribal voice as the "true voice of the text" and denigrates others who played a part in the tradition of composition. But even if one declares the "final form" of a text the "original text," hoping to include all voices that occurred before it, the context would have to be the context of the most recent redaction. This, however, is also an unjustifiable reduction of the text to only one of its contexts. Any way one looks at it, "contextualizing" a traditional text (or any smaller part of such a text) in only one context requires a procrustean maneuver, collapsing the traditional voices into merely one voice. A traditional text presents a cacophony of contexts, intentions and meanings; who has the authority to choose merely one context to serve as the "true" context of the text?

70. See Derrida, *Limited Inc*, 18.

As a brief example, consider the texts generally referred to as the Deuterono-mistic History (Josh-2 Kgs).[71] Even the strongest advocates of the single-author hypothesis, such as Martin Noth, admit to the anthological nature of the texts, albeit within a broader narrative framework: "the intention was to be a compilation and explanation of the extant traditions."[72] These texts, even in their "final" form, contain within themselves multiple contexts, reducing their utterance-quality. In his reconstruction of the role of the "Transjordanian Motif" within the production history of the Deuteronomic History, Jeremy Hutton concludes:

> [T]he independent but complementary visions of Transjordan had been overlaid upon one another already by the 7th cent., a palimpsest of signifying strata melded together in the Cisjordanian worldview. This compilation was in effect a synthesis and flattening of several distinct systems that had all used the same polysemous signifier (i.e. the Transjordanian landscape) in their respective symbolic systems... By using the historical texts at hand, each Israelite redactor- perhaps even unintentionally- played the role of the *bricoleur*, constructing a single developing symbolic system from earlier meaningful sets of signs.[73]

Even though the *bricoleur* cobbled together various images of Transjordan in a way that formed "a single... system," "further inspection... reveals a panoply of affective engagements with the land, superimposed on one another, and only barely legible."[74] Underneath the context of the author-redactor, previous contexts are still visible.

If this is true, then we approach another fundamental question: how does one justify the placement of the boundary between the last context that had the right to

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71. For a brief overview of DtrH, see Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction*.

72. M. Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 133.

73. See J. M. Hutton, *The Transjordanian Palimpsest: The Overwritten Texts of Personal Exile and Transformation in the Deuteronomistic History* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2009), 376-77.

74. Ibid., 377

re-read this text and produce a legitimate "meaning," and the first context that suddenly began reading "out of context?" Why cannot the exilic Judeans recontextualize Amos' words and thereby create a legitimate meaning, whereas Amos' contemporaries could?

Some scholars defend the utterance-model of interpretation by invoking the ethical discourse of "respect." In this line of thought, a reader should respect ancient authors' words as the reader would desire respect for his or her own words.[75] But here, one may ask: who has the authority to determine the location and formation of the "original" context? And how did they acquire that authority?

3 AUTHOR AND AUDIENCE: WHO IS TALKING NOW?

For many biblical scholars, the authority mentioned above derives solely from the office of the author.[76] To cite Barr:

> Who, for example, would read with respect an account of Paul's theology which made it clear from the start that for this depiction of the theology it was of no importance whatever what Paul actually thought or intended?[77]

This argument assumes that Paul's composition signals his *authorship,* which in turn ensures his hermeneutical control over the contents of his text. In other words, an author is the source of the text and the guarantor of its meaning. As Hirsch writes,

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75. James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 5. This line of thought finds an influential expression in E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University, 1973).

76. See Fox's quote at the opening of this chapter, for instance. See also the discussion of Fox and intentionality in chapter 2.

77. Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*, 4.

"The reader should try to reconstruct authorial meaning," which is equivalent to the author's "intention."[78] Scores of proposals for defining, measuring, and applying authorial intentions have been offered, but common to all of them are the beliefs that intentions present a *standard* by which one can judge a reading as either faithful or treacherous, and that the *goal* of reading is ultimately to read in concert with these intentions. These two beliefs support the definitions of intentions as particular mental states of a writer,[79] as goals and schematic plans,[80] as strictly that which is realized in the text,[81] and as fictions attributed by a reader.[82]

Yet when this attitude is applied to texts such as Genesis or Proverbs, it takes the concept of authorship precisely *out of context*. It is now widely accepted that the ancient notion of "the author" was quite unlike our modern concept; anonymous, honorary, attributed, and pseudonymous authorships were the norm, and the rare occurrence of an actual writer's signature appears odd.[83]

3.1   *Authorship in/and biblical contexts*

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78.   E. D. Hirsch, "The Aims of Interpretation," 8. This perspective finds its most convincing form in Husserl's concept of "intentional objects." See the essay "Intentional Objects" in Edmund Husserl, *Early Writings in the Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics* (trans. D. Willard; Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993). Husserl's theory of meaning, as well as Hirsch's, relies upon a "pre-linguistic" intention that is then conveyed through language. Such a concept of meaning has been challenged by Heidegger's argument that humans exist embedded in a world that already involves language, and thus any intention or meaning always-already participates in the linguistic world.

79.   Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*, 4

80.   A. R. Mele, "Against a Belief/Desire Analysis of Intention," *Philosophia* 18 (1988): 239-42

81.   Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language.*

82.   Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation.*

83.   K. van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2007), 40-48.

In order to separate the ancient Near Eastern scribe from modern notions of author-ship, scholars have recently begun to stress that scribes were not generally seen as the hermeneutical or productive force behind their writings.[84] Van der Toorn divides scribal activities contributing to the production of the Bible into the following gener-al categories:

> (1) transcription of oral lore; (2) invention of a new text; (3) compilation of existing lore, either oral or written; (4) expansion of an inherited text; (5) adaptation of an existing text for a new audience; and (6) integration of individual documents into a more comprehensive composition.[85]

All categories aside from (2) readily admit the unoriginality of the scribe, and even category (2) rarely promotes the author as a creative entity.[86] Of course, all of these categories involve *writing,* but they do not support the assumption that the inten-tions of the one who writes necessarily deserve unquestioned hermeneutical respect.

Michel Foucault's insightful article "What is an Author?" argues, like Van der Toorn, that the concept of "author" varies widely depending upon one's cultural loca-tion.[87] Foucault points out that the modern conception of "author" acts as a safe-guard of textual *coherence* and an anchor to a historical moment.[88] Authors in this sense function as tools used by literary critics to solve textual contradictions, explain stylistic differences, and allow for historical anchoring; thus one may appeal to an

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84.   Ibid.

85.   Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture,*123.

86.   Until the time of ben Sira, literary texts in Israel went unsigned or were attributed pseudonymously. Ibid.

87.   Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (ed. D. Bouchard, trans. D. Bouchard and S. Simon; Ithaca: Cornell University, 1977), 113-138.

88.   Ibid., 111.

author's drafts, or his or her other works, or biographical details to explain an ambiguous textual detail. By this method some meanings are validated and others are deemed impossible. Thus, the author:

> is a functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction. In fact, if we are accustomed to presenting the author as a genius, as a perpetual surging of invention, it is because, in reality, we make him function in precisely the opposite fashion…The author is therefore the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning.[89]

While Foucault may overlook other contemporary functions of the author, he correctly determines two significant differences between ancient Near Eastern and modern conceptions of authorship. First, it is important to remember that the biblical text developed precisely by means of "composition, decomposition, and recomposition" and relatively few texts seem to exhibit the genius of whole-cloth invention. Based on their practice of producing texts, ancient Israelite and Judahite scribes did not seem to observe nor expect the sort of reading prescribed by Hirsch.

Second, in contrast to modern concerns for proper contextualization, throughout the ancient Near East text functioned as a site of immense *productivity,* a superabundance of meaning that surpassed any particular signifying intent of a single scribe.[90] Signs themselves were understood to be generative throughout the ancient Near East, including in Israel and Judah.[91] As a result, ancient readers and

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89.   Ibid., 119.

90.   Noegel argues that ancient Near Eastern modes of divination "evidences the existence of a scribal perception in which the written word or "sign" has the potential to be a great deal more than what it signifies." Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East,* 37.

91.   James Barr has offered very helpful critiques of these arguments concerning the "power of words" in ancient Israel. See James Barr, "The Symbolism of Names in the

writers did not rely upon the intentions of the inscribing agent as a tool to exclude meanings, or as a guarantee of contextual and hermeneutical singularity.[92]

Biblical scholars have long argued that, in various ancient Near Eastern cultures, "certain words were thought of as having power inherent to them," especially in royal, divinatory and cultic contexts.[93] Though many explanations of such "power" have overstepped the bounds of evidence, it is beyond doubt that biblical texts do depict certain situations wherein words function as "an objective reality endowed with a mysterious power."[94] That is, signs could *do* things; they had the ability to

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Old Testament," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 52 (1969): 11-29. Thiselton extends Barr's critique, arguing that even curses and blessings are simply "performatives," following the work of J. L. Austin. Anthony Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works with New Essays* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 293. While Thiselton justifiably curbs the excessive speculations of "word-magic" proponents, material cultural remains have shown continuity in the area of apotropaic and incantational uses of images and words. See, for example, J.D. Smoak, "Amuletic Inscriptions and the Background of YHWH as Guardian and Protector in Psalm 12," *Vetus Testamentum* 60 (2010): 421-432.

92.   Note the arguments of Person: "When they copied their texts, the ancient Israelite scribes did not slavishly write the texts word by word, but preserved the texts' meaning for the ongoing life of their communities in much the same way that performers of oral epic represent the stable, yet dynamic, tradition to their communities. In this sense, the ancient Israelite scribes were not mere copyists but were also performers." R. F. Person Jr, "The Ancient Israelite Scribe as Performer," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 602. These arguments undergird the argumentation in Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville: Westminister John Knox, 1996).

93.   Gerhard Von Rad, *The Old Testament: Theology* (vol. 2; London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 2:83.

94.   Ibid., 2:85. For more examples, including many overstatements, see Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works with New Essays,* 283ff. For more thoughtful and contemporary comparative support for this argument, See Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 127, who claims that Mesopotamian words could inhabit the same "ontological register" as any "real" referent. See also Noegel, "'Sign, Sign, Everywhere a Sign': Script, Power, and Interpretation in the Ancient Near East," 143-45 and E. Frahm, "Reading the Tablet, the Exta, and the Body: The Hermeneutics of Cuneiform Signs in

produce an illocutionary force that finds its source in divine, not merely social, pow-

er. One may note descriptions of such supposed power in texts such as Psalms 73:9,

147:15 and 109:17-18, Proverbs 18:7, 20-21, Jeremiah 1:9-10, and Isaiah 55:10-11.[95]

Outright demonstrations of linguistic effect occur in texts such as Numbers 5:16-31,

in which written words could cause pain and damage specific organs (Num 5:27), or

Numbers 11:26, in which men not present at Moses' blessing were nevertheless given

a portion of Moses' spirit merely by having their names inscribed in a list.[96] This view

holds that signs not only carried power: they could produce effects *independent* of

their author or utterer. Even though Isaac did not intend to bless Jacob, the utter-

ance produced the irreversible effect of blessing Jacob (Gen 27:34-37). Likewise, Ne-

hemiah can ask that his enemies' taunts "be turned on their own heads" (והשב חרפתם

אל־ראשם Neh 4:4).[97]

As for written texts, scribes throughout the ancient Near East mined the

shape of the written sign as well as its web of lexical values for referential signifi-

cance.[98] Babylonian and Assyrian scholars "regarded the overabundance of possible

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Babylonian and Assyran Text Commentaries and Divinatory Texts," in *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World* (ed. A. Annus; Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010), 93-100.

95.   One may also note that some names in the Hebrew Bible appear to be more than simple signs; the story of the revelation of YHWH's name in Exodus 3, as well as Jacob's discussion with the nameless figure in Genesis 32:27-30, as well as the importance of words and naming in Genesis 1-3, are examples of this attitude. See John F. A. Sawyer, *Sacred Languages and Sacred Texts* (London: Routledge, 1999), 119 and a similar Mesopotamian practice in Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 174.

96.   See Jean Bottero, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* (trans. Z. Bahrani, M. Van De Mieroop; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), 85-93. For "generative" script, see Noegel, "'Sign, Sign, Everywhere a Sign': Script, Power, and Interpretation in the Ancient Near East," 146.

97.   Note the use of this idiom for "nonlinguistic" referents in Ps 7:16; Joel 3:4.

98.   For examples, see Ibid. and Frahm, "Reading the Tablet, the Exta, and the Body."

meanings associated with the polysemy of the cuneiform writing system as an inexhaustible source of knowledge and wisdom."[99] Ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian scholars were nervous about this "potentially dangerous" overabundant productivity, especially with respect to omens or other "divine signs," but for them the "act of interpreting a sign seeks to limit that power by restricting the parameters of a sign's interpretation."[100] In the Hebrew Bible, evidence of this practice may be found in Amos 8:1-2 (קיץ//קץ) and Jeremiah 1:11-12 (שָׁקֵד//שֹׁקֵד), in which the phonic similarities between signs reveals the interpretation of the divine message.[101] As Noegel shows, biblical narratives depict Israelites divining messages in ways consonant with other ancient Near Eastern practices, including the potential for the interpreter to *create* the effect of the message through the interpretive act.[102]

Thus ancient Israelites and Judahites assumed that written texts, particularly texts thought to be imbued with divine power, could easily separate from their original context of production and apply themselves to different contexts, producing different meanings in each case. This assumption undergirds Daniel's expectation that Jeremiah's prophecies continued to speak about events beyond the exile in Daniel 9, the conviction that biblical texts described present events in the Qumran pesharim,[103]

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99. Ibid., 95 and Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*, 7 As Frahm argues, "One of the main goals of commentaries employing etymology and etymography was to produce the illusion of an esoteric inner coherence of the texts they dealt with." Frahm, "Reading the Tablet, the Exta, and the Body," 96.

100. Noegel, "'Sign, Sign, Everywhere a Sign,'" 147. Divination was a common practice throughout the ancient Near East, including Israel and Judah, as noted in, for example, Genesis 30:27 and 44:15, and of course the Urim and Tummim. See Noegel, Nocturnal Ciphers, 114.

101. See, among others, Ibid.

102. Ibid., chapters 5- 6. Note especially Noegel's discussion of Genesis 41:13 on pages 176-177.

103. See J. Jokiranta, "Pesharim: A Mirror of Self-Understanding," in *Reading the Present in the Qumran Library: The Perception of the Contemporary by Means of*

and Second Temple halakhic texts that read ancient law as statements about contemporary situations.[104] One may also look to 1 Maccabees 3:48 and 2 Maccabees 8:23, which both "present the Torah scroll as a book that could be consulted as an oracle by opening it at random," demonstrating the assumption that biblical texts functioned in ways unimaginable by the scribal agents who wrote them.[105] Within the "original context" of biblical texts, "the author" did not function as a hermeneutical source or goal; if anything, the status of the pseudonymous or attributed author ensured that the selfsame text would continue to function as an agent of new and helpful meanings.

More broadly, as Armin Lange and others have shown, the very composition and development of biblical prophetic texts witnesses to a shift from "written prophecy," in which oracles were understood to refer to the time of the prophet, to "literary prophecy," in which "the redactional reworking of prophetic texts is a prophetic process in which new meaning is gained from the already written prophetic tradition."[106] As "oracle collections were recontextualized and reapplied to timeframes later than their place of origin," the "surplus of meaning" within the prophecies themselves "transcend[s] their original contexts and meanings."[107] Thus, to read

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Scriptural Interpretations (eds. K. De Troyer and A. Lange; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 23-35.

104. See L. Schiffman, "Contemporizing Halakic Exegesis in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Reading the Present in the Qumran Library: The Perception of the Contemporary by Means of Scriptural Interpretations* (eds. K. De Troyer and A. Lange; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 35-41.

105. See P. W. Van der Horst, "*Sortes*: Sacred Books as Instant Oracles in Late Antiquity," in *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World* (eds. P. W. van der Hoorst et. al.; Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 146-47.

106. Armin Lange, "Literary Prophecy and Oracle Collection," in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (eds. M. Floyd and R. Haak; London: T. & T. Clark Publishers, 2006), 253.

these texts is to hear at least two voices, that of the historical prophet *and* of the literary prophet, speaking to Second Temple audiences and beyond.[108]

As Martti Nissinen asks: "The dilemma is this: Who is talking now?"[109] Perhaps we hear two voices, and perhaps even more, since the redactors of these texts assumed that prophecy contained a structural openness, an expectation that the text itself was always able to reach beyond its context.[110] This structural openness does not allow for a limit to the number of different meanings that the text may yield, a time of expiration in which consulting the text becomes a matter of purely antiquarian interest. In other words, reading these texts *in context* would require assuming, like a good Second Temple Judahite, that the words of the prophet have never yet exhausted themselves.[111] For biblical texts, at least, authors do not separate original meanings from receptions.

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107. Ibid., 273.

108. See the poignant remarks in R. Clements, "The Prophet as Author: The Case of the Isaiah Memoir," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy* (eds. E Ben Zvi and MH Floyd; SBLSym 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 100-01.

109. M. Nissinen, "The Historical Dilemma of Biblical Prophetic Studies," in *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 110.

110. As Derrida writes, even within the "original" text "the time and place of the other time [is] already at work, altering from the start the start itself, the first time, at once." Derrida, *Limited Inc*, 62.

111. As mentioned in chapter 4, one may also look to the Psalms as an example of texts that were decontextualized during the period of their production for the precise purpose of separating from any historical author or referent. See James Kugel, "Topics in the History of the Spirituality of the Psalms," in *Jewish Spirituality* (ed. A. Green; vol. 1; London: Routledge, 1986), 133, 142, and Jeffery Tigay, "On Some Aspects of Prayer in the Bible," *AJS Review* 1 (1976): 363-79.

3.2   *Intentions and Significances*

One cannot, however, follow in the footsteps of the New Critics and simply banish the author in favor of the "text itself."[112] First of all, as argued in chapters 2 and 3, many different local manifestations of biblical texts co-exist, and as such any "text itself" must be selected or constructed amidst the variants that comprise the text. Second, it is just as arbitrary to prohibit concern for authorial intentions as it is to valorize it; writer-redactors who produced biblical texts certainly constitute an area of valid scholarly inquiry. Yet scholars who are interested in intentions must look the evidence squarely in the eye. While it is very likely true that writers who wrote much of the text of the Bible had intentions when doing so, doubtless many of these intentions were conflicted, unfinished, or unconscious, and biblical texts, like all authorial products, contain half-intentions, unintended effects, non-sense, absentmindedness, and intention-less rote recall. Moreover, the things used to transmit these intentions–words, phrases, motifs, characters, settings, other versions of stories, and so on–necessarily come sedimented with layers of previous intentions that any author is unable fully to recognize, understand, or master.

Herschel Parker has explored this phenomenon in which "familiar literary

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112. As shown by Hershel Parker, the invocation of the "text itself" takes for granted the work of textual critics and editors who assemble and construct the text itself. Furthermore, Parker shows that text criticism that takes an author's intentions as a guide -- such as the work of Tanselle - inevitably recapitulates the "text itself" ideology of the New Critics. See Hershel Parker, "'The Text Itself': Whatever That is," *Text* 3 (1987): 47-54 and Hershel Parker, *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons: Literary Authority in American Fiction* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1984). In the words of Wimsatt and Beardsley, "We enquire now not about origins, nor about effects, but about the work so far as it can be considered by itself as a body of meaning." M. Beardsley and W. K. Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1954), 87. Works do not, however, simply appear.

texts at some points have no meaning, only partially authorial meaning, or quite adventitious meaning unintended by the author or anyone else."[113] For example, during the piecemeal composition of *Pudd'nhead Wilson,* Twain transformed the character Tom from a white thief into a mixed-race slave but did not edit all of the text of the book carefully to reflect this change. Parker notes the result:

> As it turned out, Twain got an accidental bonus on the level of local meaning, for any reader of chapter 11 will think that Tom snatches away his hand so the palm-reading Wilson will not find out that he is part black and a slave, not merely that Wilson will find out that he is a thief. Judging from the abundant evidence that Twain did not read entirely through what he salvaged as *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, he probably did not ever specifically "intend" the new meaning of the gesture, even retroactively, although he would have been delighted to get something for nothing. Judging from the contemporary reception and from modern academic criticism, there was no need for the author to have invested any more labor on the salvage operation than he did, for no critic has complained about Tom's being distractingly white in some middle chapters of the book.[114]

This example shows that even modern authors are not in full control of what they write, and that what Eco calls the *intentio operis*, or the "text's intention," may assume a different form than the *intentio auctoris,* or the "author's intention."[115] Biblical literature is most likely full of these "accidental bonuses," and it would impoverish our reading to deny them as plausible effects of the text regardless of authorial intentions. For example, several scholars have proposed compelling readings of the redactional shape of the psalter; though no redactor may have intended these particular effects, such "accidental bonuses" should not be ignored simply because the

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113. Hershel Parker, "Lost Authority: Non-Sense, Skewed Meanings, and Intentionless Meanings," *Critical Inquiry* 9 (1983): 769.

114. Ibid., 772.

115. Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*. At times, the intentio operis may seem particularly unclear, and it is left up to the reader to try and make sense of a garbled text, such as the seemingly nonsensical etiology in Genesis 22:14.

redactor did not notice them.[116] Moreover, unintentional scribal errors may lead to
"accidental bonuses."

MT and OG Jeremiah 23:33, for example, present two different versions of a
joke: both are effective for different reasons, though one probably formed through
scribal error.[117] Should the text read, as the response to the question, "What is the
burden of YHWH," את־מה־משא "*What* burden?" as MT Jeremiah has it, or ὑμεῖς ἐστε
τὸ λῆμμα (=אתם המשא) "*You* are the burden!" as in OG Jeremiah? Both versions are
quite humorous, though in different ways. In my opinion, MT Jeremiah is more
humorous: YHWH identifies those seeking "burdens" (or oracles) as burdens them-
selves, as in OG Jeremiah, but only in retrospect after having already "brushed off"
the barely noticeable burden. Yet MT Jeremiah 23:33 is most likely secondary; must
we do away with this accidental bonus merely because it is attributable to unintentio-
nal scribal error?

To this example of serendipitous authorial confusion, compare Barton's dis-
tinction of "original meaning" from "later significance," following E. D. Hirsch: "the
significance may vary from one generation to another, but the meaning remains con-
stant throughout."[118] For Hirsch, the "meaning" can only ever be the "author's inten-
tion," albeit in a manner that is expressed in the text itself, not in the author's bio-
graphical details.[119] The ontologically lesser category of "significance" contains any

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116. See the canonical reading proposed in, for example, Walter Brueggemann,
"Bounded By Obedience and Praise: The Psalms as Canon," *JSOT* 50 (1991): 63-92.

117. See Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd rev. ed.
Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 303 for more information about this example.

118. Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 86. "Meaning is that which is
represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign
sequence; it is what the signs represent. Significance, on the other hand, names a
relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation or
indeed anything imaginable." Hirsch, *Validity in interpretation*, 13.

other interpretation ever offered, and is thus equivalent to the contents of "reception history." One may here note that, if Hirsch is correct, then the Hebrew Bible is itself *constituted* by invalid means, since much of it developed from diverse oral traditions, and all of it was subjected to repeated redactions. These texts were, from the moment of their inscription "only significances."[120]

If readers must read for the author's intention, and if author's intentions cannot completely control the text, then we will never actually be able to read anything. In this paradoxical state of affairs perhaps the problem lies with the dominant *ideology of reading*. We can no longer claim that readings that do not ask about authorial intention are invalid, yield ontologically inferior results, or are not somehow a part of critical biblical scholarship. One may of course seek intentions because various sorts of intentions *do exist*, to be sure; as even Derrida explains,

> the category of intention will not disappear, it will have its place, but from that place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and system of utterance... What the text questions is not intention or intentionality but their *telos*, which orients and organizes the movement and the possibility of fulfillment, realization, and actualization in a plenitude that would be present to and identical with itself.[121]

Intentions are not bad things, nor nonexistent. They simply do not, and cannot, play the role of *telos* for all reading, even all scholarly reading. Authors do not necessarily control everything their works say, mean, or do. As such, biblical authors' intentions do not constitute or justify the divide between original and reception.

As Derrida argues, it is the very structure of signs that precipitates the lack of

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119. Ibid.

120. How does Barton square this statement with his assertion that "authorless" texts such as the Psalms have no original meaning, but merely layers of traditional meanings? Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 79.

121. Derrida, *Limited Inc*, 18, 56.

total authorial control, since the *iterability* of signs - that is, the ability of the same signs to appear in many contexts, albeit in slightly different forms - also necessarily makes each sign exterior to its own context of enunciation. Recall that Derrida argues that texts are useful because they can be read in the *complete absence* of their author, as in the case of a letter. Even in the event of the biological death of the writer and the complete obliteration of the context of the text's production, the text will nevertheless *necessarily* continue to function as a network of signs.[122] For example, both Voyager spacecraft, by now abandoned to the drift of interstellar space, hold inscriptions that are readable and recordings that are decipherable even in the radical absence of all authorial presence. Perhaps some scholars lament along with Socrates that all written texts are at some point abandoned by the author, set adrift, anchorless, orphaned with no Father to answer for them.[123] But whether this is a bad or good quality of texts, it is not merely contingent or restricted to marginal, poorly written texts. Rather, *drift* is an essential characteristic of text itself.[124] Think of texts as tigers on the loose, or as spandrels, not anchors: they are not, in any event, merely photocopies of an author's hidden intentions. And even if they were, these intentions would themselves have to be signs to be readable, and thus subject to the very same drift.[125] In any event, biblical authors' intentions do not constitute the necessary *telos*

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122. Ibid., 7-9.

123. See Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (trans. B. Johnson; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981), 152.

124. This is not to be confused with Barton's convenient straw man of the "completely free-floating" and contextless text Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism,* 79. As Derrida argues, "there are only contexts, that nothing exists outside context… but also that the limit of the frame or border of this context always entails a clause of non-closure." One has to read in a context, but one cannot simply read a text in a context which has disappeared into the sands of time. The act of reading requires the inverse: that the text can reach into the reader's context, that it has escaped. Derrida, *Limited Inc,* 152.

of criticism or interpretation, and thus they do not justify the divide between original and reception.

3.3 Audience and Author

Some scholars have proposed taking the *audience* into account in order to admit the openness of the text beyond authorial control while retaining historical contextualization.[126] In general, scholars discuss the audience either in an abstract sense, as in "the matrix of possible readings at the time of production," or in a concrete sense, as in "the reaction of specific readers or listeners to a text."[127] Both possibilities introduce a variable into the archaeological search for authorial intentions: namely, that communication requires at least a sender and a receiver, and this receiver does not play a merely passive role, decoding a message to reveal its inert contents. Rather, the recipient of a text must *read* the text, which requires an active engage-

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125. To be clear: I am not asserting that "the death of the author" leads to the unfettered "birth of the reader," and that as a result any reading is a good one. See the still helpful but perhaps overdramatic essay, Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977). On the contrary, careful reading is a serious task with many possibilities for error; but in any event the question of reading will be deferred until the next chapter.

126. Note the four-fold typology of audience in P. J. Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences," *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1977): 121-41. Rabinowitz distinguishes "actual audience," "authorial audience," "narrative audience" and "ideal narrative audience." All four of these are operative in different conceptions of the "audience" in biblical scholarship. My comments focus primarily on the actual audience, since this is the only audience among the four types - the others are all constructs of readers, and thus belong in a discussion of readers.

127. Note the various facets of reader-response theory in Jane P. Tompkins, "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism," in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (ed. Jane P. Thompkins; Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1980).

ment. Reading inserts an unstable, unprogrammable, dialogical element into the stable algebra of interpretation.

Perhaps one takes "audience" to mean "addressee," a determinate person or people expected to read the text and thus included within the sphere of the author's intentions, safeguarding the hermeneutical sanctity of the text's meaning.[128] These "first audiences," it is argued, hold a privileged position in the history of interpretation due to their contextual proximity to the production of the text.[129] By this logic, other, later, unintended audiences create significances through their encounters with the text.[130] For his part, Barr clearly states that this division between original audience and later audiences is a "boundary point" for biblical scholarship.[131] In this line of thought, however, one immediately encounters practical problems of authority and theoretical problems of spatial and temporal delineation: where is this line to be drawn, and who draws it?

Even if a certain audience can be called unquestionably "the original audience," as any public speaker has learned audiences are not often unified in their reception of texts, *pace* Barton. Thus, even within the first audience of a text one can expect to find a multiplicity of understandings; the line of meaning runs precisely *through* any audience, not *behind* it. And as for temporal delineation, *when* is this line to be drawn: in the weeks following this first reading, are original audiences still

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128. For example, Barton's discussion of "that which must have existed in the minds of Amos' audience," as if it were a unity of interpretation; see Barton, *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature and Theology*, 282.

129. Note Barr's statement that the "best material" comes from authors who "concentrate on what the writers/redactors/readers/audience thought" as opposed to "dogmatic arguments" that derive from later readers. For Barr, this division is a "boundary point" in biblical scholarship. See Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology,* 58.

130. See Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism,* 179.

131. Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*, 57.

to be found? What about years later, even generations later?[132] Opening up the text to include "audiences" (something every text by definition does simply by being a text) simultaneously denies closing it off to certain audiences and contexts.[133] Anyone who manages to read a text is within its context, and that text is within the reader's context. As Bennington writes, "Reading would be impossible otherwise: from the moment one manages to read a text, even at a level of elementary decipherment, one is, however minimally, part of its context."[134]

In fact, the psalms stage a readerly confrontation as *internal* to the "ancient audience" itself:

> כי שם שאלונו שובינו דברי־שיר ותוללינו שמחה שירו לנו משיר ציון
>
> For there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors for amusement:
>
> "Sing for us one of the songs of Zion!" (Ps 137:3)

Here, the victorious Babylonians demand that the vanquished Israelites sing triumphant Zion songs in order to amuse the Babylonians. Perhaps some Babylonians were amused by the dissonance between the downtrodden Israelites and the jubilant words and tune of their Zion songs, and perhaps others merely found the songs appealing. In any event, Psalm 137 enacts a jarring recontextualization of the Zion songs. This text enacts what was and is *always* possible of texts: namely, the text broke from its previous contexts and grafted into a new context. As a result, the out-of-context Babylonians became the audience for a Judahite text. Here we see a multi-

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132. Note Bennington's comments: "Usually people work with a loose enough concept of context to suppose that there is a vague contemporaneity of writing and reading, but any rigorous concept must recognize that writing is from the start breaking with its context of "production" and with every determined context of reception." Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida,* 86.

133. See Derrida's comments on the addressee, Derrida, *Limited Inc,* 7-9.

134. Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, 91.

plicity of historical and cultural contexts, meanings, and audiences for the Zion songs.

Doubtless, this split audience composed of Babylonians and Judahites produces important effects within the psalm and as a consequence within all Zion psalms. Readers are accosted by an irreducible gap between the bold faith signified by Zion psalms within their pre-destruction Judahite context, the naive vainglory signified within the Babylonian context, and the bitter irony signified within the exilic Judahite context.[135] This multiplicity also finds expression in Lamentations 2:15, where passersby mock Judahites by recontextualizing part of a Judahite Zion psalm found in the book of Psalms (MT Ps 48:3). Who is the audience of the phrase משוש לכל־הארץ "the joy of all the earth"? More than the cultic setting must be considered "original" since the settings of the mocking individuals and the lamenting Judahites must now be included within the "original contexts" of this text.

Perhaps biting irony and dejected lamentation were not intended by any putatively original author of Psalm 48, but these meanings were *always a possibility of the text, from the moment of its first inscription:* the shift in audience does not *create* this function of the text.[136] Rather, the shift merely actualizes a property of signifi-

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135. See, for example, Tryvve Mettinger, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 103.

136. One may include within this list of examples any recontextualizations of foreign motifs, characters, sayings, and so on, such as the "context" of the recontextualized Instruction of Amenemope, or the recontextualization of ancient Near Eastern law within the Pentateuch, or the recontextualization of Neo-Assyrian motifs in the Deuteronomistic History, or inner-biblical recontextualizations such as the book of Chronicles. See Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 10-31: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 18B; New Haven: Yale University, 2009), 753-69; Raymond Westbrook, "The Laws of Biblical Israel," in *The Hebrew Bible: New Insights and Scholarship* (ed. F. Greenspahn; New York: New York University, 2008); Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction.*

cation inhering in the text. And where does this activity stop? Just as any text func-

tions in the radical absence – even the death – of its author, texts continue to

function beyond any determinant addressee. The "context of production" never quite

closes, since the text itself is a productive force.[137] One may choose certain contexts in

which to read a given text, and one may analyze it from the perspective of certain

writers or readers, but these are *choices,* not necessities, and they reflect contingent

perspectives, not *necessary* ones. Yet if it is true that all biblical scholarship is recep-

tion history, then how does one actually go about reception history? This is to tres-

pass into the topic of *meaning,* to which I now turn.

4   MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE: ORIGINAL OR RECEPTION?

Should one throw up the proverbial hands and say, "So does a text mean just any-

thing?" No, a text does not just mean anything, but it most certainly does not only

mean just one thing. Many biblical scholars agree with these judgments, arguing that

a text is *polysemous,* that is means several things.[138] In this section, I argue that it is

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137. See Bennington's discussion in Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, 51-52.

138. Polysemy admits that texts have multiple meanings, but tends to limit them to countable groups. Though attention to polysemy is certainly preferable to univocal readings of texts, the presentation of the possibilities (the text may mean this, or this) rests itself upon a particular reading of the text at hand. Thus polysemy gives the appearance of plurality while continuing to depend upon a singular reading (namely, the reading that maps out the several possibilities). This type of reading does not allow for future readings which may locate previously unthought possibilities for reading the text. As Derrida explains, "Polysemy always puts out its multiplicities and variations with the horizon, at least, of some integral reading… It forgets that its horizon is framed." Derrida contrasts polysemy to "dissemination," which does not foreclose upon possible future readings. Derrida, *Dissemination*. Though this may sound paradoxical (a text cannot

more appropriate to say that the number of meanings of a text is always yet to be determined.

For all of the weight it carries within biblical criticism, the term *meaning,* much like *context,* remains ironically undefined. What does "meaning" mean?[139] Of course there have been many answers to such a question, but broad agreement among recent linguistic scholarship can be found on several fronts: most importantly that, contrary to many ancient and early modern philosophers, "meaning" is not a definite property of particular phonemes, words or even phrases, neither is meaning something "inside" a word or a phrase. Rather, "meaning is not a possession, it is a set of relations" between parts and wholes, not unlike the concept of context.[140] It is for this reason that "contextualism" has become so important: if meaning is a product of the word's relation to other words and to non-linguistic situations, then the *context,* or that to which a word relates, plays a part in the creation of meaning itself. As Moises Silva concludes: "the context does not merely help us understand meaning; it virtually *makes* meaning."[141] This insight guides diverse modern ap-

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mean just anything, but its meanings cannot be numbered), it is not. There can be an uncountable number of justifiable meanings, and also uncountable unjustifiable meanings. See A. Kanamori, "The Mathematical Development of Set Theory From Cantor to Cohen," *Bulletin of Symbolic Logic* 2 (1996): 1-71. In other words, let the field of biblical studies dispense with the canard that absolute infinity is the only alternative to either univocity or controlled polysemy.

139. There is not enough space even for a cursory attempt at categorizing answers to this question. Introductory textbooks such as W. G. Lycan, *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008) and J. Lyons, *Semantics. vol. 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977) offer instructive overviews. For a much more detailed analysis of meaning that roughly agrees with the presentation found in this section, see Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida,* 15-83.

140. See H. P. Scanlin, "The Study of Semantics in General Linguistics," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (ed. W. R. Bodine; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1988), 127.

141. M. Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical*

proaches to meaning such as the Wittgensteinian concept that "meaning is use,"[142] J. L. Austin's speech-act theory,[143] and even verification theories.[144] All of these approaches assume that meaning emerges from a relationship between language and the circumstances of its utterance.

4.1   Meaning as a Function of Relations

Saussure's model of the linguistic sign presented this relationship as *internal* to each sign, arguing that the signifier aspect of a sign refers to the sign's concept, or its "signified."[145] As an example, Saussure offers a diagram of the linguistic sign in which the

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Semantics (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 139.

142. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar* (trans. A. Kenny; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), 60.

143. See Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*.

144. See, for example, A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (Mineola: Dover, 1952).

145. I happen to find Saussure and Derrida's discussion of meaning to be convincing and particularly enlightening for biblical texts, whose internal relationships of inner-biblical re-writing thus find a new relevance. Yet my conclusions in this section could also be obtained by means of Wittgenstein's theory of meaning, wherein he claims that "if we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we should have to say that it was its use." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Brown and Blue Books,* 4. In Wittgenstein's argument, investigating meaning does not require abstraction or generalization, but rather a simple description of the diversity of ways in which the sign has been put use. If we extend this definition of meaning to include texts, then, scholars cannot not "give the meaning" of a text, but rather, like good reception-historians, should instead show the diversity of ways in which the text has been put to use. As Wittgenstein himself said, "Don't think but look!" Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (trans. G. Anscombe; New York: Macmillian, 1953), 27. For a pragmatist theory of meaning that covers some of the same ground, see J. Stout, "What is the Meaning of a Text?" *NLH* 14 (1982): 1-12. Moreover, Quine's theory of meaning in light of his argument for the structural indeterminacy of translation supports many of these same conclusions. See Quine, *Word and Object*.

signifier is represented by the letters that spell "Tree" (or the Latin *arbor*) and the signified concept of *tree* is represented by a small image of a tree. While Saussure claimed that the identity of the signifier was composed of pure "differences without positive terms," his conception of meaning is entirely positive: Saussure argues that signifieds simply exist.[146]

In response, Derrida applies pressure to this concept of the signified: what exactly *is* a signified, where would we find one? Perhaps, to find the answer, we should follow Wittgenstein's injunction: "if you want to understand the use of the word 'meaning,' look for what are called 'explanations of meaning.'"[147] Consider the following: when asked to "give the meaning" of a biblical text, a scholar will inevitably produce a linguistic explanation, such as a commentary. But surely this explanation is not "the signified," as the commentary is simply another string of signifiers similar to the text in question. Similarly, when an individual wants to find the meaning of a word, that individual might turn to a dictionary, wherein no "signifieds" are contained: definitions are merely strings of other signifiers.[148]

To recall Saussure's discussion of signifiers as explained in chapter 3, each

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146. See Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 167.

147. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 126.

148. Wherever one searches for "meaning" or "signifieds," one finds only substitutions. Even if one were to give the "meaning" of a text by non-linguistic means, one could only substitute gestures, objects, marks, and so on. These "meanings" are all external to the text, and are all productions that attempt to substitute the "signified" for other signifiers. If the original meaning resided with the author's intentions, and one asked the author to see those intentions, what could the author do? Either gesture to the signifiers that compose the text, or offer more spoken or written signifiers in their stead. In practice, we substitute some signifiers for others, and call that activity "meaning." Even non-linguistic things can function as signifiers; if I gesture to a tree in order to demonstrate the signified for "tree," I am placing that tree in the role of a signifier which refers my interlocutor to the other signifier, "tree."

signifier's identity emerges from its purely differential relation to other signifiers - that is, the sound "dog" does not *naturally* mean anything, but it is merely distinguishable from other sounds. Derrida argues that this differential identity is precisely the way that signifiers *mean,* as well. In other words, there are no such things as signifieds; the little picture of a tree in Saussure's diagram does not help us escape this conclusion, since it, too, merely substitutes one (verbal) sign "tree" for a pictorial sign of a tree. Essentially, "meaning" is only an act of *substitution*, a sort of translation of signifiers. As Bennington writes: "if, for example, I wish to give the meaning (signified) of a given signifier, all I can ever do is produce more signifiers, organised in such a way that one or more of them count as a signified."[149]

For Derrida, the dictionary is thus a massive organizational device: it produces a network of signifiers, placing them in certain patterns that create an internal system. Perhaps the reader has had the experience of looking for the meaning of a word in a dictionary, only to realize that several other unfamiliar words in the definition themselves must be sought in the same book. After a while, enough familiar words are found so that the reader may think, "Alright, I understand." Diving into a new field of scholarly literature usually presents much the same problem: one must discern within a body of related literature what "they mean" when they say X and Y, since it is somewhat different from what "we mean" when "we" say X and Y. Moreover, many scholars take words in wide circulation and "reposition" them within a discourse; Heidegger, for example, worked hard to redefine the word "Being" in phi-

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149. See Geoffrey Bennington, *Other Analyses: Reading Philosophy* (ebook: CreateSpace, 2004), 31. This is at odds with Hans-Georg Gadamer, for whom meaning is translation, but a translaiton of a pre-existent, pre-linguistic substantial sache that is itself unchanging. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (trans. J. Weinsheimer, D. Marshall, 2nd rev. ed.; New York: Continuum, 1989), 389-99.

losophy, and was in large part able to do so by means of organizing large groups of other signifiers. Thus, *meaning is an effect of organizations of signifiers;* or as proposed above, "meaning is not a possession, it is a set of relations."[150]

Derrida notes that any commentary, rephrasing, or attempts to define or fix the meaning of statements "in other words" creates a "textual supplement" that itself calls for further comment or definition with further supplements, and so on.[151] Even authors who wish to explain their work are limited to creating supplementary signifier-organizations ("What I mean to say is...") How is an author's explanation different *in kind* from a critic's explanation, rather than simply different in degree? Both are supplementary linguistic structures that seek to re-position the elements of the text so as to account for its structure; neither has an objective, necessary privilege over the other. As shown above, "putting a text in its context" would require recognizing that the author does not have complete control of the text even from the start, that the author's intentions, however whole, cannot organize the entire context and text in such a way that he or she absolutely overdetermines the meaning-effect that the text will produce, that there is no necessary boundary between meaning and significance, and thus that the very boundary between "biblical criticism" and "reception history" is founded upon a fundamental misconception. Perhaps Derrida, Wittgenstein and Stout are correct: Hirsch's concept of "meaning" *does not exist.*[152] There are

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150. Perhaps the "relations" are construed differently than Scanlin imagines, but differential relations between signifiers are still relations.

151. Meaning is thus secondary, supplementary to the text, something produced by an encounter with a text. See Jacques Derrida, "Living on/Border Lines," in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1979), 62.

152. But note Bennington's important qualification: "[T]hat there is no signified does not imply that we place all the signifiers on the same level- we must respect the effects of signifieds, of what gives itself out as a signified." Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, 96-97. In other words, I should try to find meaning when I read a text,

only significances, significations.

Presenting a meaning, then, requires actively re-organizing the text in a manner that attempts to account for the "position" of the signifiers in the text. Put in simpler terms, readers must be able to justify their reading by showing how their reading takes account of the various elements of the text as it re-organizes it and substitutes some words for others.[153] In this way, the reader must re-write the text in another mode. The reader must become an author, just as the author surely became his or her own reader during the writing process. We can thus hold open the position of the author as "the one who holds the meaning" as a structurally open space, able to be occupied by any reader who may try to make sense of the text.

Thus no participant in the textual process (author, reader, the context of writing, the context of reading, the contexts in-between, the text "itself") has a right always to dominate all other readings; and yet none of these participants can ever be fully excluded from readings. Moreover, no scholar can know the number of acceptable meanings that a given text has, since future readers and future contexts may hold as-yet unknown resources with which to read any text. Of course, some readings are questionable, and others are poor. Nevertheless, there is not only one correct way to read any text, nor has any text, if it is still readable, yet seen the last acceptable reading.

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but I must realize that, no matter how masterfully I account for the elements of the text, the text continues to function beyond my reading, in other contexts.

153.   In the same way, there is no "perfect translation" of a text, nor are there only three, or five acceptable translations; there are likely limitless justifiable translations of a text, but this does not authorize just any translation. There certainly are better and worse translations, but the important point is that there is no pre-ordained number of acceptable ones. See Quine, *Word and Object.*

4.2   *Context and Meaning*

In contrast, many biblical scholars argue that the meanings of biblical texts are con-textually determined: that is, one can discover an utterance's particular meaning by analyzing the context in which the utterance is given. In other words, although the signifying relationships within an utterance are underdetermined, the external situa-tion surrounding the utterance determines it.

For this to be true, the external situation must itself already be determined so that it may determine the text. However, as argued above, the relations between ele-ments within a circumstantial context are not objectively predetermined; any context must be constructed by assigning relations between elements, either by participants or later scholars. A text is a part of a context, and as such both text and context must be constructed with reference to each other and with reference to the other elements of the context.[154] Context does not naturally overdetermine text, and text does not overdetermine context: both context and text are underdetermined in relation to each other, until they are respectively (re)constructed and read.

As established above, however, texts function precisely by moving between contexts, and as such any text is itself open to reading in various contexts. Even if a scholar offers a particularly convincing "contextualization" within one context, tradi-

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154. Of course the caveats mentioned earlier in the chapter remain: contexts are produced by effects of framing, and frames are not in themselves objectively predetermined; moreover, certain elements within the context must be considered focal points, though these are not predetermined, either. Moreover, the "underdetermined" state does not "exist" per se, as if they can be approached in a pure state. The context and text can only ever be approached through concretized determinations, such as the various representations of the conflict involving Antiochus IV.

tional texts are particularly potent exemplars of a constitutive multi-contextualism. Biblical texts, therefore, *always mean more than can be determined within any one context.*[155]

4.3   Conclusion

In summary, the concept of the "original meaning" of the text, supposedly found only in its "original context," runs into several problems:

(1) The "original context," even for those living within it, is a site of underdetermined multiplicity, and must be *framed* and the relationships between its elements *determined* before it can function as anything resembling a "whole" into which the text can be "put." There can always be other frames, and always other determinations; for this reason, the task of framing and determining contexts is in principle infinite. The boundary between "original" and "reception" is thus not a pregiven reality.

(2) However one frames them, the production of the biblical text doubtless flows through various contexts; this processual movement bars any single context from the status of "original." As such, each physical manuscript of a biblical text bears not just the context of *its* moment of production, but carries with it sedimentations from its past. A biblical text always sits somewhat uneasily within its context,

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155. Thus readings that cast the formation of the Pentateuch as a hermeneutical event taking place in the Exile or the Persian Period, for example, may offer tremendously helpful and convincing contextualizations of the text within one given historical context. Yet the very scholars who propose these readings would also admit that much of the Pentateuch pre-existed this redactional unity, and that the reading of these texts changed significantly even before the era of textual stabilization.

always pointing to previous contexts and always moving on towards new ones. It can never be constrained, or objectively reduced to, any one set of contextual relations.

(3) The author of a text cannot claim a position of absolute dominance over the productive powers of his or her text, and the audience cannot be delimited in a necessarily objective manner so as to give theoretical clarity to the concept of "original audience." Texts are open to reading, which is to say texts are productive, not reductive, even at the moment of inscription.

(4) Meaning is an effect of signification produced by reading, and is not an inherent property of any text. There is no necessary priority ascribed to any particular individual's construal of a text, and thus the boundary between "original meaning" and "receptions," just like the boundary between "original text" and "corruptions/additions," is a construction of biblical scholars. Removing this boundary does no damage to the text or violence to any of its readers; it only acknowledges the purely contingent nature of the boundary.

With respect to methodology, I conclude:

Reception history is *nothing* if reception history is understood as "studying that which comes after the original." There is no such thing, since there was nothing original in the first place. In the first place, there was the secondary.

But: *everything* is reception history, if reception history is understood as "studying how unoriginal audiences taking unoriginal texts and giving them unoriginal meanings," which is simply to say "people taking a text and doing something with it." Text criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, rhetorical criticism, canonical criticism, tradition history, comparative studies: these approaches all look at how people take texts, contexts and traditions and do different, and sometimes new, things with them.

Yet if it is true that all biblical scholarship is reception history, then how does

one actually go about reception history?

Mapping a Garden of Forking Paths: Processual Reception Theory

> In all fiction, when a man is faced with alternatives, he chooses one at the expense of the others. In the almost unfathomable Ts'ui Pên, he chooses–simultaneously–all of them... Fang, let us say, has a secret. A stranger knocks at his door. Fang makes up his mind to kill him. Naturally there are various possible outcomes. Fang can kill the intruder, the intruder can kill Fang, both can be saved, both can die and so on and so on. In Ts'ui Pên's work, all the possible solutions occur, each one being the point of departure for other bifurcations. Sometimes the pathways for this labyrinth converge. For example, you come to this house: but in some possible pasts you are my enemy: in others my friend...
>
> JORGE LUIS BORGES

1   INTRODUCTION: WHAT CAN A TEXT DO?

1.1   *The Need for a New Theory of Reception*

As we have seen in chapters two and three of this dissertation, biblical texts *qua* texts are not fixed objects; rather, they are open processes that can only be closed from contingent perspectives. And as we have seen in chapters four and five, the meaning of biblical texts as well as their contexts are open to multiple determinations and thus exhibit change throughout time. Both biblical texts *and* their significances are

dynamic, not static, entities.

As an open process, a biblical text has no moment of purity, origin, finality, or true meaning that would constitute a boundary between the actual text and its later additions, interpretations, receptions, or corruptions. Thus, the form and meaning of a biblical text cannot be defined or controlled by any one of its multiple author-redactors or any of the several communities that continue to curate it; no person or group has the necessary, objectively determinable right to authorize any textual version or delimit its signification.[1] Any temporal, geographical, communal, or ideological boundary that scholars construct is contingent. Taken together, these insights challenge standard conceptions of biblical criticism as well as reception history.

In *The Genealogy of Morals,* Nietzsche outlines the basic rationale for a process-oriented study of cultural objects. Nietzsche here offers a view of the cultural object as a *spandrel*, whose purpose is not defined or contained by its point of origin, but rather is created anew as it traverses contexts:

> [T]here is for historiography of any kind no more important proposition than the one it took such effort to establish, but which really ought to be established now: the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart; whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events... [involve] a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or even obliterated... the entire history of a 'thing,' an organ, a custom can in this way be a continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations whose causes do not even have to be related to one another but, on the contrary, in some cases succeed and alternate with one another in a purely chance fashion.[2]

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1.   As noted above, particular groups or individual persons certainly do establish their own general hierarchies, but these determinations function only within in their local jurisdictions.

In these few lines, Nietzsche issues several thoughts crucial for reception history: (1) an origin does not explain any current meaning or function; (2) all things are eventually repurposed and thus reinterpreted; and (3) this reinterpretation ignores and obscures the previous uses and meanings of the adapted thing.

These three critiques should sound vaguely familiar to the biblical scholar, since they parallel James Barr's arguments concerning semantics.[3] Words, like customs, organs and institutions, change their meanings in somewhat haphazard ways throughout time. Yet biblical scholars such as Barr and Barton have not applied their semantic logic to biblical texts as a whole: just as words can change their semantic functions in surprising ways throughout time, biblical texts can, as well.[4] Barr stopped short of extend this historical variability to any textual unit larger than the word, but the same logic applies: thus, when biblical scholars locate the "original" source of a particular legend, motif, genre, or character, this discovery does not necessarily explain anything about its form and function in any successive context. And so, just as locating the "original" meaning of a word cannot help explain its meaning in any successive historical or literary context, the changing semantic function of the biblical text cannot be tied to its context of initial production.

Perhaps surprisingly, these same critiques pose a difficult problem for reception history, even though it constitutes the very practice devised to answer them. For its theoretical orientation, reception history currently depends upon the thought of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hans-Robert Jauss, whose school of thought is called

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2.   Friedrich Nietzsche, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (trans. W. Kaufmann; New York: Random House, 2000), 513.

3.   For the "root fallacy" see James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1961), 100.

4.   See John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 117-36.

"philosophical hermeneutics."[5] While these thinkers have proven immensely helpful for several generations of scholars, a number of their theoretical commitments have shaped the field of reception history in some unhelpful ways.[6]

In a nutshell, Gadamer argues, like Nietzsche, that each successive context must reinterpret the elements of their tradition.[7] Yet whereas Nietzsche observes that later meanings and uses of cultural objects are often at odds with previous meanings and uses, Gadamer retains the notion of origin and argues for its continuing role in shaping later meanings. In his book *Truth and Method,* Gadamer conceives of the act of reading as a "dialogue" between the historically-situated reader and the otherwise-historically-situated text as it was located in its context of original production.[8] Gadamer calls this mutual dialogue between reader and text a "fusion of horizons" that combines the context of the reader with the context of the text.[9] When the reader's horizon fuses with the original horizon of the text, the reader may then begin to understand the text, Gadamer claims, by locating the original *Sache* or "subject matter" of the text as it becomes incarnated in different language.[10] In this way, Gadamer treats the different historical understandings as different perspectives on the same

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5.   See especially Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (trans. J. Weinsheimer, D. Marshall;. 2nd rev. ed. New York: Continuum, 1989) and Hans-Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (trans. T. Bahti; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982). For an overview of philosophical hermeneutics, see Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics* (trans. J. Weinsheimer; New Haven: Yale University, 1997).

6.   For the impact of Gadamer's Wirkungsgeschichte on biblical scholarship, see, for example, Ulrich Luz, *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence, and Effects* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), and the entire issue of *JSNT* 33:2 (2010).

7.   Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 298-305.

8.   Ibid., 363-368.

9.   Ibid., 305-06.

10.   See Ibid., 418-25 for a discussion of language as an incarnation of understanding.

"subject matter" or "thing" that offers different appearances "for us" but is essentially self-identical "in itself."[11] This same meaning in different settings is one, not many.[12] If history were not moving, perhaps a particular individual would find no "second senses."[13]

Though it seems helpful, Gadamer's theory preserves a significant problem for reception history. Gadamer claims that every reading of a given text constitutes a dialogue between (1) the same original text in the same original horizon-context and its always-identical "subject matter," and (2) whoever is reading the text and whatever context-horizon in which they are reading. As such, his "fusion of horizons" assumes a stable text, a stable original "subject matter" and a singular context of origin. These assumptions are somewhat plausible in a modern context wherein single authors write texts in relatively compact periods of time (though they prove unhelpful in many modern situations, as well).[14] But, as we have seen, these assumptions are

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11.   See Ibid., 285, 390.

12.   "The verbal explicitness that understanding achieves does not create a second sense apart from that which is understood and interpreted." Ibid., 399.

13.   Here we find the role of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, or "effective history," in Gadamer's thought: Gadamer does not propose a study of Wirkungsgeschichte, but merely encourages consciousness of the fact that a text has a history of effects. See Gadamer's discussion of "historically effected consciousness," which has been generally interpreted as an ambiguous phrase claiming that every interpreter is affected by history, and that interpreters need to become conscious of this theoretical claim while they interpret; ibid., 301ff. Grondin seems to include in this category historiographical information, which would aid in projecting horizons, yet this does not appear to be central in Gadamer's work. See Jean Grondin, *The Philosophy of Gadamer* (trans. K. Plant; Acumen: Chesham, 2003), 93. Other authors, such as J. Weinsheimer, do not include historical research in this concept, as Gadamer is clear that he does not want to spawn a new method. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 336, and J. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics* (New Haven: YUP, 1985), 182.

14.   See Herschel Parker, "Lost Authority: Non-Sense, Skewed Meanings, and Intentionless Meanings," *Critical Inquiry* 9 (1983): 767-74 for examples of modern contexts in which these assumptions remain problematic. See also Jacques Derrida,

entirely unhelpful when it comes to a traditional text, such as the book of Proverbs: the text has never been stable and the horizon-context was shifting from the very beginning. As a result, any "subject matter" was always-already in negotiation before the text assumed recognizable shape. With what horizon, then, does one form a "fusion of horizons" when one sits down to read Proverbs? With whom does one hold the dialogue?

Gadamer's mistake is to conceive of the text as a static object *even as* it moves through history. Roman Ingarten, Wolfgang Iser and Jauss agree with Gadamer: all three presuppose at least certain portions of the text are stable: at minimum, the portions of the text between the "gaps" or "blanks" that readers fill are supposedly stable.[15] Different readings are merely different accessory packages, much like one would choose in a car dealership; though different paint jobs and radios personalize each car, the same engine lies under the hood. Yet how could we claim that the self-differential and slowly evolving book of Daniel, for instance, merely presents a predetermined number of gaps for every reader to fill?

In charting out a theory of reception history, then, we must avoid this pitfall by developing an alternate account that can think of *texts as processes,* and as a result does not rely upon a "fusion of horizons." Nietzsche points us in a helpful direction: by *focusing on the variation of the object,* rather than its contexts or areas of stability, we may shift the emphasis of our study from the human subjects of "original author" and "contemporary reader" to the object itself that undergoes the process of relocation and reinterpretation. In this chapter, I will lay out a theory of biblical

"Living on/Border Lines," in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Comtinuum, 1979).

15.   Note Iser's discussion of the "segments and patterns" of the text that exist in between the "blanks": Wolfgang Iser, *How to Do Theory* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006), 64-68.

reception history that does just that: namely, I shift the disciplinary focus from read-ers to the continuously varying biblical text. This does not mean that readers and contexts of interpretation are unimportant, nor does it mean that they are completely fungible. But it does mean that biblical reception history should tell a story *about the biblical text,* not a story about various readers to which the biblical text plays a minor role.

It should be noted that the last few centuries of biblical scholarship have proved Nietzsche right in every regard. Though many biblical scholars still argue that the origin of a biblical text holds the secret to its true meaning, the data amassed by biblical scholars points in the opposite direction: biblical texts never stay put, and their contexts of initial production, as well as their author-redactors, prove hopeless-ly unable to contain them or restrict their function. Would it not make more sense to explain the form and meaning of a biblical text as a changing process, and thus to in-clude variation within the definition of its form and meaning? Even with the New Testament writings of Paul, though they are written by an individual author in a short span of time, grasping the moment of emergence– that is, the moment of their authorship– will only explain that one moment. It will not, thus, explain the life of the object itself, since the object has been, even in that brief moment of initial production, on the move. Following Gilles Deleuze's lead, we should not see biblical texts as objects: we should instead see them as *objectiles,* object-projectiles, that must be studied as something for which movement and variation is a necessary qual-ity, and thus for whom any static identity is an always-contingent predicate.[16]

Moreover, contexts are not static objects, either. That is, just as the elements

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16.   Gilles Deleuze, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque (trans. T Conley; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993), 20-22.

of a text allow themselves to be determined in different ways in different readings, any context in which a reader might contextualize a biblical text can be understood in mutually exclusive ways by contemporary as well as temporally removed observers. Antiochus IV and the *hasidim* understood the events of 167 BCE in mutually exclusive ways. And, as Zhou Enlai reminds us, contexts are temporally unstable. No less than texts, contexts or "horizons" are also objectiles, and thus unsuitable partners for a moment of "fusion of horizons." Constructions of a context are for this reason not a pre-given whole into which parts, such as a text, must fit. There is no reason to assume that contexts– or texts, for that matter– form harmonious wholes. Any defined, constructed context must be seen as a contingent, peripheral supplement to the collection of parts, and thus unable to master them.

As a result, the dialectic relationship of "text and context" is not a process of mutual clarification that leads the reader towards a pre-determined, singular meaning. Neither is it a process that ends in a Gadamerian moment of "understanding" that relives the past. Instead, the relationship of text to context is an event of creation. Text and context are two open systems that complicate each other, and any reciprocal determination produces something.[17] Thus, the productive power of the text to create novel forms and meanings must play a central role in any theory of reception history.

While no actual manuscript of a text, nor any of its readings, has any natural priority over others, actual manuscripts and readings are particular determinations of that text. The process of a biblical text *has* been determined at particular points

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17.   In the same way, Michael Camille has forcefully challenged the notion that texts clarify images: on the contrary, when the two are combined it forms a more complex, rather than more clearly defined, semiotic system. Michael Camille, "Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy," *Art History* 8 (1985): 26-49

throughout its trajectory, but at all points it *exceeds* any particular determination and may always be determined differently. Reception history takes as its task the analysis of the multiplicity of these particular determinations in the form of manuscripts, translations, commentaries, quotations, and artistic transformations; from these various sources, we can imagine that the biblical text will continue to be productive into the future. For this reason, reception history leads us to think in more complex ways about biblical texts.

1.2   *A Deleuzian Approach to Reception History*

We have thus established that reception history must be able to explain both (1) the particular local manuscripts and locally determined meanings of biblical texts, and (2) the underdetermined and excessive biblical text that gives rise to its varying local expressions.[18] In this chapter, I offer a theoretical approach to reception history that takes as its starting point the reality of both (1) and (2). For this task, I have found the thought of Gilles Deleuze particularly helpful. Before introducing the technical details of Deleuze's thought, I will offer a general overview of how his theory impacts the study of reception history.

Perhaps most important for my purposes is Deleuze's focus on the capabilities of a thing as opposed to its predicates or essences. Throughout his work, Deleuze criticized essentialism, which holds that a thing is defined by the static set of its distinctive characteristics.[19] Humans, essentialists have historically claimed, are defined as

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18.   An expression is not a representation of an inner state, but rather an "actualization" of a potential. For the Deleuzian use of "expression," see Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic Of Sense* (trans. M. Lester, C. Stivale; New York: Columbia University, 1990), 110-11.

"rational animals," since rationality is the characteristic that distinguishes humans from other sorts of beings. Thus, rationality functions as the essence of humanity.[20]

In contrast, Deleuze argues that things should be distinguished by their capacities. Rather than ask, "What is the essential feature of a human being?" Deleuze would reframe the question by paraphrasing Spinoza: "Of what is a human being capable? What can a human being do?"[21] From this perspective, things should be defined by their powers, which can only be discovered through experimentation and variation. That is, Deleuze asks, "What powers does this human have?" In a way, the essentialist has a point: the power for rational thought, to be sure, is a human potential. But we must admit that the power for irrational thought is a part of the human being, as well. Thus, irrationality constitutes a part of the answer to the question, "What is a human?"[22]

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19.   See Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2002), 9-10.

20.   D. H. DeGrood, *Philosophies of Essence: An Examination of the Category of Essence* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1976), 36.

21.   Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (trans. M. Joughin; Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1990), 226. As Spinoza writes: "For indeed, no one has yet determined what the body can do... For no one has yet come to know the structure of the body so accurately that he could explain all its functions–not to mention that many things are observed in the lower animals which far surpass human ingenuity, and that sleepwalkers do a great many things in their sleep which they would not dare to awake. This shows well enough that the body itself, simply from the laws of its own nature, can do many things which its mind wonders at." Baruch Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1994), 155-56. As Deleuze argues, this logic can be applied to anything at all: "A body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea; it can be a linguistic corpus ..." Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (trans. R. Hurley; San Francisco: City Lights, 1988), 127.

22.   Gilles Deleuze, Seminar, 21 December 1980, trans. Simon Duffy, at [www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=190&groupe=Spinoza&langue=2].   Accessed Dec 21, 2011.

If we would define things by their capacities, then we would have to reject totalizing statements about any object. For example, one cannot say that the definitive list of every human capacity has already been, or could ever be, produced. Humans continually surprise themselves with their ever-developing capacities for endurance, compassion, cruelty, love, environmental impact, and so on.[23] One might imagine that human capacities are a settled issue. But not only are records of endurance and skill broken with every passing year: cultural developments, technological developments, biomedical developments, genetic exaptations and so on will continue to change the terrain in which human capacities emerge. Satellite communication was once not an actual human power; likewise, human capacities for social organization are surely not exhausted with the current capitalist system. Accordingly, any definition of the human being must remain always provisional, and thus ready to accommodate the emergence of new potentials. As Spinoza says: "For indeed, no one has yet determined what the body can do."[24]

Analogously, when faced with a biblical text, biblical scholars often assume their essential responsibility is to ask, "What does this text mean?" Behind this question lies an assumption: namely, that a text has an essential meaning, much like essentialists believe that a human being has an essential set of characteristics. Some scholars understand that this restriction to singular essences poses a problem, so instead they argue that there are multiple meanings to biblical texts.[25] However, these same scholars often seek to delimit these meanings by claiming that a text has several senses, or reflects the concerns of several communities.

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23.   Recent trends in genetic engineering, as well, complicate attempts to essentialize the human being, since humans are working to change the very composition of human beings.

24.   Spinoza, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works,* 155-56

25.   See the examples of Michael Fox and Alan Lenzi, below.

But as Deleuze suggests, redefining a biblical text not by its essence but by its powers or capacities– that is, what it *can do*– would fundamentally alter the work of biblical scholarship. If it is true that we have not yet determined what a biblical text can do, then this process of determination by experimentation would never be quite complete, since we would always be watchful for the emergence of new capacities. In this sense, a biblical text should be seen as an open process, and thus capable of interacting with new situations and readers in surprising ways.[26] Reception history is fundamental to this enterprise, since it traces the interaction of this textual process with a panoply of readers, cultures, environments, and historical events. Instead of asking, "How should this text be read? What does it mean?" reception history can lead biblical scholars to ask instead, "How might this text function? What can it do? What powers does it have, and how might these powers function in various settings?"

Furthermore, Deleuze argues that instead of treating capabilities as a predicate of an object, we should treat them as an event. For example, how might we answer the question, "What color is the sky?" Instead of claiming that "the sky is blue," Deleuze would argue that we should instead assert that what occurs at a given moment is the event of the *sky bluing*, which is but one of the coloring powers of the sky.[27] That is, one particular power of the sky is the manifestation of the color blue, and this is best seen not as a property of the sky, but rather as something it *does*. As Deleuze would say, "The sky blues."[28]

One could argue, of course, that "blue" is a cultural construct, and that vari-

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26.   This dynamic roughly parallels Derrida's discussion of "signature" and "counter-signature." See Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (trans. G. Bennington; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 153-66.

27.   Deleuze, *The Logic Of Sense*, 6.

28.   Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, 60. Deleuze here says, "not 'the tree is green,' but 'the tree greens'…"

ous cultures distinguish the color "blue" in quite different ways.[29] Furthermore, the color blue results from a particular interaction between the human eye and particular frequencies of light; the color blue does not necessarily interact with other animals, or even inanimate objects, in such a way that the "bluing" of the sky could be universal.[30] Of course, color is a "feature of our experience that is constructed from the overall pattern of illumination reaching the eye at any moment as subsequently analyzed and conditioned by the particular details of the organization of the eye and the visual system."[31] Yet if we set aside the question of the identities of various sorts of colors and the varieties of perceptions of color that different people or species can have, we may still agree that colors emerge from a particular spectrum of electromagnetic radiation.[32] Human perceptions of color emerge from the relationships between the light effect in the atmosphere, the structure of the human eye, the human brain. One could ask many questions about the differences between various human observers, the differences between human and non-human observers, and so on, but these questions are ancillary to the question about the *powers of the sky*.

In short, humans generally see the daytime sky as blue because of "Rayleigh scattering," in which electromagnetic radiation disperses when it encounters small particles.[33] Sunlight thus scatters when it encounters particles in the earth's atmos-

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29.   For example, the Basque language did not, until recently, differentiate blue, green and gray. See R. L. Trask, *The History of Basque* (London: Routledge, 1997), 267-68.

30.   For a brief overview of the science of color perception, see C. L. Hardin, *Color for Philosophers: Unweaving the Rainbow* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), 1-40.

31.   G. H. Jacobs, "Animal Color Vision," in *The Encyclopedia of Perception*, vol. 1 (ed. E. Goldstein; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2010), 48.

32.   For this reason, the debate between universalists (e.g. B. Berlin and P. Kay, *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* (Berkeley: University of California, 1969)) and relativists (e.g. B. Saunders, "Revisiting Basic Color Terms," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6 (2000): 81–99) matters little here.

phere, becoming "diffuse sky radiation." Since shorter wavelengths are affected more than longer wavelengths, the electromagnetic radiation occurring within the visible spectrum that English speakers refer to as "blue" appears to cover the sky. The human quality of the perception is not of interest here, nor is the linguistic or cultural identity of particular colors: instead, my point is that the earth's atmosphere in conjunction with light from the sun creates a particular electromagnetic effect (one that humans perceive as a color-effect, and one that English speakers refer to as "blue.") Whatever we call it, and however we perceive it, the sky is *doing something*. Thus, we can conclude that the sky *is not* blue, as if its color is a property or predicate– rather, the sky *produces* a bluing effect. Bluing is something the sky *does*: in non-anthropocentric terms, the sky continually produces a particular radiation-diffusing-effect, and if it did not continue to produce this effect, then it would cease to appear blue to humans, or Dogs may perceive this effect differently than humans, and different humans may perceive this effect differently, but the effect manifests itself amongst and between these perceptions.

Yet the event of the "sky bluing" occurs only in certain sets of circumstances. At noon on a clear day, for example, the sky blues. In other circumstances, such as at morning or evening or night, or during a storm, the sky shows that it can manifest other colors, since it has other powers. Due to the varying composition of the atmosphere, the relative position of the sun so on, the sky can also orange, red, yellow, black, grey, white and brown. Moreover, the sky "is" not cloudy: the sky *clouds,* since the production and dissipation of masses of suspended water droplets is another power of the atmosphere. Thus, if one says, "the sky is blue," one subtly claims that a

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33.   This simplified presentation ignores Mie scattering. A more detailed presentation, along with a historical resume of the search for the coloring power of the sky, may be found in P. Pesic, *Sky in a Bottle* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2005).

particular set of circumstances are the natural circumstances in which the sky reveals its true essence. Storms and sunsets, from this vantage point, are aberrations. Likewise, if one says, "humans are rational animals," one implicitly claims that those many moments wherein humans produce something less than rational thought are aberrations. We all know intimately the irrational capabilities of human thought; thus humans have the capacity to think rationally *and* to think irrationally.

In the same way, a given biblical text may have had a certain significance to its author or various significances to its various author-redactors, but doubtless it can do other things in other contexts. If one primarily asks about historical communities' interpretive proclivities and institutional practices of reading, or about the individual biographies and subjective conscious (or even unconscious) reasons behind individual readings, then one has shifted the focus from the *capacities of the text* to the *contingent conditions in which a text exhibited its capacities*. My preference for "focalization" of the text's capacities does not minimize the general importance of history, communities, or individual readers. Certainly, readers have capacities and powers, and contexts have capacities as well.[34] Contexts, readers, and texts all interact in the process of reading, and the particular form of a local incarnation of a text's semantic capacities depends upon the precise relationship determined between these three elements. In any given context, a text will only manifest some of its capabilities, but a shift in context or a shift in perspective can light up the text in a completely different manner. As reception history shows, a biblical text has done many things; some can be predic(a)ted, while others are quite unpredic(a)table. A focus on readers will help us to learn more about the capacities of various readers. A focus on contexts

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34.   For a discussion of "focalization," see Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2nd ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1997 [1985]), 142-160.

will help us to learn more about the capacities of various contexts. But textual reception history will help us to learn more about the capacities of various texts.

When one asks about the power of a thing, rather than its essence, then unusual events that occur at the limits of experience take on a special significance. For example, the coloring power of the sky known as the *aurora borealis*, or northern lights, can only perceived in particular latitudes and at certain times: yet in these contexts, the sky greens or reds with bursts of intensity. Thus, it is clear that both bluing and flashing-green are among the coloring powers of the sky.

Likewise, texts may reveal surprising capacities when read in particular circumstances: insights concerning the construction of gender in the biblical text seem only to be perceived from particular vantage points, many of which were hidden from mainstream biblical interpretation for several millennia. Stanley Fish's interpretive communities and their "systems of intelligibility," much like Foucault's discursive formations and *epistemes*, for example, certainly do influence the potential capabilities of a text.[35] Yet for Foucault and Fish, the *episteme* and the interpretive community serve as the protagonists of their scholarly work: the variations between *epistemes* and communities provide the focus. In contrast, a focus on the *objectile-text* would lead to questions about the textual capacities revealed under the conditions of various *epistemes* and interpretive communities. For example, a liberatory capacity of the text of Exodus emerges within the history of African-American discourse, but others of its powers might be revealed in a modern Egyptian context. Similarly, the book of Joshua may reveal certain capacities when read in a Zionist

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35.   See Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum," in *Is There A Text In This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1980), 148, and Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1986), 38, 191.

context, and others when read by Native Americans attending Puritan schools in seventeenth-century Massachusetts. A focus on the *powers of the text,* rather than on the conditions within which the text manifests those powers, will be the guiding theme of my theory of reception history.

Moreover, we must always hold a place for readings that are yet-to-come and contexts yet-to-emerge.[36] In the example of the sky, if the chemical composition of the air changes drastically, this event will influence the capabilities of the coloring power of the atmosphere. On other planets, for example, we now know that skies can exhibit an even broader array of coloring powers that would have been imaginable before the development of space exploration. Likewise, the continuing reading of biblical texts will doubtless produce new forms of meaning, since their ongoing development of signifying power depends to some degree on their relationships to changing contexts and changing readers. For this reason, reception history must include a Spinozian caveat: "No one has yet determined what this text can do." Yet it is important to remember that Deleuze does not encourage us to say that a thing can do anything anywhere. I will address the question of limits below, but here the important point is that things always have within themselves capabilities that they do not currently manifest.

With these introductory comments, I have sketched the main contours of a reception history that thinks of the text as a process, not a product. In the second section of this chapter, I will clarify several of Deleuze's concepts and then show in more detail how they might encourage a revision of currently fashionable theories of biblical reception history. In particular, I will discuss Deleuze's concept of the *virtual and*

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36.   See the discussion of *avenir* in Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority," *Cardozo Law Review* 11 (1990): 993

the actual, as well as his *reversal of the problem-solution relationship* and his *topo-logical approach to identity.* Together, these concepts will help us to tell the story of biblical reception history with a focalization on the continuously varying biblical text. In the third section of this chapter, I will distinguish four separate processes at work in biblical reception history: namely, the *process of the text* (i.e., the development of the form of the text over time), the *process of reading* (i.e., the developing capacities for the text's production of significance), the *process of transmutation* (i.e., the extension of the text's capabilities in ways that transform its semantic structure), and the *process of non-semantic impact* (i.e., the developing capacities of the text to impact its environment in ways other than its semantic production). Finally, I will address the role of readers and reading communities, as well as the role of the reception historian herself, within my theory of biblical reception history.

2   FRAMEWORK FOR A PROCESSUAL RECEPTION HISTORY

I have found three related concepts within Deleuze's thought particularly helpful with regards to reception history: (1) a distinction between the "virtual" and the "actual," (2) the inversion of the relationship between problems and solutions, and (3) a topological approach to structure. I will introduce each of these concepts in turn.[37]

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37.   I offer a caveat: Gilles Deleuze's thought is as rich as it is complex. Some of my discussions of his work may be unorthodox, but my aim is, rather than providing a comprehensive account of Deleuze's thought, to improve (or abandon) particular conceptions of reception history.

2.1   *The Virtual and the Actual*

Perhaps Deleuze's most helpful contribution to reception history is his distinction between the *virtual* and the *actual*, since this distinction allows for biblical scholars to think of both the underdetermined objectile-text that moves and changes as well as its local determinations, or particular texts and readings.

To begin: textual scholars tend to think of texts and meanings in terms of the binary pair, *possible* and *real*.[38] The possible consists of whatever is permissible according to known facts and the rules of logic. For example, it is possible that Nehemiah is the author of at least part of the book of Nehemiah.[39] It not possible that Pharaoh Ramses II is author of the book of Nehemiah, since he was not alive at the time of its initial production. Thus, we can exclude impossibilities, enumerate possibilities and even arrange them according to probability. Yet one of these possible states also happens to be *real* as well as possible. That is, one possible state also holds the additional attribute of *reality*. Taking up again the example of the sky: there are many possible manifestations of the color of the sky (e.g. red, blue, yellow) yet only one color also has the quality of current reality added to it in each moment of space and time.

According to this line of thought, one may be able to enumerate all of the logically plausible meanings of a particular text and chart them. For example, Michael Fox, the leading authority on Proverbs, offers three possible meanings for the word

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38.   Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* (trans. P. Patton; New York: Columbia University, 1994), 211-14. For an introduction to this concept, see Todd May, *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005), 48-49.

39.   See Jacob L. Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah-Memoir and Its Earliest Readers* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2004), 1-6.

אמן in Proverbs 8:30: either it means (1) artisan, (2) constantly/faithfully, or (3) nurturing/growing up. Of the three, Fox selects "growing up," reading the word as an infinitive absolute working as an adverbial complement.[40] While Fox has agreed that it is possible to construe the text in a limited number of ways, he assumes that one reading in particular is not only possible according to the historical context, including its semantics and syntax, but that it also existed in reality. Thus, one of the limited number of possible states is also real by virtue of its extra component of *existence.* While this approach does offer the reader a decisive answer to a question, it is difficult to imagine what exactly constitutes this reality. Fox has just enumerated the possible meanings and proven that they function perfectly well within the semantic and syntactic structure of both the language system and the text. What exactly separates the real from the possible? Fox would likely answer, "the intention of the author, of course."[41] If this is true, then the difference between reality and mere possibility lies in the thought of an author. What sort of existence is that, and why would our ruminations about the contents of a momentary flutter of neurons force us to tell readers, "That is not the *real* meaning of this text?"[42]

Other talented readers, such as Alan Lenzi, have a more nuanced approach: Lenzi argues that several senses of אמן in Proverbs 8:30 are real, but readers should see "the meaning 'artisan/advisor' or, as I prefer to translate, 'master,' as the primary sense of the word."[43] Lenzi allows that more than one possible reading may have

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40.   See Michael V. Fox, "'Amon Again," *JBL* 115 (1996): 699-702 and later in Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9* (AB 18a; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 287.

41.   Michael V. Fox, "Job 38 and God's Rhetoric," *Semeia* 19 (1981): 53.

42.   As Deleuze writes: "it is difficult to understand what existence adds to the concept when all it does is double like with like." Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 212.

43.   Alan Lenzi, "Proverbs 8: 22-31: Three Perspectives on Its Composition," *JBL* 125 (2006): 706.

been historically real, but he argues that these readings possess differing levels of re-ality. For Lenzi, one reading is primary and thus functions as the denotation, while others are secondary and thus function as connotations. While at first glance Lenzi's position seems to avoid the problems encountered by Fox, upon closer examination the problems only multiply. One might ask here: what agent has the authority to arrange these readings into a hierarchy? And how did this agent come to possess such a privilege? Is it the author's intention that sorts readings into primary and sec-ondary categories, or do the diffuse rules of grammar force us to recognize the full re-ality of one reading as opposed to the others?

One may, of course, argue that certain readings make sense given the general linguistic system in place in ancient Israel, and that others do not make sense. But the attribution of full reality to one possible reading, partial reality to others, and only possibility to still others requires the intervention of a transcendent authority, one who can control the ontological status of particular elements in the world. Fox would claim that the author occupies this position. For Lenzi, the situation is less clear, but it would seem that the scholar makes the primary/secondary distinction.

For reception history, however, another problem looms even larger. If the an-cient context or the initial author sets the boundaries for the possible meanings of the text, and one or more of these possible meanings are real, then how do new read-ings emerge? We have established that one must discern the "correct" readings from the "incorrect" readings from *within* the subset of "possible" readings: thus, what do we say of readings that are not even within the set of possible readings? The response must be nonsensical: "These new readings are not even possible."

Instead of thinking in terms of the binary pair *possible* and *real*, however, Deleuze urges us to think of existence in terms of the *virtual* and *actual*.[44] This is no mere shift in jargon; it allows us to think differently since both the virtual and actual

are real whereas the possible names something that is only logically possibly real and not really real.[45] In brief, Deleuze asks us to think of potentialities, capacities and powers as real things: an incredibly strong individual's potential to inflict bodily harm, for example, is palpable, and surely effects the reality of those who come into contact with such an individual. Such a potential is, in Deleuze's terms, *virtual* until it is made *actual* by acting it out, but the mere threat of its use is entirely real. Texts, we might suggest, should be thought of in similar terms: Fox names several potential powers of the text, but in the end selects one as his actual reading. All of those readings, however, are *real.*

An exploration of Deleuze's distinction between virtual and actual will help us to locate some of its parameters. According to Deleuze, whatever exists in the world of our actual experience, including all determinate objects, comprises the actual. The virtual, on the other hand, refers to the formal conditions and capacities that generate the actual and allow it to transform.[46] Recall the example of the sky: when we look at the sky, Deleuze argues, we can certainly note the current "actual" color of the sky. But, Deleuze adds, we would be wrong to think that the current color of the sky exhausts the reality of the coloring power of the sky. On the contrary, the potential

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44.   Deleuze finds these terms in the work of Henri Bergson, but alters their definition. See Henri Bergson, *Mind-Energy: Lectures and Essays* (trans. H. Carr; London: McMillian, 1920), 165.

45.   As Deleuze writes: "The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual. Exactly what Proust said of states of resonance must be said of the virtual: 'Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract'; and symbolic without being fictional. Indeed, the virtual must be defined as strictly a part of the real object—as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged as though into an objective dimension." Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 208-09.

46.   In this way, Deleuze's virtual shares many affinities with Derrida's notion of the trace structure. See Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida,* 74-76, 111-114.

power of the sky to change to a wide variety of colors, even surprising or unusual ones, is *just as real* as the actual color that is manifest at any present moment. Deleuze names this very real, but never quite present, potentiality a "virtual multiplicity."[47] This multiplicity consists of all potentiality available to a particular body.

Whenever a thing changes, we may think of this change as the process of a particular potential manifesting itself. For example, when the sky turns from blue to yellow, the potential yellowing power of the sky manifests itself. Since this process makes actual a particular potential from a particular virtual multiplicity, Deleuze calls this process "the actualisation of the virtual," and he calls the new manifestation "the actual."[48] Thus, the process of the sky transforming from blue to yellow– that is, the sky shifting from bluing to yellowing– is an actualization of the virtual power of the sky.[49]

The virtual is thus a field of differential relations rather than fixed identities. For example, the virtual of the coloring power of the sky is a product of, among other things, the differential power of atmospheric pressure, in which high and low pressure differences drive the process of pressure changes.[50] These pressure changes

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47.   Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 212, 239, 245.

48.   Ibid., 185-86.

49.   Yet the virtual multiplicity that conditions the actual coloring of the sky, for instance, is not identifiable with any particular color, nor is it merely a trajectory tracing all colors the sky has turned in the recent past, and neither is it a monstrous agglomeration of all the colors the sky might turn. Rather, it is better to think of the virtual as the structure by which the sky has color at all. According to Deleuze, the coloring of the sky is a dynamic system that is produced by means of intensive forces such as the variable pressure, movement and composition of the atmosphere as well as shifting fields of light. When combined, these forces create a system in which the sky becomes capable of exhibiting certain effects of light.

50.   For a fascinating history of the search for the forces behind the coloring of the sky, see Gotz Hoeppe, *Why the Sky Is Blue: Discovering the Color of Life* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2007).

then govern the emergence of particular weather conditions that we perceive as the "sky bluing" and so forth– and, hence, these particular weather conditions constitute an actualization of differential forces. Also, this differential power of atmospheric pressure interacts with other differential elements, such as the position of the sun as it changes in relation to a particular rotating point on the earth's surface, to create effects of light. Thus, differential elements (the atmospheric composition, the quality of light entering the atmosphere, the position of the light source relative to an observer, etc.) in a system of reciprocal relationships together produce the coloring powers of the sun. Thus, we may think of a virtual multiplicity as a structure of potential powers defined by differential elements in reciprocal relationships; from this structure, actual things emerge.[51] A text can be thought of in the same way: the differential relations between lexemes, sentences, paragraphs and longer units create a potential field of reading that can be actualized in different ways.

One important distinction can be made between the temporal aspects of the possible and the virtual. As we see in biblical scholarship, the possible functions as if it were an aspect of the past, while the virtual allows us to think in terms of the future. When one speaks of the "possibilities" of a text, these possibilities seem to already exist as fully-formed situations. Thus, the possibilities of a text are locked in at the moment of its production. If one wants to seek out possibilities, one must then dive into the past to recover their forms. On the contrary, the virtual is always set in the future, since it is comprised of undetermined but determinable– that is, yet-to-be-determined– capabilities and powers. In this way, the virtual dimension of a text is always to-be-read, holding out the potential for future readings.[52] One can, in other

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51.   Likewise, the differential field of phonemes or graphemes, morphemes and lexemes, as well as their grammatical relationships, constitutes the virtual multiplicity of linguistics. Deleuze introduces this example in Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 193.

words, read a text in a novel way that, nevertheless, respects the contours of the text.

The virtual is a dynamic, rather than static, structure. Virtual multiplicities change, and, as they change, so do the capabilities of their actualization. In the case of language, over time particular structures of graphemes transform, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly. Lexemes and grammatical rules change, too, and the virtual structure of linguistics shifts with them. Since Deleuze posits the virtual as a dynamic process by which every actual thing emerges, the concept of the virtual can in this way help us to explain the emergence of novelty. As Steven Shaviro writes,

> [The virtual] is the impelling force, or the principle, that allows each actual entity to appear (to manifest itself) as something new, something without precedence or resemblance, something that has never existed in the universe in quite that way before.[53]

As helpful as it is to catalogue possible meanings of a text in the ancient world, this approach cannot help us to understand readings that emerge without precedence. Thinking of the biblical text as a dynamic virtual field, however, explains its generative power.

In order to help his reader imagine the virtual, Deleuze claims: "Purely actual objects do not exist. Every actual surrounds itself with a "cloud of the virtual."[54] At other times, Deleuze describes the virtual as "coiled within" the actual.[55] Deleuze's varied metaphors underscore an important point: one cannot directly perceive the virtual. It is not present in the way we think of presence: one cannot touch it, or see

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52. See Jacques Derrida, *Without Alibi* (trans. P Kamuf; Stanford: Stanford University, 2002).

53. S. Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2009), 34.

54. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II* (New York: Columbia University, 2007), 148.

55. Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: The Complete Text* (trans. R. Howard; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), 46.

it. One can only perceive the actual. Yet, due to the continuous changes undergone by the actual, one may indirectly intuit the reality and even the general structure of the virtual. The virtual is, in a strange way, a present-absence. Both images, the "cloud of the virtual" hovering around an actual body and the virtual "coiled within" an actual body, suggest that the virtual field structures but also constantly inheres within the world as we perceive it.

We can now extrapolate several important features of Deleuze's virtual/actual distinction as it relates to reception history of biblical texts.

1. No single form of a text, and no single reading of any form of a text, exhausts that text's potential force. Every biblical text is surrounded by a "cloud of the virtual" that is every bit as real as any historical instantiation of that text or its meaning.

2. This virtual is structured by differential elements, differential relations, and singularities. In particular, the virtual aspect of a biblical text exists as a differential relationship of a series of differential graphemes that are reciprocally determinable. That is, the text is undetermined *but* determinable through the process of reading. Texts are not completely "indeterminate," or unable to be determined; they are able to be determined, but are not determined in advance of a reading.

3. The virtual most often actualizes in divergent ways. That is, we should not expect most readers in the history of the reading of a particular text to arrive at the exact same determination of the elements of that text, because processes tend to give rise to different actual manifestations. We can, however, think in terms of long-term tendencies of a process; this is addressed below.

4. The virtual conditions a process, not a final product. We should expect to find a broad diversity of readings of a biblical text whose forms change throughout time, just as we should expect to find a broad diversity of mammals whose forms that

change throughout time. As a result, no actualization is intrinsically better than any other, since there is no ideal form or essence that conditions the process. In the same way, no human is more human than any other human, and there is no origin or telos to the genetic process of humanity. Within this process, we may see divergence as a mode of experimentation with form. The virtual asks us to think not, "What should a human look like?" but rather, "Of what forms is the human body capable? What can the human form do?" As it applies to texts, the virtual asks us, "How might this text mean or function?"

5. The virtual is *itself* a process, but one separated from the process of any particular actualization. When a reader approaches a biblical text, that reader seeks to actualize the virtual semantic capabilities of the actual manuscript at hand. This reading process is an *actualization* of the virtual. Yet every biblical text is also itself a process, as its own text undergoes forces of composition, redaction, alteration, emendation, canonization, standardization, translation, citation, commentary, and enculturation. These forces alter the virtual capabilities of the text, but the continued co-existence of actualizations of earlier forms of the text retain the possibility of revisiting previous modes of its structure. In this way, each reading actualizes a text, giving it local significance by making manifest a particular construction, or determination, of the various elements that compose a particular edition of a text.[56]

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56.   For example, the Aleppo Codex manifests one local determination of the textual process of the book of Job. A reading of the book of Job as found in the Aleppo Codex manifests one local determination of the book of Job, as it is found in the Aleppo Codex. Below, I will distinguish these processes in more detail.

2.2   *Problems and Solutions*

Building on his distinction between the virtual and the actual, Deleuze rethinks the relationship between *problems* and *solutions*.[57] In general, scholars understand problems to represent a gap or lack in the sense of the object of study. For example, the question, "What is the meaning of the book of Job?" makes manifest a lack of clarity in the object itself– namely, the lack of a clear expression of a singular meaning in the book of Job. Problems thus emerge from the object of study itself, and require a singular solution that narrows a set of logically possible solutions in order to discover the real answer. According to this point of view, a problem is merely a question that has not yet found its correct answer. Solutions are the primary focus of inquiry, and as such problems exist only to be extinguished.

We have already seen the prevailing logic of problems and solutions at work in the above critique of textual criticism.[58] Through the years, many textual critics have believed that that there exists a natural and representable model for each biblical text that normatively defines the identity of local texts that attempt to represent it.[59] Good copies are not identified as the original or model but nonetheless exemplify it, and bad copies are simulacra that simulate the model while not participating in it because of errors, additions, and so on. Thus, until recently biblical scholarship as-

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57.   Ibid., 179-82. For a basic introduction to this concept, see T May, *Gilles Deleuze*, 83-86.

58.   See chapters 2-3 of this dissertation.

59.   See, for example, Ronald Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition," *VT* 58 (2008): 330

sumed that there should be one correct way to present a biblical text. This was the nature of the problem: which text is closest to the model? As Deleuze points out, this construction of the problem already determines the natures of its solutions in advance. The solution must then be a singular text that most closely resembles the model text.

Yet, following in the trail of scholars such as Eugene Ulrich, I have argued that there are many potential ways to present the ancient form of a biblical text, and that we can categorize these presentations in many different ways. For example, we may arrange texts by their aesthetic quality, theological depth, historical priority, or use by a particular religious community. None of these criteria for organizing texts, however, has any necessary precedence over any other, and all of these criteria are open for discussion. Is there one form of the book of Proverbs, for example, that is the most aesthetic form? What if we thought of the arguments for the most aesthetic form of Proverbs not as if they were uncovering a real feature of the text, but as if they were constructing the very aesthetic qualities that it sought. Would it not be more helpful to think of the problem (i.e. "Which text shall we present in this critical edition?") in this way? This conclusion suggests that the *problem* of textual criticism must be rethought, which will necessarily change the types of solutions one could supply.

Likewise, many biblical scholars have understood the problem of reading to be the question: What is the meaning of this text? In turn, the solution to a question such as this is the reading that most closely approximates the meaning. Thus, many biblical scholars have held the conviction that there exists a model reading that yields a model meaning, which is a particular meaning by which all other readings or meanings are judged. By this logic, some attempts at representing the original meaning may be deemed interesting, but nonetheless categorized as "not the

solution."

Deleuze argues that the virtual/actual distinction asks us to see the concept of problems and their solutions in a different way. Instead of imagining that problems are merely simple questions that have yet to find the single correct solution, Deleuze asks us to consider problems as fields of inquiry and experimentation. If we consider problems in these broader terms without assuming that a single pre-determined solution, or even that a pre-extant hierarchy of solutions, will extinguish the problem, then we can think more clearly about processes and the means by which they evolve.

For example, Deleuze proposes that all local populations of biological species present different solutions to the general problem posed by their environments. There is no "correct" species and no natural hierarchy of species; rather, all species present different ways in which to solve their own environment-problem. The environment-problem does not propose a single solution that would extinguish its questions; on the contrary, its conditions engender a "domain of solvability" that are "relative to the process of the self-determination of the problem."[60] As the problem changes, the types of potential solutions change as well. If a species fails to solve the environment-problem, or if the local terms of the problem change due to environmental changes and the species cannot adapt to solve the new terms of the environment-problem, then the species will no longer exist. Yet each species that survives continues to testify to the many different ways in which one might solve the "environment problem." As Deleuze writes, "An organism is nothing if not the solution to a problem, as are each of its differenciated organs, such as the eye which solves a light 'problem.'"[61] Here, Deleuze uses the oddly spelled word "differenciation" to re-

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60.   Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 122.
61.   Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 211.

fer to the process of actualizing the virtual. Deleuze summarizes as follows: "Each differenciation is a local integration or a local solution which then connects with others in the overall solution."[62] The overall "light problem," in which species must find ways to capture and process the information that light provides, can be solved in many different ways, as attested to by various types of animal eyes, as well as light-sensitive photoreceptive proteins employed by bacteria.[63] Deleuze argue that "the problem of light" is a problematic field, not a particular question with a particular answer.

In the same way, language itself is a global solution to the global problem, one might even say the *virtual* problem, of communication, and individual languages incarnate particular, or *actual*, solutions. Moreover, individual speakers actualize the virtual structure of an individual language in order to create particular enunciations. As Paul Patton explains:

> Language in general may be regarded as a solution to the problem of how to communicate an infinite variety of semantic content using a relatively small number of signifying elements. The Idea of language as such, or the transcendental Problem of language, will therefore be a virtual structure which includes all of the sets of relations between signifying elements which may be actualised in particular languages. Determinate sets of relations between phonemes will be incarnated in the particular languages which are solutions to the problem of language as such.[64]

According to Patton, if we think of language as a particular solution to a general "communication problem," we may situate particular languages within the broader history of solutions to the communication problem *as a means of understanding the*

62.   Ibid.

63.   See M. van der Horst et al., "Photosensing in Chemotrophic, Non-Phototrophic Bacteria: Let There be Light Sensing Too," *Trends in Microbiology* 15:12 (2007): 554-62.

64.   Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2000), 41.

terms of the broader problem more clearly. Deleuze argues that one may analyze the

similarities and differences of actual solutions, and thus

> determine the conditions of the problem which progressively specify
> the fields of solvability in such a way that the statement contains the
> seed of the solution. This is a radical reversal of the problem-solution
> relation...[65]

By shifting the focus on solutions to a focus on problems, we may investigate the

ways in which the construction of a particular problem creates a particular field of

acceptable solutions.[66] And when we analyze a virtual problem through its field of ac-

tual solutions, we may then discern the general structure of the problem. Here, it

would be helpful to reapply Deleuze's concept of problems to the discussion of con-

text from the previous chapter: contexts are not solid things with a given set of rela-

tions– on the contrary, contexts are *problematic structures*. The events of 167 BCE in

Jerusalem constitute a problem with not one, but many, potential solutions. This

problematic situation faces the participants in the events of 167 BCE as well as any

contemporary observers or later historians. Some construals of that context are fail-

ures, just like some biological species fail to meet the conditions of their problematic

field. But surely in the chaotic world of Jerusalem in 167 BCE, the perspectives of the

several groups formed "incompossible (or "mutually exclusive") worlds," in which

> several worlds appear as instances of solution for one and the same
> problem... These diverse events form so many instances
> corresponding to the problem and determining the genesis of the
> solutions. We must therefore understand that incompossible worlds,
> despite their incompossibility, have something objectively in
> common... The incompossible worlds become the variants of the same
> story.[67]

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65. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 179-80.
66. For a description of Galois' group theory, see DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy,* 150-54.
67. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 114.

Thus, Deleuze readily admits that one does not simply construct the problem and its solutions from thin air, as if by subjective whim. On the contrary, one must locate the contours of a particular problem in order to discover any feasible particular solution. Deleuze offers a particularly interesting example:

> Learning to swim or learning a foreign language means composing the singular points of one's own body or one's own language with those of another shape or element which tears us apart but also propels us into a hitherto unknown and unheard-of world of problems.[68]

In this passage, Deleuze asks us to think of the event of swimming. Imagine "swimming across a lake" as a problem: doubtless, it can be solved in many ways. There are certainly infinite ways to fail at this task– one might not move one's arms, and begin to sink, or one might tire a bit out from shore and return without crossing it– but are there not as many ways of successfully crossing?

What, then, are the conditions for locating a successful solution? In swimming, one must compose the "singular points," or particular elements, of one's body in such a way that it coordinates with the opposing element of the water. In this way, the problematic field is composed of both the general conditions, such as gravity and the composition of the human body, as well as the particular conditions of the particular human body in question (e.g., its particular strength and capabilities, its buoyancy) and the the particular body of water (i.e., its turbulence, density, size, etc.) These conditions of the problem specify the field of solvability for this task, providing the conditions for success as well as failure.

Yet one always has to hold open the possibility of surprising solutions emerging from changing conditions. The conditions of the problem may change at any moment: if a storm whips up, the solutions given at one time may no longer function– a

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68.   Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 192.

swimmer must adapt to the conditions in the water. Or, from the side of solutions, some crossings may even be so influential as to change the sorts of solutions deemed acceptable: the introduction of the front crawl stroke, for example, changed the very field of potential solutions for the event of crossing a lake.[69] As Manuel Delanda argues,

> What makes a material system problematic, what continuously demands new explanations, is precisely the open-endedness... or the multiple stable states in which it may exist and the abrupt transitions it may undergo.[70]

If a material system changes over time, then it makes sense to think of that system as an open-ended problem. Thus, individual solutions only offer contingent, provisional resolutions to the problem. In short, a successful crossing of a lake does not strive to the replicate a model. We could ask, along with Spinoza, "How *might* one cross a lake?" instead of, "What *is* a lake crossing?" In this way, the search for solutions becomes a method of experimentation that seeks to stretch the borders of a problem's solvability. As James Williams concludes, "We learn to respond well to problems by experimenting with cases of solutions which, thereby, reveal the conditions of the problem. Learning is, therefore, indirect."[71]

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69.   I should note, however, that there is often significant cultural resistance to restatements of the problem: for example, consider the fascinating introduction of the front crawl stroke to British competitive swimming, which occurred in 1844. In London, two Ojibway Native Americans named Flying Gull and Tobacco exhibited the speed produced by their radical front crawl stroke, yet observers called the motions "totally un-European," saying "they lash the water violently with their arms, like the sails of a windmill, and beat downwards with their feet, blowing with force, and forming grotesque antics." For the next thirty years, English swimmers kept to the breast stroke and avoided the front crawl stroke, even though it yielded impressive results. E. Littel, *Littel's Living Age* (vol. 1; London: T.H. Carter & Co, 1844), 217.

70.   DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 178.

71.   James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's' Difference and Repetition': A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2003), 159.

The dominant manner of approaching the problem-solution relationship relies on the Platonic image of the model and the copy, whereas Deleuze approaches the problem-solution relationship through the non-representational distinction between the virtual and the actual. As mentioned above, a virtual problem tends to produce divergent and novel solutions, and not repetitions of the same; in other words, we should assume that solutions will not look much alike. Exact resemblance is not the natural tendency of any system.

We may also think of the process of the formation of a text, as well as the history of the reading of a text, like the crossing of a lake: that is, as problematic fields instead of simple questions. Individual manuscripts and individual readings constitute particular solutions to the problematic field of the text; moreover, we should assume that these manuscripts and readings will diverge. The problematic text calls for a limitless series of potential solutions, and since the problematic text *itself* changes over time, and the contexts in which it is read also change over time, there is no *telos* for this process. If the conditions of reading a text change as a text travels through various contexts, the field of solutions itself changes, much like the rules of swimming change when one moves from a fresh water river to a salt water ocean. One cannot swim in the Dead Sea in exactly the same way that one can swim in the local pool, just as someone in fifth-century Rome could not read the biblical text in exactly the same way as an eighteenth-century German biblical critic. In different contexts, the text is capable of manifesting different sorts of powers.

In the case of the problem of reading, we should assume that there are many ways of actualizing the virtual of the text. Each event of editing or reading a text offers the writer/reader the chance to engage in an open-ended process whose end result is neither necessary nor predetermined. A reception historian, then, surveys the many different solutions to the problematic field of the text, and attempts to dis-

cern patterns, or tendencies and limit cases within this field, without drawing firm boundaries or creating necessary hierarchies between solutions. One could, of course, organize solutions in many ways, and distribute them into many sorts of categories. Texts and readings can be sorted by means of historical priority, aesthetic quality, theological profundity, exegetical clarity, and so on. But none of these categories are "natural" or "primary," and no set of criteria takes precedence over any other.

Moreover, if we think of a biblical text as a virtual problem, then we may avoid the serious charge that a text might as well mean just anything at all. Since the text is a problematic field, the reader must account for its various parts for it to be an actual solution. The structure of a particular virtual problem, such as a biblical text, conditions its own actualization (that is, the process of producing a particular solution, such as an actual reading of a biblical text). And the local conditions of the problem, such as the readers, their interpretive communities and reading protocols, and the general historical context, work together to further delimit the structure of a particular problem. The general "environment problem" may appear in radically different ways to different species within that environment (surely the problem of the rainforest manifests itself differently to spiders than it does to birds), but nonetheless, it remains the general "environment problem". Likewise, texts may pose their virtual problems to different communities in very different guises, but the virtual structure of the problem may be (virtually) identical.

In this way, one may make distinctions about readings: some are successful, some are failures. But by altering the way in which we think of problems and their solutions, we can spend less time arguing over which solution is *the* real one, or even delineating between the primary meaning and other meanings. Instead, we can investigate the problematic structure of the text by examining the ways in which it cul-

tivates certain sorts of solutions, or readings, and the ways in which it does not culti-
vate others. This sort of exercise would help us to learn more about the text as it
actually functions over time, amongst various regimes of interpretive practices.

In short: as discussed in the previous chapter, the meaning of a text can be
understood as a reorganization of its signifying structure. Many such reorganizations
are possible, primarily because of the necessary flexibility and iterability of language.
As such, a text generates a virtual field that may be actualized in many different
ways. There are many ways to organize and categorize actual reading-solutions, and
it would be far more fruitful to explore the variety within the text's field of solvability
than it would be to focus our efforts on always locating the earliest probable
meaning.

2.3   Topology and Readings

At this point, I may ask how particular solutions are produced, and more specifically
how we may discern between solutions and non-solutions. To do so, I must clarify
briefly our notions of "structure."

I begin with the illustration of the game of chess. At minimum, in order to
play the game of chess one must have a chess board and various pieces. No chess
piece "means" anything in particular outside of the structure of the game of chess,
and likewise a chess board has no particular significance outside of of the game of
chess, either. These pieces and the board are what Deleuze calls "differential ele-
ments" that only find an identity, or a significance, within their set. That is, only
when the entire set of chess pieces is assembled on a board does any particular piece
find its identity and significance. Moreover, the rules of chess stipulate a particular

manner of relation between the chess pieces: knights may move a certain way, pawns may move in another manner, and so on. Thus, the chess pieces exhibit a particular set of differential relations. These are considered "differential" relations because these movements are relations of change: the way a knight may move makes sense *in relation to* the pawn's movement, and so on.

To this field of differential elements and the field of differential relations, Deleuze would remind us of another important element of structure: namely, "singularities."[72] In Deleuze's writings, singularities can seem to mean two very different things, yet these two definitions are aspects of the same element. On the one hand, singularities seem to be sensitive points in which a system acts in an unusual manner: the boiling or freezing point of water act as singularities, for example, since these are sensitive points at which water radically changes. On the other hand, singularities can seem to function as "rules" or the "tendencies of a system."[73] For example, one could call the boiling point of water "the rule of boiling," which emphasizes the general regularity of this occurrence and downplays the specific oddity of the temperature point. Both of these aspects of singularities are important for reception historians; as a result, below I will revisit singularities.

In chess, the set of differential relations proper to chess tells us how a knight moves; but when a knight lands on another piece, something sensitive, or special, occurs. At this point, a piece is captured, and the pieces move in a manner not accounted for by the general relationships of piece movements. One could call this "the rule of capture." Another singularity emerges at the point of the king: when the king is captured, the game ends. Likewise, one could call this "the rule of the king." Yet

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72.   DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy,* 15-16.
73.   Ibid., 14.

another singularity would occur at the far edge of the board: if a pawn finds the far edge, that pawn may become a queen. Any such set of differential elements, differential relations and singularities constitutes the structure of a virtual multiplicity.

Chess, then, presents a problematic field that may be solved in countless ways: how might a chess game be played? There is no limit to the permutations a game might take, and no model-match which each individual match attempts faithfully to replicate. Rather, some players might even invent new techniques and new strategies that would upset the commonly-held assumptions about how a chess game must look, which would then alter the problematic structure of the game for future players.

Yet we know that structures are not static; even the rules of games undergo changes, mutations, and mistaken applications. How might the structure of chess submit to forces of change? Imagine, for example, playing chess with someone who accidentally moved a pawn like a rook. You might say, "That's not right." A use of a differential element, such as a chess piece, in a manner that ignores its differential relationship to the other elements produces a disruption of the process of a game of chess. This disruption might, if allowed, expand or alter the virtual field of chess. Now, imagine your opponent refused to allow you to move your pawns two squares forward on their opening move. I imagine you might say, "No, that's not how chess is played." Your opponent may say, "Well, that's how I play chess." Here we would see a slight difference in the rules between the players, but we might not necessarily claim that they are playing an altogether different game. These sorts of small adjustments can slowly change the structure of games, languages, cultures, and even biblical texts. And as they change, the potential powers, and thus actual products, of these structures changes, as well. That is, at some point the chess pieces may move in different patterns.

But suppose your opponent said, "Every time you take a piece, you must then hold a cookie-baking competition to decide if the piece survives or not." Perhaps you might agree to play the game with these newly negotiated rules; but we can all agree that at that instant you would have stopped playing chess. Instead, you would begin playing a different game. Of course, this new game would be related to chess, possessing a related virtual, problematic field. But it would nonetheless constitute a different game, likely with its actual manifestations diverging from those of a chess game. From this example, we might deduce that a change in the structure of singularities can produce a new virtual field. In turn, this new virtual field would engender different capacities and powers, and would incarnate itself in different ways than the virtual field produced by the previous configuration of singularities. Thus, one can experiment within the game of chess, one might even disrupt a game of chess, but also one might introduce a distortion that alters the game itself, and thus would produce a difference in kind, not merely in degree.

In this way, Deleuze would call slight differences (i.e. a different way to play chess, or a different chess-game) different actualizations of the same virtual multiplicity. At the point at which we begin to play a different sort of game altogether, Deleuze would argue that we find a distinction between two different virtual multiplicities. In terms of reading a text, we can begin to think of different readings as different actualizations of the same virtual field. Deleuze would call the process of re-reading in such a way as to produce a quite different but technically compelling account of the text "counter-actualization."[74] Likewise, we can think of simple misreadings as disruptions of the text, and we can think of a reading that seems to re-construct the text in a manner unlike itself as the production of a different virtual field.

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74.   Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 150.

None of these activities are naturally good or bad, and none are necessarily better than any other. They simply perform different tasks. Disruption can be as productive as it is mistaken; this process undergirds humor, paradox and nonsense. Creative distortion can prove fruitful; this process guides the best sorts of "re-makes" in film, for example. And the process of counter-actualization is most familiar to us in the guise of the new but convincing reading of an old text that had long been thought to have given up its final secrets. But how does one distinguish between them?

In order to conceptualize the boundary point between reading and re-constructing, we may find it helpful to think in terms of topology, or the study of the variable actualizations of virtual shapes.[75] Topology is a branch of mathematics that studies the properties that are preserved when an object is deformed, as if by stretching, but without tearing or suturing any aspects of its surface.[76] If we imagine the space of a rubber ball, its topological features would be those that do not change even if deform its shape by stepping on it or throwing it forcefully against a wall. This approach to space is quite different than Euclidean geometry. From a Euclidean per-

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75.   I should be clear about my appropriation of topology, as well as evolutionary biology. The mathematical and scientific metaphors that I have been cultivating throughout this chapter are not meant to directly explain the process of textual development and reading. Yet biblical studies has long been dominated by particular metaphors, including hylomorphic metaphors, that emphasize stasis and final products. In order to develop a more process-oriented view of the biblical text, I have found it helpful to look at the way in which scholarly discourses familiar with processes in general - namely, evolutionary biology, topology, and dynamical systems theory - theorize processes. I am not using math and science as a blueprint for textual studies; rather, I am interested in locating the tools with which scholars study and conceptualize processes. These general concepts can then guide the particulars of studying textual processes.

76.   For an introductory overview of topology for non-mathematicians, see N. Huggett, *Everywhere and Everywhen: Adventures in Physics and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University, 2010), 31-41, 64-88.

spective, when we step on a rubber ball, it takes on a different shape than it had before that event: it becomes an oblate spheroid, as opposed to a sphere. Between topology and Euclidean gemoetry, we see different approaches to the identity of an object. As Levi Bryant explains:

> Taking the example of a triangle as a being composed of three singularities or points along with three relations, a Euclidean view emphasizes the static form possessed by the triangle, its formal identity, while a topological point of view emphasizes the dynamisms or adventures the relations between these singularities are able to undergo. Thus, for instance, a Euclidean view is prone to emphasize the different types of triangles such as right, isosceles, and equilateral triangles, while topology thinks the manner in which these triangles can be transformed into one another and other shapes through operations of stretching, pulling, and twisting.[77]

Thinking in Euclidean terms, we may imagine that there are a pre-given number of possible chess games that exist in invariant forms; in "topological" terms, we may imagine that part of the excitement and importance of chess derives from its dynamism, or the "adventures" that a contingent game of chess might undergo.[78]

Thus, topology helps us to re-think identity and the boundaries between structures in a new way. Instead of looking for a close resemblance of form, topology pays attention to the general coherence of the structure. Two objects that look quite different may in fact be "homeomorphic," or topologically equivalent. An old joke claims that topologists cannot tell the difference between a doughnut and a coffee cup, because the two shapes can be morphed into each other without any tearing or suturing: thus, the coffee cup and doughnut are topologically equivalent.[79] While

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77.   Levi Bryant, *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 2008), 68-69.

78.   Those interested in topology more broadly should consult M. Kline, *Mathematics for the Nonmathematician* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1985), 452-77.

topologists can, of course, differentiate between the two objects, they nevertheless posit no *topological* distinction between the two. But if one bends the structure to the point at which the structure rips or breaks, it is at that point that the identity of the structure changes. If one wanted to turn a sphere into a coffee cup, one would have to tear a hole to create the handle.[80]

Topology is also a very interesting and useful metaphor because it pays close attention to the context of a set of points. Euclidean geometry assumes that all shapes exist within the featureless space of a flat plane. Topology, on the other hand, asks about the ways in which a form changes as it is embedded within a variety of curved and folded spaces. In short, topology gives us a way to imagine one form as it traverses a series of different contexts. The image below shows how a spherical space alters the local neighborhood of points surrounding a triangle's singularities: that is, the lines between the corners of the triangle are bent by the space in which the triangle is embedded. If that same triangle were embedded in a space shaped like a crumpled-up piece of paper, the lines connecting its corners would have jagged edges and protrude at points along with the space itself. In terms of reading a text, or even translating a text, topological terms help us to break away from Platonic theories of reading. Instead of asking a question such as, "Did that commentator give the correct meaning of the text?," or even, "Did that translator give the right translation?" one could ask a more topological question: namely, "In what ways might one bend, stretch, and fold this text in order to read it differently without destroying its form?"

If one encounters a particular reading of a text that does not account for an

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80. Huggett, *Everywhere and Everywhen: Adventures in Physics and Philosophy,* 38.

80. See the image printed in I. Peterson, *The Mathematical Tourist: New and Updated Snapshots of Modern Mathematics* (New York: Owl Books, 1998), 59.

important feature of that text– say, for example, that one encounters a reading of the book of Job in which Job's speeches are never mentioned– one could certainly argue that the reading has undergone a "structural mutation." That is, the reading seems to actualize a different text than the one it claims to be reading; it manifests a different set of singularities and thus emerges from a distinct virtual structure. In topological terms, the reading claims to be a triangle, but instead it shows us a square. A reading that bends but does not break the structure of the text, in the words of Derrida, "must be intrinsic and remain within the text."[81]

Or, with respect to context, instead of the Euclidean question: "What is the correct context in which to read this text?" one might ask a more topological question, such as: "In what ways does this particular context re-shape the reading of this text?" Clearly noticeable topological stretching of texts occurs at points in space and time during which great change, and sometimes horrifying change, altered the terrain in which texts could be read. For example, the oft-cited example of the Shoah has most certainly shaken the fabric of the biblical text by changing the problematic field in which religious texts may propose their solutions. As a result, this event and its aftermath have forced readers to ask different questions and seek different answers when reading biblical texts.[82] Other world-changing events have altered landscapes, as well: the event of the Renaissance, for example, altered the structure of cultural space in which biblical texts could be read, giving critical scholars a different problematic in which to ask new questions and seek different answers.[83]

Yet the space in which a reading occurs does not determine the reading by it-

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81.   Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (trans. GC Spivak; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1998), 158

82.   See, for example, the essays collected in Tod Linafelt, ed., *Strange Fire: Reading the Bible After the Holocaust* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000).

83.   See Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*, 117-36.

self: one can still shift the placement of the text in other directions, and stretch the shape of the text within a context. In part, this is because the space of a context itself must be determined.[84] The jagged shape of a post-Shoah context for a contemporary European Jew may appear quite different to a neighbor oblivious of those recent events. If that neighbor learns of the events of the twentieth century, however, it is possible to re-construe his or her context. Of course, readings cannot occur outside of contexts, and contexts do impact reading, but context cannot alone determine the reading, because context itself must be determined, and can always be re-determined.

As one might imagine, determining the relationship between text and context is less clear-cut with reading texts than it is with the topology of a triangle. Nevertheless, the metaphorical shift from Euclidean to topological thought would help us to think less in terms of accuracy with respect to a pre-defined meaning and more in terms of the various powers or capabilities of a text. We may then ask, "What can a text do?" without answering, either, "one thing," or "a few things," or "just anything at all."

In the previous chapter, we established that the reading of a text usually results in a re-organization of the text that creates a supplementary text, such as a commentary (e.g., "the meaning of this text is...") that itself must be read.[85] As Derri-

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84.   See chapter 5 of this dissertation.

85.   Deleuze names this problem the "paradox of infinite proliferation," and this problem both sustains the very usage of language at the same time that it limits its function. A name, for instance, serves as both a "thing" and its "sense." The name Lamentations, for example, is both an object ("Lamentations is the name of the book") and yet also has a meaning ("that means that the book is a series of cries of distress.") Yet the meaning will never be stated in the same words as the name itself, since that would be mere tautology. Thus, the sense of a statement must be another statement, and thus we fall into Bradley's regression. Deleuze gives the example of this regression in a

da argues,

> to produce this signifying structure [of a reading] obviously cannot consist of reproducing, by the effaced and respectful doubling of commentary, the conscious, voluntary, intentional relationship that the writer institutes in his exchanges with the history to which he belongs thanks to the element of language.[86]

Reading a text requires, to some extent, transforming it. Perhaps, as Derrida claims, the most "respectful" reading of a text would not be a reading at all, since it would refuse to alter the text– it would simply repeat it.[87] (Yet, as Borges reminds us, even repetition is an alteration.)[88] Since every reading then produces a restructuring of the text, the metaphor of topological transformation seems particularly apt. One may look at the relationship between source text and supplementary text not in terms of exact resemblance, which would group successful and unsuccessful readings by their adherence to the model. Rather, one could think in terms of transformations that retain the topological structure of the text but also set it in motion, read it in varying contexts, and thus learn far more about the capacities of the text. In the same way, we would learn more about particular people by seeing them in various contexts,

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conversation from Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking-Glass: " The name of the song is called 'Haddocks' Eyes.'" "Oh, that's the name of the song, is it?" Alice said, trying to feel interested. "No, you don't understand," the Knight said, looking a little vexed. "That's what the name is called. The name really is 'The Aged Aged Man.'" "Then I ought to have said 'That's what the song is called'?" Alice corrected herself. "No, you oughtn't: that's quite another thing! The song is called 'Ways And Means': but that's only what it's called, you know!" "Well, what is the song, then?" said Alice, who was by this time completely bewildered. "I was coming to that," the Knight said. "The song really is 'A-sitting On A Gate'..." Quoted in Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 29.

86.   Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* 158.

87.   As Geoffrey Bennington writes: "...there could be no reading absolutely respectful of a text, for a total respect would forbid one from even touching the text, opening the book..." Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida,* 165.

88.   J. L. Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote," in *Ficciones* (New York: Grove, 1962).

pushed and pulled in various ways, than we would learn about them if we only saw them in their comfortable houses. When we look at how a text produces meaning in various settings it tells us more, not less, about the nature of that text. As Manuel Delanda writes,

> The point here is that a key ingredient for combinatorial richness, and hence, for an essentially open future, is heterogeneity of components. Another key element are processes which allow heterogeneous elements to come together, that is, processes which allow the articulation of the diverse as such.[89]

If we vary the inputs, the readers, the contexts, and the heterogenous perspectives from which they read a text, we will find a combinatorial richness. This richness stands in contrast to the readings produced by most biblical scholars when they attempt to replicate the exact inputs of the text's initial reading process, ostensibly in the mind of the author or first audience. Thus, the process of reading grapples with an actual physical manuscript of a text, returning to its virtual potentialities to locate its singularities and then re-actualize the text into a supplementary signifying structure. In other words, when we read a text, we ask anew the question of what that text can do.[90] Thus, topological thought gives us different resources with which to think

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89. Manuel DeLanda, "Deleuze, Diagrams and the Open-Ended Becoming of the World," in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures* (ed. E. Grosz; Ithaca: Cornell University, 1999), 38.

90. This is not to say that we should avoid careful readings of texts that account for the semantics of the language that existed at the moment of their production (if the text in question does have a singular moment of production). Even the much-maligned Derrida allows that, "This moment of doubling commentary should no doubt have its place in a critical reading. To recognize and respect all its classical exigencies is not easy and requires all the instruments of traditional criticism. Without this recognition and this respect, critical production would risk developing in any direction at all and authorize itself to say almost anything. But this indispensable guardrail has always only protected, it has never opened, a reading." A topological orientation to reading texts would emphasize the opening of readings while remaining "within" the text. Derrida, *Of*

about form.

Biblical studies has, of course, dealt extensively with questions of form, and has at times exhibited a struggle between more Euclidean modes of thought and relatively topological modes. Form critics have, at times, slipped into what is called a "hylomorphic" mode of thought by assuming that texts have a basic content that is shaped into a particular form by means of a pre-existent, determined genre.[91] At its basic level, hylomorphism claims that transcendent form imposes itself on matter, thus creating recognizable entities.[92] When one imagines that form is external to matter, there one finds hylomorphism. In this line of thought, forms simply exist and continually reproduce themselves by shaping otherwise shapeless matter.

Deleuze encourages us to think not in terms of hylomorphism, but rather in terms of morphogenetic processes, or "processes that generate forms."[93] In a morphogenetic process, elements in the material world arrange themselves in such a way that form emerges immanently from within that process. Thus in evolutionary biology, the form of an animal species develops over time. Species are not particular, pre-given forms of animal that are imposed on hunks of matter; rather, species are

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Grammatology, 158.

91.   See the comments concerning the Apocalypse Group's definition of the Apocalyptic genre in Carol A. Newsom, "Spying Out the Land: A Report From Genology," in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (ed. R. Boer; Semeia Studies 63; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).

92.   For an overview or Aristotle's theory of hylomorphism, see Christopher Shields, *Aristotle* (London: Routledge, 2007), 53-64. Note the critique of hylomorphism, following the work of Gilbert Simondon, in Adrian MacKenzie, *Transductions: Bodies and Machines at Speed* (London: Continuum, 2006). Deleuze treats hylomorphism in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (trans. B. Massumi; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987), 409.

93.   Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 214, 251; Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque,* 191 .For an explanation, see DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy,* 4, 10-13.

contingent, ever-changing forms produced by the fully material process of specia-tion. No species' form is imposed from without; it emerges from the process itself. In the same way, form critics have at times acted as if genres existed above the texts that they explained, imposing their form from beyond. More recently, form critics have sought descriptions of genres that locate form within the interactions between various actual texts.[94]

In a sense, form criticism itself emerged from a morphogenetic insight: Gunkel argued that texts should not be judged merely by external similarity, but also by their function. How do texts work? Gunkel asked.[95] Throughout its history, form criticism has often pushed in the direction of topological thought: form example, James Muilenberg rightly pushed form critics to look more closely at the individual deformations of the genre in each text, to analyze the way it stretches and bends the genre in its own way, in order to move away from a theory of transcendent genres.[96] As Muilenburg argued, these deformations of form in each biblical text are not aber-rations, but are rather explorations of the variety of capabilities available to a partic-ular form.

Other methodological folds within biblical criticism have historically been less critical of hylomorphism. It should not come as a surprise that textual criticism often uses the vocabulary of hylomorphism: type, archetype, and hyparchetype all describe the hylomorphic imposition of a model's form onto inert matter.[97] But Eugene Ul-rich, for example, has recently pushed us to take seriously the formal divergences

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94.   See Newsom, "Spying Out the Land: A Report From Genology."
95.   See Martin J. Buss, *Biblical Form Criticism in Its Context* (JSOTSupp 274; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 209-62.
96.   James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 1-18.
97.   See chapter 2 of this dissertation.

that emerged in the midst of the process of textual production; this morphogenetic insight has sparked a fruitful period of research for textual criticism.[98]

For our purposes, reading itself can be thought as a morphogenetic process, instead of a hylomorphic one. Some textual scholars, such as Stanley Fish, have treated texts as inert receptacles awaiting the imposition of the reader's form, as influenced by her "interpretive community."[99] In this line of thought, readers simply make their texts into whatever preconceived notion they may have. The problem with this theory is that it does not account for how the resources of the text contribute to the production of its form. In contrast, thinking of reading as a morphogenetic process helps us to explain the existence of a wide variety of actual readings while also maintaining that there is a virtual structure guiding this process, and thus something that accounts for all the fascinating convergences between various readings of the same text as well as all of the compelling divergences.

Manuel DeLanda explains how morphogenetic and hylomorphic conceptions of processes diverge:

> The spherical form of a soap bubble, for instance, emerges out of the interactions among its constituent molecules as these are constrained energetically to "seek" the point at which surface tension is minimized. In this case, there is no question of an essence of "soap-bubbleness" somehow imposing itself from the outside, an ideal geometric form (a sphere) shaping an inert collection of molecules. Rather, an endogenous topological form (a point in the space of energetic possibilities for this molecular assemblage) governs the

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98.   See, for example, the rich essays in Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (SDSSRL; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

99.   Whether from the activity of a reader or a community, note the hylomorphic image of form imposing itself via a model: "...formal units are always a function of the interpretive model one brings to bear..." Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1980), 13.

collective behavior of the individual soap molecules and results in the emergence of a spherical shape.[100]

In this way, the singularity or "topological point," namely, the pattern of minimizing surface tension, produces a particular form. The process of the genesis of an "actual" soap bubble emerges from this "virtual" singularity. Soap bubbles can nevertheless come in all sorts of shapes and sizes; they can be strangely elongated, rippling in the air, or perfectly spherical and taut. Yet the same singularity governs their process of production and actualizes the variety of forms. Thus, morphogenetic processes do not follow, produce or instantiate a model. On the contrary, they actualize virtual tendencies in divergent ways. As DeLanda elaborates:

> [T]he one and the same topological form, the same minimal point, can guide the processes that generate many other geometrical forms. For example, if instead of molecules of soap we have the atomic components of an ordinary salt crystal, the form that emerges from minimizing energy (bonding energy in this case) is a cube. In other words, one and the same topological form can guide the morphogenesis of a variety of geometrical forms.[101]

Thus, by changing the context and inputs yet retaining the structure of singularities, we can see the same process create radically different forms, such as the soap bubble and the salt crystal. In the practice of reading, we can see this principle at work, as well. By changing the reader, or the context, or the reader changing perspectives, or reading in light of another text, or a series of texts– in any of these instances, one may find that the same text, functioning as a "topological point," will yield divergent actualizations, or readings. In reading as in the production of soap bubbles, topological points give rise to divergent actualizations as they try to solve similar problems in

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100. Manuel DeLanda, "Immanence and Transcendence in the Genesis of Form," in *A Deleuzian Century?* (ed. I. Buchanan; Durham: Duke Universty, 1999), 499-500.

101. DeLanda, "Deleuze, Diagrams and the Open-Ended Becoming of the World," 33-34.

different environments. Thus when one reader carefully shows that Exodus is a liberatory text,[102] and another reader carefully shows that Exodus is a text concerned with proper modes of servitude,[103] we may affirm this divergence without contradiction: the text of Exodus may properly "stretch" in these ways and instantiate these forms without tearing.[104]

In their discussion of morphogenesis, Deleuze and Guattari explore a morphogenetic human process that seems to be very similar to reading: namely, the work of the blacksmith. For the blacksmith, "it is not a question of imposing a form upon matter but of elaborating an increasingly rich and consistent material, the better to tap increasingly intense forces."[105] As DeLanda explains:

> In other words, the blacksmith treats metals as active materials, pregnant with morphogenetic capabilities, and his role is that of teasing a form out of them, of guiding, through a series of processes (heating, annealing, quenching, hammering), the emergence of a form, a form in which the materials themselves have a say. His task is less that of realizing previously defined possibilities than actualizing virtualities along divergent lines. But, again, it would be a mistake to think that the relevance of metals for the question of innovation is solely due to human intervention.[106]

Thus, the blacksmith initiates an open-ended process of creation that nevertheless

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102. See J. S. Croatto, *Exodus: A Hermeneutics of Freedom* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981); JJ Collins, "The Exodus and Biblical Theology," *BTB* 25 (1995): 152.

103. See Jon D. Levenson, "Exodus and Liberation," *HBT* 13 (1991): 134-174.

104. One could, of course, try to show how these particular readings do not actually disagree. Yet it would be difficult to argue that the three "possible" readings of Proverbs 8:30 mentioned above are not contradictory, and yet all three are "possible" - and thus logically allowable. This fundamental divergence and yet simultaneous existence must be explained, and only theories of difference, such as those of Derrida and Deleuze, provide the resources to affirm both necessary truths.

105. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 329.

106. DeLanda, "Deleuze, Diagrams and the Open-Ended Becoming of the World," 37.

must deal with the real constraints imposed by the singularities inhering within the metal in question. Likewise, an actual reading of a text must deal with the semantic constraints imposed by the text, but it remains an act of creation, namely, a genesis of form.[107] In this way, the biblical text is a "formative text" for communities and even individuals: not because it imposes a pre-existent, well-defined form upon its readers. On the contrary, the text is formative because it functions by producing various and varying forms. Thus we may radicalize Von Rad's postscript to his two-volume Theology, in which he insists that the basic form of the credal statements was re-actualized in different ways throughout Israel's history.[108] Here, we may see that form itself is produced by the re-actualization of the text's potentials.

3   A NOMADIC RECEPTION HISTORY

I have now marked out several concepts (viz., the virtual and the actual, the reversal of the relationship between problems and solutions, and topological identity) that together form the basis for a processual theory of biblical reception history. These concepts allow the biblical scholar to assert *both* the identity of a text *and* its many different manifestations and readings over time. I will now address more practical matters concerning the practice of biblical reception history.

It should be noted that one could structure the practice of reception history in

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107. As Deleuze and Guattari write: "...the highest power of language was discovered only when the work was viewed as a machine, producing certain effects, amenable to a certain use..." Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 107.

108. Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (vol. 2; London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), 425.

many different yet defensible ways, and so what I offer here is not a normative description of the essence or nature of reception history. Instead, what follows is my attempt to provide an account of biblical reception history *that focuses on the development and capacities of the text in question*. Since I am a textualist working within the field of biblical studies, my textual focus should not be surprising. Likewise, since I am a reception historian, my focus on the text's change over time is not unusual. Other reception historians may be more interested in the readers or reading practices themselves, and still others may be more interested in shorter durations of time and geographically or culturally delineated spaces of reception. A cultural historian, art historian, or theologian might find it more helpful to begin at another starting point or to ask different sets of questions. Yet what I offer is a construction of reception history that analyzes one particular problematic field: namely, the shifting capacities of biblical texts. I begin by delineating several different textual processes at work in reception history. Since reception history faces the difficult problem of data overload, and the resulting "scrapbooks of effects"–style presentation, I will also address the problem of data organization and presentation.[109]

3.1 *The Four Processes: Text, Reading, Transmutation and Impact*

Let us first establish a basic set of distinctions. On the one hand, as I have shown in chapters two and three, reception history must trace the production and continued development of a biblical text *qua* text by means of textual criticism, albeit without

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109. For a critique of the "scrapbook of effects," see Rachel Nicholls, *Walking on the Water: Reading Mt. 14: 22-33 in the Light of its Wirkungsgeschichte* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 27.

creating a hierarchy of textual forms. On the other hand, as I have shown in chapters four and five, reception history must trace the production and continued development of readings of the biblical text. Thus as a biblical text develops, at every moment its process serves as the ground of another process, namely the process of its production of significance.

Straddling these two categories are the liminal cases of translations: from the perspective of the "source text" they are a reading of the text, but from the perspective of other readings and the readers themselves the translations often function as the "source text" itself.[110] One might study LXX-Exodus, for example, from both perspectives and even take note of the difference between these perspectives: that is, the analysis of the translation *qua* translation will certainly differ from the analysis of the translation *qua* communal text.[111] Is LXX-Exodus, then, properly understood as a text or as a reading? It is both, of course, though from different perspectives. Though

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110.   Benjamin and Derrida note this dual function of the translation. See Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's 'Tableaux Parisiens'," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (ed. H Arendt; New York: Schocken, 1923). and see the discussion of this essay in "Des Tours de Babel," in Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (vol. 1; Stanford: Stanford University, 2007), 191-225. As Bennington writes, "Benjamin distinguishes between original and translation: the original allows itself to be translated and retranslated an indefinite number of times, whereas the translation does not let itself be translated in its turn. We must follow Derrida's implicit advice here and recognize that such a criterion only functions after the event: something is original if it will have let itself be translated and retranslated, and thus read and re-read. Some translations or readings will let themselves be retranslated: Derrida himself invokes the Sophocles translations by Hölderlin which get retranslated in turn, thus becoming originals." Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida,* 168.

111.   This problem shares affinities with the paradox of infinite proliferation, as the translation becomes the text itself; it is both, yet never both at once, and becomes something quite different when it is seen from either perspective. See Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 28-31.

this internal difference may seem to exist only within translations, upon closer exam-
ination is surely exists within every text named as a source text. For example, the
composition and redaction histories of Daniel reveal an active reading process that
exists internal to any manuscript that may be named the "source text," and thus
reading and textual development propel each other in a mutual development.[112] Like-
wise, the book of Proverbs is always-already both text and translation: lest we forget,
(a) the *Instructions of Amenemope* are not written in Hebrew, (b) Proverbs itself is
clear that Hezekiah's scribes "translated" (העתיקו), or moved, chunks of the book
from other sources (25:1), and (c) many other proverbs found in the book were also
likely in circulation well before their inscription within Proverbs, and thus they were
translated from the oral sphere to the context of a written text. Is MT Proverbs, then,
properly understood as a text or as a reading? From this perspective it becomes clear
that the problems assumed to be proper to translations are, in fact, merely the prob-
lems posed by texts in general. As Blanchot writes, "The original[s are] never immo-
bile... even in their original language, they are already as it were being retranslated
and re-accompanied back toward that which is most their own: their original foreign-
ness."[113] This "original foreignness" ensures that, for biblical texts, the processes of
textual development and reading are always intertwined; yet separating them will
forever be a heuristic, yet necessary, procedure for reception history.

From the dual processes of textual development and reading, two additional
reception-historical processes emerge, both of which have hitherto found little trac-
tion in reception history. We may distinguish, heuristically, the contours of four
processes: the development of a text, the production of its significance, its history of

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112. See John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*
(Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 2-38.

113. M. Blanchot, "Translating," *Sulfur* 26 (1990): 84.

transmutations and its history of non-semantic impact. At every point, these process-es all affect each other; and for all biblical texts, these processes doubtless split and recombine in fascinating patterns that have yet to be clarified. Each process has its own virtual and actual dimensions, and each process has its own sort of singularities. Here, I will first sketch the processes of transmutation and non-semantic impact, and then I will turn to the processes of textual formation and reading in more detail.

3.1.1   The Process of Transmutation

Biblical scholars are keen on distinguishing between "good readings" and "bad read-ings" of a text. A "good reading" generally accounts for all the elements of the biblical text in question, plays by the semantic rules and uses historical references that exist-ed at the presumed moment of inscription, and produces a coherent meaning. "Bad readings" fail at one or more of these tasks. While I do not find it helpful to attach values of "good" or "bad" to particular reading procedures, I do recognize a helpful distinction between "readings that play by rules" and "readings that play fast and loose with rules."[114] The former category I will call *readings,* and the latter I call *transmutations.*

I use the term "transmutation" in the sense provided by Roman Jakobson,

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114.   Here, I follow Nietzsche, who famously wrote, "'Beyond Good and Evil'... At least this does not mean 'Beyond Good and Bad.'" Nietzsche asks us to judge ethical matters from an immanent perspective, based on local criteria and situations at hand (good/bad), rather than from a transcendent perspective, based on universal moral laws (good/evil). In the same way, I am proposing a system of local (i.e. "topological") judgments that do not sort readings into value-laden categories ("good readings" and "bad readings") but rather seek to locate the contours of readings. See Nietzsche, "Genealogy of Morals," in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, 491.

who organized translation into three categories: intralingual, interlingual, and inter-semioic transmutation.[115] Since all reading requires a substitutionary reorganization of the text, thus creating a statement that purports to say "what the text says," the motif of translation can prove quite helpful to reception history.

According to Jakobson, intralingual translation, or "rephrasing," occurs when a reader creates a text within the same language as the original text that "translates" it, or produces a meaning for it. This process transpires in the practice of reading, as well as the production of commentaries, explications, paraphrases, descriptions, and so on. Just as there is no perfect or primary translation of a text, and yet translations can be more or less correct or helpful, readings can prove more or less helpful without forming a necessary hierarchy.

Whereas intralingual translation names the process of reading within a single language, interlingual translation names the process of interpreting signs by means of another sign-system, as occurs during the translation of Hebrew into English. This form of language-transformation is equivalent to the typical notion of translation. To this taxonomy of translation, Jakobson introduces a valuable third term, intersemiotic transmutation, which describes the interpretation of linguistic signs by means of non-linguistic signs. This process gives rise to visual depictions of textual narratives, musical adaptations of images, film adaptations of musical works, and so on.

Jakobson's taxonomy distinguishes types of translation by means of the semiotic systems used in various translation processes. That is, Jakobson is asking, "What type of sign-systems are the source and target languages?" As almost all biblical reception will require interlingual translation, a theory of biblical reception history

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115.   Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *On Translation* (ed. R. Brower; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1959). Derrida discusses Jakobson's text in Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, 1:191-225.

would be better served by distinguishing types of translations by other means. Since reception history inquires into the ways in which texts and readings change throughout time, the modes of change could guide its taxonomic structure. For this reason, I distinguish between *readings* and *transmutations*; readings produce sign-systems that carefully account for the elements of the source-text as they reorganize them, forming a topologically homeomorphic text, while transmutations engage the text but do not read it *per se.*[116]

I find it helpful to expand Jakobsen's category of intersemiotic transmutation to include transformations of the biblical text where the focus lies less on translation and more on creative expansion and adaptation. Since I want to track the ways in which biblical texts manifest their significative capacities, I would not sort receptions into categories based on their medium of presentation. By dividing the presentation of a text's reception into sections that treat commentaries, visual art, music, and so on as discrete groups, a reception historian puts emphasis on the medium in which a text reveals its capacities, rather than on the capacities themselves. Such categorizations can prove quite interesting, but a work of visual art that interprets a biblical text may have more in common with a particular musical adaptation *as a reading* or *as a transmutation* than it does any other work of visual art. Thus, I find it more helpful to distinguish between the types of textual capacities that receptions express.

Within the category of reading, I group receptions that seem to manifest similar expressive powers of the text in question. Thus, the process of transmutation tracks those receptions which cannot be classified as "readings" but that nevertheless

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116. As noted above, in topological terms, a reading may stretch its text quite far, but ultimately it does not tear the text. "Tearing" occurs when the semantic structure of the text and the language in which it is written cannot logically account for the elements of the reading.

engage the text even as they distort it. I do not think it wise to treat readings as *better* than transmutations merely because they engage the text more closely; transmutations can at times be more beautiful, more thought provoking, or more historically influential than any particular reading.

Particular transmutations may find their roots in the text or in particular readings, while others emerge from a mere passing familiarity with the source text and its readings. Some transmutations even emerge from clear misreadings or misapprehension of the readings of others. Particularly creative translations may cross the line from the status of "reading" or "text" into transmutation. In terms of organizing transmutations and presenting them, it would appear that sorting transmutations into categories of "almost readings" and "clear misreadings" and the like would be far less interesting a practice than sorting transmutations into categories of "powerful" or "troubling" or "life-affirming" or "effective." That transmutations do not adhere closely to the text is not necessarily a problem, and a lack of conformity to the model of reading does not constitute failure.[117]

Since, as a textualist, my focus is on the capacities of the text, I sort transmutations into categories that attempt to reflect the sorts of capacities a text exhibits. As a result, most transmutations can be organized in a manner similar to, and at times indistinguishable from, the organization of readings, which I treat below.

Let us consider a brief example of a transmutation: the eponymous character of the book of Job, for instance, often appears in the histories of art, literature, phi-

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117. Of course, as I have argued with regards to the sorting of textual versions and readings, the criteria for sorting are not set forth in advance. Every scholar and every study will face the question of the selection of criteria, but it would seem somewhat odd to judge transmutations by their ability to be faithful and respectful to a text, since that might be like judging a person's beauty by measuring their faithfulness to their parent's image.

losophy, theology, medicine, and other discourses in ways that develop, rather than read, the book of Job.[118] In one such example, Job became one of several patron saints of medieval musicians.[119] Even though this development may find its origin in a reading of the text of the book of Job, or of related texts such as the *Testament of Job*, the figure of Job and the musicians began a life of its own that did not necessarily continue to rely on readings of the text to sustain its development.[120] Thus "Job and the musicians" emerges from the history of the character Job, but it functions in a manner tangential to the semantic concerns of the text of the book of Job.[121] This operation should be of interest to biblical reception historians, since it is nevertheless a product of the text, although it is a diffuse and distended product from the point of view of a textualist. But to judge the cultural manifestations of the trope of "Job and the musicians" by its faithfulness to the book of Job seems to miss the point. Rather, I have found it more helpful to discern the ways in which the transmutations of a text allow for that text to connect to various parts of culture, various communities, organizations, traditions and discourses, and continue to function in ways that the text itself could not. Many of the examples of this motif either show musicians increasing Job's pain, or they show musicians soothing Job's pain; thus the motif of the musicians shows connections to certain semantic nodes of the text– namely, *Job's*

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118. See the variety of material surveyed in Stephen J. Vicchio, *The Image of the Biblical Job* (vols. 1-3; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006).

119. For an overview of Job's relationship to medieval music, see V. Denis, "Saint Job, Patron Des Musiciens," *Revue belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art* 2 (1952): 253-98 and K. Meyer, "St. Job as a Patron of Music," *Art Bulletin* 36 (1954): , 21-31

120. See Samuel L. Terrien, *The Iconography of Job through the Centuries: Artists as Biblical Interpreters* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University, 1996), 107ff.

121. While this motif may initially result from references to music in the book of Job or the Testament of Job, in either event recall Nietzsche's argument: the origin of a thing does not necessarily explain its function in any successive context.

pain– as they also demonstrate the flexibility within these semantic nodes– namely, *increasing* or *decreasing* Job's pain.[122] One could analyze the ways in which these transmutations interact with the text, how they draw power from the text and how they creatively expand this power.

One can then pivot to see how these capacities interact with other elements in the world: what sorts of things do these transmutations *do*? Through the trope of Job and the musicians, for example, the text of Job extends (and distends) itself to function as a legitimating authority for the foundation of musicians' and instrument makers' guilds.[123] By means of the transmutation "St. Job," musicians associated their trade with a religious icon and thus the power of the Church and the protective blessing of the deity. The text alone cannot do this, but the transmutation of the text can extend the text's capacities. Thus, the process of transmutation produces linguistic and other semiotic structures, such as music and visual art, that extend a text's capacities beyond what its semantic structure allows. Readings, on the other hand, express the capacities proper to the text through the production of linguistic and other semiotic structures.

Thus, the transmutation of a text produces actualizations of a certain type of virtual capabilities of that text: the text *really can* function in ways that extend, rather than contain, its semantic potentials. A reception historian, in turn, can trace the problematic structure of the text by charting how that text might transform and extend itself.

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122.   For examples, see Meyer, "St. Job as a Patron of Music," 21-31 or Terrien, The Iconography of Job through the Centuries: Artists as Biblical Interpreters, 107ff.

123.   See I. Fenlon, *The Renaissance: From the 1470s to the End of the 16th Century* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1989), 372; Denis, "Saint Job, Patron Des Musiciens," 253-98.

3.1.2   The Process of Non-Semantic Impact

Reception historians can also trace the history of its non-semantic impact of a text, which is comprised of the impact a text has had apart from and beyond its readings. This process is only marginally related to the process of the development of a text *qua* text, since the actual elements of a text and its actual reading are not directly in question. As many scholars working in reception history locate their theoretical resources in philosophical hermeneutics, it should not be surprising that non-semantic, or non-hermeneutic, uses of a text are not often studied with the same intensity as semantic-hermeneutic uses. And yet, the non-semantic impact of a text can often overshadow its production of semantic significance.

One example of this process would be the non-semantic impact of the Rosetta Stone, whose semantic context is not necessarily of great interest to the modern world, but whose non-semantic functions– that is, the opening of Egyptian hieroglyphs to the possibility of modern reading, its role in British and French colonial rivalries, its cultural iconicity, and its current function as a centerpiece of a museum– are of great importance. Biblical texts function in similar non-semantic manners.[124] Psalm 91, for example, has functioned as an apotropaic text since at least the Second Temple Period, as attested by 11Q11 at Qumran.[125] Of course, the particular images

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124. See, for example, C. Andrews, *The Rosetta Stone (*London: British Museum, 1988).

125. E. Eshel, "Apotropaic Prayers in the Second Temple Period," *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium of the Orion Center* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 69-88. See also M. Henze, *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 169. On the general use of Psalms as amulets, see P. Collart, "Psaumes et amulettes," *Aegyptus* 14 (1934): 463-467 and the essays of Thomas Kraus, Larry

found in Psalm 91 contributed to its use as an apotropaic text likely due to the reading process, but its apotropaic function is itself something distinct from reading.

Texts are often powerful even when they are not read; the practice of binding tefillin, found even in the Second Temple period, exemplifies this, as does the writing covering the monumental art of the ancient Near East.[126] Even today, politicians, judges and witnesses must swear while touching a Bible. Though textualists are right to care deeply about the semantic production of texts, they often ignored the powerful force of non-semantic impact of those same texts. A text's non-semantic impact comprises part of the text's virtual capacities, and these capacities are actualized at every moment. At the very minimum, any manuscript, as an extension in space-time with particular qualities, manifests this power. The problematic field of a text's non-semantic power opens it up to experimentation: how might this text impact its surroundings *without* or *beyond* functioning in a semantic fashion?

3.1.3   The Process of Textual Formation

In the field of biblical studies, reception historians often focus on the process of reading the biblical text and downplay the process of the development of the text itself.[127]

Hurtado and Marianne Schleicher in *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon* (eds. C. Evans and H. Zacharias; London: T & T Clark, 2009).

126.   See Y. Cohn, *Tangled up in Text: Tefillin and the Ancient World* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008).; Zainab Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2003).

127.   For example, the excellent treatment of Jonah in Yvonne Sherwood's Survival of Jonah does not consider the formation and history of the text of Jonah, but rather focuses on the readings of "the text."

Yet as I have argued, the history of the development of a biblical text constitutes an important part of that same text's reception history. For this reason, reception historians should look to the fields of source criticism, redaction criticism, form criticism, textual criticism and tradition history in order to consider the process of the formation of the text.

I have discussed the process of textual formation in the third chapter of this dissertation, and for that reason my comments here will be brief. As for a biblical text, the *actual* text consists of the actual physical manuscripts, while the *virtual* text consists of the "cloud of potentialities" that manifests between different manuscripts and surrounding each of them. That is, each manuscript of the book of Job, for example, is marked by the differences between itself and the other actual members of the general series, "the book of Job." Even if the reader is completely unaware that the particular version of the book of Job in their hands is unlike many others, the capabilities and potentialities of that particular text are limited or expanded depending upon the version. A manuscript of the book of Job that ends abruptly at 42:11, which may be the case for the Qumran Targum (11QTargJob), would alter the capabilities of that text, and is thus marked by its difference with respect to other manuscripts.[128] This process is of course open to changes and the introduction of novelties: the Old Greek translation greatly altered the text and yet remained a text of the book of Job, while centuries later this alteration was itself altered in Origen's Hexapla to bring it more in line with other known versions.[129] At each of these points, the virtual poten-

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128. Note the editorial dispute concerning this point in J. van der Ploeg et al., *Le Targum de Job de la grotte XI de Qumrân* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 87. It is very possible that the Qumran Targum included up to verse 17, but in any event there are known alternate endings ot the book of Job, as is found in LXXJob 42:17, which claims to have received this longer ending from the "Syriac book" (likely an Aramaic Targum of some sort).

tials of the text change in response to the actual changes undergone by the actual text.

Thus, the virtual is a vast enmeshed field that includes the potentials of the many manuscripts of the book of Job. Thus, any actual, particular manuscript of the book of Job manifests the virtual multiplicity of the book of Job in a particular manner. In other words, each actual manuscript has certain actual features that do not exhaust the features that may be manifest by the book of Job. Each individual manuscript holds certain potentials, while the field as a whole exhibits certain potential powers, as well.

With regard to the text of a biblical book, we may ask, "How might this biblical text look?" The virtual field of the text of a biblical book contains its problematic structure, to which any particular manuscript provides a contingent solution. We may then analyze the various extant manuscripts and translations, and in turn offer a topological model of the ways in which the text of the book of Job has been stretched and twisted. Finally, we may be able to indicate points at which the text seems to "tear" or "suture" in a way that alters its identity. At these points, we may posit that the text becomes "something else." Biblical scholars can then map the forms in which texts have appeared, providing a clearer picture of the texts that produced particular readings. Think of a biblical text *qua* text as a strand of DNA, and its readings as the particular bodies that it produces: a strand of DNA is a single structure of signifiers (though open to its own transformations, mutations, and so on over time) that can nevertheless construct a diverse population of individuals. If biblical texts are a genotype (i.e., the signifying structure that conditions the emergence of a particular

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129. See Peter John Gentry, *The Asterisked Materials in the Greek Job* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1995).

individual organism), and readings are its various phenotypes (i.e., the observable characteristics of an organism). One should remember that "there is no straightforward relationship of 'determination' between genotypes and phenotypes... the same genotype can produce a range of different phenotypes."[130] And to the production of phenotypes, I now turn.

3.1.4   The Process of Reading

Reading produces significatory structures, or meanings, and this process has both a virtual aspect to it as well as a field of actual products. Readings must begin with an encounter with an actual manuscript, or various actual manuscripts, and thus the reading process emerges from a particular point or set of points from the process of textual production. From this actual manuscript, the event of reading begins with the virtual capabilities of the text and then proceeds to produce an actual reading, or "meaning." For this reason, Deleuze calls reading of a text "an event," since it has the power to alter both actual and virtual dimensions of a particular individual. Whitehead has also helpfully elaborated the concept of an event as it applies to a monument; as Shaviro writes,

> Even a seemingly solid and permanent object is an event; or, better, a multiplicity and a series of events... Whitehead gives the example of Cleopatra's Needle on the Victoria Embankment in London... Now, we know, of course, that this monument is not just "there." It has a history. Its granite was sculpted by human hands, sometime around 1450 BCE. It was moved from Heliopolis to Alexandria in 12 BCE, and again from Alexandria to London in 1877-1878 CE. And some day, no doubt, it will be destroyed, or otherwise cease to exist. But for

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130. D. Buller, *Adapting Minds: Evolutionary Psychology and the Persistent Quest for Human Nature* (Cambridge: MIT, 2005), 24.

> Whitehead, there is much more to it than that. Cleopatra's Needle isn't just a solid, impassive object upon which certain grand historical events– being sculpted, being moved –have occasionally supervened. Rather, it is eventful at every moment. From second to second, even as it stands seemingly motionless, Cleopatra's Needle is actively happening. It never remains the same... At every instant, the mere standing-in-place of Cleopatra's Needle is an event: a renewal, a novelty, a fresh creation.[131]

In the same way, one may think of a biblical text as an event can be repeated again and again: one may imagine that every time someone sits down to read the book of Job, for example, what occurs is the event of reading-Job. Thus, we can distinguish between text of the book of Job and the reading of the book of Job: these intertwined processes, brought together by the recurring event of reading-Job, each have their own actual and virtual aspects that all risk changing at every occurrence of this event.[132]

Since an objectile always harbors more capacities than it can manifest at any point in time, we may think of reading as a series of limiting selections, or a series of choices that continue to narrow the potentials of a virtual multiplicity until what merges is an individual reading, or a "meaning."[133] Deleuze encourages us to think in these terms through his references to Borges' short story, "The Garden of the Forking Paths," which describes a labyrinth-book in which "all possible outcomes" of every event occur.[134] As Borges writes: "In all fiction, when a man is faced with alternatives,

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131. Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics*, 16-17.

132. Likewise, the processes of transmutation and non-semantic impact may derive from events of reading, or perhaps events of misreading.

133. See Deleuze's discussion of Simondon and individuation, Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 246-252, 258-261.

134. J. L. Borges, "The Garden of the Forking Paths," in *Ficciones* (trans. H. Temple and R. Todd; New York: Grove Press, 1962), 89-101. Referenced in Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 114.

he chooses one at the expense of the others. In the almost unfathomable Ts'ui Pên, he chooses– simultaneously– all of them. He thus creates various futures, various times which start others that will in their turn branch out and bifurcate in other times."[135] Thus every reader of the labyrinth-book must confront these forks, choosing some the the expense of others, until one coherent version of the story emerges.

Biblical reception history should not try, like Ts'ui Pên, to imagine all possible narrative permutations of a text; but rather, when analyzing a biblical text's process of reading, the reception scholar seeks the *semantic* permutations of that text. When reading a given text, one confronts a semiotic garden with a succession of forked semantic paths. If one reads אמון in Proverbs 8:30 as "artisan," one then opens potential semantic paths while closing others, whereas if one reads "faithfully," this actualizes a different relationship between that word and other words around it. In this way, a reading progressively limits and thus clarifies a particular capability of a text even while forcing many others to remain obscure.[136] Reading requires selecting paths, while reception history involves mapping the garden in which the paths fork.

Deleuze calls the process of selection a "dramatization."[137] As James Williams explains,

> by dramatisation Deleuze means a new way of playing a given relation of expression and expressed, that is, like the director putting a new version of a play, the expressor must take something that already determines this version, but that must also be given a new and reinvigorating slant.[138]

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135.   Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths," 98.

136.   Even the selection of two paths at once, for example by selecting an ambiguous reading of Proverbs 8:30 that relies upon a dual– or triple– resonance of אמון, is itself a selection as well as a rejection.

137.   Ibid., 234-39.

138.   James Williams, *The Transversal Thought of Gilles Deleuze: Encounters and Influences* (Manchester: Clinamen, 2005), 49.

An actor receives a script much like a reader receives a text, yet the actor must create the dramatization of the script and in the process produce the character who speaks the already written lines.[139] Crucial to this process is the process of selection, and thus exclusion: the actor must give the character determinations by choosing to speak each line in one particular way to the exclusion of other possible ways. Likewise, an actor who takes part in a re-make of an earlier film must "counter-actualize" the role by thinking again of the role in a different way than the previous actor.[140] Thus, Deleuze claims that actual things can only express "certain relations or certain degrees of variation," while the counter-actualization of those things allows for a greater expression of these degrees of variation.[141]

Every fork chosen can be justified by means of many criteria, none of which are naturally superior to any other. These criteria often derive from the prevailing discourses available, but one can always attempt to recover criteria from other discourses particular to other spatio-temporal and cultural locations. Sets of scholarly, aesthetic or theological criteria are historically contingent and themselves constitute changing processes, and are thus not not universal or transcendent. As a result, any use of any criteria will itself be a divergent actualization of a virtual multiplicity.

In this way, "a medieval Rabbinic reading," or "a patristic Christian reading," or "a modern scholarly reading" will in some way select particular Jewish or Christian or scholarly modes of reading and emphasize some of their intrinsic criteria over

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139. Deleuze introduces the example of the actor in Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 150.

140. As Bonta and Protevi write: "actualization...is the construction of exclusive disjunctions, the selection of a series of singularities whose actualization precludes the simultaneous actualization of others, which would then have the modal status of the (virtual) 'road not taken.'" M. Bonta and J. Protevi, *Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Guide and Glossary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2004), 27.

141. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 252.

others. Intertextual relations, as well, must be selected according to particular criteria, as will standards of coherency. Yet none of these selections provides a necessary mode or a determinate solution to the problem of the text: there can be countless "modern scholarly readings" of the book of Job, and as a result the production itself– namely, the reading– provides a more compelling objectile of study, at least for the textualist reception historian, than the set of reading practices or particular subjectivity (conscious or unconscious) involved. Some choices will open certain areas of the text's capacities, and simultaneously close others. Only a panoply of readings can offer a glimpse of the text's fluctuating wealth of powers.

When analyzing readings, reception historians face another problem of regression: the event of reading produces *a reading*, which consists of a text, whether physically inscribed or simply held in mind. Yet in order to be analyzed, the readings themselves must thus be read.[142] As a result, any reading must be submitted to the same actualization process outlined above in order for any further readers to grasp the reading. Biblical reception scholars must then *read the receptions* of the text, determining them in order to render more distinctly the structure of the objectile-text in question.

The work of reception history of a biblical text forms a problematic field in its own right, and thus proposes its own field of solvability which no single reading can extinguish; each reception can itself exhibit capacities beyond any single scholar's determinations. Any individual reading of a reception could always be counter-actualized so as to express other powers of the reception in question. Or one could, of course, choose a particular reading of a biblical text *as* a new objectile of study, and

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142.   We see here again the "paradox of indefinite proliferation." See Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 28-31.

begin the process anew. For example, one might analyze Gregory the Great's *Morals in Job* as a reading of the book of Job, but then one might decide to analyze the reception of Gregory the Great's *Morals in Job* itself. As a result, textualist reception historians will constantly have to negotiate the boundary between a reading's function as a reading of another text and its function as an objectile in its own right.

Thus, for the reading of a text, the virtual hovers as a cloud of potentialities between different readings and surrounding each of them, and the event of reading unfolds as a risky and unpredictable encounter that may change both its virtual and actual dimensions.

Though these events are unpredictable, that is not to say they are completely random: as mentioned above, Deleuze encourages us to think of structures and processes in terms of (1) a set of different elements, (2) their reciprocal relationships, and (3) the singularities which determine the parameters of the structure's form.

In the case of the formation of a biblical text, we may think of the words of the text as the different elements, the organization of those words as the reciprocal relationships, and the paratextual elements (e.g. type, formatting, surface of inscription, binding, marginal text and notations) as the singularities, the scribal "rules" by which a text is actualized, or presented as a text.

In the case of the reading of a biblical text, we may think in more abstract terms: the differential elements are the elements of the source text as selected and organized in the reading, and the reciprocal relationships are the ways in which these re-ordered elements relate to each other as well as the broader context, including intertextual resonances, interactions with the reader and the culture in which the reading occurs, as well as the more diffuse influences of tradition and other contexts that find their way into the context in question. For the reading of a text, we must either understand singularities as the "rules" by which one reads a text, or otherwise the se-

mantic fields within which the readings of a given text tend to concentrate.

Yet we must remember that a biblical text is a process, not a static entity. As such, it does not prescribe one set of rules for all places and times, as if the same inputs produce the same outputs in every context. On the contrary, we may see that the rules, or singularities, for reading are (1) not actually rules, but are more precisely identified as tendencies, and (2) undergo changes as the text circulates through various cultural, spatial and temporal locations. One may alternately conceive of these singularities as the long-term tendencies of the process of reading a particular text, since the structure of a text may exhibit larger scale tendencies even amidst widely variable readings between times and places. That is, one may look very closely at the history of reading a particular text and see tremendous local variation, but a wider view of the history of reading that text may exhibit more general metastability. Thus, I distinguish between two different sets of "extraordinary points," or singularities: namely, (1) the local tendencies for reading a text, exemplified by Fish's "interpretive communities" or Foucault's *epistemes*, and (2) the more global tendencies for reading a text, which cross over these parochial borders.

As mentioned above, singularities are extraordinary points that define their local neighborhood, such as the singularity of the triangle corner that defines and orders the points that lead up to the next singularity, namely, the next corner. Thus, singularities may be thought to extend their tendencies by ordering nearby points.[143] As such, singular points determine the form of an object. In terms of reading a text, a singularity is not a particular word found in the text, nor is it a sentence. The local tendencies of reading a text are more closely identifiable with the local hermeneutical practices. As biblical texts have been read in countless contexts, it must be assumed

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143. DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 15-16.

that the activity of reading itself has changed during that span. What constitutes a "valid" reading in one community may not constitute a "valid" reading in another. For example, the Talmud claims that readers may take and add a letter and then reinterpret a difficult word or phrase.[144] This is less of a "rule" and more of a clear tendency of rabbinic readers to read in certain patterns as opposed to others. These tendencies become clearer when examining a multitude of readings within a particular cultural manifold, but there is always the opportunity to read against these tendencies. Interpretive communities are not, after all, intellectual straightjackets. If this were the case, no new interpretive communities would ever form. Of course, these individual actions can be quite fascinating, but from the perspective of a textualist, the particular reader's adherence or deviation from a particular model of reading is of less interest than tracking how a text reveals its own capabilities in these varying contexts.

Thus, we have established that a reader or interpretive community dramatizes a text, actualizing its virtual semantic potentials by constructing a reading. Each dramatization will be to a greater or lesser extent influenced by local patterns of reading, local intertexts and local discursive formations. By taking a broad look at many such local dramatizations, a reception historical scholar may be able to discern more global patterns of dramatization that suggest contours of a text's virtual semantic structure.

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144. For this example and many other similar examples, see Scott Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago: American Oriental Society, 2007).

3.2   *Reception History as the Story of the Text's Capacities*

My particular construction of reception history will focus on the development of the text and its productive capacities. The task of the reception historian is thus to produce a history of this development. Since history is something of a story, reception history must at minimum locate a protagonist, a plot, and a point of view for its particular form of storytelling.[145]

As a textualist, I name the textual process as my protagonist, and the unfolding of its significatory, transmutational and non-semantic powers as my plot. As a result, in my concept of reception history I emphasize the global tendencies of a text's production of significance and de-emphasize concerns for mapping a particular context's general reading tendencies, analyzing particular readers, and meticulously constructing local contexts.

For this same purpose, I also focus less on the subjectivity of particular readers, since the textual focus of reception history leads me to be less interested in why particular readers arrived at their constructions and more interested in the significatory capabilities of the text. Scholars who study the hermeneutical tendencies of particular readers and contexts are, to be sure, of great value, and deserve praise. Moreover, the work of these scholars is of considerable value for the work of reception historians. Yet for the reception history of a text, these concerns are always marginal, though still important, to the main character: namely, the text. And since a biblical text is a process, we must not expect to find static properties (the form of the text and its meaning) but rather the changes that these properties undergo. To many current

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145. On the emplotment of history, see Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1978), 1-5.

biblical scholars, periods of change are nothing more than temporary, and thus less important, phases of transition between periods of stability, where "real" predicates may be found. For example, the period of textual fluidity exemplified by the texts from Qumran is but a mere prelude to the textual stabilization that supposedly occurred after the "Great Divide." But for reception historians, their objectile of study challenges this distribution of importance: periods of greater fluidity may reveal a wide variety of textual capabilities in a short span of time.

Since a global view of the reception history of a text spans many contexts, cultures, horizons of expectation, reading models and strategies, these broader tendencies reveal more about the process of the text than do the local patterns of reading. By tracing readings from many diverse contexts, a reception historian can locate various semantic nodes through which clusters of readings converge. One way to locate singularities is to observe various examples of a particular process and map them, noting the crucial points of attraction.[146] For example, simply by looking at water one cannot know at what temperature it will undergo its various phase transitions, but repeated observation of water locates its freezing and boiling points. In different conditions, including different pressures, different altitudes and chemical contexts (in a brine ice solution, for example), the boiling and freezing point of water will change. But nevertheless, the system has tendencies that one could map through repeated experimentation.[147]

One may, in the same way, plot a diverse field of readings of a particular text, locate semantic or functional clusters of readings, transformations or non-semantic

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146. For Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of mapping, and the image of the rhizome, see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 12-20.

147. See DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, 13-15.

impacts and label these nodes "singularities" of the text. In effect, each node of the process of reading a text constitutes a semantic center around which the given text can be organized. Thus, global singularities function more like a semantic nodes through which many individual readings cross, revealing the long-term semantic tendencies of a textual process. The task of reception history is to map the trajectories of a text's development, semantic production, transformation and non-semantic impact as they reveal the capacities of that text.

3.3   The Nomadic Distribution of Reception

In this way, I urge biblical reception historians to arrange readings according to what Deleuze terms a "nomadic distribution," as opposed to a "sedentary distribution."[148] In a sedentary distribution, a set of elements are arranged according to a category, logic or law that is external to the set itself. For example, some studies of reception history categorize readings according to "Jewish readings" and "Christian readings," as if "Jewish" and "Christian" are pre-existing containers into which various readings should be thrown, regardless of their own forms or contents. Reception historians who categorize readings in this manner focus on the community of the reader, and not the productive capacities of the text.

On the contrary, a nomadic distribution follows the contours of a particular space, allowing only immanent criteria to propose contingent distinctions.[149] If sedentary distribution functions like a farmer who decides how to cut up the field

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148. See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 36-37. For an overview, see Adrian Parr, ed., *The Deleuze Dictionary* (New York: Columbia University, 2005), 181-86.

149. See Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 59-61.

and plant the crops, nomadic distribution functions like the herdsman who lets his flock loose in the fields, noting their general distributive trends over time. Thus, reception history that distributes its readings "nomadically" would arrange its objectiles primarily according to the functions of a reading, transformation or use (e.g., "they tend to act in this similar way") as opposed to the identity of the reader (e.g. "a Jew read it this way, so put it in with the Jewish readings") or the context of production ("it's a medieval reading, so put it with the other medieval readings"). In the extended example provided in the next chapter, I locate several semantic nodes for Job 19:25-27 that I refer to with the terms *survival*, *presence* and *justice.* Over time and space, a rough picture of the nomadic distribution of readings emerges, but as I continue to assert, these tendencies do not limit or prohibit new readings to emerge and form new nodes, new tendencies for reading.[150]

Finally, I come to the question of the point of view. Many textual scholars conceive of their project as the reconstruction of a particular subjectivity that serves as their point of view onto the text. For example, a biblical scholar concerned with the book of Nehemiah may desire to reconstruct the particular subjectivity of the author of that book, perhaps Nehemiah himself, as a means of viewing the object of study.[151] In this construction of the scholarly task, we determine a particular subject as the key that unlocks the truth of the situation. Other textual scholars emphasize the subjectivities of the "original audience" or the general "horizon of expectations" that dominated a particular context of reception as the proper point of view through which to read the text.[152] Still others emphasize the variety of particular subjectivities

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150. One must also keep an eye out for repeated misreadings that distort the semantic topology of a text: do certain texts invite misreading, and is this self-decomposition of the text one of its own powers?

151. See again, Wright, *Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah-Memoir and Its Earliest Readers.*

that determine readings, such as reader-response critics. Again, while these are quite interesting and often compelling modes of examining texts, the construction of reception history must seek a broader concept of its task.

The question, "what can this text do?" cannot be answered by analyzing its point of origin, since biblical texts function like spandrels, not anchors. Though we may direct our point of view towards the individuals who first produced a particular biblical text, those author-redactors did not yet know what it would become. Neither can this question be answered by examining a particular audience, even taking into account its internal differences, since their contingent responses do not necessarily help us understand the diversity of powers within a text. And reader-response criticism, while a fascinating and important contribution to the field of biblical studies, tells us the story of an individual consciousness or perhaps a reading community interacting with a text; the protagonist remains the reader or interpretive community, and the powers of the text seem to derive from the power of the reader. What reception history needs is to shift its point of view from the author, audience or reader to the text. *And yet*, as we have seen, the text is an objectile, an object-projectile in motion who cannot be reduced to "the text itself" as if it were static, monological and inert.

Here, too, Deleuze intervenes in a helpful manner: instead of supporting pure subjectivism, in which the reader is in control of determining the text (as author, audience, or reader), or pure objectivism, in which the text is always given as already-determined, Deleuze twists the notion of perspectivism.[153] Though Deleuze avoids the typical construal of perspectivist relativism that claims, "What's true for me may not

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152.   See Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception.*
153.   See Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 173-75.

be true for you," he does assert that different perspectives will necessarily construe the world differently. As Deleuze explains:

> For Leibniz, for William and Henry James, and for Whitehead as well, perspectivism amounts to a relativism, but not the relativism we take for granted. It is not the variation of truth according to the subject, but the condition in which the truth of a variation appears to the subject.[154]

That is, Deleuze asks us *not* to imagine that everybody constructs the world, and the truth of their own situation, as they please (i.e., "the variation of truth according to the subject.") Instead, Deleuze posits that we think of "point of view" as a particular view on the variation of the world, and thus perspectivism shows us "a truth of relativity (and not as a relativity of what is true.)"[155] The world is in variation; the text is a process; *change itself* changes; this variation is the *very condition* in which the truth of objectiles appears..

It is precisely here that Deleuze's concept of the viewpoint differs from Gadamer and Jauss: as Thiselton points out, philosophical hermeneuts think that the "necessary plurality of actualizations [of a biblical text] can be perceived not as 'theological contradictions,' but as the multiple voices required for a polyphonic harmony built from complementary viewpoints."[156] Gadamer, Jauss, and those that follow in their footsteps think of the multiplicity of viewpoints as complementary viewpoints on a stable object, a finished text, a unified *sache*. Gadamer and Jauss' theory seems more appropriate to literature officially published in one form, by unique authors, in the era of machinic reproduction than it does to traditional texts. Their perspectival synthesis is only possible if the object of study is not subject to change. Yet the bibli-

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154. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, 20.
155. Ibid., 23.
156. Anthony Thiselton, *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works with New Essays* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 44.

cal text was subject to reception and alteration *from the very beginning, even as it was forming*. Jauss' division between the "aesthetic experience" of the "horizon of literary expectation" found in the first context, which *understood* the work, and successive contexts, which considered the text "alien" or "provocative," does not hold for the biblical text: the biblical text *is alien to itself,* it *harbors difference within itself,* since successive contexts re-wrote and re-read texts before any possible moment of textual "completion." For this very reason, Deleuze asks us to consider the temporally variable object as an objectile: the object is in constant variation, and this variation itself varies. If we construct a synthesis of viewpoints on this objectile, it must be a "disjunctive synthesis" capable of affirming, in Thiselton's words, "contradictions."[157]

Moreover, philosophical hermeneutics puts great emphasis on the subjectivity of the reader and the reader's community: from Gadamer's metaphor of "reading as dialogue" to Jauss' "horizon of expectations," the reader seems to provide the perspective from within his or her (or their) own subjective consciousness (as well as their subconscious). For my purposes, the subjectivity of the reader is of less interest than the revealed capacities of the text. The many different ways to construe a biblical text provide different vantage points that are not properties of individual readers; I, too, can read and think about several perspectives on a single text, as can you. From this state of affairs, we can deduce that points of view are not created by a par-

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157. Deleuze explains the disjunctive synthesis as a preservation of difference within a synthesis: "The whole question, and rightly so, is to know under what conditions disjunction is a veritable synthesis, instead of being a procedure of analysis which is satisfied with the exclusion of predicates from a thing by virtue of the identity of its concept (the negative, limitative, or exclusive use of disjunction). The answer is given insofar as the divergence or the decentering determined by the disjunction become objects of affirmation as such... an inclusive disjunction that carries out the synthesis itself by drifting from one term to another and following the distance between terms." Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 174.

ticular consciousness, but others can occupy them, as well. As Levi Bryant explains:

> A point of view or a perspective is not something that belongs to a subject, but rather a subject belongs to, occupies, or is occupied by a point of view or perspective... Perspective is indeed a condition for the production of truth because it exercises a selection which allows diversity or beings to show forth, to manifest themselves... Consequently, for Deleuze perspective does not depend on the subject for its being. There is a being proper to perspective as such... The perspective precedes the subject such that the subject occupies its perspective like a zebra occupies the plains.[158]

A particular perspective, like a particular reading, focuses on some elements to the exclusion of others; each fork chosen in a particular path closes some potentials as it opens others. The reader does not create these potentials: on the contrary, the reader merely "actualizes" potentials that already existed. A point of view thus emerges from the potentials of the text, as actualized by a series of choices. Deleuze calls this emergence of a point of view a "superject," borrowing the term from Whitehead.[159] In this way, a reception historian does not need to place herself into a particular formation of consciousness, or a particular subjective identity, in order to conduct her study.

Deleuze asks us to think about the "point of view" like a camera shot: we can, through film, see a field of variation through a particular vantage point that is open to anyone who will see through it.[160] It is not *my* place, even if I temporarily occupy it. The camera offers a structurally open point of view, or a primacy of viewpoint over viewer, that allows us to see variation from different vantage points. Each vantage point, Deleuze argues, offers a particular mode of organizing the chaotic world, or "determination of the the indeterminate," which is "a condition of the manifestation

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158. Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, 152.
159. Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque,* 20.
160. See, for example, Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema: The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986), 12-28.

of reality."[161] In this way, a point of view opens a reading by organizing the text in a particular manner. Viewpoints organize and imply particular "modes of existence," but do not emanate from individual subjectivites.

Clearly, in the past several decades biblical scholars have begun to accept that different points of view– such as the point of view that suddenly notices the lives of women, or of colonized peoples, for example– alters the ways in which texts may be read. Yet we must assert that these readings are open to those of both genders, to those colonizers as well as colonized, and so on. The truth of these readings cannot be summed up by the phrase, "to each his own." Rather, the committed individual assumes a viewpoint, and this viewpoint opens up a potential of the text not seen by those oblivious to it. Once awakened to this potential, any reader may assume it. Historical critics are, for this very reason, engaged in a very productive endeavor: they are busy reconstructing vantage points that were produced at other places and times and offering these vantage points to modern readers. But historical critics go awry when they posit their own reconstructed view as a summation of the text's legitimate capacities.

Thus, reception historians might find it profitable to discover unique perspectives on a text than to catalogue every encounter a text has ever had, or to locate a certain amount of encounters for every pre-determined community, as if reception history were as concerned with communities as it is with the process of textual development. Explanations for the cultural-historical factors surrounding a reading or a textual alteration are interesting, but the question remains: how do these readings stretch the text? As Nietzsche reminds us, giving the exact coordinates of a text or reading's origin actually does little to explain its power or significance.

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161.   Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque,* 23.

Reception historians have the particular ability, however, to posit semantic, transmutational and non-semantic nodes through which significant numbers of diverse actualizations of the text pass. These nodes, or singularities, provide particular vantage points from which to view the text. Every particular reading will individuate in its own distinct manner, of course, but the perspective from which each reading emerges can be replicated. Grouping texts according to these general perspectives can serve as a starting point for the mapping of a text's potential powers. Reception historians must, in other words, provide a reading of the history of a text's reception, which requires gathering diverse elements into a roughly coherent and roughly stable, but also necessarily revisable and destabilizable, structure.

Thus, there is no metaposition or transcendental perspective that can offer the truth of the text. The truth of the text *emerges from* its variation among positions. Accordingly, the task of the reception historian is to comb through the historical record, searching for viewpoints that open new vistas on texts that gesture towards their unfolding power and potential. The mandate is simple: map the forking paths, discover vistas, and let them circulate amongst us. Show us: of what is a text capable? What can a text do?

Justice, Survival, Presence: Job 19:25-27

Of all the passages in the Old Testament none has been more variously treated than Job xix 25-27. All the versions had trouble with it, and likewise have all commentators to the present day. So varied are the interpretations that no two of them are in agreement. On only one point are all agreed, and that is that the text is not in order and has to be emended, but again no two agree on emendation… However, recent years have shown that the Masoretic text is remarkably reliable, at least in its consonantal text, and it is altogether possible that it may be right here.

TJ MEEK

The suggestions are endless.

NORMAN HABEL

Of the excessive production of texts, there is no end.

QOHELET 12:12

1   INTRODUCTION

In my estimation, reception history is not primarily an *interpretative* practice (i.e., "What does this text mean?"); rather, reception history creates a model of repeated textual *experimentation* (i.e., "How might this text function?").[1] To be sure, creating a model of textual experimentation does require much reading, but this reading is of

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1. See Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997), xxii.

a sort different than interpretation. Instead of reading one version of a text and producing a meaning, I seek to read (that is, organize and thus make sense of) the history of a text's unfolding capacities and thus produce a map of its ever expanding terrain.

To illustrate this theory of reception, I offer here one such mapping. I have chosen Job 19:25-27 as my test-case, since: (1) it is widely accepted in critical scholarship as an important yet difficult set of verses within its larger literary context, (2) I am aware of its exceptionally broad and diverse history of reception in Jewish and Christian communities as well as outside of them, and (3) it is a short text, and thus its readings may be traced more clearly throughout history.[2] Due to constraints of space, I cannot produce a thorough account of this text's history, nor can I give here an exhaustive record of its productive capacities. Instead, this chapter can only suggest the avenues that a more complete study would be able to explore in more detail.

In this mapping exercise, I will analyze the text and its contexts and suggest several singularities, or *semantic nodes*, that emerge from this analysis. Like any simple narrative, I will begin at the beginning, with an analysis of the presumably earliest Hebrew text of Job 19:25-27 in its initial context of production.[3]

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2. One might complain that this is not "a biblical text," but merely a citation from a larger biblical text. Yet any reception theory should be able to explain the process engendered by a selection from a larger biblical text as well as the larger text itself; in many ways, the citation (which is still a biblical text) is able to undergo a far greater number of readings and transmutations due to its compactness.

3. While initial contexts of production often yield fascinating meanings for biblical texts, I avoid fetishizing the moment of origin. In contrast, I begin with the initial context for the sake of the narrative presentation of the textual process, and not because it holds any special secret of meaning.

2   THE QUESTION OF THE INITIAL CONTEXT

It is difficult, however, to know the origin of the book of Job–or, more precisely, it is difficult to know if there is anything that can be *called* the "origin of the book of Job." It is not only notoriously difficult to date; the book of Job also evinces a complicated literary history that precedes anything that can be called "the book of Job."[4]

Centuries of biblical interpreters have struggled with the likely compositional fault lines that run through this text.[5] Even though the earliest textual witnesses from Qumran generally agree with the structure and contents manifest in the Masoretic text, since the early modern period scholars have argued that the prose prologue and epilogue (1:1-2:13; 42:7-17) stand in stark relief to the poetic section (3:1-42:6) in both form and content.[6] As a result, many scholars conclude that different authors wrote the prose and poetry sections at different times. At present, the consensus among modern critical scholarship holds that the Joban poet took a pre-existing, traditional tale about the pious individual named Job and made it the prose framework

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4. On attempts to date the book of Job, see C. L. Seow, *Job* (Illuminations; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 54-62.

5. See the helpful review of the history of compositional theories in Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2003), 3-31.

6. On the Qumran targum and fragments, see Eugene Ulrich and S. Metso, "4QJob^a," in *Qumran Cave 4, XI. Psalms to Chronicles* (DJD 16; ed. E Ulrich et al.; Oxford: Clarendon, 2000) 171-78, Pl. XXI; Eugene Ulrich and S. Metso, "4QJob^b," in *Qumran Cave 4, XI. Psalms to Chronicles* (DJD 16; ed. E. Ulrich et al.; Oxford: Clarendon, 2000) 179-80, Pl. XXII; Eugene Ulrich, "4QpalaeoJob^c," in *Qumran Cave 4, IV. Palaeo-Hebrew and Greek Manuscripts* (DJD 9; ed. P. Skehan et al.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 155-57, Pl. XXXVII; John Gray, "The Massoretic Text of the Book of Job, the Targum and the Septuagint Version in Light of the Qumran Targum (11Qtarg Job)," *ZAW* 28 (1974): 331-50.

for the new poetic dialogue which the poet then fabricated.

Attempts to divide the book according to prose and poetry are complicated in several ways. Most importantly, the poetic section as well as the prose framework seems to exhibit internal differences that may be evidence of redactional activity. These incongruities have led, on the one hand, to ever more baroque theories of composition and redaction and, on the other, to increasing frustrations with the confidences and limitations of historical criticism. Since textual criticism offers little evidence of textual development, scholars attempting to reconstruct the stages of the book of Job's construction rely upon literary arguments. For instance, the divine name YHWH occurs often in the prologue and epilogue, but is eclipsed by the use of El, Eloah, and Shaddai in chapters 3-37, which may signal a different author. Also, Job's character seems to vacillate from the prose to the poetry; Job the quiet sufferer in chapters 1-2 suddenly transforms into a rebellious skeptic in chapters 3-31, only to return to his former state of resigned acceptance in chapter 42. Such a radical transformation, some critics argue, strains credulity and signals the existence of originally independent works. Thus, the literary context of the book of Job spans at least several contexts, some of which rely upon decontextualized readings of previous texts in order to signify anything coherent at all.

Moreover, some have wondered whether YHWH's declaration that Job has "spoken of me what is right" could actually refer to Job's unorthodox rhetoric (cf. 9:22-24), and have been more comfortable imagining that the statement only sanctions Job's pious statements in the prologue (1:21). The problem here is that it is difficult to justify relegating YHWH's affirmation to Job's speech in the prologue when the affirmation accompanies YHWH's rebuke of the three friends' dialogue speeches (42:7). Other scholars have questioned this simple bifurcation of prose and poetry: most importantly, neither the prose nor the poetry sections stand easily on their

own. The epilogue, for instance, requires a lengthy conversation between the friends that does not occur in the extant prose sections (cf. 42:7-9).[7] In addition, the prose section itself seems incongruous, since the epilogue (42:7-17) fails to mention the satan, the divine council, or the status of the wager, all of which drive the narrative of the prologue. Perhaps, then, the prologue and epilogue were not originally parts of a single prose tale composed independently of the poetry or, on the other hand, perhaps they have always been parts of the same story with the poetry.

Similar problems plague attempts to isolate the poetic dialogue. Not only is the dialogue predicated on the events recounted in the prologue, it, like the prose tale, is not entirely internally coherent. The sequence of speeches that is so strictly observed for two cycles (4-21) breaks down in the third (22-27), where Bildad's speech is oddly truncated, Zophar's is non-existent, and Job's statements sound uncharacteristically like those of the friends. While some rearrange the final cycle, attributing portions of chs. 24 and 27 (usually 24:18-25 and 27:12-23) to the friends, all textual witnesses attest to the present location of these supposedly dislocated texts.[8] Furthermore, the poem in ch. 28 interrupts the dialogue with its meditation on the location and (in)accessibility of wisdom. While nothing in the text marks Job 28 as separate from the dialogue, it differs in style, tone, and perspective from the speeches, and neither engages with them nor elicits their response. In terms of genre,

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7. Some who bifurcate the prose and poetry sections think that 42:7-9 was added with the poetry, and that the pre-existing prose tale does not begin until after the mention of the friends. See Carol A. Newsom, "Narrative, Ethics, Character, and the Prose Tale of Job," in *Character and Scripture: Moral Formation, Community, and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. W. Brown; Winona Lake, IN: Eerdmans, 2002), 124; R. Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 573-575.

8. See, for example, the re-ordering throughout David J. A. Clines, *Job 21-37* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006).

it shares much in common with other speculative wisdom poems such as Proverbs 8, Sirach 1 and 24, and Baruch 3:9-4:4. In light of the poem's distinctiveness, many have deemed it secondary to the book. However, as Job's generic discontinuities mount, the claim that a particular text stands out against its literary context may make that text seem more and not less at home in this book. Of course, this is not unusual among biblical books; so, it seems that genre displacement is simply part and parcel of the "original" context of biblical texts.[9]

The strongest case for textual interpolation can be made apropos Elihu's speeches in Job 32-37. Job's lengthy speech in chs. 29-31 concludes, "The words of Job are ended," while Job 38 begins, "YHWH answered Job from the whirlwind." One may expect God's response to follow Job's climactic final speech, and yet between these two verses span six chapters comprised of a single, self-contained block of speeches. Moreover, this unexpected interlocutor is the only character with an Israelite name, Elihu, and is neither mentioned nor responded to anywhere outside of his speeches. God explicitly addresses Eliphaz and the other two friends in the epilogue, but either ignores or is ignorant of Elihu. A brief prose introduction in 32:1-5 justifies the addition of these speeches, but it seems more like an apology than a justification.

Unlike Job and the other friends, Elihu often quotes the others and engages the precise diction of their arguments (cf. 33:8; 33:11 // 13:27; 33:15 // 4:13). Although it would be difficult to prove or disprove, one may conjecture that this difference indexes a contextual or historical shift in more general practices of reading and writing. Reading, studying, and interpreting written texts became increasingly possi-

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9. For an example of genre displacement even within the presumed intention of the first author, see the discussion of Job's appropriation and inversion of biblical genres in Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations,* 130-169.

ble and popular over the course of the Second Temple period, and it may be that Eli-hu's concern with responding to the letter of the others' speeches reflects this general trend. Elihu's reference to his youth vis-à-vis the friends in his justification for his si-lence may therefore index more than mere age difference.[10]

Some scholars offer evidence for dating Elihu's discourse to the Hellenistic period (ca. 330 bce- 70 bce). Elihu's theology, while similar to the friends, can seem less pastoral and more sophisticated than theirs. Within the trajectory of sapiential thought spanning from Prov 1-9 (ca. 450 bce) to Ben Sirah (ca. 180 bce), Elihu's strongly theocentric, almost philosophical wisdom (cf. 32:8) resonates with Ben Sir-ah, whereas the friends seem closer to Proverbs. Several scholars argue for a third century bce date given various intellectual currents Elihu shares with other Jewish literature from the Hellenistic period.[11] Thus, the book of Job's "original context" ex-tends from possibly the period of the Exile, or perhaps the early Persian period, until the Hellenistic period.

Yet the story of Job most likely precedes the entire biblical text that bears his name. Many modern scholars agree that the figure of Job, if not the book, may be traced back well before the exile: though Ezekiel mentions Job as a hero of renown, his comments are at odds with the Joban biblical narrative (Ezek 14:14, 20; cf. Job 1:18-19), implying that a different story of Job may pre-date the canonical version.[12] It may well be that the prose sections of the book of Job modify an already-existing

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10.   Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1991), 148, 153.

11.   T. Mende, *Durch Leiden zur Vollendung* (Trier: Paulinus-Verlag, 1990), 419-27; H. Wahl, *Der gerechte Schöpfer: eine redaktions-und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung der Elihureden, Hiob 32-37* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1993), 182-87.

12.   S. Spiegel, "Noah, Danel, and Job," in *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume* (New York: The American Academy of Jewish Research, 1945) 305-355.

folktale; thus, the origin of the book of Job is already secondary to the previous story of Job, and thus unoriginal. Perhaps, then, we should speak of "initial" texts and contexts, which are the texts and contexts at which we scholars choose to begin our investigations. The adjective "initial" refers more strongly to our scholarly activities, and not necessarily to the material under investigation.

Now that we can see the difficulty in locating a precise literary, generic, or historical context for the book of Job, we can also take note of its linguistic dislocation: Job's orthography is unusually conservative, leading Freedman to suggest a seventh century bce date and a Northern provenance. Others regard this orthographic conservatism as "archaistic" not "archaic," that is, it *seems* ancient and foreign.[13] With regard to diction, the book of Job is unique in the biblical canon. Some one hundred and forty five words within the book of Job are not to be found in other texts of the Hebrew Bible, and even more words derive from archaic Hebrew, Aramaic, Transjordanian dialects, and ancient Arabic. As a result, some scholars follow medieval rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra's suggestion that the Hebrew book is a translation of an older, non-Hebraic source.[14]

In contrast, Edward Greenstein argues convincingly that the language does not exhibit a true dialect; rather, its linguistic oddities deliberately create a variety of poetic effects, including a general sense of foreignness.[15] In modern American cinema, this same foreign-izing effect is achieved by means of British accents: characters in American films set in the ancient world usually sound as if the Acropolis were adjacent to Trafalgar square. In the book of Job, many of the Aramaic-like qualities fail

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13.   See Seow, *Job*.

14.   See N. H. Tur-Sinai [Torczyner], *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1957), xxx-l.

15.   Edward L. Greenstein, "The Language of Job and Its Poetic Function," *JBL* 122 (2003): 651-6.

to approximate actual Aramaic, and thus it appears that the book of Job exists in a linguistic netherworld: it is actually original to no existing semantic context.

And yet, it remains possible for readers of many different contexts to read this non-contextual (or is it then pan-contextual?) semantic system. The book of Job is regarded widely as a profound book, something that signifies in spite of– or, perhaps, *because of*– its clear internal dislocations. Many recent biblical scholars, such as Norman Habel, Carol Newsom and Davis Hankins, have read the book as a literary whole in ways that nevertheless take account of its internal differences in style and substance.[16] Thus, the dislocations within the initial context(s) of the book of Job do not disable its signifying function any more than the differing initial contexts of the words in this sentence disable its signifying function, in whatever context it may be read.

3   THE INITIAL CONTEXT(S) OF JOB 19:25-27

We have no information at all concerning the reading of Job within its presumed context of production.[17] There are neither commentaries nor even translations that survive from the Persian period, nor do we find anything other than brief recountings

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16.   See Charles D. Hankins, "Job and the Limits of Wisdom" (Emory University, 2011); Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*; Norman Habel, *The Book of Job* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985).

17.   Ezekiel 14:14, 20 do show at least a familiarity with a story somewhat similar to the book of Job; this is discussed below. Also, one could argue that proposed redactional layers show a reading of earlier sections of the text; while this may be true, we find then readings in a context later than their inscription. But, in any event, we can only find readings of the book of Job (outside of those perhaps in the book itself) in later periods.

of the prose tale, assorted translations, narrative retellings, and individual quota-

tions that remain from the Hellenistic world.[18] What modern scholars mean, then, by

"reading a text in its ancient context" means a *modern* reading of this text wherein

modern scholars attempt to read *as if* they were ancient peoples.[19] Thus, the product

of such readings cannot be anything other than a modern product, albeit a modern

product designed to mimic presumably ancient products.[20] As a result, most scholars

usually find themselves in the paradoxical position of consulting recent critical edi-

tions, linguistic tools, commentaries, and historiographic syntheses created by mod-

ern scholars in their attempts to reach the furthest back in time.[21]

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18.   See, for example, the OG translation, the fragments from Origen's Hexapla, the *Testament of Job*, and the remarks of such interpreters as Aristeas the Exegete.

19.   For example, Richard Simon emphasized that, when translating "words whose signification we do not know," the biblical critic must recover a lost "art or custom" from ancient Israel that might help limit the potential meanings and find the "proper signification." Richard Simon, *Histoire critique du vieux testament* (Montrouge: Bayard, 2008), 2:II, III. Readers can do this in a more or less precise manner; for example, if I were reading Job 19:25-27 as if I were an ancient Israelite, I should not read the text with a doctrine of Resurrection in mind. What is important to keep in mind, however, is that at the moment of the text's inscription there were already many potential ways of reading it. Modern scholars attempt to reconstruct the semantic, generic and historical boundaries of the ancient readers when reading a text, but this constitution and determination of a context was precisely what ancient readers themselves had to do in their own acts of reading. Thus, modern scholars can rule out many readings as violating some semantic, generic or historical boundary and so disqualify this reading from the category of "readings of the text in its ancient context" (but this does not rule out the reading in any absolute sense). But the text was open to many different readings even in its initial state, and thus there must be an allowance for multiplicity even when readings texts "in their ancient contexts."

20.   Even this goal is itself a thoroughly modern one, as opposed to ancient and medieval readers, who in large part were quite uninterested in reading texts as if they were other people.

21.   This problem, of course, is exactly the same effect of displacement produced by signs that enables their very use. See Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (trans. G. Bennington, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 25-41.

Thus, our beginning looks surprisingly like the ending to our story: I will focus mainly on recent scholarly readings from Norman Habel, David Clines, Choon-Leong Seow, and many others. These modern readings, we will see, themselves emerge from within the process of the reception of the texts they try to read *as if* that history did not exist. But this odd juncture of ancient and modern is not merely a "fusion" of two horizons that ends in a moment of understanding: rather, these modern-ancient readings display the semantic divergence and novelty that the biblical text produces. We must imagine that, even in its initial context, as in every successive context, the text of Job 19:25-27 overflowed with different semantic potentialities.[22]

Since I do not suppose that the text of Job 19:25-27 is a direct citation from an older text (though it has been suggested),[23] I imagine that the literary location of this text as it stands within the MT is most likely its initial literary context. I take the presumed Hebrew text from the Second Temple period to be my point of literary departure, and the general cultural milieu of Persian-period Israelites and the necessarily vague borders of "Classical Hebrew" to be my historical and linguistic contexts.[24]

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22.   In the initial context of production I will analyze semantic possibilities but not textual, transmutational and non-semantic processes, for the simple reason that these processes are far simpler to model from a diachronic perspective. A more detailed study would be able to elaborate on these other processes.

23.   See Emile G. Kraeling, *Book of the Ways of God* (New York: Scribner, 1939), 89, who argues that Job 19:25 echoes the Ba'al cycle, and note that in any event the text of Job 19:25-27 is composed only of cited elements from other contexts–for example, no lexeme in 19:25-27 is unique to that context, and the meanings that it brings with it from its previous contexts are manifold.

24.   It may in some cases be productive to propose heuristic literary, semantic and historical contexts that precede the "earliest known" ones. Here, I have not found this exercise to be particularly helpful. But in the case of Pentateuchal traditions, for example, the reconstruction of the P-source posits a "pre-original" set of contexts that help us to read that material in a different light. It is, however, misleading to label the P-document the "original" text in any sense, since the P-source must have drawn material from pre-existing traditions and written sources before shaping it into anything

Below, I offer a reading of Job 19:25-27 that seeks to locate its various semantic potentialities in light of these contexts.

3.1   Determining Literary Contexts

At times, biblical scholars seem to imagine that literary contexts are "given."[25] If they were, however, biblical scholars would spend less time constructing them, and there would be fewer arguments about them. That is, contexts do not simply appear: we must discern them, which is another way of saying that we must *construct* them.

As for Job 19:25-27: what is its literary context? Here is one answer:

Job 19 constitutes a speech given by the character Job; it occurs in the second of three rounds of dialogues between Job and his friends (chs. 15-21). By this time, the dialogue has turned from a conversation into something more resembling a shouting match. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar take turns accusing Job of sinful activities that have brought about his justly deserved punishments, and repeatedly associate Job's plight with the "fate of the wicked" who invariably descend to Sheol (cf. 15:20-35; 18:5-21; 20:5-29).

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resembling a document. Thus, we may always push any text or context to reveal something "behind" it that seems more original. The scholarly task, then, is simply to begin somewhere while realizing its contingent and unoriginal status. As for Job 19:25-27, this particular passage is not preserved in the texts found at Qumran, but there is no information available that would lead me to believe that Hebrew manuscripts of Job 19:25-27 differed widely in their consonantal form when compared to the MT in the broad context of Second Temple Judaism.

25.   See Habel, *The Book of Job*, 273.

In contrast, Job might be understood to speak in the language of lament in his speeches of the second cycle (16-17; 19; 21). As Gunkel argued, one of the forms appropriated in particular by Job is the lament; he also noted a strong connection to the genre of individual lament poetry especially present in 19:7-22.[26] In these speeches, Job relies heavily upon what Adele Berlin has named "the trope of death"– a common trope in lament poetry of the ancient Near East– to describe his suffering.[27] The images forming the constellation of the trope of death are rather consistent throughout lament and thanksgiving genres, and occur in less consistent forms elsewhere throughout the Hebrew Bible.

The shared imagery between Job 19, Psalm 88 and Lamentations 3, for example, is uncanny. In all three poems, the sufferers image themselves in darkness (Lam 3:2; Ps 88:7,18; Job 19:8), complain that their bodies have been decimated by God (Lam 3:4; Ps 88:10; Job 19:20), that they are surrounded and walled in by God (Lam 3:7,9; Ps 88:9; Job 19:8), that their glory or respect has vanished (Lam 3:18; Ps 88:9; Job 19:9), that they have been separated from their communities (Lam 3:6; Ps 88:9,19; Job 19:13-19), that their cries for help have been rejected (Lam 3:8; 43-44; Ps 88:10,15; Job 19:7), and all contain the vivid image of God besieging the individual, expressed with the same phrase, סלל־על (Lam 3:5a; Ps 88:17-19; Job 19:10-12). These images–of immobility, dismemberment and darkness–suggest identification with buried corpses, and thus the inhabitants of Sheol. In short, these three poems employ the elements of the "trope of death."

There has been much debate over whether or not the ancient poets under-

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26.   Herman Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (Macon: Mercer University, 1998), 148.

27.   Adele Berlin, *Lamentations* (Int; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 89-94.

stood these as metaphorical or not; regardless of the answer, the sense of death extends far beyond mere biology or the cessation of life. As Jon Levenson has argued, "Whereas we [moderns] think of a person who is gravely ill, under lethal assault, or sentenced to capital punishment as still alive, the Israelites were quite capable of seeing such an individual as dead."[28] Thus, the trope of death expresses physical, emotional, and religious devastation, which reflects the poet's distance from life, order, and God.

Likewise, Psalm 88 and Lamentations 3 contain clear references to the underworld itself (בור Lam 3:55; שאול Ps 88:3). It is fitting, then, that Job 19 also contains references to death and the grave. For example, in verse 10, Job cries, "He breaks me down on every side, and I *am gone*," using the verb הלך, which here seems to refer to impending death (cf. Gen 15:2; Ps 39:14; 1Ki 2:2; 2Chr 17:11).

Chapter 19 is not alone in its use of the trope of death: in fact, all of Job's speeches in the second cycle abound in death imagery:

(16:13) He slashes open (יפלח) my kidneys, and shows no mercy

(17:1) My spirit is broken, my days are extinct, the grave (קברים) is ready for me

(17:7) My eye has grown dim (תכה) from grief, and all my members are like a shadow (צל)

While Job and his friends all seem to focus on Sheol throughout the second cycle, in terms of genre, Job and his friends seem to be speaking past each other; the fate of the wicked emphasizes the awful but deserved unalterable conclusion to an evil life, while the lament psalm stresses the pain of the speaker to move the deity into action,

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28.   Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University, 2006), 38.

which requires the essential openness of the speaker's location in Sheol. It seems that, in the second cycle, Job and his friends carry on an indirect argument about where sufferers end up, why they end up there, and the possibility of salvation. Job expresses an impossible desire to be recovered from Sheol in 14:1-22; in response, the friends claim that the wicked go down early to Sheol, and *cannot* return (esp. 15:30; 18:19; 20:26). The friends argue that Job's experience of Sheol in life is evidence of his wickedness, and he will soon be forever lost. One might construe the lament-genre trope of death is Job's response: as he mimics the one in Sheol who *does not belong there* and can potentially envision a restoration, Job offers an alternate conception of his predicament. Perhaps this is an indirect struggle for control of the language of death– and thus of the language of ontological finality.[29]

It seems that I have, in the above paragraphs, simply *told you* what is clearly *there.* And yet: what I have actually done is carefully selected particular images and intertexts in order to justify a particular perspective on this text. I have clearly set up this text as a discussion of death and Sheol, as well as a struggle for the language of death. This construction of the literary context will allow me to move to a discussion of the recovery of life from the jaws of death, which is a common motif in lament and thanksgiving psalms. Of course, this will inform one reading of Job 19:25-27. As for the many other elements of the text and the other potential intertexts, I have hidden them from view. There is no other way to determine a context, since reductionism is required to establish a context; as a result, one could always determine a context differently, by highlighting the repressed elements.

For example, to begin again, differently:

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29.   On the topic of Job's appropriation of genres, see Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 130-168.

Job 19 constitutes a speech given by the character Job; it occurs in the second of three rounds of dialogues between Job and his friends (chs. 15-21). By this time, the dialogue has turned from a conversation into something more resembling a shouting match. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar take turns accusing Job of sinful activities that have brought about his justly deserved punishments, and repeatedly associate Job's plight with the "fate of the wicked" who invariably descend to Sheol (cf. 15:20-35; 18:5-21; 20:5-29).

In contrast, Job might be understood to continue his appropriation of the language of the courtroom in his speeches of the second cycle (16-17; 19; 21).[30] In chapter 9, Job begins to appropriate forensic language in order to argue with his friends' pious encouragements to pray for renewal. Job's forensic language conveys his inability to pray: God is his adversary, not his advocate. In 9:2b, Job subverts Eliphaz' rhetorical question in 4:17: "Can a human be in the right before God?" Job's cry, "How can a mortal be justified before God?" twists the word צדיק from its ethical or religious sense to its forensic sense: for Job, the question is not one of his *righteousness,* because he *is* righteous. In the following verse, Job asks about contending with God in court (לריב עמו), suggesting that traditional supplication would not work in his preculiar case.

Job's recourse to legal metaphors is quite powerful, in fact: since the legal system serves to mediate disputes and restore justice, Job has at his disposal a discourse that disarms the pious niceties of his friends. The courts are an important function of the community and a viable source of tradition, and furthermore, it is a tradition that

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30.   For readings along these lines, see David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 457-66; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 302-309. For a more balanced view of the legal metaphor in Job, see Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 150-166, 201-211.

sets aside *a priori* knowledge and looks to the facts of each particular case in order to render a proper judgment. The legal tradition requires that charges be made public, and it then offers both parties a chance to speak and for the accused to defend her or himself. Thus, the legal system would offer Job the perfect communal space to confront God, since he knows that God has attacked him for no cause (2:3; cf. 9:22).

As a result, Job develops an elaborate courtroom fantasy. In chapter 9, Job realizes that it would be too difficult to take God to court, because God would then be prosecutor, defendant, and judge alike (9:15-16, 32). In light of this paradox, Job wishes that there were an arbiter (מוכיח) that could keep God from abusing and intimidating Job (9:33-34). If this could happen, then Job would be free to testify and tell the truth about his awful condition, including the fact that he has done nothing to deserve it (9:35). In chapter 16, Job offers legal testimony describing the attacks of his assailant (16:9-16) and protesting his own innocence (16:17). Job even imagines that God has managed to force Job's shriveled body to testify against Job himself (16:8). In turn, Job asks for his innocent blood to cry out for justice (cf. Gen 4:10). Job then proclaims that his "witness is in heaven," and "the one who vouches for me is on high" (Job 16:19) before wishing again for arbitration (16:21; ויוכח). In chapter 19, Job begins his testimony again: he accuses his friends of attacking him (19:2) and then recounts a litany of God's assaults (19:6-12) and God's destruction of Job's community (19:13-19). Job then wishes to write down his legal testimony for all to read (19:24, reading "witness" with LXX for עד) before declaring that his kinsman-redeemer will soon rise up to vindicate Job (19:25).

Both of the above constructions of context are acceptable, since they can justify their readings by means of the semantic, generic and intertextual structures that existed in ancient Israel. Thus, we can see that context is *constructed,* and thus any

particular construction of a context is *contingent*. But one must read in a context (that is, one cannot read entirely "out of context"), and thus context is *necessary*.[31] When analyzing the potentials of a text, we must remember that the context is not given, and thus we must ask, even when thinking about the context of a text's production, how the text functions in the midst of various contexts.

3.2   *Degrees of Semantic Freedom*

We can now analyze the text and determine some of its "degrees of freedom." This phrase derives from dynamical systems theory, but it proves a helpful metaphor for textual reception theory. Manuel DeLanda explains:

> When one attempts to model the dynamical behaviour of a particular physical object (say, the dynamical behaviour of a pendulum or a bicycle, to stick to relatively simple cases) the first step is to determine the number of relevant ways in which such an object can change (these are known as an object's *degrees of freedom*), and then to relate those changes to one another using the differential calculus. A pendulum, for instance, can change only in its position and momentum, so it has two degrees of freedom... A bicycle, if we consider all its moving parts (handlebars, front wheels, crank-chain-rear-wheel assembly and the two pedals) has ten degrees of freedom (each of the five parts can change in both position and momentum)...

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31.   "...the point is not at all to claim the liberty to read out of context, which would be meaningless (one always reads in one or several contexts), but to interrogate the coherence of the concept of context deployed in this way." Bennington and Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, 85.

> After this mapping operation, the state of the object at any given
>
> instant of time becomes a single point in the manifold, which is now
>
> called a *state space*.[32]

Thus, a physicist looks at a bicycle and notes the points at which the bicycle can move and change; the freedom provided by this movement allows the bicycle to function in various ways. As for texts, we often find areas of ambiguity, indeterminacy and undecidability that provide "degrees of freedom" that allow for interpretive movement. Biblical scholars have long seen these textual "degrees of freedom" as problems in need of an ultimate solution; however, the reception historian, like the physicist, may analyze the ways in which these specific degrees of freedom create the potential for different readings. These readings created by the text's degrees of freedom are certainly *real*–albeit in many cases 'virtual,' or 'unactualized'–even within the broadly-construed initial context. I will offer here only the most influential degrees of freedom for the text at hand, and I can only sketch out their general parameters, but a longer study could doubtless offer many more interpretive potentials.[33]

The early versions do not seem to present variants that would presuppose a *Vorlage* different from MT.[34] I have, for the most part, ignored the extravagant emendations that interpreters have suggested for this text, since I regard many of them as a topological "ripping" or "stitching" of the text that alters its problematic

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32.   Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2002), 14.

33.   For other examples of biblical scholars establishing various "degrees of freedom" in the book of Job, see Tod Linafelt, "The Undecidability of BRK in the Prologue to Job and Beyond," *Biblical Interpretation* 4 (1996): 154-72, and Alan Cooper, "Reading and Misreading the Prologue to Job," *JSOT* 46 (1990): 67-79.

34.   Some Hebrew manuscripts do not include the phrase אשר אני in verse 27, but the other early versions include it. Many biblical scholars assume that verse 26 is textually corrupt, but no significant variants exist.

structure. It is not that these emendations are *bad* in some absolute sense, but they do tend to produce new textual structures instead of reading the structures at hand. That is, they are at times difficult to classify as "readings," but might fit better under the rubric of "transmutations" of the text. Thus, it is likely that the earliest recoverable consonantal text is minimally different from the text found in the Aleppo Codex and Leningrad Codex, which are in agreement. That early text, albeit written in anachronistic Aramaic square script and accompanied by even more anachronistic medieval masoretic vocalization, is as follows:

25 וַאֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי גֹּאֲלִי חָי וְאַחֲרוֹן עַל־עָפָר יָקוּם

26 וְאַחַר עוֹרִי נִקְּפוּ־זֹאת וּמִבְּשָׂרִי אֶחֱזֶה אֱלוֹהַּ

27 אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי אֶחֱזֶה־לִּי וְעֵינַי רָאוּ וְלֹא־זָר כָּלוּ כִלְיֹתַי בְּחֵקִי

A comparison of two English translations highlights some of this text's degrees of freedom:[35]

> NRSV:
>> (25) For I know that my Redeemer lives,
>>> and that at the last he will stand upon the earth;
>> (26) and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
>>> then in my flesh I shall see God,
>> (27) whom I shall see on my side,
>>> and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
>>> My heart faints within me!
> NJB:
>> (25) I know that I have a living Defender

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35. Particular translation issues will be discussed below, and thus I have omitted translation notes here.

and that he will rise up last, on the dust of the earth.

(26) After my awakening, he will set me close to him,

and from my flesh I shall look on God.

(27) He whom I shall see will take my part:

my eyes will be gazing on no stranger.

My heart sinks within me.

Below, I will explore the problematic structure of various elements of this text, focusing on the differing semantic potentialities at the levels of words and phrases and then extending this analysis to the level of sentences and larger sense-units.

(1) וְ

In this text, an interpretive question immediately asserts itself: namely, what is the status of the *waw* that opens our passage? Grammarians generally argue that an interclausal *waw* standing before a non-verb should be read as disjunctive; thus, at first glance the beginning of verse 25 should be read with the word "but."[36] Many scholars simply take this for granted: for example, as David Clines writes, "The opening 'but' (*waw*) is of course contrastive with vv 23-24."[37]

There are, however, other potential readings; a *waw* can be a notoriously tricky thing to translate. As Alan Cooper has argued, in Job 1:2, for example, the *waw* in וילדו could signify a temporal and causal connection between Job's piety and his wealth, or it could signify that "Job's prosperity [is merely]... *symmetrically* relat-

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36. See Bruce Waltke and Michael O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 650.

37. Clines, *Job 1-20*, 458.

ed to... his piety, in no temporal or causal relationship (that is, the *waw* means 'and'—no more, no less)."[38] Cooper shows us that the *waw* opening Job 1:2 is one of that text's degrees of semantic freedom, and the readings that it opens are significantly different: is Job's piety the *cause* of his wealth, or is the narrator simply juxtaposing Job's behavior with his wealth? The answer to this question inflects our reading of the rest of the prologue, and indeed the entire book of Job.

In 19:25, a reader could certainly take the *waw* as disjunctive, but it also could be read, among other things, as an explicative conjunction.[39] *Pace* Waltke and O'Connor, there are many examples wherein a *waw* introduces an explicative clause, and not merely a phrase, beginning with a non-verbal component (e.g., וכל אשר in Job 2:4, as well as Gen 13:8; Lev 14:9; 2 Sam 15:18; 1 Kgs 7:45b; Mal 3:1).[40] In one such reading, Job's words in 19:25-27 would constitute the "words" (מלי) that Job wants so desperately to engrave on a cliff (19:23-24).[41] But why would it matter if the phrase is explicative or disjunctive? Seow explains some of the interpretive stakes:

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38.   Alan Cooper, "Reading and Misreading the Prologue to Job," *JSOT* 46 (1990): 69. Though this example refers to a waw preceding a verb, the grammatical parallel is not in view. I am here referring to the translational importance as well as translational difficulty found elsewhere in the book of Job.

39.   So Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies,* 198. For disjunctive readings, see Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1984), 285; S. R. Driver and G. B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), 132. For an assumedly pleonastic reading of the waw that leaves it untranslated, see M. H. Pope, *Job* (AB 15; 3rd ed. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 139; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 291.

40.   See P. Wilton, "More Cases of Waw Explicativum," *VT* 44 (1994): 125-28 and D. Baker, "Further Examples of the Waw Explicativum," *VT* 30 (1980): 129-136. Thus, I disagree with Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 650-52, wherein the authors claim that intraclausal waw connected to a non-verb must be disjunctive, and that explicative waw may only function at the phrasal level.

41.   This particular interpretation may undergird the common practice of engraving this text on tombstones and other monumental funerary art; see below.

We should probably take that *waw* not as conjunctive, suggesting a supplementary argument to what is in vv. 23-24, but as disjunctive, this marking the contrast between what Job wishes (vv. 23-24) and what he 'knows' (vv. 25-27). The contrast is, perhaps, between two resolutions to the problem of his terrible persecution– the one an indelible monument of a dead victim, the other a living champion.[42]

If the *waw* is disjunctive, then Job's wished-for[43] monument might display Job's legal "depositions" that accuse God of assault (cf. 19:6-20) and thus carry on his case even after his death; this wish would *contrast* with his hope for a solution to his problem while he is still living (19:25-27).[44] Thus, the reader would then understand Job's words as something quite different from his written testimony. Yet if the *waw* is explicative, then, for example, Job's written testimony may *be* his hope for a redeemer to either defend him from God, or to save him from his ills, or to take care of his body after his death.[45]

Thus, the *waw* creates the contextual frame for 19:25-27 and situates Job's words within the larger poem. But the problem (or more appropriately the *problematic structure*) is that there are many other possibilities opened up by this ambiguous *waw*. By it, any construal of Job 19:25-27 can be understood as *either* disconnected from *or* the content of the message referred to in 19:23-24. In short, the "degree of

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42.   Choon-Leong Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," in *Gott und Mensch im Dialog: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag* (ed. M. Witte; BZAW 345/II. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 696.

43.   The optative phrase מי־יתן occurs twice in 19:23, thus rendering the following words a wish ("would that..."). On the central role of this phrase in Habel's reading of the book of Job, see Habel, *The Book of Job*, 347.

44.   Clines, *Job 1-20*, 456.

45.   For a reading that follows this last line of thought, see Matthew Suriano, "Death, Disinheritance, and Job's Kinsman-Redeemer," *JBL* 129 (2010): 49-66.

freedom" made available by the initial *waw* allows 19:25-27 to pivot around its pre-

ceding verses.[46]

גאל *(2)*

With regards to 19:25-27, the word גאל has functioned as most important interpretive

pivot throughout the history of Joban interpretation.[47] Several semantic fields jostle

within this word: the גֹּאֵל could at least signify (a) a person, such as a family member,

who will in some way defend or otherwise care for Job; (b) another divine figure,

such as a personal deity or an imaginary divine champion, who would protect Job

from God; (c) God; or (d) Job's own legal complaint. These fields remain quite open,

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46.   One could also analyze the play found in the word ידע in 19:25. Concerning
the contextual meaning of this word, there are many options. Ball and Tur-Sinai think
that without the word כי following ידע, the phrase must be translated simply as a
statement of personal knowledge ("I know the identity of my kinsman-redeemer." C. J.
Ball, *The Book of Job: A Revised Text and Version* (rev. ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1922),
279; Tur-Sinai [Torczyner], *The Book of Job: A New Commentary*, 304-05. Gordis sees
it as a "triumphant affirmation" of Job's knowledge that the kinsman-redeemer will
vindicate his memory. Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and
Special Studies*, 205. Seow argues that ידע here introduces a non-epistemological, non-
confessional, decidedly un-triumphant "conceit for whatever purpose"; Seow cites
several of Job's other uses of ידע that plainly contradict what he does actually know (cf.
9:28; 13:18), thus showing that "to know" does not here mean to have knowledge, but
rather to imagine a fleeting and contradictory hope. Yet Seow agrees that one cannot rule
out the possibility that Job offers here a conviction or an "article of faith"– though it is
unlikely, given Job's anger towards God. See Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 705. Clines, too,
thinks that ידע introduces what Job "knows, or believes," which is "that God is his
enemy," as well as the "ultimate recognition of his blamelessness" that will occur in the
future. This statement is thus an expression of belief, not a report of sure knowledge. See
Clines, *Job 1-20*, 457-458. Many other semantic possibilities exist for this occurrence of
ידע, many of which are decisive for interpreting the status of the statement that follows it.

47.   See Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob* (KAT; Gutersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963),
308ff., especially 317-322.

however, even after a reader selects one: for example, if this word does refer to God,

is it spoken with pious faith, or is it an ironic use of an epithet, since God has done

anything *but* "redeem" Job at this point in the book?[48] In order to explore the flexi-

bility of this word, I will address each of the four semantic fields in turn.

In the Hebrew Bible, גֹּאֵל most often signifies a "kinsman-redeemer," the near-

est male relative who gives aid to family members who are in need. One can act as a

גֹּאֵל by marrying widowed relatives (eg. Ruth 3:9), buying land or houses that rela-

tives had lost in order to return it to them (eg. Lev 25:24-34), ransoming a family

member who sold themselves into indentured servitude (eg. Lev 25:47-55), or even

avenging a family member's wrongful death by killing the responsible party (often

called a גֹּאֵל־הַדָּם, eg. Num 35:19).[49] Thus, in Job 19:25, Job may be calling for a kins-

man-redeemer to come to his aid. Yet this quasi-solution does not do much to nar-

row the field of interpretation: is Job's human kinsman-redeemer a steadfast relative

who will ensure Job's proper burial,[50] or is the redeemer someone who will help him

defend himself from his heavenly adversary,[51] or perhaps his earthy enemies, such as

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48.   For a reading that understands Job's use of גאל to be pious, see J. G. Janzen, *Job* (Int; Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 134-35. For a reading that understands Job's use of גאל to be an ironic reminder of "God's forsaken role," see Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 701.

49.   Also, Israelites responsible for certain cultic offerings could substitute the required offerings for a lavish payment, thus "redeeming" the animals or land (cf. Lev 27:9-34). See J. Unterman, "The Socio-Legal Origin for the Image of God as Redeemer of Israel," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (eds. D. Wright et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 399-405. For more on גֹּאֵל, see H. Ringgren, "גָּאַל," TDOT 3:350–55.

50.   See, for example, Suriano, "Death, Disinheritance, and Job's Kinsman-Redeemer," 60.

51.   Though Pope famously suggested a reading inflected by the Sumerian concept of the personal deity, he allows that a human redeemer may be what Job envisions: "It is not clear whether Job has in mind a human agent…[or] a personal god." See Pope, Job,

his friends, while Job is alive?[52] Moreover, is this kinsman-redeemer a real person, or is this merely a conceit? It seems that any of these are at least minimally defensible options, especially since: (1) Job is in dire need of help of all kinds, and speaks of his condition by means of many different concrete and metaphorical images, often juxta-posed (cf. 9:19), (2) God is a complicated character in every biblical text, but espe-cially this one, (cf. 2:3; 38:1; 42:7), (3) Job is not a particularly consistent character (cf. 3:11; 17:13-16), and (4) the book of Job is a complex and difficult poem, and as such it often stretches the boundaries of language, imagery, and even theology (cf. 19:26).

Yet there are even more semantic potentials available for this term. Marvin Pope, for example, suggested that Job is asking a minor deity to help him plea his case before God, similar to the function of personal deities in various Sumerian texts.[53] Other interpreters have argued that Job is calling for a figure similar to the celestial arbiter that he invokes in 9:33 (מוֹכִיחַ) or the witness which, in 16:19, he claims is in heaven (בַּשָּׁמַיִם עֵדִי).[54] This divine protector could be understood as the antithesis of the שטן character.[55] Moreover, Elihu seems to imagine a similar scenario in 33:23 (אִם־יֵשׁ עָלָיו מַלְאָךְ), which may signal that at least one ancient interpreter read Job in this manner. Yet this solution, as well, creates a new problematic field: who

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52.   See Rashi's comments to this effect in Avraham Shoshanna, ed., *Sefer Iyyov Be-Veit Midrasho Shel Rashi [The Book of Job in the School of Rashi]* (Jerusalem: Makhon Ofeq, 2000), 116-117.

53.   Pope, *Job*, 135.

54.   See, for example, Sigmund Mowinckel, "Hiobs Go'el Und Zeuge Im Himmel," *Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 41 (1925): , 207-12; Habel, The *Book of Job,* 306; William A. Irwin, "Job's Redeemer," *JBL* 81 (1962): 217-29; S. Balentine, *Job* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 297; T. J. Meek, "Job xix 25-27," *VT* 6 (1956): 100-103.

55.   See Habel, *The Book of Job*, 306.

exactly is this arbiter, since Israelite theology did not seem to have a well-developed concept of personal deities? Is the arbiter's action directed against God or the friends, and is this action primarily forensic, defending Job in court, or is it an attack, defending Job by means of force? Is it perhaps a combination of these options? And what is the epistemological status of Job's claim– does Job know an actual celestial being, or is this his imagination talking? It seems that this reading creates as many questions as it answers. Surely some of these readings are weaker than others, but many of them can be easily defended, and any one is ultimately difficult to disprove.

In contrast, Job's use of גאל may refer to God. Though this reading has fallen out of favor in recent decades, it remains a viable reading of the text.[56] In the Hebrew Bible, YHWH is often characterized as a גאל: for example, Jacob calls YHWH his גאל for protecting his life (Gen 48:16). Moreover, psalmists refer to YHWH as their גאל, and at other times they ask YHWH to fulfill this role in order to rescue them from enemies or even impending death (eg. Pss 19:15; 78:35; 103:4). Occasionally, YHWH plays the role of the גאל not by attacking enemies, but rather by prosecuting the psalmist's assailants in court (Ps 119:154; Lam 3:58; notice the use of ריב in both cases). Thus, the text surely harbors the semantic potential to refer to God as גאל in 19:25, which would allow for–at the very least–the semantic inflections of a recovery of health, a deliverance from adversaries, and a forensic vindication.

Is reading God as the גאל, however, admissible in light of the surrounding lit-

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56.   For example, see Driver and Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job,* 171 ("none other than the living God himself"); Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job,* 283 ("it is the living God who is the Vindicator of Job"); Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies*, 206 ("In view of the uncompromising monotheism of the Book of Job…"); J. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 292-94 ("redeemer applies to none other than God").

erary context? Norman Habel argues that the גאל cannot possibly refer to God, as "the need is for deliverance from God, not by God."[57] While it seems beyond doubt that Job requires and constantly asks for deliverance *from* God, there are other instances where he imagines this deliverance *from* God *by* God (cf. 14:13-17; 23:3-7, 10). In chapter 14, for instance, Job imagines that God will pull him from the grave after God's wrath passes by. And in 23:7, Job proclaims, "I would be acquitted forever by my judge," who is in context clearly God. One may argue that these images of God working against God are paradoxical, but is it not conceivable that Job asserts a paradox, or perhaps that Job has conflicting thoughts? Or, could it not be that Job wishes God would not be who God is?

It might be that the recent general reluctance to name God as the גאל is an understated attempt to protect Job's identity from reverting to the "patient Job." For centuries, Job's heterodox cries were muffled by worried exegetes, and perhaps some recent interpreters are nervous that, if it turns out that Job sincerely asked God for help, the newly discovered impious Job would once again be lost.

Yet it could be that Job refers to God as גאל and nevertheless remains angry and accusatory; as Seow has argued, one can read Job's cry in 19:25 as an "ironic allusion to God" that serves to "remind the deity of a role abandoned that must be taken up again."[58] Thus, Job could be referring to God's *typical* role, but not one that God had assumed in relation to Job at that point in the story. Throughout the poetic dialogue, Job threads his speech with subtle irony; can the text not signify irony here, too?

Évode Beaucamp offers another quite ingenious potential reading of גאל:

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57.   Habel, *The Book of Job*, 306.
58.   Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 700-01.

namely, as Job's own cry for justice.[59] In chapter 16, according to Beaucamp, Job claims that the cry of his blood, like that of Cain, cries out for justice even in heaven itself (16:18-19); in 19:25, then, Beaucamp takes the גאל to refer to this same cry for justice and its longed-for redemptive affect:

> Bien qu'appliqué ici - et c'est l'unique exemple - à une réalité matérielle personnifiée: le cri qui appelle vengeance, l'emploi du mot goël se justifie parfaitement en pareil contexte.[60]

David Clines has offered a lengthy and detailed exegetical support for Beaucamp's reading, concluding that the גאל is "Hardly God... [it is] only his cry, uttered in the direction of God."[61]

Yet the bare facts are that the text never explicitly names Job's גאל, and that the context and intertexts are loose enough to support a multiplicity of readings. Much of the argumentation for any single position consists of bald statements of what Job "must" or "cannot possibly" be saying, but these arguments reduce to a simple tautology. It should seem odd to readers who work through Clines' introduction, in which he offers multiple contradictory readings of the book of Job from various perspectives to then confront Clines' assertion that the word "redeemer" can

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59.   "Quel est ce goël? Évidemment pas Dieu, puisque c'est lui dont il s'agit de vaincre l'hostilité, Aucun humain, par ailleurs, ne saurait servir d'arbitre en pareil cas (Jb 9,33), Alors qu'il proteste en vain contre la violence dont il est l'objet (Jb 16,17), Job ne connaît plus qu'un seul «témoin», capable de porter après sa mort sa cause devant Dieu (Jb 16,19-21), c'est le cri de son sang, Il n'y aura que lui, alors, pour s'interposer entre eux deux, dans la mesure toutefois où la terre ne le recouvrira pas (Jb 16,18)." E. Beaucamp, "Le Goël De Jb 19,25," *LTP* 33 (1977): 310.

60.   Ibid.

61.   Clines, *Job 1-20*, 457-66; see also David J. A. Clines, "Belief, Desire, and Wish in Job 19,23-27: Clues for the Identity of Job's 'Redeemer'," in *Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden, IOSOT Congress Jerusalem 1986* (eds. M Augustin and K.-D. Schunck; Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1988), 363-369.

"hardly" apply to the divinity.[62] Could the book of Job not handle one more internal conflict? Could Job not offer one more ironic invocation of pious language?[63]

Thus, we find a significant degree of freedom within the word גאל: it could signify a close family member, a divine assistant, God, or even Job's ongoing cry for justice.

אחרון (3)

In Job 19:25, the word אחרון has been translated in many different ways. Throughout history this word has most often been read as an adverb, meaning "at last" or even "at the last."[64] As a result, this reading understands Job to be describing a climactic event set in the distant future. The word אחרון then governs the temporal setting of the entire enunciation: Job must be speaking of something *other than* the current state of affairs, or even something that is about to happen. As many interpreters have pointed out, however, Classical Hebrew does not elsewhere use the word אחרון in an adverbial sense.[65] Yet the OG translator and *kaige*-Theodotion thought that this reading was legitimate, so perhaps the adverbial sense is not entirely out of play.[66]

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62.   For the Vegetarian Reading of Job, see Clines, *Job 1-20*, l-lii.

63.   This is not to say that all readers must accept all potential meanings as their own reading. Clines crafts a careful and internally consistent reading, and one that contributes much to the discussion of the book of Job; Clines does this precisely by choosing some readings and leaving others behind. But choosing one reading does not require one to disprove other potential readings, especially when the evidence is nothing more than "it does not seem consistent with the character's earlier words."

64.   See LXX, Theodotion, Vulgate, Peshitta, Targum, KJV ("at the latter day"), NRSV ("at the last").

65.   The adverbial form is אחרונה; see Meek, "Job xix 25-27," 101 and Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 701.

66.   See Balentine, *Job*, 297.

Moreover, the poetry of the book of Job quite often stretches the very bounds of language, and at those margins the signifying field of words may unsettle our inner philologists and grammarians.

Other readers, however, understand אחרון as an adjective of place, meaning "behind," or of time, meaning "later."[67] Thus, Job could be speaking of something yet to happen, but perhaps not a climactic event in the distant future. Still others have read this word as a substantive adjective, meaning "the last [one]."[68] Budde advanced a particular reading of this sort: he understood "the last [one]" in a forensic sense, meaning "the last one [to rise up in court]." Assumed here is that the final person to speak in a court case is the lawyer-like advocate who lays out the most convincing, and thus closing, arguments.[69] Budde's forensic argument seems quite plausible, but it leaves much of the text's semantic structure to be determined: for example, is the "last [one to rise in court]" a human advocate, a divine advocate other than God, or is it God who does this action?

Dhorme, for instance, reads אחרון as an epithet for God.[70] On several occasions, אחרון serves this very purpose, once in the context of the divine epithet גאל (Isa 44:6; cf. Isa 48:12). As Seow argues, "the twin epithets 'first' and 'last' together convey the unique character of God as both Creator ('the first') and ultimate Champion

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67.   See Tur-Sinai [Torczyner], *The Book of Job: A New Commentary,* 304-05. Pope translates the word as a substantive, "guarantor," based on Mishnaic Hebrew. See Pope, *Job*, 146. This is unlikely, as "last" is BH, and it functions well without recourse to a word used only much later.

68.   "It is clear that, in [Is 44:6], it is God, in his role as go'el, who is the first and the last." Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 283. See also Driver and Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, 127.

69.   Karl Budde, *Das Buch Hiob, übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1896), 108.

70.   Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 283.

('the last')."[71] One might understand YHWH to assume the role of אחרון in a forensic sense (cf. Ps 119:154), or in the extra-legal sense of a violent גאל־הדם, the "final" arbiter of justice who operates outside the law (cf. Isa 49:26; 43:14).

Clines, following Beaucamp, argues that Job's cry is itself the גאל–cum–lawyer who speaks "last" in court.[72] Though Clines simply asserts that "it seems clear that legal language is being used," the only forensic words in the immediate literary context that Clines can point to are גאל and קום, neither of which are very commonly used in that manner. Ultimately, Clines understands the forensic trope as the most important element of Job's many arguments; since this famous passage *could* be read in a manner consistent with this understanding, Clines does so. Of course, Clines' reading is in many ways a compelling one. But as Clines knows, reading אחרון as "the last [one to rise up in court]" requires a larger "forensic context" to justify its unusual signification. Certainly, this forensic context can be *constructed*–but *only* if one decides to read גאל and קום in theirs somewhat obscure forensic senses. Thus, it is not "clear" that legal language is being used: it is, however, clear that the determination of a forensic context allows for a forensic determination of this otherwise underdetermined word.

In the end, it seems impossible to exclude definitively either the temporal adjectival use or the substantive use, as both work syntactically and in context. Moreover, if the reader grants some grammatical flexibility, the adverbial reading could work, as well. And since nothing seems to exclude God, Job's cry, an imaginary celes-

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71.   Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 702. As a result, Seow reads the waw in 19:25b as explicative: "that is, the Last..."

72.   See G. R. Driver, "Problems of the Hebrew Text and Language," in *Alttestamentliche Studien. Friedrich Nötscher zum 60 Geburtstag gewidmet* (eds. H. Junker and J. Botterweck; Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1950), 46-47, quoted in Clines, *Job 1-20,* 460.

tial arbiter, or even a human kinsman from playing this role, it appears that the in-
terpretive potentials of this text continue to mount.

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(4) עַל־עָפָר יָקוּם

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Likewise, the phrase עַל־עָפָר יָקוּם elicits a wide variety of readings. in 19:25b, Job

claims that the גֹּאֵל, whoever that may be, will "rise upon the dust." Some readers

have understood יָקוּם in a forensic sense, continuing the reading of אַחֲרוֹן as "the last

one to rise up [in court]." As Clines argues, "The verb 'rise' (קוּם) is quite well attested

in a legal setting" (cf. Job 16:8; Deut 19:16; Ps 27:12; 35:11).[73] Thus, Clines reads

עַל־עָפָר as "on earth," as opposed to the heavens.[74] Other readers who favor a forensic

context, such as G. R. Driver, have argued that עַל־עָפָר means "in court," "since justice

was done in the threshing-floor or in the gate, both very dusty places."[75] For 19:25b

as a whole, Clines reads: "he will rise last to speak for me on earth"; though the

words "speak for" cannot be accounted for in the Hebrew text, they convey some-

thing of Clines' forensic context. While Clines' reading is plausible, it has its own

weaknesses, and at the same time it cannot rule out many others.[76] For example,

Dhorme also reads יָקוּם as "rise up in court," but he argues that it is YHWH who rises

up to defend Job on earth.[77]

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73.   Ibid.

74.   See also Driver and Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book
of Job,* 174. Driver-Gray argue that there is a "tacit antithesis between 'dust' and
'heaven'" in this text, even though heaven is not mentioned in this passage nor anywhere
in the chapter.

75.   See G. R. Driver, "Problems in the Hebrew Text of Job," *VTSup* 33 (1955): 47.

76.   For example, Clines can only point to Job 41:25 as proof of עַל־עָפָר signifying
"in the world" as opposed to "in the heavens," and even in that situation it clearly
functions to differentiate the land from the waters. See Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 703.

Many other readers have suggested that Job's kinsman-redeemer or even later generations will "rise" or *stand* upon Job's "dust," or his *grave*, in order to read his inscribed words on the rock above.[78] In a similar vein, Dillmann and, following him, Wellhausen argue that קום in the vicinity of the preposition על generally means "to rise up against" (cf. Deut 19:11). Since "the dust" could potentially signify mortal life (cf. Job 4:9), Wellhausen claims that Job is calling upon YHWH to rise up and attack Job's friends in order to defend Job.[79]

Yet the phrase על־עפר could also function as a circumlocution that subtly refers to Sheol. Job used this exact phrase in his preceding speech (17:16) as a euphemism for Sheol:

> Will it [Job's hope] go down to the bars of Sheol (בדי שאול תרדנה)?
> Shall we descend together into the dust (על־עפר)?

In 20:11, immediately following Job's speech in chapter 19, Zophar uses the phrase to mean the grave, as well:

> Their bodies, once full of youth, will lie down in the dust (על־עפר) with
> them.

Also, in Job's speech following upon that of Zophar (21:26) he again uses the exact phrase to mean the grave:

> They lie down alike in the dust (על־עפר ישכבו), and the worms cover
> them.

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77. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 283.

78. See Tur-Sinai [Torczyner], *The Book of Job: A New Commentary*, 305; Suriano, "Death, Disinheritance, and Job's Kinsman-Redeemer," 49-66.

79. See Wellhausen's quote in J. Holman, "Does My Redeemer Live Or is My Redeemer the Living God? Some Reflections on the Translation of Job 19, 25," in *The Book of Job* (ed. W. Beuken; BETHL 114; Leuven: Leuven University, 1994), 379.

Thus, על־עפר in 19:25b may connote Sheol, or the land of the dead; in 19:3-13, Job has already described himself as one of the denizens of Sheol, and thus its appearance here would not be particularly surprising. In this reading, the גאל rises up either "against Sheol" or "upon Sheol" in order to liberate Job from its prison-like environs. Very often in biblical texts, individuals or communities in need call upon the deity to "rise up" (קום) and protect, deliver or "champion the legal cause of the victim against the adversaries."[80] From Job's perspective, God has certainly not been dormant–but it could be that Job calls upon YHWH to wake up the dormant attribute of divine redemption.

M. L. Barré has argued for a different reading, presupposing YHWH as the גאל: since the word חי occurs in close proximity to קום in 19:25, Barré sees this as an artfully muted use of the "fixed formulaic pair" קום/חיה, which usually signals "revivification" and healing (cf. 2 Kgs 12:20-21; Isa 26:14, 19).[81] Of course, one need not follow Barré's emendations or his rather baroque interpretation of the text in order to

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80.   See Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 703. Almost every use of קום in such a context expresses a desire for future restoration of individuals or groups of people. On only a few occasions does קום refer directly to God "rising" (Ps 68:1; Is 28:21) except as an imperative, mainly in individual psalms of complaint (Ps 3:8; 7:7; 9:20; 10:12; 17:13; 35:2). In these Psalms, the poets, in destitute circumstances, call for God's power to revive them. If the poet did want to communicate the idea of a revivification of Job, the poet would likely use this verb (cf. 14:12; 2 Kgs 13:21; Ps 88:10; 140:11; Isa 26:19). Obviously, there may also be forensic overtones (Ps 94:16), but the semantic link to חי and the context of complaint support the sense of healing and resurrection. Many interpreters have also drawn too strict a line between the courtroom and revivification metaphors. In many instances in BH, forensic language is not meant as an exclusively literal image; it refers to God's saving activity from immanent peril. For example, in Psalm 119:54, the metaphor of "giving life" (חיני), connected with images of revivification, is paired with the metaphor of a courtroom case (ריב), wherein the poet asks God to "redeem me" (גאלני).

81.   M. L. Barré, "New Light on the Interpretation of Hosea Vi 2," *VT* 28 (1978): 129-41; M. L. Barré, "A Note on Job xix 25," *VT* 29 (1979): 107-109.

sense a poetic allusion to a context of healing. While Barré tries to bend the text (and perhaps "tears" it) to show that יקום refers to Job's own healing, one could continue to read גאל as the subject of יקום and nevertheless incorporate Barré's insights. For example, one may read this text in such a way that Job imagines the revivification not of himself, but rather of YHWH's compassion and mercy, which have seemed to slink off to Sheol. The reader, who sees חי and reads it as a description of the גאל, then sees the verb קום in the following line; in an instance of "retrospective patterning," the pair could remind the reader of their usual setting and re-inflect the meaning of חי.[82] The גאל, at first portrayed as "living," could in retrospect be in need of life itself.

Seow impressively threads many of these semantic potentials into one reading by associating עפר with "human frailty and insignificance" as well as "death" and "the realm of the dead."[83] Thus, Seow argues that to "arise *'al-yaqûm* means, therefore, to come out of dormition to stand over all things ephemeral, including the adversaries of Job."[84] This reading, as well, can be justified, since it accounts for the elements of the text, even if it chooses several potentials at once. Thus, the combination of one or several readings reveals another potential of the text that is also very real–though *virtual* until it is actualized in a particular reading.

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82.   For "retrospective patterning," see Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968), 10.

83.   Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 703.

84.   Ibid.

נקפו־זאת *(5)*

Like v. 25, v. 26 offers a plethora of semantic degrees of freedom. Dhorme quips: "Much ink has been spilled over this verse. A glance at the versions shows that the difficulties did not arrive yesterday."[85] Nor, I might add, will this verse ever find a solution that extinguishes its problematic structure.

The verse begins with a *waw* and the preposition אחר, which could signify, among other potentials, the temporal sense "after" or the spatial sense "behind," or it could function as an adverb ("afterwards") or a conjunction ("after").[86] One could imagine that אחר plays on אחרון in 19:25b, and thus it would take the temporal sense.[87] Or, if one understands אחר עורי as parallel to—and thus sharing some semantic overlap with—מבשרי in 19:26b, *and* if one takes מבשרי to mean "from [the viewpoint of] my flesh," then one could read אחר עורי in a similar sense. Thus Gordis reads "deep in my skin" and Dhorme reads "behind my skin," while Tur-Sinai reads this phrase as "after my body."[88] Yet these opening words offer the least complicated reading choices in v. 26.

In particular, the phrase נקפו־זאת has troubled not only modern commentators but all of the ancient versions, none of which agree here.[89] MT points this phrase as נִקְּפוּ־זֹאת, which suggests a Piel perfect of נקף and the feminine singular demonstrative adjective. Lexicographers have identified two different roots for the verb: based on

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85.   Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job,* 284.

86.   See Ibid.

87.   Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 704. Seow also reads the waw in 19:26a as either epexegetical or emphatic.

88.   Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies,* 209; Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job,* 284; Tur-Sinai [Torczyner], *The Book of Job: A New Commentary*, 306.

89.   See the discussion below as well as Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 284.

Isaiah 10:34, נקף-I means "to cut down," and it seems to carry a metaphorical sense of "round off" in Leviticus 19:27. As for the well attested נקף-II, it occurs only in the Qal and Hiphil stems, and means "to go around," "make a circuit" or "surround" (cf. Job 1:5; 19:6; Lam 3:5; Ps 88:8; 17:9; 22:16). Thus, the MT pointing invites the interpreter to read this verb as either "they struck off [my skin]," or as "they surround [my skin]."

Within Job 19 itself, Job uses נקף-II in 19:6 and similar siege imagery of 19:8-12; thus a reader could determine a semantic context of "enclosure" for 19:26. Job does find himself surrounded by his miseries, his adversarial dialogue partners, and God's oppressive presence: his friends "torment" him and "tear" him "to pieces" like roving animals (19:2), and God has "put" Job "in the wrong" and "closes his net" around him (19:6; הִקִּיף). The Old Greek, Syriac and Vulgate versions read נקף-II in 19:26, but take "my skin" as the subject.[90] However, נקף-II occurs almost exclusively in the Hiphil stem, with only one exception, where it carries an obscure temporal meaning having to do with the course of a year (Is 29:1). This is not to say that reading נקף-II as a Piel is impossible; there are many such roots that occur in a particular stem only once in the Hebrew Bible.

However, within chapter 19, one may also determine the context in such a way that the image of Job's skin as "hacked off" seems to present itself as an obvious choice.[91] HALOT suggests "flay" for this word, as it refers to "hacking down" trees in Isaiah 10:34 and its derived noun to "beating" olive trees in Isaiah 17:6 and 24:13.[92]

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90.   See below. Note that Yet נקף-II is an overwhelmingly negative term–that is, it describes people or animals surrounding someone in order to harm them, and probably would not describe the care and concern that the Vulgate requires (cf. 2 Kgs 16:4; Ps 17:9).

91.   See Pope, *Job*, 147.

92.   HALOT, 1:722.

This brutal treatment is a tempting description of Job's sufferings, as he likens the death of a human to the "cutting down" of a tree in 14:7, an act which Job also recalls in 19:10. The disintegration of Job's body is a recurring theme in the chapter: Job is "broken in pieces" (19:2), God "breaks down" Job on "every side" (19:10), Job's bones "cling" to his "skin" and "flesh," which apparently have attempted to escape (19:20), and Job's friends "pursue" him and attack his "flesh" (19:22). Moreover, the repeated references to Job's "skin," "flesh," "eyes," "kidneys" and "chest" in 19:26-27 suggest that Job's body—or lack of it—is in view in these verses. Yet this view has its own problems, one of which is that the verb נקף-I only occurs one other time in Biblical Hebrew.[93]

No matter one's choice between נקף-I and נקף-II, tho other issues are perhaps more pressing: (1) what is the subject of this verb, and (2) what does one do syntactically with the word זאת? The third-person ending of נקף (נִקְּפוּ) could refer to the friends, or perhaps Job's imagined miseries, and then Job's skin (עורי) could function as the object of the verb. Yet this solution leaves the זאת as a problem: this feminine demonstrative disagrees with the only potential antecedent in the verse (ערי). As a result, some interpreters read the זאת as adverbial ("like this"), but this use of would be זאת *sui generis*.[94] Budde's influential suggestion to emend the text to read נֻקַּף־כָּזֹאת, (reading the verb as a Niphal, "[my skin] has been flayed like this"), but the recent aversion to consonantal emendation has sent many interpreters searching for other potential readings.[95]

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93.   Dhorme emends נקפו־זאת to read נִזְקַפְתִּי, "I will stand erect." This reading is contextually appealing but otherwise groundless, as no version suggests that the text ever appeared in this form (until Dhorme created it, of course). Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 285. For a selection of far more baroque reorganizations and emendations of the text of 19:26, see Clines, *Job 1-20*, 433-434.

94.   See comments in Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 704.

Gordis reads אחר as "deep," a similar reading to "behind" (cf. Exod 3:1, אחר המדבר) and translates the line: "deep in my skin this has been marked," referencing the use of נקף-II in Leviticus 19:27 (to "mark off" hair in the sense of "[trim] around") to support his translation.[96] That is, as Gordis reads this passage, inscribed deep within Job's mind is the conviction that God will ultimately redeem him. In contrast, Seow suggests reading נַקְּפוּ־זְאֹת by understanding the 3mp ending (וּ) as a *waw*[97] attached to זאת and reading the verb as a Piel of נקף-I, "to flay."[98] Thus Job's "skin" is the object of the verb, and, if the *waw* is treated emphatically, Job could be adding an exclamation mark to his description of his sufferings, saying "after he has hacked off my skin–even this!" In this reading, the subject of נקף is simply "he," which Seow takes to be God, the one whom Job continually accuses of destroying him (c. 19:6-12).

In the end, this poetic line could tell the reader, among many other options, that God flays Job's skin, or that the friends are flaying Job's skin, or that Job harbors an intense conviction that God will eventually save him, or that Job's skin surrounds him. As Habel claims, for this verse "the suggestions are endless," and perhaps here the conviction that one of these readings claims a natural ontological priority runs aground on the shores of interpretation.[99]

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95.   See Budde, *Das Buch Hiob, übersetzt und erklärt*, 106.

96.   Robert Gordis, *The Book of God and Man: A Study of Job* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1965), 89.

97.   This suggestion derives from W. L. Michel, "Confidence and Despair: Job 19,25-27 in the Light of Northwest Semitic Studies," in *The Book of Job* (ed. W. Beuken; BETHL 114; Leuven: University of Leuven, 1994), 172. Michel's article contains many other creative readings, some of which may stretch the bounds of semantic play.

98.   Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 704. Seow holds out the potential multivalence of the language, adding that "there is irony in the langauge: God's enclosing (*hiqqîp*) has meant that Job's body is broken open (*niqqap*)."

99.   Habel, The Book of Job, 290.

<div align="center">

(6) מבשרי

</div>

Another major interpretive difficulty in 19:26 is the meaning of the preposition מִן in

the phrase מבשרי, which could at least mean "from [within] my skin" (a locative use

of מִן), "away from my skin" (an ablative use of מִן), or "without my skin" (a privative

use of מִן).[100]

> Samuel Terrien argues:
>
> > there is no doubt that when used with a verb expressing vision or
> > perception, the same preposition מן refers to the point of vantage, the
> > locale from which or through which the function of the sight
> > operates.[101]

While Terrien's reading is intriguing, he cannot justify the claim that it is impossible

to read מן in any sense other than locational if it occurs near a verb of perception. Ar-

guments such as this disregard the basic functioning of language: that is, language

users are free to use the elements and patterns that constitute *langue* in unusual and

even, at times, inventive instances of *parole*. But in any event, the preposition מן can

at times carry an ablative sense in conjunction with verbs of perception, as attested

within Biblical Hebrew (cf. Gen 8:8: וישלח את־היונה מאתו לראות הקלו המים; Num 32:8).

Terrien does, however, offer a compelling reading: in conjunction with Job's refer-

ences to seeing God with his "own eyes" in 19:27, a context of "embodied sight" may

be determined.[102]

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100. See Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* 212-214.

101. Samuel Terrien, "The Book of Job: Introduction and Exegesis," in *The Interpreter's Bible,* Vol. 3 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954), 1055. To buttress his point, Terrien cites Ps 33:13-14; Song 2:9.

102. One should also note that even Clines, who adopts the reading "from [the position of] my flesh," admits that this "is by anyone's reckoning a rather strange way of

Yet, as I have noted above, Job's lamentations in chapters 16-17 and 19 rely upon a series of tropes that describe the destruction of the lamenter's body.[103] Seow notes a strong parallel in 19:22 and 31:31, where מבשרי suggests the image of

> the adversaries as wild beasts savaging the prey they have pursued–a common scene in the laments... the point is the metaphorical devastation of the body.[104]

Thus, one can determine here a context dependent upon the trope of dismemberment (cf. Job 16:12-14), implying that Job's devastated body is fully destroyed; images of bodily destruction often serve as metaphors for Job's situation (cf. Job 6:4; 7:4-5; 10:9). Although Terrien argues that "the idea of a bodiless mode of human existence is totally foreign to the Semitic mentality," this ignores the possibilities of poetic tropes.[105] Indeed, Fohrer argued that מבשרי metaphorically imaged Job's cadaver-like starved body as fleshless, while T. J. Meek assumed that Job's flesh had been so thoroughly ruined by boils (2:7-8) that his body seemed skinless.[106]

If we determine 19:26b to read that Job's skin has been flayed (either literally by disease or metaphorically by his sufferings), then the poetic image of a decomposing, fleshless body with broken bones is a familiar metaphor in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Ps 88; Lam 3) and could be a justifiable reading of מבשרי. No metaphysical reading or disembodied spirit need be introduced, though many have argued that this phrase suggests a postmortem encounter with God (viz., "away from my flesh, I shall see God.")[107]

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saying 'while I am still alive.'" *Clines, Job 1-20,*461.

103. See Berlin, *Lamentations,* 89.

104. Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 705.

105. Terrien, "The Book of Job: Introduction and Exegesis," 1055.

106. See Meek, "Job xix 25-27," 101; Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob*, 307.

107. For a "postmortem" reading, see G. Hölscher, "Hiob 19,25-27 Und Jubil 23,30-31," *ZAW* 53 (1935): 277-83, which uses a passage from Jubilees describing a

4   SEMANTIC NODES: JUSTICE, SURVIVAL, PRESENCE

There are, to be sure, many more semantic degrees of freedom to be found in this text, but perhaps the discussion up to this point may serve as a sketch of its general semantic structure.[108] We can now see that the number of interpretive permutations made available even by the paltry options introduced in this brief discussion is un-fathomably large.[109] As T. J. Meek writes:

> Of all the passages in the Old Testament none has been more variously treated than Job xix 25-27. All the versions had trouble with it, and likewise have all commentators to the present day. So varies are the interpretations that no two of them are in agreement. On only one point are all agreed, and that is that the text is not in order and has to be emended, but again no two agree on emendation. Even the King
>
> James Version emends the text in several particulars.[110]

If one stops to consider it, this is a disturbing fact: of the hundreds of scholarly com-mentators and readers of this passage in the past few centuries, few, if any, have agreed upon an entire reading of this text. Perhaps not all of these readings are equally justifiable, yet these interpreters are learned scholars of Biblical Hebrew and, in general, they are careful readers of biblical texts. How could it be that almost all of them are wrong—could it be *the text* that is the problem? As a result, many scholars have claimed, like Habel, that "the text of these verses is corrupt": Driver-Gray, for

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postmortem vision of vindication as an intertext in order to argue that Job hopes for such an experience.

108. For example, the phrase לי in v 27 could mean "for myself," or "by my side," indicating several possible modes of encounter (that is, confrontation or solidarity). Also, 19:27c (כלו כליתי בחקי) has been read in an astounding number of ways by interpreters ancient and modern. For a brief overview of these concerns, see *Clines, Job 1-20,* 434.

109. Moreover, if one simply changes even one of their decisions, this alteration yields a new reading.

110. Meek, "Job xix 25-27," 100.

example, refuses to even give a translation of 19:26a ("And . . . .").[111]

Yet Meek responds to this trend with the following:

> However, recent years have shown that the Masoretic text is remarkably reliable, at least in its consonantal text, and it is altogether possible that it may be right here.[112]

As Meek argues, the versions do not lead us to assume a corrupt text: they simply suggest a *problematic* text. I suggest that it is more productive to see this problematic structure as an invitation to actualize many divergent and yet *justifiable* virtual solutions, rather than an invitation to find *the correct* solution that would extinguish the interpretive problem itself. To play upon Meek's own words, perhaps the text "is right here" in its insistent production of new and different readings. In other words, the truth of Job 19:25-27 is found only in its variance.

In order to give some structure to these modern readings of the text that attempt to limit themselves to the semantic and cultural patterns presumably at work in its ancient context, I here propose to *read these readings* themselves. After reading literally hundreds of readings of Job 19:25-27, I have gathered them into three interpretive nodes. These nodes are loose, thematic groupings that do not require any particular affinity between the readings gathered together: even within such gatherings, one may find significant dispersion.[113]

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111.   See Norman Habel, *The Book of Job* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1975), 105; Driver and Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, 174; *Clines, Job 1-20,*460. Clines asserts that the text of 19:26 is "almost certainly corrupt."

112.   Meek, "Job xix 25-27," 100.

113.   This   approach   diverges   from   that   of   "effective   history,"   or Wirkungsgeschichte. Hans-Georg Gadamer famously argued that each text has its own proper Sache, or "subject matter," that underlies the various historical understandings of a text and directs its incarnation in various forms. In this way, Gadamer treats the different historical understandings of a text as different perspectives on the self-same

It is as if one were to drop a bag of marbles on to an old wooden floor: per-

haps no two marbles would end up in exactly the same place, but the contours of the

floor would herd the marbles into vague patterns. Once one takes a look at the pat-

terns themselves, one may draw general, though certainly contingent, boundaries be-

tween different groups of objects.[114] And, from this exercise, one may locate the basic

contours of the floor: where are the almost imperceptible ridges, and which way do

the different floorboards tilt?

Likewise, I will look at the pattern of the dispersion of readings and draw pre-

liminary groupings as a means of interpreting the basic contours of the text. I have

now examined the Hebrew text of Job 19:25-27, and I have quickly noted some of its

general contours. Now, I will distribute modern readings into several groups that

each share a general semantic field, and I will offer thoughts concerning each of these

fields in turn. I thus propose a three-fold division into semantic nodes, each of which

spawns an interpretive trajectory that one may trace throughout the history of this

text's reception.[115]

"subject matter" or "thing" that offers different appearances "for us" but is essentially
self-identical "in itself."   See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (trans. J.
Weinsheimer, D. Marshall; 2nd ed.; London: Continuum, 2004), 285, 390, 418-25. In
contrast, I am suggesting that there are various Sache that develop over time as an
emergent property of the text as it traverses various contexts.

114.   This is the activity that Deleuze defines as "nomadic distribution." Dividing
up the marbles by their color, or size, regardless of their placement on the floor would, in
Deleuze's terminology, be defined as a "sedentary distribution." See chapter 6, as well as
A Parr, ed., *The Deleuze Dictionary* (New York: Columbia University, 2005), 181-186.

115.   Of course, this taxonomy is of my own construction, and thus does not aim to
contain or explain every single reading throughout history; these many readings can be
divided up in a number of ways, and future readings in unexpected contexts will
doubtless require a re-conceptualization of this schema. Nevertheless, the nodal terms
survival, presence and justice will allow me to gather different readings into several
generally distinguishable networks of significance. What I offer is my own reading of
these readings, and as such I will attempt to justify it without attempting to disprove all

These thee nodes are as follows:

(1) Job envisions an extra-legal avenger, or perhaps a courtroom scene, that will result in his justification before God; readings of this sort coalesce around a semantic node of justice, and are found sporadically in Jewish and Christian contexts from the ancient world to the modern;

(2) Job describes an experience of near-death and subsequent healing; readings of this sort participate in the theme of survival, and while they are most commonly found in Western Christian contexts, they cross religious, cultural and geographic boundaries;

(3) Job predicts a theophanic meeting with God; readings of this sort are concerned with presence, and tend to emerge in rabbinic Jewish and Middle Eastern Christian contexts, but can also be found far removed from these religious groups and geographic locations.

I will treat each of these general readings in turn, and then I will briefly trace each interpretive trajectory from the ancient world to the modern.

4.1   Justice

The semantic node of "justice" gathers together several strands of reading. One such strand is the "forensic" reading, which understands Job 19:25-27 to describe courtroom proceedings, with either (a) Job as the plaintiff, a powerful arbiter as the prosecutor or judge, and God as the defendant, or (b) with God as the prosecutor and/or judge, Job as the plaintiff and Job's friends or more vague foes as the defendants.[116] A

(or any) possible alternatives.

116.   There are, of course, hundreds of potential variations in this scenario, but the shared vision of a courtroom scene provides an opportunity to gather together these readings. For a thoroughgoing forensic reading, the New English Bible is a classic example: "But in my heart I know that my vindicator lives, and that he will rise last to

different strand reads the גאל as an extra-legal avenger, a גֹּאֵל־הַדָּם, who attacks either Job's friends or God on Job's behalf, perhaps after Job has died. Both of these general approaches understand the text to describe a vision of *justice* being meted out to those who deserve it, as well as Job's deserved vindication.

Recently, the prevailing scholarly reading of Job 19:25-27 has argued that this text presents Job's wish for a victorious lawsuit against the divinity.[117] Clines, for example, explains that Job 19 is spoken "still in the waiting room between issuing the summons and having his case called."[118] In order to justify their determination of a "forensic context" in chapter 19, readers point to a particular reading of the words גאל and קום, all of which can–at certain times–be found in forensic contexts (cf. Ps 119:154 for גאל; Ps 27:12 for קום).[119] Many interpreters suggest a forensic sense of אחרון, as well; it very well could signify the "last" in any context, including a forensic one, but this use in this sense would be unique in Biblical Hebrew.[120] These words

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speak in court; and I shall discern my witness standing at my side and see my defending counsel, even God himself, whom I shall see with my own eyes, I myself and no other. My heart failed when you said, ..."

117. See F. Rachel Magdalene, *On the Scales of Righteousness: Neo-Babylonian Trial Law and the Book of Job* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2007) and the commentaries by Habel, Clines, Newsom, and Ballentine.

118. *Clines, Job 1-20,* 468.

119. See Driver, "Problems of the Hebrew Text and Language," 46-61; *Clines, Job 1-20,* 460. One might note, however, that the supposedly forensic contexts of גאל and קום in the Psalms are not necessarily forensic; these are likely uses of forensic metaphors deployed in a context of a prayer of lamentation. Moreover, the decontextualization of the psalms in general allows for these forensic metaphors to apply to many different circumstances, and thus any particular use is open to at least several different potential semantic determinations.

120. This is, however, no reason to discount it as a reading. It is, though, quite interesting to note that many readers who criticize others for "inventing" meanings for ancient words see no problem in stretching other ancient words to suit their interpretive case. For this reading of אחרון, see Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job,* 283, "It is clear that... [אחרון] is God... He who will have the last word... [as] a witness in a court of

can inhabit a forensic context, but they alone cannot justify an *exclusively* forensic

context, since all three of these words are only "forensic" in a secondary sense. That

is, if they are already understood to be in a forensic context, then they can function in

that setting. But when one hears קום in the context of גאל, *must* one think "rise up in

court"?[121]

> Habel gives a slightly more detailed argument for the "forensic context":

>> Given the legal context of this verse (cf. vs. 3, 23, 29) and especially
>> the explicit juridical role of the 'witness' (16:19-21), with whom the
>> redeemer is presumably to be identified, it seems preferable to view
>> the verb *qwm* as a legal expression.[122]

Yet 19:3 and 19:29 are hardly enough to establish an exclusively "legal context" for

the verse within the chapter, and it is difficult to understand to what Habel is even

referring. Verse 19:3 includes the words כלם and בוש, but neither seems to indicate a

courtroom setting. Verse 19:29 does include the juridical word דין, but verse 29 as a

whole seems to describe not a court case but a vengeful persecution (גורו לכם מפני־חרב

כי־חמה עונות חרב). Again, the context of 19:25-27 *could* be understood as "forensic,"

but the context is not, as Habel claims it is, "given." Rather, it is *constructed* from

available materials that are generally amenable to such use.

   Besides the verses from chapter 19, Habel also asserts that "the explicit juridi-

cal role of the 'witness' (16:19-21)" should convince readers that it "seems preferable

to view the verb *qwm* as a legal expression."[123] That is, Habel argues that the general

context of Job's arguments, and especially the intertext of chapter 16, overdeter-

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justice."

   121.   Other interpreters also point to the face-to-face encounter described in 19:27
as something only possible if God were brought to testify in a celestial court. But these
words and phrases, as well, are hardly exclusive to a forensic context (אחזה־לי ועיני ראו),
and could only serve this function if the context had already been determined as forensic.
   122.   Habel, *The Book of Jo*b, 273.
   123.   Ibid.

mines the meaning of קום in 19:25. It is without a doubt that Job elsewhere explicitly states his desire to take God to court, especially in chapters 9 (cf. 9:3: לריב לעמי) and 23 (cf. 23:4: אערכה לפניו משפט), and that in chapter 16 he imagines a courtroom scene that includes the word קום, also found in 19:25 (16:8: לעד היה ויקם בי; cf. 16:19: הנה־בשמים עדי ושהד במרומים).

But Job also at times imagines decidedly non-forensic encounters with God. The most famous example of this is found in 14:7-17, at which point Job wishes that God would hide him in Sheol until God's own wrath passed over him (14:13). In verses 15-17, Job imagines that God would then "remember" (זכר) Job and yearn (תכסף; cf. Ps 84:3) to establish a relationship characterized by communication (תקרא ואנכי אענך) and tolerance (לא־תשמור על־חטאתי).[124] In chapter 14, then, we find Job wishing that God would sabotage God's own destructive power in order to renew Job's life and restore his relationships. Furthermore, we may find lexical correspondences between 19:23-27 and 14:7-17: עפר (in 14:8/19:25), קום (in 14:12/19:25), מי יתן (in 14:13/19:23), חיה (in 14:14/19:25). Just as one may construct a forensic context, one may construct others using the lexemes in the text as well as intertexts.

Among other interpreters, Clines introduces another set of intertexts that, he argues, overdetermines the context in favor of an exclusively forensic signification. As he puts it, the "obvious resolution of the [semantic] problem is to identify the *go'el* with a figure like the celestial witness (16:19) and 'arbiter' (9:33)."[125] Certainly, several times in the dialogues Job seems to imagine an unnamed figure that could

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124. For זכר as "signifying the resumption of relations between God and" humanity, see W. Schottroff, *Gedenken im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament: Die Wurzel zakar im semitischen Sprachkreis* (WMANT 15; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967), cited in *Clines, Job 1-20,* 331.

125. Clines, "Belief, Desire, and Wish in Job 19,23-27: Clues for the Identity of Job's 'Redeemer'," 306.

help him mediate his dispute with God (9:32-35: מוכיח 'arbiter'; 16:18-22: עד 'wit-

ness'; 19:25-27: גאל "redeemer"; 31:35-37: שֹׁמֵעַ לִי "one who hears me"). As Clines puts

it, "it ought to be unmistakeable that the גאל of ch. 19 is the same as the 'witness,' the

'advocate' and the 'spokesman' of ch. 16."[126]

But how do we know that the גאל *ought* to function like the עד, and who or

what would even have the authority to determine this in an absolute sense? How did

the fact of Clines' reading (an *is* statement) become normative (an *ought* state-

ment)? These texts could potentially read in such a way that the גאל and the עד are

the same figure, but it is also possible that these are completely different flights of

fancy–just as it is also possible that the image of the גאל can lead us to rethink our

evaluation of the עד in a less forensic sense. And, fascinatingly, Clines does just this,

undermining his own *ought* only a few pages later:

> A second reading, in which the end of the book is allowed to resonate
> here also, super-imposes a new level of meaning above the meaning
> intended in these lines by the character Job. It is an irony, though not
> at all a bitter irony, that Job's words have a meaning other than he
> envisages. The truth is that, though he expects God to be the last
> person who would vindicate him, God does indeed in the end become
> his vindicator, and that on earth (42:10, 12). Job's desire to 'see' God
> is fulfilled to the letter (42:5), and the belief and the desire of those
> verses, here so antithetical to one another, are shown in the end to be
> identical. In the end, Job does not see his hope fulfilled, for he has no
> real hope; but he sees his words, hopeless but desirous, fulfilled with
> unimaginable precision.[127]

Clines here admits that there are at least two meanings struggling within Job

19:25-27, but he wants the reader to privilege the sense that does not "allow" the end

of the book to resonate. God *is,* then, at least in light of 42:10-12, Job's גאל. The prob-

lem is that, according to Clines, God *ought* not to be. Yet why would we not allow

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126. Ibid., 306.
127. Ibid., 309.

foreshadowing and retrospective irony to influence our reading of this passage? And, moreover, is it not allowable to push back against this retroactive identification of God as גאל– that is, may we doubt that Job's restoration is, in fact, a full vindication?[128] Perhaps more importantly, Clines here privileges the intent of the speaker over the other meanings that those same words might have. Clines does offer a strong argument that, *if* we have decided to model the character Job's *intention* in our reading, then there is a strong case that the גאל is the מוכיח and the עד. But *even in that reading,* the retroactive identification of God as the גאל breaches this hermeneutical boundary, revealing the gap that separates Job's intentions–and all of ours–from his words. This is, of course, the same boundary that runs not in between "original" (here, what Clines understands as Job's intention) and "secondary reception" (here, the ironic reversal at the end), but rather through the midst of the textual fabric, even within its initial context.

In any event, these readings are contingent, and there is no heavenly *ought* that holds the true interpretive answer. Who *could* hold the right answer to the question of the meaning of this text, if even the character Job himself is not in control of their signification? To quote Job, "there is no arbiter between us who might lay his hand on us both" (9:33; לא יש בינינו מוכיח). No metaphysical demigod, such as a particular construction of "authorial intention" or "the intention of the text," or even "the intention of the character" holds absolute authority: these terms merely lend a veneer of authority to what is, ultimately, the interpreter's own semantic organization of the text.

Habel and Clines (like many biblical interpreters) here construe the readerly

128. On the various defensible ways to interpret this text, see Carol A. Newsom, "The Book of Job," 629.

task as one of providing ultimate *solutions,* as if the text requires the correct contextual key to unlock its true forensic secret, which would render the task of reading complete. Yet as Deleuze explains, thinking in terms of *problematic structures* may help encourage biblical interpreters to propose readings that do not seek to dominate the field of interpretation or too hastily declare other readings anathema. Very often, this solution-based approach to interpretation manifests itself subtly: for example, Clines simply asserts that, because the forensic context *can* be determined, all other potential constructions of the literary context *must* be ignored. The correct response to this sort of argument is, in general, to reject this construction of the reader's task, and instead to assert the problematic structure of the biblical text. That is, readers can either simply justify a non-exclusive particular reading, or analyze the ways in which the text both supports and restricts any one of these potential constructions. Like biologists exploring the problematic structure of a particular ecosystem, we can analyze the various solutions to the problem of the environment without deeming one solution "the answer" to its many questions.

Along with the confusion of *problems* and *solutions,* biblical scholars also often think in terms of the *possible* and the *real,* as opposed to the *virtual* and the *actual.* We can see this tendency clearly in Habel and Clines' comments. In this line of thought, an interpreter deems one particular reading of a text "more probable" than all others since its semantic construction or literary intertexts is the most obvious. Usually this argument is accompanied by statements that a particular construal of context, or a particular choice of intertext, or a particular meaning is "explicit," "given," or "obvious." The implication is that less obvious or explicit contexts, intertexts, and meanings are less probable, and thus are not "really" what the text means to say. But why are only the most obvious (to us) meanings the "real" ones, or perhaps the "most real" ones? And which person is the subject who "gives" a particular construal

of a context that we call "given"? Why are subtle meanings or obscure intertexts im-
possible readings, to be discarded in favor of obvious ones? Instead, biblical inter-
preters can think in terms of Deleuze's concept of the *virtual* and the *actual,* both of
which are real, and neither of which are entirely given. In this mode of thought, we
would read texts with an eye for the many diverse potentials that it may manifest
through the process of reading. In other words, Clines' reading actualizes a very real
potential of the virtual dimension of this text, but his actualization does not exhaust
or diminish the manifold resources that the text always continues to offer to readers.

It must be said, however, that Clines' reading of 19:25-27 is as creative as it is
compelling. Clines, who is on this point followed by many recent interpreters, posits
a separation of time, viewpoint, character, and scene in between 19:26a and
19:26b.[129] He assumes that the *waw* opening 19:26b is disjunctive, and what follows
may be understood as a completely different train of thought.[130] Thus, in 19:23-24
Job *wishes* that his own testimony would be carved on a mountainside to carry on
his fight until he is acquitted, while in 19:25-26a Job expresses a *conviction* that his
case will actually be won, albeit after his own death. Then, in 19:26b-27, Job express-
es his *desire* that the legal confrontation would occur in his lifetime, but then con-
fesses his inability to believe that this would ever be the case (19:27c). In Clines'
reading, since Job has been abandoned by God and all fellow mortals (19:13-22),
Job's גאל must be his own "cry" (cf. 16:18-19). With no one to save him but himself,
Job remains his only hope.[131] Clines' solution allows him to admit that 19:26b-27 en-
visions a reunification with God, while continuing to assert both that Job sees God as

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129. See Clines, "Belief, Desire, and Wish in Job 19,23-27: Clues for the Identity of
Job's 'Redeemer'," 363-69; 437-38, 457-70.
130. See Ibid., 461-62; ; 479.
131. See Clines, "Belief, Desire, and Wish in Job 19,23-27: Clues for the Identity of
Job's 'Redeemer'," 366.

an enemy *and* that Job is not inconsistent on this point.[132]

The many readers, such as Clines, who are attuned to the thematic of *justice* want to hear Job's full-throated cry in all its unorthodox anger.[133] Furthermore, they do not want to accept weak theological apologies that obscure the painfully obvious divine source of Job's sufferings that even YHWH admits were inflicted "for no reason" (cf. 2:3, לבלעו חנם). In the book of Job, YHWH acts in ways that clearly violate the shared norms of behavior that guide human ethics of all stripes, and these violations, many readers claim, must be prosecuted. It is, of course, true that a great many readers throughout the centuries have worked hard to make Job's lamentations look as pious as possible; readers such as Clines provide a very valuable corrective to this dominant mode of reading. Indeed, those who construe this text as a struggle for Job's legal vindication themselves struggle in many ways to redeem the radical and liberative dimensions of the text from the snares of complacent piety.[134]

4.2   Survival

As opposed to readings focused on the thematic of *justice,* many other readers have understood this text to address issues of *survival*. These readings generally do not

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132.   Interestingly, Clines and Habel seem driven by a need for consistency when it comes to the identity of Job's imagined גאל: Clines quotes Ringgren, who writes: "Since the lawsuit here stands in the context of a dispute with God, it seems unlikely that God himself would appear as vindicator and legal attorney against himself," and then comments, "Nor is it a heavenly being." See Ibid., 365.

133.   Though Clines does admit an irony to these words: they do, in fact, come true, but in a very different sense than Clines' Job imagines them. See Ibid., 369.

134.   On the many fascinating nuances of legal metaphors in Job, see Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 150-161.

concern themselves with the meting out of just deserts, the vindication of Job's righteousness, or other moral concerns. Rather, they read this text as a vision of a return of vitality, a restoration of damaged relationships, and a recovery of ability in disabled body parts. The semantic node of *survival* gathers together many disparate readings that nevertheless construe the text as a description of a recovery, or continuation, or carrying on, of life. I will begin by offering one such reading that seeks to respect the contours of the text as much as possible.

As explained above, readers of this text may determine the immediate literary context of 19:25-27 to be a form of a lament psalm (19:7-20). Here, it seems important to note that a commonly occurring corollary of the trope of death in thanksgiving psalms is a recovery-of-life trope.[135] Many different metaphors represented in the Psalms fulfill this function: some envision a spatial ascent from underground Sheol back to the topside-world of the living (cf. Ps 30:3,4; 40:2,3; 41:10), some use sight-language to describe a vision in the Temple which would likely bring healing (cf. Ps 11:4,7; 17:13,15; 63:2), some describe body parts recovering their functions (cf. Ps 13:4; 30:3; 71:20; 80:18; 85:6; 119:25), and still others use forensic language to describe a retrieval of wholeness (cf. 9:4; 18:44; 31:20; 119:154). The return-to-life trope may signify a recovery of individual integrity, bodily ability, legal status and communal reintegration, or a desire for any of these things. Moreover, any one aspect may metonymically represent the re-integration of one's entire life (e.g., "going up" may signify a recovery of "life" in many senses) or metaphorically represent another single element displaced by the image (e.g., "winning a court case" may signify recovery from a disease). One need not, then, posit an anachronistic doctrine of

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135.   See Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, 39.

Resurrection in order to imagine that, even in its ancient context of production, this text may have spoken of death and the recovery of life.

In the context of an extended trope of death, the sudden discursive shift in 19:23-24 may alert readers to a potential shift in tropes, as well. In this light, 19:25 seems to be packed with words that signify a recovery-of-life: גאלי, חי, יקום almost jump off the page. Job "knows" that a "living"[136] "redeemer"[137] will "rise up"[138] against

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136. Here, the use of חי would not function as a verb meaning "to give life," as it does in other recovery-of-life tropes, but its mere presence in the midst of a lament introduces the motif of life. YHWH is at times called "the living God" (cf. Deut 5:23; Josh 3:10) even in the context of lament or thanksgiving psalms (cf. Pss 42:3; 84:3). On the use of חיה in recovery-of-life tropes, note Isaiah 38:16: "Restore me to health and make me live!" (תחלימני והחיני). The Piʻel of חיה is often used to connote YHWH's preserving of life, rescuing and healing those in need of aid, who are captured by the power of death. Knibb notes that an oath formula in Jeremiah 38:16 seems to draw a connection between YHWH, the "living God," and the creation of humanity: "By the life of the LORD who gave us our lives" (NEB). Kraus has argued that this text reveals that YHWH as a giver of life is one of the ideas behind the conception of YHWH as the living God. Thus the mention of YHWH as cosmic life-source in Nehemiah 9:6, in which חיה is in the Piʻel, intersects with the individual reviving acts of YHWH in the Psalms (Pss 30:3; 71:20; 80:18; 85:6; 119:25). Likewise, the Qal of חיה can connote healing and reviving from near-death states (Num 21:8-9; Josh 5:8; 1Kgs 17:22), as can the Hiphʻil (Is 38:16; 2Kgs 8:15). In this sense, a restoration to life comes from YHWH, the living God, who as the creator of all life sustains all life. This is probably the understanding behind the saying "YHWH kills and makes alive" (Deut 32:39, 1 Sam 2:6, 2 Kgs 5:7, 4 Macc 18:18-19, and "Hades" in Tob 13:2, Wis 16:13). See H.-J. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 146.

137. As the psalmist proclaims, "You have maintained my just cause!" (Ps 9:4), the very same psalmist recounts a prior experience of salvation with a spatial metaphor: "You are the one who lifts me from the gates of death" (Ps 9:13). Likewise, the author of Psalm 119 writes: "Plead my cause (ריבה ריבי) and redeem me (גאלי); give me life (חיהי) according to your promise" (Ps 119:154). In these poems, forensic words function as reviving metaphors. As with psalms that focus on protection from enemies or recovery from illness, the Sitz im Leben of these forensic situations are unrecoverable, and thus they function as general terms for affliction that result in a diminished experience of life. As such, they are readily adaptable to psalmists who envision themselves in Sheol.

138. Again, קום would function differently here than in many other recovery-of-life

"Sheol" (על־עפר, cf. 17:16; 21:26): if one imagines that in 19:7-20 Job speaks of the collapse of every aspect of his life, and also casts this collapse as a movement towards Sheol, this language sounds rather like a defiant proclamation of Job's hope in the restoration of his life. Following upon this verse, Job then may be understood to describe his flayed carcass (אחר עורי נקף) at the moment that he encounters the healing power of Eloah (מבשרי אחזה אלוה), thus contrasting his death-like state at the moment that he begins his recovery.

Moreover, in the context of lament psalms, the verb חזה, which Job uses twice in this text, often "signifies not so much an actual looking at God as an experience of a close encounter of salvific divine power."[139] While it is possible for חזה to mean simply "see" (Ex 18:21; Cant 6:13), the word is overwhelmingly associated with non-physical sight, such as the visions of a seer (Num 24:4; Is 1:1), the "sight" of thought (Job 34:32), or the experience of God's saving help (Ps 17:15). For the lamenting

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tropes. Yet the appearance of קום is tantalizing: in the psalms, the author can conceive of restoration to life spatially, as in Psalm 30:3: "YHWH, you brought my life up from Sheol." This type of restoration is characterized by verbs and prepositions that connote upward movement, such as עלה (Pss 30:4; 40:2), or קום (in a negative sense, Pss 36:13; 41:8; 88:10; 140:10; Job 14:12; positively, Pss 40:3; 41:10; 113:7; Job 24:22; 1Sam 2:8; 2Kgs 13:21; Is 26:14; 26:19; Hos 6:2; Mic 7:8). This upward motion is metaphorical, unless it corresponds to the healing of an individual, who can then stand upright.

139. Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 706. As Gunkel has noted, many of the individual lament and thanksgiving Psalms seem to have a connection with the temple cult. It appears that in cultic ritual, life can be preserved or restored. As in Psalm 17, wherein the psalmist asks YHWH to "deliver my life," and then asserts as his experience of salvation, "As for me, I shall behold (חזה) your face in righteousness" (Ps 17:13,15). Another psalmist frets that his life is in danger, because the wicked lurk in darkness ready to shoot him to death (11:2); but the response comes that "YHWH is in his holy temple," and as their experience of salvation, "the upright shall behold (חזה) his face" (11:4,7). In Psalm 63, the psalmist, once in mortal danger (63:9), has "looked upon (חזה) you in the sanctuary" (63:2), while it is the enemies that will "descend to the depths of the earth" instead of the psalmist (63:9). While this appears as primarily a cultic understanding of salvation, such language can easily be appropriated by later authors.

Psalmists who are metaphorically in Sheol, "seeing" the saving presence of God is often associated with renewal of life, akin to resuscitation (Ps 30:3; 86:13).

Also, in verses 26-27 we see a litany of bodily references: Job mentions his skin (עורי), flesh (בשרי), eyes (עיני), kidneys (כליתי), and chest (חקי). These repeated enumerations of body parts, as well as the reference to God's proximity, may also suggest a restorative encounter, since psalmists at times refer to their restored body parts when describing a recovery of life, or its maintenance in the face of death (cf. Ps 56:14; 92:11; 16:9-10).[140]

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140. This is broadly true of ancient Near Eastern lamentations and sufferer texts. In the Akkadian poem, "A Sufferer's Salvation," the metaphors of both upwards movement and recovery of the wasted body occur together. The poet emphasizes Marduk's action that "raised my head," in parallel to the phrase "[he] brought me back from the dead." Later in the poem, the author again combines the two: "He snatched me from the jaw of death, / he raised me up from hell" is followed by a fragmentary group of lines whose meaning is clear: "He opened my shrouded eyes...speech...my ears." In this text, the individual's body, with closed eyes, stopped speech, and functionless ears like a corpse, is revitalized, and the text ends with a description of the particular body parts which have been brought to life again. Also, in Ludlul Bel Nemeqi ("I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom"), an Akkadian thanksgiving hymn to Marduk, both spatial and healing metaphors describe the recovery of the individual. Like "A Sufferer's Salvation," the protagonist's body is dismembered and rendered useless by his oppressive disease: his mouth, lips, head, heart, chest, and arms are progressively disabled. One line in particular makes this comparison explicit, as it reads, "My lips, which used to discourse, became those of a dead man...my flesh is waste...my bones are loose, covered (only) with skin." Social isolation then follows, as family and friends and servants disown him: "My brother became my foe, / my friend became a malignant demon." Like a corpse, the man is shut in: "My way in is barred, my point of slaking blocked." Suddenly, a divine being appears, recites an incantation, and the man's body begins to re-form in the precise order in which it ceased to function: "My beclouded eyes, which were wrapped in the shroud of death/ he drove the cloud a thousand leagues away, he brightened my vision." This healing and recovery of the body imagery is followed by an ascent: "The Lord took hold of me, / The Lord set me on my feet, / The Lord revived me, / He rescued me from the p[it]... he pulled me from the river of death." See W. W. Hallo and K.L. Younger, eds. *The Context of Scripture (*3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1.152, 43-44, 1.153, 486-492.

The progression from חזה in 19:26b-27a to ראה in 19:27b could be read as a shift from experiential to actual physical sight, since the vast majority of occurrences of ראה refer to literal sight. Job repeatedly underscores this motif of sight, which highlights the appearance of the formerly estranged God. Reversing his lament that he finds himself estranged from all vestiges of a community (19:13-22), Job finds himself next to God, and "not a stranger" (לא־זר). Job seems to relish his personal restoration by piling up first-person references in 19:27a: "I-I-for me-my eyes!" (אני אחזה־לי ועיני).

These literary effects, when combined, allow one to justifiably read this text as a recovery-of-life trope, especially in light of the context of lamentation and death in chapter 19. In this reading, Job imagines that YHWH will someday restore his body, his community, and his alienation from the divine. To be clear, this particular reading does not see the the doctrine of Resurrection in this text; rather, Job sounds like an unfairly condemned death row inmate, on his way to his execution but rebelliously imagining his salvation. Like a "dead man walking," Job imagines his hope that the mysteriously absent and ambivalent governor would wake up and grant an eleventh-hour pardon—which, if received, might restore Job's life, his freedom, his legal standing, his social relations, and his honor.

The above reading understands this text to be describing the survival of Job, but there are other potential readings concerned with survival: for example, this text might also be read as a description of the survival of the גאל. As the petitioner, Job is expected to envision his own resuscitation. Yet, if the pair קום and חיה do signal a context of healing, as Barré argues, we should note that the subject of the verb יקום and the adjective חי is not Job; instead, the subject is the redeemer. Many misreadings of this passage demonstrate its unsettling effect: the Vulgate outright changes קום into a first-person verb "I will be raised" (=אקום), and Barré himself proposes to

read the causative form יָקוּם, "he will make stand."[141] These interpreters rightly note the appearance of resuscitation language in 19:25, but shy away from applying it to the גאל. But, if one reads the גאל as YHWH, this text could then describe the recovery of YHWH's life.

Emil Kraeling, for one, suggests that Job in 19:25 envisions the resuscitation of the redeemer, which represents God's mercy.[142] Kraeling finds support for his reading in analogous literary descriptions of gods returning from the land of the dead. In the Ugaritic Ba'al cycle, for example, El dreams that Ba'al, who had descended into the land of the dead, had returned to life. El's cry that "I shall know that Mighty Ba'al lives" (*wid' ḥy 'al'iyn b'l; KTU 1.6 III 8-9*) exhibits lexical and thematic similarities to Job's declaration in 19:25 (ואני ידעתי גאלי חי).[143] Perhaps Job imagines the prolonged absence of divine help *as if* YHWH had departed for the land of the dead. The recovery of YHWH's life, then, would here be described with language similar to Baal's return to the land of the living.

While of course it is highly unlikely that Persian-period and Hellenistic Jewish readers of Job would link these two specific texts (Job 19:25 and KTU 1.6 III 8-9), it would be hard to imagine that those same readers would *not* be familiar with the idea of a god who returned from the underworld, since this theme is rather common in ancient Near Eastern and even Greek thought. Thus, one could construe this text as a parody of the return-to-life trope used by psalmists: that is, Job uses all the words one would use in such a context to signify hope in one's own recovery, but they can only be understood to hope for *God's* revivification: "My redeemer is living, *be-*

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141. Barré, "A Note on Job xix 25," 108-09.

142. Kraeling, *Book of the Ways of God,* 89.

143. This argument does not depend upon the author of Job intending this textual relationship, since recreating the mind of the author is not the goal of this textual analysis.

cause at last he rose up from Sheol."[144]

Zuckermann reads the reference to the dying-and-rising god motif as an attack on a belief in resurrection or Yahwism; this may be more or less defensible, but it is simpler to argue that Job here makes a point: namely, God, not Job, is the one who must change.[145] Once God's proper character returns, God may then do what is right, and restore Job (which would then be described in 19:27). In retrospect, this reading construes chapter 19 as a long set-up to a quick reversal: Job explains in detail his metaphorical death, but in the end, it is God who must be pulled up from the pit first.

There are, of course, many other readings that one could gather up in the semantic node of *survival*.[146] For example, Matthew Suriano suggests an interesting reading of Job 19:25-27 that centers on the question of Job's proper burial. Suriano argues that, in 19:23-27, Job describes a loyal kinsman's production of an epitaph that memorializes his name and thus ensures the survival of his name for future generations:

> What Job pleads for is the recognition of his innocence and the rehabilitation of his status in society. Concomitant with these provisions would be a proper death... This theme of death and disinheritance is implied throughout chs. 13–21 and is made explicit in certain passages, notably 19:23–27. In particular, these verses

144. Reading the waw as explicative.

145. Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint*, 114-5.

146. Other examples include Samuel Terrien's reading that Job wishes that, after his death, he would witness his own vindication in front of the deity; since, as a shade, he could not participate in such proceedings, Job "would recieve new flesh for the specific purpose of the divine-human interview" after death. Terrien emphasizes that this is not resurrection, but temporary resuscitation so that Job would be "enabled to plead his defense before God, will again be made fully alive." See Samuel Terrien, *The Iconography of Job through the Centuries: Artists as Biblical Interpreters* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University, 1996), 1055. Also see Janzen, *Job,* who develops a surprisingly traditional reading that discusses "resurrection."

express the sufferer's confidence that a kinsman will step forward and perform the necessary actions to afford Job justification in death. According to this ideology of death, the fate of the individual was directly related to concepts of collective identity tied to kinship and patrimony. Thus, the defunct individual's identity was preserved within a larger framework of ancestry. This belief was reified through cultural practices such as communal burials inside family tombs and was affirmed by writing the name of the dead in an epitaph.[147]

Suriano's proposal is intriguing, but perhaps he goes too far when he claims that it alone provides the "proper context" for reading this text.[148] As he explains:

> Because scholars have not recognized the cultural context of Job 19:23–27, they discuss the figure of v. 25 in terminology that is incorrect. The context for Job's kinsman-redeemer is not a courtroom drama set in the divine realm, but rather Job's death and burial.[149]

Here, Suriano assumes that there can be only one proper cultural context for the word גאל, though even on its face this is not a tenable proposition. The figure of the גאל can certainly carry a forensic valence (and many others, as well), since the word has no "proper context"–it is a *word*, and as such can be used in limitless contexts, such as this one right here. Moreover, even in its ancient context, this word clearly had a wide array of "proper contexts," such as forensic action, extra-legal vengeance, levirate marriage, divine liberation from oppression, and many others, none of which were or are "incorrect."

Yet in his analysis, Suriano opens up another understanding of *survival:* the survival of one's name, the continuity of familial descent, and the maintenance of proper ritual observance that seeks to extend the life of an individual beyond the borders of death. This is a part of the struggle to live on in some sense past one's death: the *sur-vie*. And those interpreters who try to close off readings that highlight Job's

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147. Suriano, "Death, Disinheritance, and Job's Kinsman-Redeemer," 66.
148. Ibid., 65.
149. Ibid.

struggle for survival surely do a disservice to the vast array of this texts' potentials.

4.3   *Presence*

Among other options, it would also be possible to read this passage as a description of a theophanic encounter with God that does not necessarily heal Job, help him to survive, or resolve any of Job's legal claims.

Job's stress upon the motif of seeing God (ראו/אחזה), his emphatic repetition of the first person, and the physical proximity connoted by the phrase "not a stranger" (לא־זר) lend textual support to this point of view. Some readers have suggested that Job's words could reference the actual ending of the book of Job (38:1-42:6), in which Job encounters YHWH "in the flesh," as it were, in the midst of a theophanic storm that rises upon the dust of the world. Job's response to YHWH's theophany includes the words, "But now my eye sees you" (ועתה עיני ראתך), which parallel "my eyes see" in 19:27 (ועיני ראו). The speeches from the whirlwind, however, have confounded many interpreters: what, exactly, do they do for Job? They seem to bring little comfort, or restoration, or healing, or vindication in themselves.[150] Thus, a third option would be to read this text as a call for the divine *presence*, with an ambivalent attitude towards the potential legal or life-giving consequences of that meeting. Seow offers intertextual support for a reading of 19:25-27 that stresses theophanic presence: "Job's language is, in fact, used of theophany, as in the encounter between Israel's leaders and God on Mount Sinai (Ex 24,11)" (ויחזו את־האלהים).[151]

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150. For a discussion of the Divine Speeches, see Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 234-58.

One particular strand of this interpretive trajectory found immense popularity in nineteenth and early twentieth century biblical criticism. In this general reading, Job expresses an expectation that he will encounter YHWH only after his death, and though he has no hope of earthly healing or restoration at this meeting, Job nevertheless desires to be in the divine presence. According to Heinrich Ewald,

> *werde ich* dennoch *schauen — Gott*, die Wonne der Erscheinung und unmittelbaren Nähe Gottes auch als Richters und Vertheidigers meiner Unschuld, die ich vor dem Tode des Leibes nichtmehr geniefsen kann, dann noch empfinden! und zwar dann, wie vonselbst hieraus erhellet, mit geistigen Augen, nicht mehr mit den jezigen, und doch so gewifs und so klar und fühlbar als möglich. Wer Gott schauet, wird das reine Licht die klare Wahrheit und das ewige Leben gewahr, garkeine Trennung und keinen Zwiespalt mehr zwischen sich und Gott fühlend, also auch keinen Schrecken, keine Furcht noch Strafe: im leiblichen Leben dies zu können hat Ijob hier längst vollkommen verzweifelt, aber er weifs nun dafs er es auch nach dem äufsern Tode geistig könne und sicher werde.[152]

Ewald argues that Job, like any mortal, cannot withstand the immediate presence of the divine, or else he would die (cf. Exod 33:20). Yet emphatically in 19:26-27 and

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151.   Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 706.

152.   Heinrich Ewald, *Das Buch Ijob* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1854), 200. "I shall nevertheless behold—God, shall then still feel the joy of the appearance and immediate presence of God also as the judge and defender of my innocence, which I cannot enjoy before the death of the body! and then, as follows of itself, with spiritual eyes, not with my present ones, and yet as certainly and as clearly and sensibly as possible. Whoever beholds God becomes conscious of the pure light, the clear truth, and the eternal life, feeling no separation and no disagreement at all between himself and God, accordingly no alarm, no fear nor punishment: of being able to do this in this bodily life Job has long ago completely despaired, but he now knows that he can and certainly will do it spiritually after physical death." For permutations of this view, also see A. Dillmann, *Hiob* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1891), 182-90; E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Job: Translated from a Critically Revised Hebrew Text with Commentary* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1939), 120-21; A. Weiser, *Das Buch Hiob* (ATD 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), 152-53.

elsewhere in his discourses (cf. 23:3), Job expresses a desire for an encounter with God "in the flesh." Ewald argues that Job knows that this encounter is not possible while he is alive, but that, when he leaves his mortal coil, Job hopes to be worthy of participating in YHWH's (albeit ghostly) presence. One very important component of this reading is the privative sense of the preposition מן in the phrase מבשרי in 19:26b, and another is the verb חזה. Bernard Duhm explains, and offers intertextual support for his reading:

> „Ohne meinen Leib" d.h. obwohl ich tot bin. Der Körper bleibt ja unter der Erde, Hiob selber aber wird als Geist, etwa wie Samuel I Sam 28... aus der Erde steigen, und eben als Geist Gott selber sehen, חזה wird bekanntlich mit Vorliebe vom ekstatischen Schauen gebraucht.[153]

Yet while this reading offers its own compelling points, it also has its share of weak points. This reading might seem strange to more recent interpreters who assert that ancient Israelites did not believe that humans continued to exist in the form of spirits after death, but Duhm shows that, at least on the margins, ancient Israelite texts did acknowledge that the spirits of the dead were available for meetings (1 Sam 28). Duhm implies a fairly important question: should we be so quick to think that Job *could not* imagine that a spirit of the dead could confront YHWH? Though Job at times wishes for the rest provided by Sheol (cf. 3:21-22), at other times Job seems to imagine that no-one can ever escape the invasive divine presence, even those in the depths of Sheol (cf. 26:5-7).

If understood as a call for a theophany, Job's request seems less like a call for a simple restored relationship, since Job never seemed to see the divinity before his

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153. Bernard Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob: Erklärt* (KHC XVI; Freiburg im Breisgau: JCB Mohr, 1897), 103. "'Without my body'–that is, although I am dead. The body is indeed under the earth, Job is himself existing only as a spirit, such as in Sam I Samuel 28... rise up from the ground, and even as a spirit to see Godself, חזה is well known to be preferred as a description of ecstatic visions."

misfortunes (cf. 1:1-2:13). It seems even less like a call for a recovery of health, since biblical theophanies are famous for their destructive and dangerous effects (cf. Ps 29:5-9).

And here, too, we find the same exclusive interpretive mentality at work. Ewald, perhaps the first major biblical critic to endorse this view, wrote, concerning other commentators at the time, and their construal of the literary context for Job 19:25-27:

> Allein viel schlechter, ja gänzlich falsch ist die Ansicht vieler, vielleicht aller neuern Gelehrten, dafs Ijob hier eine irdische Hoffnung habe und von der Zeit nach dem Tode gar nicht rede. Diefs ist schon gegen die Worte, es ist gegen den Zusammenhang der Gedanken, es fehlt gegen den Sinn des ganzen Buches und gegen den deutlichen Fortschritt von 14, 13—15 bis 16, 18 ff. und endlich bis hieher.[154]

Ewald's claim that the semantic nodes of *justice* and *survival* are "totally false," "opposed to the words themselves," and ultimately "sins against the meaning of the whole book" participates in the same fundamental assumption that we found at work in Clines and Suriano: namely, that interpretation is a battlefield, and there can only be one victor. It must be said that, *in light of the literary context that Ewald has constructed,* the other interpretive nodes do not seem as convincing. But it is always possible to determine the context in a different manner, and then the other interpretive nodes will not seem as offensive.

In fact, the node of *presence* seems somewhat present, albeit in a ghostly manner, in the other readings: the nodes of *justice* and *survival* both imply that the

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154. Ewald, *Das Buch Ijob,* 202. "But the view of perhaps nearly all modern scholars, that Job expresses here an earthly hope and does not at all speak of the time after death, is much worse, and, indeed, totally false. This view is opposed to the words themselves, it is opposed to the connection of the thoughts, it sins against the meaning of the whole book and against the plain advance from 14:13-15 to 16:18 ff., and finally to this passage."

divine will have to be present in some manner, and thus all three readings implicate each other. Due to the use of the word גאל, Job's hope could be seen as a forensic hope; due to his use of קום and חי in parallel, he could be connoting a revivification trope; and, due to his seeming use of a sight-as-healing metaphor and a stress on חזה and ראה, one could easily see in Job's statement a desire for an encounter with God. And lament and thanksgiving psalms more often than not blend these metaphors, it would be hard to construe one and not admit the existence of the others.

In all, most scholarly readings tend to draw too strict a distinction between courtroom and revivification metaphors. In many instances in lament or thanksgiving psalms, forensic language is not meant as an exclusively literal image; it often refers to God's saving activity from immanent peril. For example, in Psalm 9 the forensic metaphor is quite fluid: the psalmist proclaims, "You have maintained my just cause!" (Ps 9:4), but the vindication is later presented as a return-from-Sheol motif: "You are the one who lifts me from the gates of death" (Ps 9:13).

In other examples: the poet of Lamentations 3 complains of residing "in the depths of the pit," but conceives of salvation in forensic terms, exulting: "You have taken up (רבת) my cause (ריבי), O Lord; you have redeemed (גאל) my life (חיי)" (3:58); Psalm 143 contains the metaphor of the poet's suffering and impending doom as existence in Sheol (143:3,7), along with revivification language (143:11), and forensic language (143:2); Psalm 71:13 mentions "my accusers" (שטני נפשי) as the cause of suffering while incongruously asking YHWH to "revive me" (תחיינו) and "bring me up again from the depths of the earth" (מתהמות הארץ תשוב תעלני) in 71:20.[155]

Thus, these interpretive distinctions are effects of our reading, which is noth-

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155.   Psalm 143 contains the metaphor of the poet's suffering and impending doom as existence in Sheol (143:3,7), along with revivification language (143:11), and forensic language (143:2).

ing more than the actualization of a solution from a problematic structure. Let us not forget that, when we propose a reading, we are offering something *smaller* than the problem, offering something that could never cover over the problem like putty over a crack in the wall. The problem always survives our attempts to kill it, since its presence continually evades our grasp.

4.4   Moving on from the Initial Context

Thus, within its initial context, one can trace a general "virtual" structure of the text that may help in classifying its diverse readerly actualizations. I have proposed a procedure whereby the reader determines the "degrees of freedom" provided by determinations of the text's historical and literary contexts as well as its semantic structure. In other words, I have analyzed some of the text's *structural* potentials that allow for the production of different, yet justifiable, readings.

In the process, I have discovered that the constitutive boundary–the one separating production from reception–does not divide between the original context and later contexts (or between original texts and witnesses to that text, or original meanings and receptions). Rather, the divide runs straight through the text's initial context, as well as its potential meaning. That is, *from the very beginning,* the text of Job 19:25-27 was a complex dialogue of production and reception, of offering and taking: the writer produces, but also receives from the context and past texts. The reader always receives the text from someone else, and that reader always lives within a context that in part determines her or him; but this same reader also must determine the text's contexts and produce a reading from the text's provided, yet underdetermined, elements. What results is a processual system with emergent properties:

or, a problematic virtual multiplicity.

In my reading of these modern readings pretending to be ancient readings of ancient texts, I have sought to gather together various readings and thus provide a heuristic distribution into three semantic nodes: *survival, presence,* and *justice.* In the chapter that follows, I will sketch out how one might read the history of a text's production, and in turn construct an interpretive trajectory for a particular semantic node.

Trajectories of Job 19:25-27: The Example of Survival

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it
> '"the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a mem-
> ory as it flashes up at a moment of danger... The danger affects
> both the content of the tradition and its receivers... In every era
> the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a
> conformism that is about to overpower it. The Messiah comes
> not only as the Redeemer, he comes as the subduer of the
> Antichrist. Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the
> spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the
> dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy
> has not ceased to be victorious.

WALTER BENJAMIN

1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter, I will explore the diverse viewpoints from which one may read Job 19:25-27 by tracing the text's "receptions," or the historical products of these viewpoints, in the ancient and medieval eras.[1] I have chosen to use as an example the

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1.   In the space allotted I must pass over the vast majority of receptions in silence, and even those mentioned I cannot examine in depth.The most conspicuous absences are receptions in languages that I cannot decipher. One solution to this

trajectory emerging from the semantic node of *survival* simply by virtue of its wealth of receptions, but I will also offer a brief sketch of *presence* and *justice*. In the space available, I will focus mostly on the processes of textual formation (that is, the shape of the text) and semantic production (that is, particular readings). While I will briefly touch upon transmutations and non-semantic effects as they occur in the history of this text's processual development, the greater part of these fascinating stories will receive short shrift.

2   SURVIVAL

To *survive* is to remain alive, or to endure in spite of resistance. Thus the concept of "survival" presupposes a simple narrative structure: a life is threatened with death, and yet it subsists.[2] *Survival* offers a view from the unresolved middle of that narrative–that is, the protagonist's life is not unscathed, and yet the protagonist is not fully dead.

At first glance, the narrative of "survival" might seem like a comedy, since in the end life wins. Yet "survival" cannot entirely evade the threat of death: the specter of death always lives on, if only in memory. That is, a "survivor" is always a survivor

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problem would be to form a collective of scholars from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds who would be capable of expanding the horizons of reception-historical research; until that time arrives, the cultural location of any particular scholar will by nature define the boundaries of their potential studies.

2.   As Lyotard writes, "The word survivor implies that an entity that is dead or ought to be is still alive." Jean-Francios Lyotard, ""The Survivor"," in *Toward the Postmodern* (ed. R. Harvey; Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993), 151, quoted in Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 31.

from something, and from that something the survivor can never fully escape. The book of Job itself is a "literature of survival," since it tells the story of death besieging Job, though Job managed to escape its clutches.[3] Yet even in this happy conclusion, readers have noted that Job's restored family surely could never erase the memory of the lost children from the prologue for whom Job worried so much (Job 1:2, 4-5).[4] Job's new life continues in spite of the absence of his initial children. One might imagine that, for Job, the children's absence was like the overbearing presence of a gaping wound. For the survivor, life and death have crossed each other's sovereign borders, complicating any attempt to identify one without reference to the other. In *Surviving Lamentations,* Tod Linafelt calls this the "paradoxical dynamic of survival: death in the midst of life, life beyond the borders of death."[5] For the survivor, there is neither death nor life, but rather life-death.[6]

        And yet not all who have survived an encounter with death survive in the same way. As Timothy Beal writes,

> Surviving is, most literally, 'living over' or 'living through.' Living through is very different than living beyond. Living beyond is forgetting, living in oblivion. So survival is in some sense about not forgetting, resisting oblivion. The survivor takes something of what she or he survives into the present.[7]

But surely some survivors do—or at least try to—live in oblivion by forgetting what has happened. One might then respond: are they *really* surviving? Is one living at all if

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3.   For "literature of survival," see Ibid.

4.   See, for example, the discussion in Newsom, "The Book of Job," 636.

5.   Ibid.

6.   See Jacques Derrida, *Learning to Live Finally: An Interview with Jean Birbaum* (Hoboken, NJ: Melville House, 2007), 33.

7.   Elie Wiesel and Timothy K. Beal, "Matters of Survival: A Conversation," in *Strange Fire: Reading the Bible after the Holocaust* (ed. T. Linafelt; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 22.

one lives in oblivion? Is not "living beyond"—forgetting, oblivion—more akin to death than to life?

Many have referred to the reception history as "the survival of literature," implying that the text has somehow managed to escape its own historical oblivion and find itself before our eyes, ready to be read.[8] Of all the texts that perished in the ancient world, and of all the ancient texts that managed to escape and survive for some time but eventually perish, how is it that this text has subsisted all these years? This is certainly the case for Job 19:25-27—how is it that this ragged, almost unreadable text has survived? And how is it that this set of marks on a page will most certainly outlive me? Yet its raggedness, its seeming incompleteness, has only served to encourage its life: as Tod Linafelt argues,

> To imagine a text existing complete in and of itself is to imagine not "survival" but a "lifeless" state of preservation. Paradoxically, the "unfinished edge" of the text... allows it to go on, endure, by calling other texts that respond to it. It is the unfinished edge's refusal to be finished that converts the death sentence to a suspension of death.[9]

This same struggle for survival—that is, the struggle between death and life, oblivion and resisting oblivion, forgetting and remembering—repeats itself throughout the history of the reception of Job 19:25-27. Many have read 19:25-27 as a triumphalistic rejection of death that proclaims an otherworldly resurrection which will allow the faithful to "live beyond" the struggles and pain they have endured in this life. And yet, others have struggled to read this text as part of Job's passionate fight to recover his life by "living through" his traumatic experiences. In this section, I will begin with the Old Greek translation and continue to sketch its actualization through its early

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8.   Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book*, 30. Linafelt here discusses Lamentations as both a 'survival of literature' and a 'literature of survival.'

9. Ibid., 33.

Christian readings, performance in liturgy, monumental inscription, and artistic illumination. Thus, the semantic node of *survival* gathers together a broad array of readings of 19:25-27 that refer to Job's holistic recovery of the various aspects of his shattered life. Throughout the centuries of the Common Era, examples of this construal of the text are quite easy to find, and yet they also exhibit significant internal diversity.[10]

2.1 *Old Greek Job: Recovery of Life*

The Old Greek (OG) version, a translation made in Alexandria in the second century BCE, is perhaps the earliest known translation of the book of Job.[11] It is almost twenty percent shorter than MT,[12] it is of high literary quality,[13] and that it is one of the freest Greek translations of any Septuagintal text.[14] Some have suggested that the

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10. I cannot, for the sake of space, track this text's travels in music, in theater, in film, or in the many other diverse avenues through which it has survived, but hopefully this small sample will gesture towards some of this text's capabilities.

11. It is possible, but not likely, that Aramaic targums, such as 11QTargumJob, were prepared earlier than the Old Greek translation. See D. Shepherd, *Targum and Translation: A Reconsideration of the Qumran Aramaic Version of Job* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). for a discussion.

12. See S. R. Driver and G. B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), xlix-l, lxxv-lxxvi; Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1984), ccii-cciii.

13. For example, in Job 1:5, instead of translating ויהי with κα*ι* εγενετο as it is translated usually in LXX, OGJob translates it with κα*ι* ὡς, representing a more standard Greek style.

14. OGJob challenges the interlinear paradigm of LXX translation, because it occasionally imports verses from other biblical books (e.g., OGJob 34:13=Ps 24:1). See N. Fernandez Marcos, "The Septuagint Reading of the Book of Job," in *The Book of Job* (BETL 114; ed. W. Beuken; Leuven: Leuven University, 1994), pages 251-266; see

Greek translation reflects a Hebrew version that differs from MT,[15] but it seems most likely, that, given the fact that chapters with the highest concentrations are among the most difficult in the book and, in the case of the Elihu speeches, repetitive of what has already been said by the other friends, the translator may have aimed for a popular version by reducing the text in translation.[16] Since Job was not used in Alexandrian Jewish liturgy, the idea of a popular audience is plausible.[17] While OGJob omits 16% of chapters 15-21, and the percentage after chapter 21 continues to climb, it is striking to note that only two half-verses are omitted from all 28 verses of chapter 19. The translator's attention to the preservation of this chapter might signal a concern for proper translation due to the text's early importance.

I begin by reading OGJob 19:25-27 *as a reading*. In what follows, I assume (with good reason, I argue) that OGJob reads something at least similar to the Hebrew text that also underlies MTJob 19:25-27.[18]

The text of OGJob 19:25-27, as reconstructed in the critical Göttingen edition, and my translation are as follows:[19]

252-255.

15.   See, for example, J. Jeffrey, 'The Masoretic Text and the Septuagint Compared, with Special Reference to the Book of Job," *Expository Times*, 36 (1924-25), 70-73.

16.   See Seow, Illuminations.

17.   N. Fernandez Marcos, "The Septuagint Reading of the Book of Job," 257.

18.   In cases where LXX assumes a different text, one may still analyze LXX as a reading of a prior text, though this step will by nature be conjectural.

19.   See the critical edition of J. Ziegler, *Septuaginta, Vetus Testamentum Graecum: Iob* (Göttingen: Vandehoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).. Note the textual variation especially in ἀέναος in v. 25 and τὸ δέρμα μου in v. 26, which will be discussed below. I do not have the space here to examine the textual history of the Septuagint of Job 19:25-27, but its changes both derive from particular readings from the text and open semantic potentials for new readings to emerge.

(25) οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι ἀέναος ἐστιν ὁ ἐκλύειν με μέλλων ἐπὶ γῆς.

(26) ἀναστήσαι τὸ δέρμα μου τὸ ἀναντλοῦν ταῦτα· παρὰ γὰρ κυρίου ταῦτά μοι συντελέσθη,

(27) ἃ ἐγὼ ἐμαυτῷ συνεπίσταμαι, ἃ ὁ ὀφθαλμός μου ἑόρακεν καὶ οὐκ ἄλλος· πάντα δέ μοι συντετέλεσται ἐν κόλπῳ.

> (25) To be sure, I know that he who is about to unloose me on earth is everlasting.
>
> (26) May my skin which patiently endures these things rise up; for these things have been accomplished on me by the Lord –
>
> (27) things I am conscious of in myself, things my eye has seen and no other; and all of them have been accomplished for me in my bosom.

In Job 19:25, OGJob renders both חי and ואחרון with ἀέναος, construing the two words as predicative adjectives in hendiadys, or perhaps as a syntagm connected with an epexegetical *waw,* thus resolving the syntactical difficulties of the masculine אחרון. OGJob's interesting reading of יקום left אחרון without a clear function: OGJob translates יקום as the first word of verse 26, taking עורי as its subject. This decision separates the directional dissonance of יקום and על־עפר and gives עורי a proper masculine singular verb instead of the plural נקפו but introduces a new problem: namely, the intervening *waw* and preposition ואחר. As it is difficult to find any trace of them in the Greek, Dhorme, Driver-Gray and others have concluded that the OG translator entirely omitted the two words.[20] It is possible, however, that ואחר read as an epex-

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20.   Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job,* 284;   Driver and Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, 128.

egetical *waw* and temporal adverb may explain the replication of an imperfect verb (יקום) with an optative aorist verb (ἀναστῆσαι), thus understood as a jussive.[21] The Hebrew imperfect with a parenthetical temporal phrase—"that is, afterwards"—may have prompted the modal Greek verb.

Verse 26b presents an array of fascinating readings. OGJob appears to represent נקפו with the verb ἀναντλοῦν, a present active nominative or accusative singular participle.[22] For the confusing plural subject, the translator has substituted a verb conjugated in the singular with a fitting subject: τὸ δέρμα μου. The switch to participial form requires קום to continue to be the finite verb in the sentence while it allows נקפו to modify the subject ("my flesh.")[23]

This move has allowed OGJob to use זאת as the object of the participial clause, thus making sense of difficult syntax. While the Hebrew singular is rendered with the plural ταῦτα, OGJob regularly performs this substitution in accordance with Greek style (cf. Job 5:27). The verb ἀναντλεω occurs in the LXX only one time, in Proverbs 9:12, translating the word נשא. In that context, the word elliptically refers to sufferings borne by a scoffer. Due to the conceptual difference between "to hack off" (נקף-I) or "to surround" (נקף–II) and "to endure" (ἀναντλεω), Driver-Gray writes, "Whether G read נקפו... and, if not, what exactly it read instead of these words, is uncertain."[24] If OGJob read נקפו, however, it is very possible that the words are re-divided into נקף וזאת, with the *waw* functioning either emphatically or epexegetically.[25] Thus OGJob

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21.   While the aorist tense usually connotes simple past action, the optative future fell into disuse during the time in which the OG translators worked, and modal future meanings were often rendered with the optative aorist. See Tremblay, *Job 19:25-27,* 358.

22.   Pace Driver and Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job,* 128.

23.   This modification also allows the translator to replicate the words while achieving better Greek style by creating subordinate clauses using participles.

24.   Again, see Ibid.

would be reading and adequately represent a singular Hebrew verb. Furthermore, the phrase could be translated as such: "even these things (e.g. "these sufferings") [which my flesh] circles around." In order to smooth out the complicated syntax and highlight the connotation of Job's body revolving around–orbiting, and thus under the influence of, or bearing–suffering, the translator used the verb ἀναντλεω. In this instance, a perceived poetic metaphor has been concretized and simplified.

It appears that the Greek translator read ומשדי (παρὰ γὰρ κυρίου) for MT ומשברי and אלוה (ταῦτα) for אלה. It is unlikely that either is a preferable reading to the MT, because both words find parallelistic complements, בשר in the previous line, and אלוה in the latter line. It is, however, interesting to note that OGJob likely read a Hebrew manuscript with fewer *matres* and no pointing; thus the reading of אלה could have been supported by the same logic, as a semantically parallel intensification of זאת.[26]

The Hebrew verb in 26b, אחזה, has not been adequately accounted for in previous studies of OGJob. It has been assumed that the word did not influence the translation, and that συντελέσθη is purely interpretive.[27] In OGJob, συντελεω represents כלה (cf. Job 19:27b; 21:13, reading with Qere), נקף-I (Job 1:5), and אבד (Job 30:2). Discussions of OGJob seem to have agreed that the appearance of συντελεω in

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25.   See Choon-Leong Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," in *Gott und Mensch im Dialog: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag* (ed. M. Witte; BZAW 345/II; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 692, where he suggests this reading for the Hebrew text. It is a live possibility that this reading is supported by OGJob.

26.   It is possible that the Hebrew text of Job, composed as a highly complex literary work replete with instances of visual poetry, could have implemented Janus parallelism with a defective spelling of אלה, thus representing both "these (terrible things)" and God with the same word. This confusion of deity and sufferings seems fittingly Joban and thus a tantalizing option, and reminds the reader that an ironic tinge may well be present in Job's call for a redeemer.

27.   See Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 285; Driver and Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job,* 128.

Job 14:14 is superfluous; as Hervé Tremblay writes, "puisque le traducteur y a inséré le verbe συντελεω alors qu'il ne se trouve pas dans l'hébreu."[28] There is, in fact, an appearance of כל ("all") in 14:14 that is read by the OG translator as a form of כלה and translated as συντελεσας. In Job 19:26b, however, the translation of אחזה was less wooden. The phrase which OGJob read as "and by the Lord I have seen these things" likely seemed too elliptical if rendered woodenly in Greek; the more direct Greek rendering retained the first-person on the verb with the independent dative personal pronoun μοι while exchanging the motif of sight–which connotes the reality of the suffering from Job's vantage point–for a descriptive perfect passive verb which connotes the reality of Job's suffering from an objective viewpoint. While the Hebrew text is more literarily artful, the Greek text is more easily understood; sight here connotes the reality of the experience, and this connotation is fore-grounded in the Greek.

The same strategy seems to have guided OGJob in verse 27a. According to the OGJob's reading, Job is claiming to have seen the combined impact of his many sufferings (elliptically referred to as "these.") Instead of render this metaphorical "sight" into Greek, OGJob does away with the metaphor and renders Job's words in a more direct manner: Job "knows" (συνεπίσταμαι) for himself (ἐμαυτῷ) these "things." Since Hebrew חזה often connotes the metaphorical sight of visions (Isa 1:1; Amos 1:1), dreams (Dan 2:26) and theophanies in the Temple (Ps 11:7; 17:2), OGJob renders the conceptual difference between the "literal" sight of ראה and that of חזה by converting metaphoric language into concrete terms.[29] Finally, OGJob reads 27c, כלו כליתי, as "all of them (כל) have come to an end for me (יִכְלִיתִי)."[30]

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28.   P.-H. Tremblay, *Job 19, 25-27 dans la Septante et chez les pères grecs: unanimité d'une tradition* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 2002), 202.

29.   Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 697.

Reading חי as a predicative adjective of the substantive participle גאל and the ensuing use of יקום as part of verse 26 constitutes an important difference between the MT tradition and OGJob. If יקום applies to Job's skin, then Job likely envisions a miraculous healing as a deliverance from his suffering. Furthermore, while ἀναστήσαι can mean simply "to rise," its use in this context is similar to its use in OG thanksgiving psalms, which connotes a recovery of life and health. This reading envisions Job's restoration as a return to full life from his sufferings, which have been cast as a death-like experience. Thus, OGJob seems to notice a similarity to tropes in thanksgiving psalms, as in OGPsalm 40:9-11 (=MT 41:9-11). In this psalm, the speaker uses the trope of death to express suffering, and then uses the word ἀνάστασις to describe recovery.

In this way, one may understand OGJob 19:25-27 to be saying the following: Job claims to know that the "everlasting" one (i.e., God) is about to "unloose" him, or, in other words, liberate him from his miseries (19:25).[31] Then, Job expresses his hope that God will heal, or "raise up," his body, which has patiently endured his sufferings (19:26a). This healing, Job reminds his listeners, is the work of God (19:26b). Finally, Job expresses the intimate and exclusive knowledge that he has of this future healing (19:27).[32] This reading seems to have been the dominant mode of interpretation for this text, especially among Christians, especially if the image of healing is understood to signify post-mortem resurrection.

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30.   By the time of OGJob, waw-yodh confusion was common; thus "my kidneys" could be read as a Hiphil imperfect of כלה with a first-person object suffix.

31.   See Tremblay, *Job 19, 25-27 dans la Septante et chez les pères grecs: unanimité d'une tradition,* 191-92 for a discussion of the possible senses of ἐκλύω.

32.   Tremblay argues for a reading of this passage as an argument for the resurrection, especially in light of OGJob's translation of Job 14. See Ibid., 161-219.

And yet, one may find ample degrees of semantic freedom within OGJob 19:25-27 that would help one fashion a counter-reading. While the word ἐκλύω in koine Greek most often signifies "to be set free" (cf. *P. Teb.* 49.6), in the Old Greek translation this word commonly signifies "to be weak," (cf. LXX 2Sam 16:2; 17:29; 1 Macc 3:17; *Test. Job.* 30:1), "to lose courage" (cf. LXX Deut20:3; 1 Macc 9:8), or "to dread" (cf. LXX Prov 3:11). This translation choice seems odd: in the entire Septuagint tradition, the word ἐκλύω translates גאל nowhere other than in Job 19:25. Yet, since the Greek text of OGJob is of a high literary quality, the frequent use of ἐκλύω to signify "to be set free" in Greek literature may justify a similar reading in this instance (cf. Theogonis 1339; *Phaedrus* 67d; *Odyssey* 10.286).

Yet again, the various translation options depend upon different construals of their broader literary contexts. If one reads this passage in the context of Septuagintal literature, one may then read with the Claude Cox, the translator of *Iob* in the New English Translation of the Septuagint, who translates ἐκλύω as "undo me" (nets Job 19:25).[33] In Cox's reading of OGJob, Job declares that God is about to finish him off, but Job hopes that his body can continue to endure God's relentless attacks (19:26). Moreover, Cox reads συντετέλεσται in 19:27 as "come to an end," rather than "accomplish." In Cox's reading, God's action is the "undoing" of Job, and thus things seem to have "come to an end." That is, Job will soon perish at the hands of God, unless his body can continue to endure God's torments. Cox's reading of συντέλεω finds ample support throughout LXX and pseudepigraphal literature (cf. Jer 14:12; Ezk 7:15; *Test. Levi* 5:4).

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33. A. Pietersma and B. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2007), 681.

Yet one might argue: in none of these cases does ἐκλύω translate גאל, and thus reading ὁ ἐκλύειν as "he who is about to undo me" is an incorrect reading. In this line of thought, one must try to discern the meaning implied by the translator's act of translation. While this is a perfectly reasonable project to undertake, it ignores the status of OGJob and later LXXJob as fully authentic and legitimate texts of the book of Job. Once OGJob has been translated, it then functions *as the book of Job itself,* and may be read just as one reads the Hebrew text–that is, it may be read as a text, and not simply as a translation. The Greek text, no less than the Hebrew text, harbors its own capacities for multiple readings. Moreover, it is just as groundless to privilege the complex, partially derivative Hebrew text of the book of Job as an "original" but deny such status to one of its translations. In short, OGJob functions as *both* a translation of the book of Job *and* as a text of the book of Job, and both constructions of its identity may produce justifiable, but different, readings.

We can see that this is an unsettling state of affairs. For example, the introduction to the New English Translation of the Septuagint expresses the committee's desire to represent "what the original translator thought his text to mean" as opposed to "what later interpreters thought the text to mean," thus producing "a new translation of the (original) Septuagint–i.e., a translation of a translation."[34] According to this introduction, the modern English translators of the Septuagint have "decided to focus on the most original character of this collection... the Septuagint *as produced* rather than *as received,*" and thus "one should read the Septuagint *as produced.*"[35] Perhaps the translators of NETS aimed to translate for this purpose, but it seems like a sisyphean task to try and parse out the elements of the Septuagint that

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34.   Ibid., xv.

35.   Ibid.

are "production" from those that are "reception." This borderline, too, runs through the middle of the Septuagint itself. One may read a translation as it relates to its source text, and one may read a translation as a text in its own right: but these choices are interpretive strategies for the reader, and do not necessarily correspond to any intention in the mind of a translator. Who should have the final word on what it means to "read" the Septuagint, whether it is to read without reference to the source text or not?

Nevertheless, the continuing development of the process of *textual formation* led to ever-changing capacities as shown through the development of the process of the text's *reading*. Translation is, in many ways, the mode of literature's survival, but it would be impossible for the translator to *not* change the translated text. Survival *requires* change: as Walter Benjamin writes of the word *trans*-lation,

> No translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its afterlife–which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living– the original undergoes a change.[36]

Even within the history of the Septuagintal text, several variants show how the survival, and thus transformation, of the text both reflects and alters its history of reading. For instance, LXXa Job 19:26, a later recension of OGJob, reads: ἀναστησει δέ μου το σωμα, "but my *body* will rise."[37] This shift likely signals a re-reading of both the trope of death and the trope of recovery-of-life as non-metaphorical discourse, taken instead as a statement of concrete action. Another addition was made to the last

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36.   As Derrida writes, "The *sur*, 'on,' 'super-,' and so forth... also designates the figure of a passage by *trans*-lation, the *trans*- of an *Übersetzung*... The simultaneous transgression and reappropriation of a language..." Jacques Derrida, "Living on/Border Lines," in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Comtinuum, 1979), 71.

37.   See Tremblay, *Job 19, 25-27,* 122; L. Dieu, "Le Texte De Job Du Codex Alexandrinus Et Ses Principaux Temoins," *Muséon* 13 (1912): 223-74.

verse of OGJob, 42:17, reads: γέγραπται δὲ αὐτὸν πάλιν ἀναστήσεσθαι μεθ᾽ ὧν ὁ κύριος ἀνίστησιν ("And it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up.")[38]

This addition seems to have influenced the development of the *Testament of Job*, which mentions the "resurrection" (ἀνίστησιν) in 4:5 and in the further development of the postscript in manuscript V, which adapts the addition to OGJob 42:17.[39] All of these additions use the verb ἀναστασις, which is only used in the context of rising from troubles or suffering elsewhere in OGJob in 14:12, where it is negated. These additions find in OGJob19:25 reason to interpret the word ἀναστήσαι as a supernatural rising. We can see a general shift toward concretizing metaphors as one reason for this development; thus, from the shift in semantic context, new textual potentials emerge.[40] In other words, as the concept of resurrection develops in Jewish and Christian communities, it found textual resources in the psalmic, metaphorical motifs of a descent and return from the land of the dead. When read in a concrete

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38.   The OG colophon is lacking in the Sahidic, and in Pap. Oxyr. no 3522. Asterisked in the Syro-Hex, it probably derives from Theodotion. See N. Fernández-Marcos, "The Septuagint Reading of the Book of Job," in *The Book of Job* (ed. W. Beuken; BETHL 114; Leuven: Leuven, 1994), 264.

39.   See J. Schnocks, "The Hope for Resurrection in the Book of Job," in *The Septuagint and Messianism* (ed. M. Knibb; Journées Bibliques De Louvain 53. Leuven: Leuven University, 206), 297.

40.   Vernon Robbins has also argued that, in the New Testament, John 19:30 alludes to Job 19:25-27. In the four Gospels, all of Jesus' speech uttered while on the cross seems to reference the Septuagint, and the word τετέλεσται ("it is finished") in John 19:30 finds its strongest Septuagintal resonance in Job 19:26-27, which repeats συντετελεω twice. In this reading, Jesus suggests that his body's act of "enduring these sufferings" will allow for certain "things" to "be accomplished" (συντελέσθη) and "fulfilled" (συντετέλεσται). While this reading may or may not discern the intent of the author of the gospel, for a community intent on finding connections between Jesus' death and the Hebrew scriptures, this connection would not seem far-fetched at all. See Vernon K. Robbins, "The Crucifixion and the Speech of Jesus," *Forum* 4 (1988): 38-39.

manner, these proclamations of a return from the land of the dead, including one way of reading Job 19:25-27, came to be associated with the resurrection.

2.2   *Reading Survival: The Immanence of Resurrection*

Emerging from LXXJob's reading of Job 19:25-27, the interpretive trajectory of *survival* generally understands this text to predict Job's renewal in the form of resurrection. This trajectory strongly manifests itself in early Christian texts, since early Mediterranean and European Christianity almost exclusively read LXX, and moreover read this text in light of nascent Christian theological claims.

The earliest known citation of Job 19:25-27 occurs in the influential letter 1 Clement, written to the Corinthian church near the end of the first century ce. In 1 Clement, these verses function exclusively as a scriptural support for the final resurrection (26:1-3).[41] It is clear that the author of 1 Clement understands Job 19:26 as a recovery-of-life trope similar to those found in lament and thanksgiving psalms: the two other biblical texts cited in support of resurrection (LXXPs 27:7; 3:6) are individual lament psalms. LXXPs 27 mentions a descent to Sheol (27:1) and hopes for healing and restoration (27:7-9), while 1 Clement reads the description of sleep and waking in LXXPs 3 as a subtle reference to death and revivification. While this is not likely the intent of any putative author or even translator of this psalm, the mention of sleep in lament psalms can at times, even within the context of their production, signify the "sleep" of death (cf. LXXPs 12:4; 87:6). Thus, in light of the context of the

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41.   See D. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 174.

book of Psalms, 1 Clement construes "sleep" in LXXPS 3 as a metaphor for death. As the theological concept of resurrection developed in the Greco-Roman era, the already-established construal of Job 19:25-27 as a recovery-of-life trope allowed it to manifest a new meaning: namely, it was read as a prophecy of the resurrection of the righteous.

As the author of 1 Clement writes, concerning the final resurrection of the righteous:

> Do we then think that it is so great and marvelous that the Creator of all things will raise everyone who has served him in a holy way with the confidence of good faith... For it says somewhere, "You will raise me up and I will praise you," and, "I lay down and slept, and I arose, because you are with me." And again, Job says, "You will raise this flesh of mine, which has endured all these things" [καὶ πάλιω Ἰὼβ λέγει· καὶ ἀναστήσεις τὴν σάρκα μου ταύτην ἀναντλήσασαν ταῦτα πάντα.][42]

This textual form of Job 19:26 is not attested elsewhere, but its status as a citation is not in doubt. As a result, some scholars have argued that, prior to 1 Clement, these texts already existed in an oral *testimonia,* or a stock group of scriptural citations that support a particular theological conviction, concerning the resurrection.[43] The letter addresses a Corinthian church divided into schismatic groups (*1 Clem* 1-3), which the author seeks to unify by, in part, explaining the basic theological structure of the author's Christian faith.[44] Fundamental to this structure is the role of the res-

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42.   Clement of Rome, Opera Omina (ed. J.-P. Migne; PG 1; Paris: Garnier, 1857) 265. Translation from Bart Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers: I Clement, II Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Didache* (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 2003). For similar agrarian imagery for the resurrection in Jewish literature, see b. Keth. 111b; b. San. 91a-91b.

43.   See, for example, Tremblay, *Job 19, 25-27,* 288-293. It is also possible, however, that the author simply cited from memory. See Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome,* 100-101.

urrection (*1 Clem* 24-27), which the author claims "is at all times taking place" (*1 Clem* 24:2), and which can bring new life to situations in dire need of renewal. The author looks to nature and finds resurrection, understood as the renewal of life, constantly at work precisely where death and darkness seem to have eclipsed life and light:

> Day and night declare to us a resurrection. The night sinks to sleep, and the day arises; the day [again] departs, and the night comes on. Let us behold the fruits [of the earth], how the sowing of grain takes place. The sower goes forth, and casts it into the ground, and the seed being thus scattered, though dry and naked when it fell upon the earth, is gradually dissolved. Then out of its dissolution the mighty power of the providence of the Lord raises it up again, and from one seed many arise and bring forth fruit. (*I Clem* 24:4-5)[45]

1 Clement's reading of OGJob 19:26 follows this same line of thought: Job declares that, at the moment of bodily, emotional and communal dissolution (19:2-22), he awaits the one who will renew all of these things. Within 1 Clement's overall message, Job 19:26 functions as both a scriptural proof-text for the theological principle of resurrection and as a proclamation that resurrection "is at all times taking place," even perhaps within the fractured community of faith in Corinth.

Some readers might resent the focus on post-mortem resurrection in interpretive trajectory of *survival,* since the angry Job of the dialogues would not accept his unjust state of suffering as only a momentary hardship before an everlasting life of other-worldly bliss.[46] Any displacement of Job's hope into a

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44.   See O. M. Bakke, *"Concord and Peace": A Rhetorical Analysis of the First Letter of Clement with an Emphasis on the Language of Unity and Sedition* (Paul Mohr Verlag, 2001), 167.

45.   Clement of Rome, Opera Omina, 265. Translation from Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers: I Clement, II Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Didache*, 45.

46.   As Clines writes, "Against any view of bodily resurrection it need only be noted that it contradicts everything the book has said previously about the finality of

spiritual afterlife seems to "rip" the text, as it would be difficult to construe differently Job's commitment to the immediacy of his struggle and his clear hope for the restoration of *his* world throughout the second cycle (cf. Job 16:18; 17:13-16).[47] Moreover, the restoration that *does* come is, at least in the Hebrew text, not primarily that of a beatific afterlife (42:7-17, but cf. LXXJob 42:17a).

Yet many Christian interpreters have downplayed Job's attachment to the material things of this world–including his family–despite Job's repeated claims that he resents losing his life "for nothing" and very much wants his old earthly life restored, including his possessions and his social role (cf. Job 29-31). For example, Jerome claims that, after losing his children and possessions, Job "flinched as little as the sage of whom Horace writes– 'Shatter the world to atoms if you will/ Fearless will be the man on whom it falls."[48] In this line of interpretation, Job's solid faith in the afterworld leads him to care little about the injustices and struggles of this life.

But Clement shows that the interpretive trajectory of *survival* may in some ways respect Job's concern for *this* life, for *this* world and *this* body.[49] While the resurrection is, of course, an eschatalogical event in Clement's mind, it is also something that "is all the time taking place" (*1 Clem* 24:3). Resurrection, Clement reminds us, *is also* a this-worldly, immanent event that heralds the renewal of life where there was no hope for it to recover. Resurrection is not only an eschatalogical hope–in the guise of radical transformation, it permeates the fabric of the world. It may be found

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death (7:9; 10:21; 14:10, 12). David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 363.

47.   See, for example, Samuel Balentine, *Job* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 299.

48.   Jerome, Letter CVIII, *NPNFSS* 6, 221.

49.   See the remarks in Carolyn Walker Bynum, "Images of the Resurrection Body in the Theology of Late Antiquity," *The Catholic Historical Review* 80 (1994): 215-237.

in the dead seed producing new life as well as the fractured community suddenly restoring its sense of collectivity and vocation.

There is, of course, a way in which the discourse of resurrection can smother hopes for immanent change and material transformation. But there are manifold potentials offered by the discourse of resurrection, among them the image of "living through." As Christian theologian Catherine Keller has argued,

> Yet even if new wounds cease to happen and old ones to hurt, the hells on earth created by the dealers in death will not disappear along with them. Like the old scars in Jesus' hands, the new creation must surely retain the scars as marks and monuments... This would entail accepting the tragic dimension of the universe... not by miraculous restorations but by the restorative activity of history itself–that is, in precisely the sense that time can heal if we let it. The mothers of the dead in El Salvador with whom I have communicated... [wish] for the realization in history of the hopes for which they struggle, a realization not at all utopian and absolute but of a decency that would have allowed their children to live full lives and die nontragic deaths.[50]

Within Christian theological notions of the resurrection of the flesh, we find a notion of survival that holds in tension a desire for a *replacement* of this world and a desire for a *transformation* and renewal of the material conditions of this world. When early Christian authors ruminate on the restoration of the flesh, they at once picture the things of this material world, yet in their most utopian guise.[51] This tension is the struggle between, in Timothy Beal's words, "living beyond" and "living through,"

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50.   Catherine Keller, "The Last Laugh: A Counter-Apocalyptic Meditation on Moltmann's the Coming of God," *Theology Today* 54 (1997): 390.

51.   For example, note the description given by the medieval poet Bonvesin de la Riva: people will still eat bread, but it will be "of the whitest white... precious and sweet," and people will recover their own bodies, but "no one is rotten inside... nor does theirbreath smell bad." Bynum, "Images of the Resurrection Body in the Theology of Late Antiquity," 594-595.

which Keller's allusion to the unsettling status of Jesus' still–wounded hands crystallizes (John 20:27).

Yet this is not only an issue for Christian theology: this same tension disturbs the book of Job, as well. For example, the description of Job's very material restoration fails to mention the lives of Job's former children and servants, who will not be restored (1:2-3; cf. 42:13). Does Job "live beyond" or "live through"–does he forget his children as does the narrator, or does he silently, yet tenaciously, remember? Is Job's desire to "see" God, "not as a stranger" (19:27) a desire to reclaim his life or to move beyond it? Is Job offering to restrain his lawsuit if God would appear as a גאל? How do we know? Perhaps this text pulsates with the potentiality *of* this tension; perhaps Jesus' mangled but still–living hands expresses the same tension of survival displayed by Job's mangled but still–beating heart.[52]

Though for some time after 1 Clement no readings of Job 19:25-27 remain, starting within the third century ce the flood of interpretive energy begins to swell. Almost all Greek-speaking early Christian interpreters read OGJob 19:25-27 as a prediction of the resurrection, including Origen (ca. 250 CE),[53] Julian the Arian (ca. 375 CE),[54] Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 375 CE),[55] Epiphanius of Salamis (ca. 375 CE),[56] and Hesy-

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52.   In the end, perhaps this is not merely a struggle within Christian interpreters, nor merely a struggle found only in the text. Perhaps this is a tension produced by the structure of life itself. I would wager that both of these poles–living beyond, and living though–never constitute a clear choice; they both inhabit every reader, and thus the internal struggle to define survival propels the appropriation of this–and perhaps any–text.

53.   The Greek text of Origens' citation of Job 19:25-26 can be found in E. Benz and E. Klostermann, eds., *Origines Werke X. Commentarius in Matthaeum I* (GCS 40. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1935), 668. Origen cites this passage in his commentary on Matt 22:23-33, in which the Sadducees deny the resurrection.

54.   For the Greek text of Julian the Arian's discussion of Job 19:25-27, see D. Hagedorn, *Der Hiobkommentar des Arianers Julian* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973),

chius of Jerusalem (ca. 450 CE).[57] Through the pre-Vulgate Latin *Itala* translation, others read a Latin translation of OGJob, and generally came to similar interpretive conclusions as those who read OGJob itself.[58] By the fourth century CE, Job 19:25-27 appeared quite often in Greek and Latin religious texts.

Following 1 Clement, several of these early interpreters justified their readings by construing the literary context of 19:25-27 as a psalmic trope-of-death. For example, the fifth-century Patriarch Severus of Antioch comments on Job 19:25-27 as follows:

> In consequence of so great a trial [Job] had in a sense gone down to Sheol and final destruction, so that even his name should thenceforth be extinguished, as he himself said when he was being tormented by the pains, and suddenly he arose as from the dead, and put off the unsightliness of the sores, and he was comely in body, as in the bloom of youth, and everything ended for him in a change to the best

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123.

55.   See *PG* 33, 1033-36.

56.   K. Holl, *Epiphanius (Ancoratus und Panarion), 1: Ancoratus und Panarion Haer. 1-33* (GCS 25; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915), 119-20.

57.   Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Homliés sur Job, version arménienne* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 563-65. Note also Didymus the Blind's use of Job 19:26 to bolster Origen's argument that God in Genesis 3 did not create clothes for Adam and Eve, but rather created corporeal bodies for them in Gen 3:21. See R. A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 2004), 106.

58.   It is likely that Augustine and perhaps Ambrose's interpretations derive from this source. The Itala version reads as follows: "Scio enim quia aeternus est qui me resoluturus est, super terram resurget cutis mea, quae haec patitur: a Domino enim mihi haec contigerunt, quorum ego mihi conscius sum, quae oculus meus vidit et non alius, et omnia mihi consummata sunt in sinu." See J. Duvivier and P. Sabatier, *Bibliorum sacrorum Latinae versiones antiquae, seu Vetus Italica, et caeterae quaecunque in codicibus mss. et antiquorum libris reperiri potuerunt* (Paris: F. Didot, 1751), 866.

fortune...That he endured such pains, not because he looked to the things that were given him in this world, but to the hope of the great and wonderful resurrection, concerning which also he said, "For I know that he will ever be revealed who shall release me upon the earth. He shall raise my skin which endures these things" (Job 19:25-26).   The words which are before us for the purpose of interpretation were used by the author with reference to the general resurrection which is expected by everyone.[59]

Severus begins this passage by reading Job's cries as metaphorical descent to Sheol ("had *in a sense* gone down"), and continues to read Job's restoration as a metaphorical return-to-life ("he arose *as from* the dead").[60] In this text, Severus clearly read the restoration of Job's material condition as an experience of resurrection ("and everything ended for him in a change to the best fortune"). Yet Severus also claims that Job's endurance derives not from "this world," but rather from his belief that there will be a "great and wonderful" resurrection, thus implicitly reading Job 19:25-26 also as a prophecy of Jesus' resurrection.

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59.   Severus of Antioch, *A Collection of Letters from Numerous Syriac Manuscripts* (ed. and trans. E.W. Brooks; Paris: Graffin, 1915), lxix.

60.   The translation of the text of Job 19:25-27, especially the use of the word "revealed," is striking, since it constitutes an odd mixture of LXX and Peshitta. Though Severus wrote in Greek and read LXX, he found enormous popularity among Syriac-speaking Christians who preserved and translated his texts. Here, the Syriac translator has emended Severus' quotation of LXX with a few words from the Peshitta. We will see that the Syriac tradition follows another interpretive trajectory altogether that derives from the Syriac translation, but the existence of Severus in Syriac reminds us that no interpretive trajectory, nor any interpretive community, may seal themselves off and retain strict boundaries of identity. There is always the "other" already within those bounds.

For these very reasons, however, John Chrysostom (ca. 375 CE) famously wavered in his opinion of whether or not Job hoped for a bodily resurrection. In a letter to his friend Olympia, Chrystostom points to Job 14:12 and 19:25 and claims, "Job... had no idea of the resurrection,"[61] but in his commentary on Job 19:26, Chrysostom demurs:

> Did Job know of the doctrine of the resurrection? I think so, and even in the resurrection of the body, unless we should say that the resurrection he is referring to is a deliverance from the evils which held him.[62]

Chrysostom, like Severus, construes Job's words as a plea for a renewal of his current life, but cautions that this trope does not necessarily indicate that one is referring to a resurrection after the cessation of biological life. Yet, Chrysostom allows that it may be a possibility: "I think so," he says, "unless..." Chrysostom's words have been taken as an outright by rejection by many biblical scholars, but he seems rather to affirm the multiple semantic potentialities of this text.[63]

Is, then, Severus' reading unjustifiable? It is most likely that the initial author of Job 19:25-27 did not have resurrection in mind, and certainly was not thinking of the specific Christian proclamation of Jesus' resurrection. But we have already seen that OGJob understood the trope system of Hebrew, but slightly later readers (such as LXX[A]) concretized the trope and applied it to a developing doctrine of the res-

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61. J. Chrysostom, *Lettres à Olympias* (Sources chrétiennes 13; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1947), 192.

62. J. Chrysostom, *Commentaire sur Job* (Sources chrétiennes 348 2; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1988), 47. It might be possible to translate Chrysostom's words as follows: "I think so, and even about the resurrection of the body, at least that the resurrection, of which they speak, is the deliverance of the corrupt who held fast." Yet the translation above seems more consistent with the immediate literary context.

63. See, for example, J. K. Zink, "Impatient Job: An Interpretation of Job 19: 25-27," *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1965): 147.

urrection. Thus, one of the potentials on this text includes the ability to shift from signifying a return-to-life trope in Persian period Yehud to signifying a concrete return-to-life in the Hellenistic period. While it is anachronistic to read this text as a statement of resurrection in the Persian period, it does not seem anachronistic in the Greco-Roman period, let alone late antiquity, to read this text in light of the concept of a concrete recovery of life, since in these historical contexts the word ἀνάστασις signified, among other things, the resurrection from the dead (cf. *Test. Job.* 4:1).

Within the semantic and cultural context of Severus of Antioch, this text most certainly had the potential to signify the resurrection. If this seems to push the interpretive envelope too far, one might also ask: during the early production history of the book of Jeremiah, was it possible for the "seventy weeks" to signify the time of Antiochus IV (cf. Dan 9:2)? Surely not–and yet, in the Seleucid period, within that cultural and linguistic milieu, it was most certainly possible to read it as such. From the Iron Age to the Hellenistic world, Jewish readers compiled and edited prophetic collections *so that* they could be applied to later contexts.[64] Likewise, early Christian readers assumed that scriptural texts *should* be applied to their contexts–and in Severus' context, these words strikingly signified the resurrection. As Severus claims, the "words which are before us" are "for the purpose of interpretation," and interpret them Severus did.

Thus, Greek-speaking readers tended to follow the trajectory of survival opened up by OGJob. Yet for the growing numbers of readers who did not read Greek, other translations soon filled these linguistic voids. Perhaps the most important biblical translation in history is Jerome's translation (ca. 390) known in later

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64. See Armin Lange, "Literary Prophecy and Oracle Collection," in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (eds. M. Floyd and R. Haak; London: T. & T. Clark Publishers, 2006), 248-75.

centuries as the Vulgate. Almost immediately, Jerome's Vulgate became one of the most important *texts* of the book of Job, and thus the potentials of Job 19:25-27 expanded with this development of its textual forms.

Though it was celebrated as a return to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, as times it bends the Hebrew text to conform to the dominant Christian interpretations of particular passages.[65] In the Vulgate, Jerome pushes LXXJob's revivification trope even further, altering 19:25b in the process: *in novissimo de terra surrectus sim* (="at last *I* shall rise upon the earth"). The Vulgate text of 19:25-27 and the author's translation read as follows:[66]

> (25) *scio enim quod redemptor meus vivat et in novissimo de terra surrectus sim*
>
> (26) *et rursum circumdabor pelle mea et in carne mea videbo Deum*
>
> (27) *quem visurus sum ego ipse et oculi mei conspecturi sunt et non alius reposita est haec spes mea in sinu meo.*[67]

> 25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last I shall rise upon the earth,
>
> (26) and again my skin shall be encircled, and in my flesh I shall see God,
>
> (27) whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not

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65.   Jerome had already translated this passage from LXXJob, and he stayed fairly close to his translation of that passage in the Vulgate.

66.   The Vulgate text itself constitutes a textual process that remained in considerable flux for many centuries. As a result, there are many textual variants that constitute the Vulgate text of Jb 19:25-27; space prohibits an exploration of this text's development here, but the textual apparatus of the Biblia Sacra provides an overview of the early centuries of this process. With its common use in liturgy, inscriptions and images, there is even more considerable textual variety in the Latin tradition. I have here represented the critical edition that aims at Jerome's edition, simply because Jerome's reading is in question here. See FA Gasquet, Biblia Sacra iuxta latinam Vulgatam versionem, IX. Libri Hester et Job (Rome: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1951), 143.

67.   See Ibid.

another; this my hope is laid up in my bosom.

Already OGJob read עורי as the subject of the verb יקום, but Jerome bends (and per-
haps rips) this text into a prophecy of the final resurrection of the righteous by read-
ing אקום for יקום.[68] This was not, as some have claimed, the decisive historical mo-
ment wherein Jerome, for the first time, associated this text with the resurrection.[69]
S.R. Driver, for example, writes that the OGJob, Pesh-Job and Rabbinic Targum "do
not justify the conclusion that the translators detected an experience after death:
however, the Vulgate, with all clearness, does and even introduces the idea of the res-
urrection of the body."[70]

Yet the idea of the resurrection had already been introduced by 1 Clement,
and many Greek exegetes had long been reading this text as a statement concerning
bodily resurrection. Jerome did, of course, amplify this exegetical tradition by alter-
ing the text. Yet Jerome did so because he had *already* read this text as a statement
of the resurrection when, a decade earlier, he had produced a Latin translation of
LXX.[71] Moreover, this passage had long been of crucial importance to Jerome's theol-

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68.   Notably, Jerome also reads אחרון temporally (*in novissimo*), adding to the
text's eschatological flavor. He also interprets נקפו as a passive of נקף–I, "enveloped in"
(*rursum circumdabor*).

69.   For an early version of this argument, see J. I. Mombert, "On Job xix 25-27,"
Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis 2 (1882): 29. For a more
recent version, see DC Hester, Job (IBS; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2005), 58.

70.   Driver and Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*,
173.

71.   Jerome had translated the LXX into Latin to replace the difficult Vetus Latina
(Itala) text; at that time, he translated this text as: *scio enim quia aeternus est qui me
resoluturus est super terram resurget cutis mea quae haec patitur a domino enim mihi
haec contigerunt, quorum ego mihi conscius sum, quae oculus meus vidit, et non alius:
et omnia mihi consummata sunt in sinu.* In 19:25, Jerome here interprets יקום a
causative (יקים). What Jerome represents is a series of steps in the transition from
interpreting Job 19:25-27 as a return from Sheol conceit to reading it in light of the
doctrine of Resurrection, the final return to life. While this is an obvious interpretive

ogy. Jerome discusses his translation of this passage in a letter to his friend, the bish-

op Paulinus:

> Job, example of patience, what mysteries are not embraced in his
> teachings? In them each single word is full to the senses. And (though
> I pass over other things) he prophesies the resurrection of the body as
> no other has written of it, either openly or implicitly. 'I know,' he said,
> 'that my Redeemer lives...[72]

Jerome here identifies the "redeemer" with Jesus Christ, and the "rising up" with the

final resurrection of the righteous in the last days. For Jerome, this text was impor-

tant especially because it seemed to espouse the resurrection of the *flesh,* as opposed

to alternate Docetist, Gnostic, and Origenist forms of Christianity that denied the

resurrection of the body itself.[73] As Caroline Walker Bynum explains, for early and

medieval Christians "What is and must be redeemed" in resurrection "is a psychoso-

matic unity, a person, fully individual both in its physicality and its consciousness."[74]

In 397 CE Jerome began writing a scathing attack against John the bishop of

Jerusalem, who apparently taught that the flesh was not raised in the resurrection.[75]

As Jerome wrote:

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gloss, it reflects developments in Jewish and Christian thought on the nature of life and death that stem from the Hebrew Bible itself.

72.   Jerome, *Epistola LIII, PG* 22, 545.

73.   The resurrection of the flesh "became a key element in the fight against Docetism... and Gnosticism... The statements of belief for catechumens that appeared around 200 and soon after gave rise to various local creeds (one of which, the old Roman, became the so-called Apostle's Creed) required assent to the doctrine of resurrectio carnis." Carolyn Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University, 1995), 26. See J. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (3rd ed. New York: David McKay, 1972)..

74.   Carolyn Walker Bynum, "Death and Resurrection in the Middle Ages: Some Modern Implications," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (1998): 595.

75.   Jerome's letter became quite influential in later medieval theology as a robust defense of the resurrection of the flesh; see Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*, 86-89.

> Job said: "And I shall be surrounded again with my skin and in my flesh I shall see God" (Job 19:26)... Does it not seem to you, then, that Job writes against Origen and for the truth of the flesh in which he sustained torments? For it grieves him that the suffering is in vain if another rises spiritually when this flesh has been carnally tortured... If he is not to rise in his own sex and with the same members that were thrown on the dung heap, if the same eyes are not opened for seeing God by which he saw worms, where therefore will Job be? You take away the things in which Job consists and give me empty words concerning resurrection.[76]

Thus, Job 19:25-27 provides the exegetical support for the survival of the immanent materiality of the human body in the resurrection. In Jerome's reading, Job's persistent references to his body parts signify their restoration, which reveals the continuity of the material world and of the human body even after the eschaton. Jerome insists that Job's bodily sufferings, his "carnal tortures," will be vindicated when his body–and not another (19:27)–revives. The body then *survives:* it has seen both death and life, just like Job. In this debate, Job 19:25-27 plays the part of the materialist counterweight to the neoplatonic disgust with the world of matter, and helps Christianity to retain the importance of the human body and, in extension, the material world.[77]

For early and medieval Christians, Job 19:25-27 teaches that "the heavenly self is no ghostly vapor, no mere collection of memories; it is the resurrected body-glorified, hardened against physical change or decay, yet beautiful and burning with desire."[78] Job thus works to retain the tension (as he so often does) between "living

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76.   Jerome, *Contra Joannem Hierosolymitanum*, 30; *PL* 23 (Paris, 1845), cols. 375-82.

77.   Jerome even rejects the seed metaphopr from 1 Cor 15, because it seemed to downplay the continuity of the flesh. See Jerome, *Contra Joannem* 23-26, *PL* 23 (Paris, 1883), cols. 390-95.

78.   Bynum, "Death and Resurrection in the Middle Ages: Some Modern

beyond" and "living through" in Christian conceptions of survival. Both Jerome's translation and his supporting comments led Job 19:25-27 to form the backbone of Christian appeals to the Hebrew scriptures for prophetic support of the resurrection of the flesh.[79] Throughout the centuries, in the context of Western European Christianity this text functioned as proof of the importance of materiality. For example, in the twelfth century a story arose concerning Maurice de Sully, the bishop of Paris, who worried about the rising tide of doubt in the resurrection of the body. When he died, Maurice asked that the text of Job 19:25-27 be written on a card and placed on his chest during the exhibition of his body in order to remind the viewers that he shared Job's hope for immanent survival.[80]

The Christian preoccupation with Job's fleshly survival continued in robust form in what is undoubtedly the most historically influential engagement with the book of Job: namely, Gregory the Great's thirty-five volume *Moralia in Job,* which was completed in 595 CE.[81] Gregory's lengthy and wandering homiletical trek through the book of Job exerted a tremendous influence not only on the history of Christian interpretations of the book of Job, but also on Christian exegesis and theology broadly construed."[82] While Gregory's reading of Job 19:25-27 is in many ways derivative

Implications," 595.

79.   See also Augustine, *City of God*, 22.29 for a less full-throated endorsement of the importance of the flesh in Job 19:25-27.

80.   R. Ceillier, *Histoire générale des auteurs sacrés et ecclésiastiques* (vol. 14; 2 ed. Paris: L. Vivès, 1863), 819.

81.   For an overview of Gregory's Moralia and a justification of its identity as an exegesis of the book of Job, see Susan Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?: Calvin's Exegesis of Job from Medieval and Modern Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 22-54.

82.   For example, the *Glossa ordinaria*, a supremely important group of Bibles with marginal and interlinear commentary, almost exclusively carried Gregory's words throughout the book of Job, such that "the story of the Glossa ordinaria to the book of

of theologians who proceeded him, he spends significant space expounding Job's use

of "skin" and "flesh" (*pelle* and *carne* in the Vulgate).[83] For Gregory, Job offers a re-

buttal to theologians such as Eutychius, bishop of Constantinople, who claim that, in

the resurrection, human bodies will be "impalpable."[84]

Like *1 Clement*, Gregory in his discussion of Job 19:25-27 emphasizes the

repetitive immanent and material adumbration of the resurrection:

> For what does the universe every day, but imitate in its elements our
> resurrection? Thus by the lapse of the minutes of the day the temporal
> light itself as it were dies, when, the shade of night coming on, that
> light which was beheld is withdrawn from sight, and it daily rises
> again as it were, when the light that was withdrawn from our eyes,
> upon the night being suppressed is renewed afresh.[85]

But for Gregory, this is merely an adumbration, since he understands Job to say that

the human body alone is the locus of the effect of resurrection. Like Jerome, Gregory

points to Job 19:25-27 as the exegetical lynchpin that forces Christians to confront

the material aspect of their hoped-for renewal:

Job is a story of Gregory the Great... Certainly the compiler of the Glossa ordinaria to Job
had a complete text of Gregory's Moralia before him." E. A. Matter, "The Church Fathers
and the Glossa Ordinaria," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From
the Carolingians to the Maurists* (ed. I. Backus; 1; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 92. See M.
Gibson, "The Twelfth-Century Glossed Bible," *Studia Patristica* 23 (1989): 232-244.

83. Note also, in different circumstances, Didymus the Blind's use of Job 19:26 to
discuss Adam and Eve's enfleshment in Genesis 3; see Layton, *Didymus the Blind and
His Circle in Late-antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship*,
106.

84. M. Adriaen, "Sancti Gregorii Magni Moralia in Job, Libri xi-xxii," *Corpus
Christianorum, Series Latina* 143A (1979): 743-45. An English translation may be found
in Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job, translated with notes and indices (*vol.
2, III; trans. J. Bliss; Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1845), 164.

85. The Moralia may be found in PL 75-76, Adriaen, "Sancti Gregorii Magni
Moralia in Job, Libri xi-xxii," 743-45. An English translation may be found in Gregory
the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job, translated with notes and indices,* 164..

> But see, I hear of the resurrection, but it is the effect of the resurrection that I am searching out. For I believe that I shall rise again, but I wish that I might hear what kind of person; since it is a thing I ought to know, whether I shall rise again perhaps in some other subtle or ethereal body, or in that body wherein I shall die. But if I shall rise again in an ethereal body, it will no longer be myself, who rise again. For how can that be a true resurrection, if there may not be true flesh?.. But in this too for us, O blessed Job, do you remove these clouds of misgiving, and... [you] show in plain words if our flesh shall really rise again. It follows, *And I shall be again encompassed with my skin*. (Job 19:26) Whereas the 'skin' is expressly named, all doubt of a true resurrection is removed...[86]

In Gregory's interpretation, the word *pelle* (δέρμα, עורי) in Job 19:26 justifies his claim that the "effect" of resurrection is not a metaphor, like "a new day has dawned," nor is it a disjunctive hope in a spiritual ascent that leaves behind the world of matter. For Gregory, these are not "true" resurrections. Like Jerome, the fleshly focus of Job 19:26-27 leads Gregory to assert that the resurrection is a radical transformation *and yet preservation* of the immanent world, such that the "world to come" will be, according to Gregory's reading of Job 19:27, a utopian transmutation of this world: "both the same and different—the same with respect to nature, different in respect to glory; the same in its reality; different in its power. So it will be subtle..."[87] Perhaps it should not surprise that Gregory's understanding of the resurrection looks much like Job's restoration in the book of Job: a subtle, uncanny difference separates Job's prior state (1:1-5) and his post-revivification state (42:7-17), in the middle of which is a pained expression of hope (19:25-27). One might say with Gregory that the beginning and end are "both the same and different— the same in reality; different in power," which is another way to say that the book of Job ends with a "second

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86. Ibid., 165-66.
87. Ibid.

naïveté" in which the "scars of hurt and doubt that have been voiced in the complaints" remain, albeit transformed.[88]

2.3   Performing Survival: Liturgy

Job 19:25-27 was not, however, only of interest to professional theologians and exegetes: a great many early Christians encountered this text as it was performed in the liturgy, and in particular liturgy dealing with death.[89]

Death liturgies are a set of survivor's practices, wherein those who have outlived–that is, survived–a member of their community attempt to live through the trauma of severed relationships. Though death rips a person from his or her community, these practices seek to reassure the community that the missing member is not, and will not ever be, entirely absent. For early Christians, the proclamation is twofold: the community will not forget the deceased, and the loved one will not enter an oblivion of utter extinction.[90]

At the very least, the deceased will survive in the community itself. Death liturgies provide the space wherein the community can promise not to "live beyond" the death of their own. In the wake of the death of Hans–Georg Gadamer, Derrida quoted a poem written by Paul Celan, whose final line reads: *Die Welt is fort, ich*

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88.   Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 212.

89.   Note also the appearance of Job 19:25-27 in early homilies and catechetical practices, which could also come under the rubric of performance. See, for example, Hesychius, *Homliés sur Job, version arménienne,* 563-65.

90.   See F. S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1996), 24.

muss dich tragen: "The world is gone, I must carry you." Responding to Celan, Derrida writes: "The survivor, then, remains alone... In the least, he feels solely responsible, assigned to carry both the other and *his* world... there where he speaks, in us before us."[91] Through liturgy, the early Christian church sought to "carry" the other even after their death, to carry them over into whatever may come next, and to begin to learn how to carry them, their memory and their legacy, their "world," in the ongoing life as a community.[92]

Early Christians also claimed that death did not preclude a restoration of the community as well as each of its members. In a study of eighth-century Christian liturgical practices, Richard McCall notes that the early Christian liturgy is a

> performance that is also an enactment, a remembrance that is also a construction... [that] enacts a world that is both the world of the everyday... and the new world of church constructed by its gathering, praying, hearing, offering, feeding, and worship.[93]

The early Christian performance of death liturgies, then, attempts to carry the deceased while transforming the world that survives. In this striving to "live through" death, perhaps it should not surprise us that Job 19:25-27 finds a place of honor, particularly in the Latin West.

The earliest known Latin death ritual appears in various collections of *ordines romani*, the oldest of which date from the eighth century, but who most likely reflect

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91.   Jacques Derrida, "Rams: Uninterrupted Dialogue—Between Two Infinities, the Poem," in *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* (eds. T. Dutoit and O. Pasanen; New York: Fordham University, 2005), 140.

92.   Note the stress on the collective context of the funeral service in M. McLaughlin, "Consorting With Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France," 35.

93.   R. McCall, *Do This: Liturgy as Performance* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame, 2007), 136.

a much older ritual matrix.[94] Within the *ordines* one finds versions of the Old Roman

ordo defunctorum, the "order of the dead."[95] According to Frederick Paxton,

> the general nature and structure of the Roman *ordo* as it probably
> emerged in the fourth and fifth centuries are clear. The ritual was built
> around a coherent set of actions–viaticum as the rite for the dying, the
> chanting of psalms, triumphal processions–and infused with a spirit
> of optimism concerning... the resurrection of the dead.[96]

While this practice may be found in many different versions in various manuscripts,

and while the actual performance of the ritual would vary each time, Damien Sicard

organized the ritual into a basic schema.[97] First, the dying individual takes commu-

nion and hears the Gospel accounts of the passion read aloud until death arrives. At

communion, a prayer claims that "the communion will be his defender and advocate

at the resurrection... it will resuscitate him."[98] As Paxton explains, "The ritual

connection between viaticum [communion] and given on the deathbed and the res-

urrection was rooted in the Christian understanding of the redemptive power of

Christ."[99] The community then offers a prayer, a psalm (usually 113 or 114), and an

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94.　See C. Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1986), 135-224.

95.　M. Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age. Vol. 4, Les Textes (Ordines XXXV-XLIX)* (vol. 4; Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1956), 523-30; H. Frank, "Der Älteste Erhaltene Ordo Defunctorum Der Römischen Liturgie Und Sein Fortleben in Totenagenden Des Frühen Mittelalters," *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 7 (1962): 360-415; D. Sicard, *La liturgie de la mort dans l'Eglise latine des origines à la Réforme carolingienne* (LQF 63; Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), 1-257.

96.　Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe,* 38.

97.　Sicard, *La liturgie de la mort dans l'Eglise latine des origines à la Réforme carolingienne,* 2-33.

98.　Ibid., 35-39. Mox ut eum viderint et exitum appropinquare communicandus est de sacrificio sancto etiamsi comedisset ipsa die qui communio erit ei defensor et adiutor in resurrectione iustorum. Ipsa eum resuscitabit.

99.　Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe,* 38.

antiphon, after which the attendants wash the deceased body and place it on a bier in order to transport it to the local church. Before the body left the house, the priest was instructed to recite the following antiphon:

> *De terra formasti me et carnem induisti me redemptor meus domine, resuscita me in novissimo die*
>
> My redeemer, you formed me from the earth and dressed me in flesh;
> Lord raise me up on the last day[100]

Joseph Ntedika points out that this antiphon was inspired by Job 19:25-27: *redemptor meus* ("my redeemer") and *novissimo die* ("the last day") occur in the *Vetus Latina* and the Vulgate, and the phrase *resuscita me* ('raise me up again") and *carnem...me* ("in flesh...me") occur as variants in both traditions.[101] Here, the text of Job 19:25–albeit in altered form–marks the moment that the body of the deceased crosses the threshold of both house and life. Someone speaks in the voice of the deceased, reminding the deity that the body beginning its process of decomposition once was tenderly formed but will now return to dust (cf. Job 10:9). Yet the hope for survival continues to hold death and life in tension: "raise me up," the community calls out, thus "carrying on" the liturgical action on behalf of the deceased.

According to the *ordo*, the body is then carried to the church, accompanied by psalms and antiphons. When it has been placed in the church, the people are instructed to chant psalms, responses, and "lessons from the book of Job" until the burial.[102] Though no specific readings are listed, Ntedika is confident that Job

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100. Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age. Vol. 4, Les Textes (Ordines XXXV-XLIX),* 529; Sicard, *La liturgie de la mort dans l'Eglise latine des origines à la Réforme carolingienne,* 141; J. Ntedika, *L'évocation de l'au-delà dans la prière pour les morts: Étude de patristique et de liturgie latines, IVe-VIIIe s* (Paris: Éditions Nauwelaerts, 1971), 242.

101.   See Ibid., 242; 119-22.

102.   Ntedika, *L'évocation de l'au-delà dans la prière pour les morts: Étude de patristique et de liturgie latines, IVe-VIIIe s,* 242.

19:25-27 was always among them, since that text commanded such an important place in later liturgy, as well.[103] As Paxton explains, the presence of the Joban readings in the liturgy offers a

> tradition of direct confrontation with God—of the creature's right to remind the Creator of the essential realities of their mutual relationship—which gives special force to the confidence in salvation expressed in the ritual as a whole.[104]

Thus, Paxton argues that the *ordo defunctorum* construes Job's passionate speeches as an attempt to remind God to act as God should towards the world. This resonates with Seow's reading of גאל in 19:25: that is, Job must "remind the deity of a role abandoned that must be taken up again."[105] In the *ordo,* Ntedika points out that in one early Spanish liturgical text that *does* name specific passages to read aloud, the texts chosen include both the bleak Job 7:1-10, which seems to slide into oblivion, and the energetic 19:25-27, which vigorously fights to live on. Thus, in the *ordo* Job continues his role of preserving the tension within Christian conceptions of death and the recovery of life.[106]

Resurrection was even more a focus of the Iberian Visigothic, or Mozarabic, liturgy, and as a result Job 19:25-27 enjoys near-ubiquitous status among Mozarabic liturgies for the dead.[107] The use of Job 19:25-27 in Mozarabic liturgy likely began be-

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103. Ibid.

104. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe,* 42.

105. Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 700-01.

106. J. Perez de Urbel and A. Gonzaes y Ruiz-Zorilla, eds. *Liber Comicus: Edition critica* (Serie liturgica 2-3; Madrid: Monumenta Hispaniae sacra, 1950), 550. See also Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age. Vol. 4, Les Textes (Ordines XXXV-XLIX),* 529.

107. Ntedika, *L'évocation de l'au-delà dans la prière pour les morts: Étude de patristique et de liturgie latines, IVe-VIIIe s,* 239-240.

fore the sixth century, since by that time it had already inspired a funerary inscription of this text near Cordoba.[108] In one particular liturgical manuscript, we find:

> *Credo quia Redemptor meus resuscitabit me, et in carne mea videbo Dominum meum*
>
> I believe that my redeemer will raise me to life, and in my flesh I shall look upon my Lord[109]

This text quotes a version of the *Vetus Latina* text, but substitutes *credo* ("I believe") for *scio* ("I know"). It is likely that this alteration of the text borrows *credo* from the ecumenical creeds of the Church, especially the claim *credo in resurrectionen mortuorum* ("I believe in the resurrection of the dead.")[110]

Though this shift may seem to turn Job's cry into an inflexible doctrine, it is perhaps interesting to notice that recent commentators on the book of Job have shifted their own interpretations of the epistemological status of Job's "knowledge" in a similar manner (namely, from "knowledge" to "belief"). Until the twentieth century, almost all interpreters saw in Job 19:25 a proclamation of sure knowledge: "I *know* that my redeemer lives."[111] But recently, interpreters more reticent to see the Job of the dialogues as an orthodox pronouncer of pieties have argued that there are significant semantic degrees of freedom for the word ידע. David Clines, for example, argues that ידע introduces what Job "knows, or believes," which is "that God is his enemy."[112] In this interpretation, "belief" is different from "knowledge": Job *believes* that his champion is alive, but he does not *know* this.[113] In other words, the shift from

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108. Ibid., 239n.63.

109. M. Férotin, *Le Liber ordinum en usage dans l'Église wisigothique et mozarabe d'Espagne du V au XI siècles* (Monumenta Ecclesiae Liturgica 5; Paris: 1904), 121.

110. Jannic Durand, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de Job des origines de l'art chrétien jusqu'au XIIIe siècle* (Paris: L'école des Chartres, 1981), 55.

111. See Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 705.

112. See Clines, *Job 1-20,* 457-458.

scio to *credo* in the early centuries of the Common Era parallels the epistemological shift from "knowledge" to "belief" in modern commentaries. Thus, the association of Job 19:25-27 with the Nicene Creed though the word *credo* in liturgical practices and funerary inscriptions does not *necessarily* relegate it to a simple profession of dogma: in many ways, belief is something *less* sure than knowledge.

In the following centuries, the liturgical presence of Job 19:25-27 only grew. By the tenth century, throughout the Latin world one may find the *officium defunctorum,* or the Office of the Dead, and by the later medieval period the Office of the Dead had established itself as the "main funeral service" for the Roman Catholic church, and many clerics and monastics chanted the Office daily.[114] Since the Office of the Dead was chanted, it was set to music. In the later middle ages and the early Renaissance, composers often scored new melodies for the readings from the Office of the Dead, and thus Job 19:25-27 found another rich context to explore its capacities.[115]

During medieval funerals, after the body had been placed in the local church, the mourners would recite the prayers, lessons and responsorials that composed the Office of the Dead. And lest one imagine that the community would soon "live beyond" that death, the mourners would repeat the Office of the Dead on various anniversaries of that death, thus ensuring the survival of mourning.[116]

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113. Of course, one could construe Job's claim to "know" to be just that–a profession of surety, especially since the verb ידע most often functions in this manner. Seow does not endorse this interpretation, but also does not rule it out. Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 705.

114. Se Paul Binski, *Medieval Death* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1996), 54.

115. The most famous of these Renaissance musical settings are Orlando di Lasso's two lectiones: *Sacrae lectiones ex Propheta Iob* (1560) and *Lectiones sacrae novem, ex libris Hiob excerptae* (1582). The use of Job 19:25-27 in these settings doubtless led to its inclusion in the libretto for Handel's *Messiah*.

The most remarked upon component of the Office is a series of nine readings from the Book of Job.[117] The nine lessons comprised a large portion of the Office, and as a result "the office contributed to a wide and detailed familiarity with Job," especially among the monastic communities that prayed the Office daily.[118] All but one of the nine lessons contains Job's vitriolic attack on God, on orthodox theology, and on his pious friends.[119] This selection of texts is unusual, since the history of Christian interpretation of the book of Job generally privilege the prologue and epilogue of Job, which tell the story of a patient sufferer who is rewarded and restored.[120] Yet Job's oft-cited pious statement, "the Lord gave, the Lord took away, blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21) is not included in the Office.

Job 19:25-27 is included four times in the Office, once as a reading and three times as a responsories.[121] In one response (R 14), this text begins with *Credo quod redemptor meus vivit* ("I believe that my redeemer lives"), but in the lesson it begins

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116.   Knut Ottosen, *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead* (Aarhus: Aarhus University, 2008), 44.

117.   See Roger Wieck, T*ime Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York: George Braziller, 1988), 166-167.

118.   D. Renevey, "Looking for a Context: Rolle, Anchoritic Culture and the Office of the Dead," in *Medieval Texts in Context* (eds. G. Caie and D. Renevey; New York: Routledge, 2008).

119.   The lessons are as follows: (1) Job 7:16-21, (2) Job 10:1-7, (3) Job 10:8-12, (4) Job 13:22-28,; (5) Job 14:1-6, (6) Job 14:13-16, (7) Job 17:1-3, 11-25, (8) Job 19:20-27, and (9) Job 10:18-22.

120.   Note, for example, how Jacobus de Voraigne treats chapters 3-38 of the book of Job: "Then after that Job and they talked and spake together of his sorrow and misery, of which S. Gregory hath made a great book called: 'The Morals of S. Gregory,' which is a noble book and a great work. But I pass over all the matters and return unto the end." Quoted in Jacob de Voraigne, *The Golden Legend; or, Lives of the Saints* (trans. W Caxton; London: J. Dent, 1483), II:25-26.

121.   Ottosen, *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead,* 59. Note Ottosen's theory of the creation of tension between these differing versions of 19:25-27 in n.16.

with *Scio* ("I know"), thus representing multiple interpretations of Job's proclamation within one liturgical practice.[122]

Yet 19:25-27, clearly understood as a cry for renewal of the flesh, is in the Office of the Dead flanked by Job's angry rejections of God and life. Hope does not have the last word in Job's discourse as presented by this liturgy. Instead, the Office readings end with Job's words: "I go, and return no more, to a land that is dark and covered with the mist of death: A land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwells" (10:22).[123] Thus, the Office of the Dead does not ignore Job's anger and impatience, as the Book of James does (Jas 5:11); neither does it explain away Job's unorthodox statements with his pious ones. In a surprising hermeneutical move, the liturgy gives space for Job's raging voice on its own terms.[124] Pity and mercy are continually asked for throughout the lessons, but through a veil of near despair."[125] According to Knud Ottosen, the Office of the Dead not only continues the complaint tradition established in the *ordo defunctorum*–it radicalizes it, and insists on the subsistence of the deceased:

> In particular the many readings taken from the book of Job give expression to the complaints of the dead toward God. The dead person, on behalf of whom the prayers are spoken, is not in fact regarded as dead; he is still living. He cries out, complains, he suffers, he proclaims his confidence and faith in the mercy of God and he demands forgiveness for his sins... At the same time, the Office of the Dead was also–from the very beginning–a prayer *for* the dead.[126]

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122. Ibid., 44.

123.   See Wieck, *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life,* 166-67 for the full biblical citations in the Office of the Dead.

124.   See P. Rouillard, "The Figure of Job in the Liturgy: Indignation, Resignation Or Silence?," in *Job and the Silence of God* (eds. C. Ducoq and M. Lefébure; Concilium. Edinborough: T&T Clark), 10.

125. Roger Wieck, *Painted Prayers: The Book of Hours in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (New York: George Braziller, 1997), 118.

Thus, the dead demand that God act as גאל, and the community carry on the demand in the place of the deceased. In this liturgical dramatization of Job 19:25-27, the community itself–that is, the collective of kinsfolk-redeemers–takes up the mantle of the גאל, struggling to ensure that God restores the deaprted.

The responses to the Joban readings in the Office of the Dead are diametrically opposed to Job's bleak testimony. The reading that begins, "I loathe my life, I will give free utterance to my complaint," is answered by the response, "You who did raise Lazarus stinking from the grave: You, O Lord, give them rest, and a place of pardon."[127] Thus, the liturgy juxtaposes Job's pain and Lazarus' hope, respective allusions to the abasement of the flesh in the Passion and the renewal of the resurrection of the flesh; there is no attempt to mediate or reconcile the two sides. As it is, through typology, the polyphonic Office of the Dead, like the book of Job itself, holds in tension both despair and hope, suffering and restoration–that is, it asserts the irreducible "paradoxical dynamic of survival."[128]

2.4   Inscribing Survival: Funerary Monuments

In Job 19:23-24, immediately before his cry for a redeemer, Job utters these words:

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126.   Ottosen, *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead*, 44.

127.   Lesson 2 and Responsorial 2 in First Nocturn, Vigils of the Dead; See J. Harper, T*he Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1991), 106.

128.   Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book,* 30. For a polyphonic dramatization of the book of Job, see Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2003), 259-260.

> If only my words were written down! If only they were inscribed on a monument– with an iron pen and with lead they were engraved on a mountainside forever!

Faced with the immanent threat of death (19:2-22), Job suggests that, if only his words were inscribed on a cliff for all to see, then his complaint could survive the event of his own extinction. As long as it is legible, writing never ceases signifying; it does not extinguish itself when it reaches a particular addressee, and it does not fail to function even when the one who wrote it is absent.[129] An inscription survives both its author and any particular readers, including us. Here we find the fundamental thematic of writing: Job wishes that his words could escape his own context and continue to signify in his absence–even in the radical absence of his own death. Job 19:23-24 teaches us that "writing remains in a monumentality... linked to death."[130]

In the translation above, I read "forever" with MT (לָעַד), but Theodotion understood this same phrase to read "as a witness" (לְעֵד).[131] Perhaps one can assert the truth of both readings: Job desires to inscribe his words because writing *survives,* and what writing preserves is its *witness,* or its signifying function. Yet for the same reason that writing *survives*–namely, its ability to escape contexts and continue to signify even in the event of the author's death–Job's witness undertakes a life of its own, evading the hermeneutical clutches of any who seek to control it.

Job's wish has not gone unrealized: millennia later, the book of Job continues to survive as literature of survival. One of the book's most fascinating potentials manifests itself in the world of funerary epigraphy, or inscriptions marking an indi-

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129. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (trans. S. Weber; Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1988), 6-9.

130. Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (trans. G. Bennington; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 45.

131. For a powerful reading of this ambiguity, see Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 695.

vidual's death: from quite early in the medieval period and continuing through the present, readers of the book of Job have inscribed versions of 19:25-27 on their own monuments of stone in order to continue witnessing, even after their death, to their faith that they will yet survive. Some readers have linked 19:23-24 to verses 25-27, assuming that Job desires the inscription of his cry for a גאל. But whether or not these juxtaposed verses inspired the history of funerary inscriptions bearing 19:25-27, these inscriptions continue to function for precisely the same reasons that Job wishes for his words to be engraved for all to see.

It is also important to note that, while many of these early inscriptions mark the tombs of clerics and theologians, as the centuries progress many more mark the tombs of the laity. The tenacious persistence of this verse testifies not only to Job's cry, but also to the lively reading tradition these verses enjoyed beyond the confines of the monastery scriptorium. As Walker Bynum writes,

> Medieval debates over bodily resurrection involved more than theology and philosophy. Mystics, poets, hagiographers, sculptors, and tellers of folktales ruminated about what a body could do, wherein lay its significance, and how it might be redeemed.[132]

From the sixth century onwards, we find many such funerary inscriptions that cite Job 19:25-27 in order to express hope in the resurrection of the flesh.[133] One of the

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132. Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336,* 342.

133. Olmedo, Sardinia, 6th c., *hic situs Silibus eccle|siae sanctae minister | expectat Christi ope | ursus sua vivere carne | et gaudia lucis nobae | ipso dominante videre, CIL* X 7972; *CLE* 786; *ILCV* 3445; Catania, Sicily, 6th c., L. Gasperini, "Su Un Epitafio Catinense Con Ripresa Scritturistica," *Civiltà classica e cristiana* 13 (1992): 63-69; Formia, Bishop of the Cathedral of St. Erasmus, 650-850, L. Gasperini, "Le Scoperte Epigrafiche Sotto S. Erasmo a Formia," in *Scritti storico-epigrafici in memoria di Marcello Zambelli* (Rome: Università Macerata, 1978), 152-60; A. Felle, *Biblia epigraphica: la sacra scrittura nella documentazione epigrafica dell'orbis christianus antiquus (III-VIII secolo)* (Inscriptiones Christianae Italiae, Subsidia 5; Bari: Epiduglia, 2006), 298-300. Note also the now-destroyed eighth-century family funerary inscription

earliest known inscriptions of Job 19:25-27 marks the tombstone of a woman named Justa from Cordoba whose title, *famula dei* ("handmaiden of God"), signified her membership in the Christian community.[134] Dating from the sixth century, her epitaph contains almost exclusively the words of Job 19:25-27 (fig. 8.1):

> *credo quod redemptor | meus vivet et in novissimo die | de terra sussitabit pelem meam | et in carne mea videbo domi|num. Iusta famula dei...*[135]

> I believe that my redeemer lives, and in the last day my skin will rise up from the earth, and from my flesh I will see the Lord. Justa, handmaiden of God...

Justa's tombstone, like many others, cites the liturgical formula found in the early Visigothic death liturgies and also in the later *Officio defunctorum*: namely, *Credo quod redemptor meus vivet...* ("I believe that my redeemer shall live...")[136] As Job 19:25-27 crossed the boundary from liturgy to monumental inscriptions, it opened itself up to even further textual variation: some of these variations may derive from local manuscripts of scripture, others may derive from the liturgical or oral traditions, while still other novel textual forms may have emerged from contingencies related to the inscription process, such as the tastes of the patron or the engraver.[137] In the con-

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located at the foot of the altar in the Church of Giovanni e Paolo in Naples: *credo quia redentor meus vibit et in nobissimo die de terra | suscitabit me in carne mea bidebo deum meum | hic requiscit in pace Euphimia et Ioh(annes) vir eius et caeteri filii eorum.* "I believe because my redeemer lives, and in the last day he will raise me upon the earth, in my flesh I shall see my God. Here rests in peace Euphimia, and John, her husband, and the rest of their children." Ibid., 556.

134. See A. Mastino, "La Risurrezione Della Carne Nelle Iscrizioni Latine Del Primo Cristianesimo," *Diritto @ storia* 5 (2006): §2.

135. *ILCV* 2399; Felle, *Biblia epigraphica: la sacra scrittura nella documentazione epigrafica dell'orbis christianus antiquus (III-VIII secolo),* 366.

136. Mastino, "La Risurrezione Della Carne Nelle Iscrizioni Latine Del Primo Cristianesimo," §A.

137. Ibid., §A; 366.

text of funerary inscriptions, Job 19:25 also found itself smashed up against and mixed with other texts, such as in the sixth century epitaph of Bishop Flavian of Vercelli, which severed the text at the beginning of 19:27 and appended Psalm 30:6 (=MT 31:6): *In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum; redemisti me, Domine Deus veritatis* ("into your hands I commend my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord of truth).[138] In Flavian's epitaph, it seems that Vulgate Psalm 30:6 provides the response to Job 19:25-27: Job calls for the renewal of the flesh, while the psalmist asks God to protect the now-fleshless spirit in the meantime. Of course, this juxtaposition also recalls Luke 23:46, in which Jesus, at the moment of his death, quotes the same psalm as Flavian ("into your hands I commend my spirit.") Flavian, like so many before him, proclaims the paradox of survival: "death after life" (Luke 23:46), and yet "life after death" (Job 19:25-26).

Even as the text of Job 19:25-27 metamorphosed throughout the early centuries of the Common Era, these inscriptions nevertheless continue many of the interpretive traditions that are gathered together by the semantic node of survival: in particular, these inscriptions proclaim the resurrection of the *flesh,* thus emphasizing the "physicality" of *carne* as opposed to the "spirit" or "soul."[139] Justa's choice of a "fleshy" text to serve as her surviving witness, for example, links the solidity of the rock-hewn inscription with her belief in the enduring renewal of the physical world, including her very body.

Another Christian epitaph dating from the sixth century was, along with many other early Christian epitaphs, recycled as landfill in the medieval period to fill in a

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138. *ILCV* 1053; *CIL* V 6728; *CLE* 709; Ibid., 276-278. Vercelli, Cathedral, chapel of St Ambrose.

139. Mastino, "La Risurrezione Della Carne Nelle Iscrizioni Latine Del Primo Cristianesimo," §E.

section of the Augustan Forum in Rome (figs. 8.2, 8.3).[140] It was discovered in 1933 by Roman archaeologists, who were hastily recovering objects threatened by the construction of Mussolini's grand parade route that led from the Vatican to the Coliseum. The three extant fragments read:

> *[---pec]cator | [---? scio enim quod] redemp|[tor meus vivat e]t in novis[simo die de ter]ra sur|[rectus s]im et|[in carne mea] vid[ebo]|[deum---]*
>
> [the sin]ner...[I know (believe?) that] my rede[emer will live a]nd in the la[st day I will be li]fted up fro[m the ear]th, and [in my flesh] I will se[e God...]

Perhaps the anonymous individual marked by this epitaph would marvel at the ability of this text to survive grave robbers, vandals, the elements, fragmentation, reuse as rubble, and the whimsies of a fascist dictator. And yet the inscription lives on, bearing the scars of its travels, its words broken to pieces (cf. Job 19:2) but nonetheless continuing to signify its testimony to the endurance and even renewal of the physical world.[141]

Yet "witness" does not exhaust the activities requested of these funerary inscriptions: in a tomb from the monastery church of S. Felice in Pavia, for example, the text of Job 19:25-27 exhibits some non-semantic aspects of biblical reception.[142] Like other Carolingian tombs from that era, the inside of Ariperga's casket is painted

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140.   C. Ricci and G. Tagliamonte, "Iscrizioni Cristiane Nelle Collezioni Comunali. Inedite E Revisioni," *Bulletino della Commissione Archaeologia Comunale di Roma* 96 (1994): 180 n.2, fig. 3a.

141.   Note also the astounding survival of a funerary inscription of Job 19:25-27 in the recycled stone composing the belltower of the church in Pomposa, Italy. See Russo, "Un'Epigrafe Con Citazione Biblica (Iob, Xxx, 25-27) Nel Campanile Di Pomposa," 109-22.

142.   C. Treffort, "Appels À La Prière Et Oraisons De Pierre Dans Les Inscriptions Funéraires Des Viiie-Xie Siècles," in *La prière en latin de l'antiquité au XVIe siècle: formes, évolutions, significations* (ed. J. Cottier; Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 278-79.

in bright colors and decorated with striking imagery. On the end of the casket behind

Ariperga's head was a bright red cross, signifying the victory of Christ, with vegetal

tendrils sprouting forth in new life (fig 8.6).[143] At Ariperga's feet was a large image of

the "hand of God" that symbolized the divine presence that remained with the flesh

even in death (fig 8.5).[144] Underneath the image of the hand of God, one may read a

smattering of words from Job 19:25 (*credo... r...emptor vivat*), and on the sides of

the tomb (not shown) reads the text of Job 19:26. Alongside these biblical texts are

apotropaic inscriptions that ask for angelic protection.[145] In this context, the crucifix

likely functioned as an apotropaic symbol, and the hand of God as well. For the Car-

olingian faithful in Lombardy, these powerful images ensured that the body of the

deceased may, as Ariperga herself asks, *requiescat in pace* ("rest in peace") and thus

remain suitable for resurrection.[146] Thus, in Ariperga's tomb, the words of Job

19:25-27 functioned as part of an apotropaic matrix that warned away evil spirits and

claimed the power of the Redeemer on behalf of the human body.

Nearly a century later, the famous Saxon bishop and patron of the arts, Bern-

ward of Hildesheim (ca. 960-1022 CE), actualized Job 19:25-27 in a manner similar to

Ariperga.[147] As Thangmar, Bernward's student and author of his *Vita* tells us, before

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143. S. Strafella, "Una Sepoltura Dipinta Nell'abbazia Di San Benedetto Di Leno," in *San Benedetto "ad Leones": un monastero benedettino in terra longobarda / Associazione per la Storia della Chiesa Bresciana* (ed. A. Barino; Brixia Sacra 3; Brescia: 2006), 169-70.

144. Treffort, "Appels a La Prière et Oraisons De Pierre Dans Les Inscriptions Funéraires Des viiie-xie Siècles," 278-79.

145. Strafella, "Una Sepoltura Dipinta Nell'abbazia Di San Benedetto Di Leno," 169-70.

146. Lomatrine and Segagni, "San Felice, Tomba Della Badessa Ariperga," 248. An image of the tomb is available in Lomatrine and Segagni's article.

147. K.-A. Wirth, "Die Nachrichten Über Begräbnis Und Grab Bischof Bernwards Von Hildesheim in Thangmars Vita Bernwardi," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 22

his death Bernward designed his own tomb and selected his epitaph in order to display his hope for bodily restoration.[148] Surrounding Bernward's sarcophagus, engraved along each of the edges of two of its sides, is the following text of Job 19:25-27:

> + SCIO ENIM QVOD REDEMPT[OR] MEV[S VI]VIT ET IN NOV[I]SSIMO / DIE DE / TERRA SVRRECTVRVS SVM · [E]T RVRSVM CIRCVMDABOR PELLE MEA / ET IN CAR/NE MEA VI/DEBO D(EV)M SALVATOREM MEVM · QVEM VISVRVS SVM EGO IPSE ET / OCVLI / MEI CONSPECTVRI SVNT ET NON ALIVS · REPOSITA EST HEC SPES MEA IN SINV MEO[149]

On the sarchophagus, the text of Job 19:25-27 frames two recessed planes that depict nine nimbed angels, four on one side and five on the other, each flanked by flames. These nine angels signify the "nine choirs of angels" led by Michael the Archangel that surround the throne of God, and the seven flames on each side represent the seven lampstands (Rev 1:20). On one end of the sarcophagus, a medallion shows a cross-nimbed Lamb of God (cf. Rev 7:7). Thus Bernward's design is consumed with the eschatological and otherworldly imagery of the apocalypse. And yet again, with its focus on the restoration of the dead human body from the dirt of the earth, the text of Job 19:25-27 plays the role of the materialist counterbalance to the

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(1959): 305-23; Treffort, "Appels À La Prière et Oraisons De Pierre Dans Les Inscriptions Funéraires Des viiie-xie Siècles," 278.

148. While some scholars have suggested that parts of this Vita, including this pericope, are later fabrications, note the compelling defense in D. Collins, *Reforming Saints: Saint's Lives and their Authors in Germany, 1470-1530* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2008), 149-50, n.40. Note also the arguments in Wirth, "Die Nachrichten Über Begräbnis Und Grab Bischof Bernwards Von Hildesheim in Thangmars Vita Bernwardi," 310, who seems ambivalent on the issue.

149. From Wirth, "Die Nachrichten Über Begräbnis Und Grab Bischof Bernwards Von Hildesheim in Thangmars Vita Bernwardi," 311.

spiritual ascent in Christian eschatology. On Bernward's sarcophagus, we see again the desire to hold together both the hope for "living beyond" and the struggle of "living through."

Bernward's arrangement of the text is another striking element of his design. In Bernward's cultural context, Job signified the potential for liberation from disease and suffering of all kinds.[150] Throughout his life Bernward had struggled with poor health, but in his last years his body grew even more frail.[151] Perhaps it is significant that Bernward positioned the text of Job 19:25-27 so that it wrapped around his body, thus adumbrating the content of Vulgate Job 19:26a with the form of the text: *rursum circumdabor pelle mea,* "I will be *encircled* again with my body." After a lifetime of disabling sickness, Bernward's tomb hold out hope that one's own *pelle, carne, oculi,* and *sinus* will "rise up" with restored abilities.

While these monumental inscriptions are almost exclusively found on Christian epitaphs, the text of Job 19:25-27, like any biblical text, finds a way to overrun any boundary—including religious boundaries. In 1934, the eminent Jewish biblical scholar Umberto Cassuto, noted for his work in both the Pentateuch and Italian-Jewish history, published an edition of Hebrew inscriptions from a long-vandalized eighth-century Byzantine Jewish graveyard in Venosa, Italy.[152] Like other Jewish scholars influenced by the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement, Cassuto sought to recover Jewish history from dominant Christian narratives that either demonized or ignored the rich history of Jews in Europe.[153] One important practice of

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150.   Ibid.

151.   F. Tschan, *Saint Bernward of Hildesheim* (vol. 3; South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University, 1942), 89, 103, 200-202.

152.   Umberto Cassuto, "Nuove Iscrizioni Ebraiche Di Venosa," *Archivio Storico per la Calabria e la Luciana* 4 (1934): 1-9.

153.   N. Roemer, "Turning Defeat Into Victory: Wissenschaft Des Judentums and

Wissenschaft des Judentums is the resurrection of the memory of the deceased by means of the documentation, recovery, and preservation of tombstones.[154] Cassuto transliterates the eighth tombstone in his study as follows:[155]

> *[ha]-miqdash ha-qadosh she-[yi]bba[neh]*
> *...................................*
> *[ti]sh'im shanah wa-ani yada'[ti]*
> *[go]'ali chay we-achar[on 'al 'afar]*
> *[ya]qum*

> ...the holy sanctuary, which will be rebuilt...
> *...................................*
> ninety years. But I know
> that my redeemer lives, and last upon the dust
> he will rise[156]

How shall we read this tombstone? The reference to the rebuilding of the sanctuary signals an eschatological context, but its fragmentary state gives us little surety that this context extends to the citation from Job. Even if the full literary context were available, it might not extend to the citation, since disjunctive shift from temporal information to biblical quotation ("ninety years/ But I know") seems to set the citation apart from the rest of the epitaph. Cassuto offers no suggestions other than noting the reference to Job 19:25-27. In his encyclopedic study of medieval Jewish tombstones from Italy, David Noy argues that a belief in bodily resurrection is mentioned

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the Martyrs of 1096," *Jewish History* 13 (1999): 65-80.

    154.   Leopold Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* (Berlin: Veit und Comp, 1845), 421ff.

    155.   Cassuto, "Nuove Iscrizioni Ebraiche Di Venosa," 9; J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire, 641-1204* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1939), 113.

    156.   Author's translation.

only a handful of times, perhaps even just once, among known inscriptions.[157] And while Jewish tombstones often borrow the Latin phrase *Hic requiescit in pace* ("Here rests in peace"), there is little other in the way of Jewish inscriptional appropriation of Christian language.[158]

The use of Job 19:25-27 was so prevalent in Christian funeral liturgies and inscriptions and so absent from Jewish funerary practices that it seems hard to believe that this was anything but an act of appropriation. But since Jewish funerary epigraphy almost by rule does not mention the bodily resurrection, and since this tombstone was written in Hebrew, signaling a deep identification with the Jewish community, it seems that this tombstone appropriates Job 19:25-27 from Christian practices *and yet* does not refer to the resurrection. Unlike the Vulgate and LXX, this Hebrew inscription reads "he will rise up" (יקום) with MT; thus the redeemer "rises up last upon the dust," perhaps not in the sense of an attorney, but rather as a "kinsman-redeemer" who will preserve this individual's name and ensure the continuance of the family estate.[159] This appropriation might share some affinities with the interpretation of Saadiah Gaon (ca. 930 CE), which rightly finds itself gathered up in the se-

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157. See D. Noy, "Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe, Volume 1: Italy (Excluding the City of Rome), Spain and Gaul," 73, 237. Note the attempted, but shaky, rebuttal by J. Park, *Conceptions of Afterlife in Jewish Inscriptions: With Special Reference to Pauline Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000)..

158. See Noy, "Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe, Volume 1: Italy (Excluding the City of Rome), Spain and Gaul," especially the tombstones from Venosa, 61-150.

159. For example, see the discussion of Oniyahu and Uriyahu in Matthew Suriano, "Death, Disinheritance, and Job's Kinsman-Redeemer," *JBL* 129 (2010): 55.

mantic node of survival.[160] Saadiah's translation emphasizes the essential role of the

community in the survival of legacies, memories, and stories:

> (25) I know that the favored of God will survive,
>
>   and others after them will arise upon the soil;
>
> (26) and after my skin is corrupted,
>
>   they will gather around this story of mine,
>
>   and from the ills of my body I shall show signs of God,
>
> (27) just as I witness myself, and mine eyes see nought that is foreign,
>
>   when my piercing glances pierce my breast.[161]

Saadiah explains his reading in detail in his comments:

> I referred *And I know that go'ali liveth* to human beings rather than God,
> linking it to his prior statement (vv. 23-24), in which he wished his
> words to be transmitted, so that he might have a lasting remembrance
> that the favored among the faithful and further successors among
> their offspring in this world would pass on his story, as he says, and
> others after them will arise on the earth (v 25). His object is to publish
> and make known to humanity the power of God... that is why he says,
> *and from my flesh I witness to God*, meaning, I reveal him to humanity.[162]

In Saadiah's reading, the rock-hewn words of Job mentioned in 19:23-24 ensure the

transmission of his story to the future generations that, as גאלים, survive him and

pass on his story themselves, presumably to those who will carry it on after their own

deaths. Perhaps the mutilated but still signifying tombstone in Venosa participates in

this same project: the survival of the signifier. It seems as though someone from the

Jewish community at Venosa took up the role of the גאל him or herself in order to re-

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160. Goodman notes the firmly material nature of Saadiah's notion of salvation:
"The concept of extramundial salvation is simply not central to Saadiah's thinking, as it
is not to the Hebrew Bible in general. The world is not thought of as a place from which
one needs to be saved–although, or because, one can be saved in it or through it."
Saadiah ben Joseph Al-Fayyumi, *The Book of Theodicy: Commentary on the Book of Job*
(trans. L. Goodman; New Haven and London: Yale University, 1988), 292.

161. Translation in Ibid., 288-89.

162. Ibid.

deem the text, recovering it for Jewish use. Like Cassuto himself, as well as the broader field of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the anonymous Venosan Jew struggles with the past in order to *redeem* it and give it new life: a survival, perhaps even a type of purely immanent resurrection.

2.5   *Job 19:25-27 and Survival*

We have thus confronted several ways of reading Job 19:25-27, but there are many more that lie just beyond the bounds of this short study. Throughout the medieval era, readings of Job 19:25-27 emanating from the semantic node of *survival* multiplied in breath and complexity. From its appearance in the Office of the Dead, Job 19:25-27 appears alongside a brilliant array of illuminated images from medieval Books of Hours, late medieval and Renaissance altarpieces, and other works of visual art that draw from the funerary liturgy. Since the Office was chanted, medieval clerics set these words to several melodies, and as a result many late-medieval and Renaissance composers arranged music for the Office of the Dead, as well as its readings from the book of Job. From this strong musical tradition, the words of Job 19:25-27 found their way into Handel's *Messiah* as well as a diverse range of hymns and choral works.

Many of these particular readings offer slightly different solutions to the question of the text, but overall they share a particular way of determining the *problematic structure* of the text. This shared determination construes the problematic structure of the text as the *problem of survival*. Throughout much of the history of this interpretive trajectory, Job 19:25-27 has been understood in light of the Christian

concept of the resurrection of the flesh, which, as Walker Bynum notes, emerges it-

self as an attempt to answer the problem of death:

> For however absurd [resurrection] seems... it is a concept of sublime courage and optimism locates redemption there where ultimate horror also resides–in pain, mutilation, death, and decay. Whether or not any of the images and answers I have surveyed... carries conviction, those who articulated them faced without flinching the most negative of all the consequences of embodiment: the fragmentation, slime, and stench of the grave. It was this stench and fragmentation they saw lifted to glory in resurrection... We may not find their solutions plausible, but it is hard to feel that they got the problem wrong.[163]

Over the history of its reading in light of the problem of *survival,* Job 19:25-27 has

functioned as a materialist counterbalance to the transcendental desire for spiritual

immortality in the afterlife. On Bernward's tomb, the images of the unchanging an-

gels mingles with a textual declaration of the continuation of mortal flesh; this para-

dox reveals an inner tension that troubles not only Christian conceptions of the after-

life, but any desire for immortality at all. As Martin Hägglund points out, there is an

"internal contradiction in the so-called desire for immortality," since immortality

means that one neither dies nor changes.[164] All things exposed to time must change,

and thus immortality is a *cessation of change,* a *cessation of time,* and thus, para-

doxically, a cessation of life itself: "the state of immortality would annihilate every

form of survival, since it would annihilate the time of mortal life."[165] Immanuel Kant

noticed this paradox, as well, and seems to shudder at the thought of immortality-as-

death that would occur at any eschaton, or "consummation" of time:

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163.   Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336,* 343.

164.   Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2008), 2.

165.   Ibid.

> But [at the consummation of time] all alteration (and with it, time itself) ceases—this is a representation that outrages the imagination. For then the whole of nature will be rigid and as it were petrified: the last thought, the last feeling in the thinking subject will then stop and remain forever the same without any change. For a being which can become conscious of its existence and the magnitude of this existence (as duration) only in time, such a life—if it can even be called life— appears equivalent to annihilation, because in order to think itself into such a state it still has to think something in general, but thinking contains a reflecting, which can occur only in time.[166]

Without time, life would be immobile as if it were "petrified," which would render the consummation of time "equivalent to annihilation." Kant's vision of the afterlife should look surprisingly familiar to biblical scholars, since it replicates the general image of Sheol, wherein nothing happens (cf. Isa 38:18).[167] In other words, if there was no time, if there was no mortality, and if life was not always a struggle with death, then nothing would ever happen. Without time, change, and the necessary threat of decay, one may imagine only radical stasis. How is this image different from death?

Perhaps it is for this very reason that many Christians find an illogical solace in the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh. Since *this* body will be revived, there will be at least a modicum of the material–temporal world that sneaks its way into the otherwise static hereafter. Thus the Christian penchant for the resurrection of *the material flesh,* figured in the inscription of mortality and temporality–that is, the

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166. Immanuel Kant, "The End of All Things," in *Religion and Rational Theology* (ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 227. Quoted in Hägglund, *Radical Atheism,* 44-45.

167. See, for example, N. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Netherworld in the Old Testament* (Biblica et Orientalia 21; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 7-21.

survival of the past into the future–into the ever-wounded hands of the resurrected Christ, seems to open up within immortality itself a paradoxical space for survival, change, and life. Life within death, and death within life: this paradoxical struggle constitutes the only space within which humans can think of either death or life. For those who, like Kant, recoil at the thought of Heaven-cum-Sheol, the mention of solid flesh may offer relief. Thus in some discourses texts such as Job 19:25-27 re-inscribe time, change, difference, and mortality itself within discussions of immortality in order to think about it at all. Job 19:25-27, with its focus on the endurance of Job's physical body, offers both the condition of possibility for thinking of immortality and, at the very same time, complicates the image by creating a space for mortality within immortality itself. Death, then, survives, though perhaps only in spectral form.

Though these receptions might not represent your own particular interpretive proclivities or cultural identities, perhaps there is something to learn even from those readings that stretch the text until its ripping point–and even those that push it beyond. This brief study has but scratched the surface of the interpretive trajectory of survival, but it may suffice to demonstrate the variety of different capacities that find expression even among what seem at first to be similar readings.

3   PRESENCE

Readings gathered under the semantic node of *presence* approach Job 19:25-27 from a different angle: instead of thinking of the end of Job's life, or even the end of the world, this reading considers 19:25-27 with the end of the *book* of Job in mind. In

Job 38:1, YHWH emerges from a whirlwind, and the divinity briefly irrupts into the Job's world. After the grandiloquent divine speeches, Job's second response (42:2-6) seems to mark a decisive turn in Job's story. In 42:6, Job seems to say that his vision of God (עיני ראתך; cf. 19:27, עיני ראו) has led him to relinquish his case (על־כן אמאס ונחמתי).[168]

Job's words in 42:5-6 echo those in 19:25-27 (עיני ראתי//עיני ראו and על־עפר). Moreover, the threefold repetition of "sight" verbs in 19:26-27 parallels the pivotal thematic of sight in 42:6-7. It is, then, not surprising that many interpreters, even those in antiquity, construed 38:1-42:6 as the literary context in which to read 19:25-27. One example of this interpretive trajectory may be found in Hector Avalos' work in sensory criticism. Avalos notes what he calls the "visiocentricity" of the book of Job, or the "privileging of vision."[169] Avalos begins his with a particular reading of Job's utterance in 42:5 ("I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you,") which Avalos interprets to mean that seeing God "is an advance over, or culmination of, his previous experience with Yahweh."[170] And, in regards to Job 19:25-27, Avalos argues that "Job is quite adamant about hoping that he will see God regardless of his physical state."[171] In this reading the *vision* of God, and thus the sensation of the immediate presence of the divine, is Job's ultimate hope.[172]

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168. On the various ways of interpreting 42:6, see Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, 28-30.

169. H. Avalos, "Introducing Sensory Criticism in Biblical Studies: Audiocentricity and Visiocentricity," in *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies* (eds. H. Avalos et al.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 55.

170. Ibid.

171. Ibid., 56.

172. The author Frederick Buechner offers a classic example of this sort of reading: "All his life he had heard about God... But now it was no longer a matter of hearing descriptions of God because finally he had heard and seen him for himself (42:5)... [As for Job's children and possessions], he never got an explanation about them because he never asked for one, and the reason he never asked for one was that he knew

In what follows, I will only be able to gesture towards some of the fascinating series of interpretations that emanate from this semantic node of the text; however, if we return to the ancient world, we may see that the Syriac Peshitta, an early versions of the book of Job, as well as early rabbinic midrash emphasized God's presence in 19:25-27 in strikingly different ways.

3.1   *Syriac Peshitta:Revealing the Divine*

Around the year 200 CE, readers from the Jewish community in the city of Edessa produced the Syriac translation of the book of Job, also called the Peshitta.[173] Often, the Peshitta translation will merely replace Hebrew words with Syriac cognates in the same syntactical order; this mode of translation is fairly wooden and literal. At other times, the text will seem somewhat expansive or interpretive. In Job 19:25-27, the Syriac translators seemed to try to make sense of the Hebrew text by creative means, yet the text would still be recognizable to those familiar with MT or LXX.

Pesh-Job 19:25-27 reads as follows:

(25) wʾnʾ ydⁿ ʾnʾ dprwqy ḥy hw wbswpʾ ⁿl ʾrⁿ ntglʾ
(26) wⁿl mšky hw ʾtkrk hlyn wⁿl bry

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that even if God gave him one that made splendid sense out of all the pain and suffering that had ever been since the world began, it was no longer splendid sense that he needed because with his own eyes he had beheld, and not as a stranger (19:27), the one who in the end clothed all things, no matter how small or confused or in pain, with his own splendor. And that was more than sufficient." Frederick Buechner, *Peculiar Treasures: A Biblical Who's Who* (New York: HarperCollins, 1979), 76-77.

173.   For the text of Pesh-Job, see L. Rignell, ed., *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version: Job, Part II/1a* (Leiden: Brill, 1993).. For a facsimile edition of Codex Ambrosianus on Job, see A. Cerani, ed., *Translatio Syra Pescitto Veteris Testamenti ex codice Ambrosiano* (Mediolani: In officinis photolithographica A. della Croce, et typographica J. B. Pogliani, 1876), 132-40.

(27) ʾn tḥnʾ lʾlhʾ ʿyny ḥḥny nwhrʾ kwlyty msp hw gyr spt mn qymy

ܘܐܢܐ ܝܕܥ ܐܢܐ ܕܦܪܘܩܝ ܚܝ ܗܘ ܘܒܚܘܦܐ ܥܠ ܐܪܥܐ ܢܬܓܠܐ (25)
ܘܥܠ ܡܫܟܝ ܗܘ ܐܬܟܪܟܘ ܗܠܝܢ ܘܥܠ ܒܣܪܝ, (26)
ܐܢ ܐܬܚܙܐ ܠܐܠܗܐ ܚܙܪ ܠܝ, ܠܒܘܬܐ ܚܙܠܝܐ, ܒܪܡ ܗܘ ܟܒܪ ܗܦܟ ܡܢ ܦܓܪܝ, (27)

>   (25) I myself know that my redeemer lives,
>   and in the end he will be revealed upon the earth,
>   (26) But concerning my skin
>   which these [things] have encircled—and upon my flesh:
>   (27) if my eye sees God, my heart will see the light.
>   But for now, my body has been consumed.[174]

Even at first glance, the syntactical and semantic differences between MT and Pesh-Job are clear. Nevertheless it is possible that in this instance Pesh-Job translated a *Vorlage* similar to the *Vorlage* of MT, since most of the Syriac words in Pesh-Job can be accounted for by the words present in MT. The interpretive problems presented by the Hebrew text were solved by (a) interpreting the passage as a theophany and translating connotations of words accordingly, (b) dividing the verses differently than MT, and (c) rearranging the words in 19:27 into a parallelistic structure.

In 19:25b, Pesh-Job does not render Hebrew קום with the Syriac cognate *qym*, though it does in every other instance.[175] Instead, Pesh-Job has used the *ethpeʿel* imperfect of the verb *gly*, a cognate of Hebrew גלה with the identical gloss: "to uncover/reveal." In Pesh-Job, Hebrew גלה is translated with Syriac *gly*.[176] This

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174. Author's translation.
175. Cf. Job 1:20; 4:4; 7:4; 8:15; 11:17; 14:12; 15:29; 16:8,12; 19:18; 20:27 (note קום in parallel with גלה). Note especially 31:14, in which God is the subject of the verb, and the action is almost certainly to be understood as God's manifestation; this is also rendered with qym in P-Job.
176. Cf. Job 12:22; 20:27,28; 30:16; 36:10,15; 38:17.

substitution of one cognate for another is indicative of an interpretive decision, likely inspired by Pesh-Job's translation of the troublesome word אחרון with the phrase *wbswp*ᵓ ("in the end"). Though the only other occurrence of אחרון in the Hebrew text of Job is translated in Pesh-Job with its Syriac cognate, the Syriac word *swp* translates related words such as אפס (cf. Job 7:6).

The addition of the definite article and the preposition "in," both common in Pesh-Job and generally acceptable in the translation of Hebrew poetry, allow for an otherwise grammatically unacceptable adverbial reading of אחרון.[177] Taken this way, the notion of "rising" in "the end" likely connoted a theophany, and with the knowledge of the events of chapters 38-42, including YHWH's theophany (38:1), the translator of Pesh-Job rendered Hebrew *qwm* with Syriac *gly*. This interpretive move is underscored by the use of ᵓrᶜ instead of the cognate ᶜpr. While the translation of Hebrew rpo is inconsistent in Pesh-Job, alternating between ᶜpr (17:16) and ᵓrᶜ (20:11), the use of ᵓrᶜ ("ground, earth") more readily connotes the material world–as opposed to the heavens–as the location of the deity's theophanic manifestation. "Dust" is not as clear an indicator of this trope.

Pesh-Job reads both אחר and the מן from מבשרי as the Syriac preposition ᶜl, thus fashioning the parallel of skin//flesh with identical prepositions. As for the difficult Hebrew verb נקפו, Pesh-Job translates it as נקף-II, "to go around," as it is in the Vulgate and OGJob. The ever-difficult זאת Pesh-Job reads as a substantive plural demonstrative, "these (things)," in order to find an adequate subject for the plural נקפו. The final two words of Hebrew Job 19:26 have been combined with the first few words of 19:27.

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177. The adverbial use is exclusively with the feminine אחרון. See Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 695.

It would be difficult to know whether Pesh-Job read a corrupted text of Job 19:27; in any event, from the translation, it is possible to reconstruct something akin to the Hebrew. Assuming that the Vorlage of Pesh-Job is the same as that of MT, several differences are striking: (1) the three verbs connoting sight have been reduced to two, the occurrence of ראה overlooked or combined with another verb of sight; (2) ולא־זר has morphed into לאור ("the light" with ל as a marker of the direct object), and (3) "my eyes" and "my kidneys" have been taken as the subjects of the sight verbs.

Pesh-Job constructed grammatically and semantically parallel lines in its translation of verse 27, which might explain in part the difficult reading. The first two lines of the three-line verse, *tḥnʾ lʾlhʾ ʿyny* and *ḥḥny nwhrʾ kwlyty*, share a verb-object-subject order, use the same initial verb, and both have body parts as the subject of the verb. It is likely that the translator noticed the multiplicity of words connoting sight and body parts and consequently constructed a parallelistic structure to sort out the syntax. The third line of the verse intensifies the usual Pesh-Job translation of כלה (Syr. *swp*; cf. Job 4:9; 7:6) and reads חקי metaphorically as "my position," the earlier repressed *qwm* here displacing another term. Either Pesh-Job read a variant manuscript which scrambled the words of the Vorlage, or it translated difficult passages by rearranging words around a parallelistic structure, saving the words left over—בחקי and כלו—to constitute a third line. Since Kennicott and deRossi do not list any such garbled witnesses to the MT, the latter theory is more sound.[178]

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178.   See B. Kennicott, *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum Variis Lectionibus* (2 Volumes; Oxford: Clarendon, 1776) I: 478-524; G. de Rossi, *Variae lectiones Veteris Testamenti ex Immensa Mss.* (4 Volumes; Parmae: Ex Regio Typographeo, 1788) IV:105-38.

Where OG understood Job as speaking in the genre of a thanksgiving psalm, Pesh-Job interprets Job's words as a prediction of the final theophany of the book. Like OGJob, Pesh-Job understands Job's mention of his skin/flesh as metonymy for his great suffering. But, when Job sees God, his kidneys–namely, the things shot to pieces by God in Job 16:13–will "see the light." The translator uses a combination of two motifs–sight and light–which are used elsewhere in combination in the Peshitta in the context of sharing a meal in the Temple (Pesh-Ps 36:9), further suggesting the theophanic context. In short, Pesh-Job construes this scene as a theophany; this translation depends upon a particular reading of the verb קום in the context of the numerous sight-verbs.[179]

3.2   Reading Presence: By Human Flesh, Seeing God

A large portion of the history of Jewish interpretation of Job 19:25-27 follows the theophanic trajectory also seen in the Syriac version. Not two centuries after the translation of the Peshitta, we find a very similar reading in *Genesis Rabba* 48:1:

> It is written, "This, after my skin will have been peeled off, but from my flesh, I will see God" (Job 19:26). Abraham said, after I circumcised myself many converts came to cleave to this sign. "But from my flesh, I will see God" (Job 19:26), for had I not done this [i.e., circumcised myself], on what account would the Holy Blessed One, have appeared to me? "And the Lord appeared to him." (Gen 18:1).

At this point in *Genesis Rabba,* the midrash is reading Genesis 18, wherein YHWH suddenly appears to Abraham "in the flesh" (Gen 18:1).[180] The events immediately

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179. Note also M. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999), 234, who also argues, albeit briefly, that "In P the expectation is eschatalogical."

preceding this encounter include the monumentally significant circumcision of Abra-
ham and his family (17:1-27). As Daniel Boyarin explains, the midrash intuits that
these two events are linked, and then finds the perfect intertext to explain their pre-
cise relationship:

> ...following its usual practices of interpretation, [the midrash]
> attributes a strong causal nexus to these events following on one
> another. Ostensibly, had Abraham not circumcised himself, God
> would not have appeared to him. This interpretation is confirmed by
> Job 19:26... In this case, the verse of Job, which refers to the peeling
> off of skin, is taken by a brilliant appropriation to refer to the peeling
> off of the skin of circumcision, and the continuation of the verse that
> speaks of seeing God from one's flesh is taken as a reference to the
> theophany at Elon Mamre... Circumcision of the flesh–i.e. peeling of
> the skin–provides the vision of God.[181]

Reading נקפו as a future anterior form of נקף–I ("will have been peeled off"), the
midrash understands Job to be saying that one must have already been circumcised
in order to see God. This explains Abraham's inability to see God before Genesis 17 as
well as the sudden change in 18:1. And yet the midrash reads נקפו again, this time as
נקפו–II: the converts "came to cleave to"–or "surround" (=הקף)–Abraham.[182] In this
reading, two theophanies are linked: Job emphasizes his vision of God in 19:26-27,
while Abraham receives God as a visitor in Genesis 18. As a result of these revelatory
theophanies, many converts from nations have their own epiphany: namely, that the
sign of Abraham reveals the divine.

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180. Elliott Wolfson, "Circumcision, Vision of God, and Textual Interpretation:
From Midrashic Trope to Mystical Symbol," *History of Religions* 27 (1987): 189-215.
Wolfson claims that this is the earliest known connection between circumcision and
theophany.

181.   Daniel Boyarin, ""This We Know to be the Carnal Israel": Circumcision and
the Erotic Life of God and Israel," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992): 492.

182.   See H. Freedman et al., eds. *Midrash Rabbah* (London: Soncino Press, 1939),
I:406, n.4.

Jewish mysticism soon appropriated this reading of Job 19:26 that read Job's cry under the rubric of divine presence. For the *Zohar*, "by means of circumcision one is opened up in such a way that God may be revealed; the physical opening engenders a space in which the theophany occurs."[183] The *Zohar* interprets Job 19:26 as such:

> He [de León] began another discourse and said, "But I would behold God from my flesh" (Job 19:26). Why [is it written] "from my flesh"? It should be rather "from myself"! It is, literally, "from my flesh." What is that [flesh]? As it is written, "The holy flesh will be removed from you" (Jer. 11:15), and it is written, "And my covenant will be in your flesh" (Gen. 17:13). It has been taught: he who is marked with the holy seal of that sign [of circumcision] sees the Holy One, blessed be He, from that very sign itself (I:94a).[184]

Moses de León begins by asking about the odd use of the word בשר: why does Job see God with reference to his "flesh"? The answer, of course, is that Job was speaking about the power of the "holy seal" that allows one to see the divine "from that very sign itself"–that is, the specific point of the circumcised, absent flesh allows the divine presence to appear. This tension between presence and absence, the present deity and the absent flesh, constitutes an important element of Jewish mystical reading in general: as Wolfson writes, "The dynamic of circumcision…–the play of closure/openness–informs us about the nature of mystical hermeneutics as well: that which is hidden must be brought to light."[185]

Many other medieval Jewish interpreters agreed that this verse to teach that the human body is the locus of divine-human interaction, but proposed very different reasons why this is so. Samuel ben Nissim Masnut, for example, in his twelfth centu-

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183. Wolfson, "Circumcision, Vision of God, and Textual Interpretation: From Midrashic Trope to Mystical Symbol," 205-206.

184. Quoted in Ibid., 206.

185. Ibid., 207.

ry work *Ma'yan Ganim* interpreted Job 19:26 as follows: "'From my flesh I behold God,' is explained: 'From the formation of my limbs and from the arrangement of my body–contemplating them–I behold God.'"[186] Elsewhere, Masnut relates that

> Abraham bar Hiyya closely follows Bahya in interpreting Job 19:26 to mean that 'from the formation of your body (literally, 'flesh') and the arrangement of your limbs you can see and understand the wisdom of your Creator.'[187]

In this line of interpretation, the presence of the divine may be found through the very materiality of the human body. Here, the מן from מבשרי in 19:26 means that it is *by means of* my flesh that I see God. Whereas *Genesis Rabba* and the *Zohar* taught that a certain absence of flesh allowed for the presence of the divine, Masnut claims that the human body is the present sign that allows one to contemplate the absent deity. Still others took this call for bodily contemplation in a concrete sense, understanding it to sanction scientific study of human anatomy. Joseph ben Jehudah, the student of Maimonides, for example, cites Job 19:26 "as *locus probans* for the meritoriousness of studying medicine: 'From the wondrous formation of my body I recognize the wisdom of my Creator as manifold and wondrous.'"[188] These various interpretive strands have only continued to diversity since the medieval period; in modern Jewish esoteric as well as philosophical discourses, the words of Job 19:26 still communicate a method of relating to the divine through the material of the human body.

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186. A Altmann, Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 15; Samuel ben Nissim Masnut, Ma'ayan Ganim (Berlin: 1889, 1889), 61.

187. Altmann, Von der mittelalterlichen zur modernen Aufklärung, 15; Masnut, Ma'ayan Ganim, 61.

188. A Altmann, Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism (2; Ithaca: Cornell University, 1969), 25.

3.3   *Reading Presence: Seeing God, in Human Flesh*

Syriac-speaking Christians eventually adopted the Jewish Peshitta as their own translation of the Hebrew Bible, and as a result they inherited a textual tradition that, through the Syriac word *gly*, overdetermined Job 19:25-27 as a statement concerning divine manifestation. Not surprisingly, Syriac Christians did not seem to think of this verse as fitting for funeral liturgies, and neither did they associate this passage with the resurrection.[189]

In the eighth century Disputation of Sergius the Stylite, Sergius offers the following argument in a letter to a Jewish interlocutor who claimed that God has not begotten a son:

> Concerning the fact that for the sake of the salvation of humanity God came down from heaven, and put on a body, and was revealed on earth, Job said: I know that my savior lives, and at the last will be revealed on the earth.[190]

While Latin and Greek Christians generally understood Job to be speaking about the resurrection of the flesh, and for Jewish mystic readers the text taught that contemplation of various aspects of the the human body would reveal aspects of the divine, Syriac Christians read this as a prophesy of the Incarnation of Christ. For the Syriac Christian, Job's statement that his "redeemer" will be "revealed upon the earth" suggested that this redeemer could not, then, be an earthly creature. By specifying the

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189. Job 19:25-27 does not occur in any Syriac Christian theological treatises or disputations published in a critical edition.

190. A. P. Hayman, *The Disputation of Sergius the Stylite against a Jew* (CSCO 339; Louvain: Secretariat du CorpusSCO, 1973), 1. Sergius begins by citing the Syriac version of the creed; seethe East and West Syriac recensions in E. Ferguson, *Recent Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays* (New York: Garland, 1999), 289.

earth as the locus of the revelation, Syriac Christians assumed that the redeemer must then *not* be on earth at the time of Job.

In Jacob of Serugh's (ca. 500 CE) fourth *memre* "Against the Jews," he also cites Job 19:25 to argue in favor of the Incarnation:

> Job has said that he [i.e., the son of God] would be clearly revealed at the end, but he appeared on the earth in precisely the manner that he predicted.[191]

Jacob here defends the use of Job 19:25 as a prediction of the Incarnation, presumably against criticisms that Jesus the Galilean did not seem to come with the clarity and force of a theophany. Yet Jacob responds:

> Do not be blinded by the spirit of the Jewish sect, who, regarding him, do not see the son of God.[192]

While Jacob's argument displays the characteristic churlish nature of Christian anti-Judaic discourses, his insults also play subtly on the text of Job 19:26-27. Job has promised that the redeemer will be clearly revealed on the earth, but the Syriac text also says "*if* my eye sees God..." (19:27a), which implies that that problem may be with one's eyes ("Do not be blinded... do not see the son of God"), and not the manner of revelation.

Likewise, many later medieval Syriac theological treatises, such as those written by ninth-century Habib ibn Hidma, twelfth-century Jacob Bar-Salabi, and thirteenth-century Bar-Hebraeus, cite Job 19:26 as a proof text of the incarnation.[193] Jacob Bar-Salabi, while disputing the Incarnation with Muslims, writes: "As a prophecy

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191.   Jacob Serugh, *Homélies contre les Juifs* (Patrologia Orientalis; t. 38, fasc. 1.; Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), 129.

192.   Ibid.

193.   G. Graf, *Die Schriften des Jakobiten Habib ibn Hidma, Abu Ra'ita* (CSCO 131; Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1951), 120; Barhebraeus, *Le candélabre du sanctuaire de Grégoire Abou'lfaradj dit Barhebraeus: Quatrime base: De l'incarnation* (PO 31:1; Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1964), 17.

of incarnation, Job says: 'In the end he will be revealed to the ends of the earth–in the flesh.'[194] Here, Bar-Salabi's translation reduplicates the word *swp,* giving it both a spatial ("ends of the earth"), as well as temporal ("in the end"), sense. While this claim advances the Christian argument for its universality, Bar-Salabi's final clause, "in the flesh," creates significant tension: how could a particular human in a limited body extend his presence to the ends of the earth? Christians respond by gesturing to the paradox of the Incarnation itself: the universal divine became present to all of humanity through the particularity of one human.

Thus, the semantic node of *presence,* like that of *survival,* concerns itself with the nature of human flesh. Yet though these two groups of interpretations agree on so much, their actual readings overlap in so few ways. It is almost as if these different groups of interpreters have constructed the *question* or *problem* posed by the text in different ways, and thus their responses by necessity propose very different solutions. As for the interpreters who understand Job 19:25-27 in terms of *presence,* they do not imagine that this text address the problem of the the loss of human life, and thus they do not use this text to proclaim the recovery of fleshly health and abilities.

Instead, these interpreters construe 19:25-27 as a solution to the problem of the separation between mundane flesh and transcendent divinity. To this problem, Job 19:25-27 offers a particular way to restore the human-divine relationship. As for the specifics of this solution, readers vary considerably: for some, Job 19:25-27 teaches us that we may encounter the transcendent deity through contemplating mundane human flesh, while others argue that Job 19:25-27 teaches us that the

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194. J.P. Amar, *Dionysius bar Salibi: A Response to the Arabs, English Translation* (CSCO 615; Louvain: Peeters, 2005), 67.

transcendent deity took the form of a mundane human body. In both scenarios, however, the originary *problem* is one of *absence*: humans are separated from the divinity, but long for the divine presence. These Jewish and Christian readings, though in very different ways, all strain to overcome this ontological barrier created by the vast distance understood to exist between the immanent and transcendent planes.

4   JUSTICE

In many ways, the interpretive trajectory of *justice* seeks to do justice to the text of the book of Job itself. Throughout the history of the reception of the book of Job, a surprising number of readers have managed to avoid altogether its probing questions and complex theological tensions.[195] At times, however, careful readers with a tolerance for theological uncertainty have noticed that in the prologue the character of God creates quite an ethical mess. For example, in Job 2:3, God seems to casually admit that, though Job is an excellent person in every way, nevertheless God destroyed Job's life "for no reason." What sort of God, one might ask, would do this to a pious individual? For those inured to the language of Proverbs, this should come as quite a shock.

Here, the book of Job exposes a necessary tension between *justice* and the *law* that sustains but simultaneously undermines both concepts.[196] While laws, including the legal system and the particular actions and decisions of judges and juries,

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195. This point is often, however, overstated. Job's complaints have found representation in Christian liturgical and artistic contexts as well as Jewish literature of survival.

196. See Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority," *Cardozo Law Review* 11 (1990): 919-1045, and M Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 40-45.

are in theory particular instantiations of justice, each law or legal decision can only ever be a contingent, limited effort to render justice. Thus justice always exceeds any particular legal act, and as such any legal action must be scrutinized: does it actually instantiate justice, or would justice be rendered more fully with an alternate law, legal system, or decision? Yet justice itself is nothing without these particular instantiations. If there were no law, or legal system, or particular actions that attempt to render justice, then justice would literally not exist. How would we know anything about justice if it we could not point to a court of law, or a courageous defense of the rights of another person?

"Traditional" Israelite Wisdom literature such as that found in the book of Proverbs, for instance, claims that wisdom ultimately resides with the divine. Since God created and infused the heavens and the earth with wisdom, if sages devote themselves to its pursuit, they can catch mere glimpses of it (cf. Prov 3:19-20; 8:22-36). In the Joban prologue, however, God admits to creating disharmony for no just cause (2:3). When Job recognizes that God's repeated assaults serve no purpose, and indeed do not serve as a judgement–that is, are not *just*–Job simply concludes that *God* is unjust (9:22-24). Paradoxically, it is precisely at this point that Job decides to casts his interaction with God as a legal dispute, hoping beyond hope that justice itself transcends even God (cf. 23:5-7).[197]

Thus, the book of Job dramatizes a world in which divine justice *should* exist, but tragically does not (cf. 12:6). Job is painfully aware, however, of the existence of the force of *law,* albeit unjust law. God, Job claims, perverts justice by tainting the legal system itself– God renders judges blind (9:24), but cannot be arraigned in court

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197. For an extended analysis of the points laid out in this paragraph, see Charles D. Hankins, *Job and the Limits of Wisdom* (PhD Dissertation: Emory University, 2011), *passim.*

for this unjust behavior because God *runs* the court system (9:15, 32). In this way, Job discovers that the court system actively attempts to keep justice from finding expression. God is the ultimate arbiter of justice, but is unjust. God is the foundation and instantiation of the law, but nevertheless is illegal, or extra-legal–beyond the touch of the law itself.

It is precisely here (so this reading goes) that Job gives voice to this hope for the possibility of legal vindication and ultimate justice even in a world where the foundation of justice is itself entirely unjust. Imaginatively, Job constructs a figure that personifies this Justice-beyond-justice and dramatizes its forceful manifestation of the *true* law in God's presence (9:32-35: מוכיח "arbiter"; 16:18-22: עד "witness"; 19:25-27: גאל "redeemer"; 31:35-37: שֹׁמֵעַ לִי "one who hears me"). Thus, the גאל of 19:25-27 embodies the excessive aspect of justice that has failed to inhere in the actions or principles of God, and Job calls for this excess to "rise up" on his behalf and force into being the coexistence of true justice and the law.

Yet this event, even Job freely admits, is paradoxical and thus impossible (cf. 9:32). The law cannot mimetically represent an absolute, transcendent justice. The space of Job's courtroom is a space unlike any found in the world, wherein a sovereign law-making authority could submit to impartial justice. It would be, for all practical purposes, something like an apocalyptic intervention from an ultra-transcendental force that would create an extra-ordinary space (9:35: בינינו "between us") within which justice and the law could function in an entirely different manner.

Generally, readings grouped in the semantic node of *justice* understand the word גאל in the sense of the גֹּאֵל־הַדָּם, or "blood-avenger." The figure of the avenger is provided for by the law (cf. Num 35:19), but operates outside of the legal system; this interstitial, extra-legal (and yet lawful) mode of justice also points to the incongruity between justice and law. It is fitting, therefore, that the the status of one representing

Job's hope for justice-beyond-justice exists in the tension between justice and law. It is precisely this tension that drives Job's legal metaphor throughout the dialogues, and attentive readers throughout the ages have realized that the book provides no clear answers to these troubling problems.[198]

The twentieth century Marxist Ernst Bloch, for example, sees the book of Job as a critical moment in the history of theological thought, since here Job "critiques theodicy as an ideology that is the opposite of faith[ful] protest and [the] hope for justice."[199] That is, Job dares to call God to task for failing to act in accordance with justice, and thus effectively abandoning those who suffer. Theodicy apologizes for God's failure to enact justice; Job realizes that these apologies are an ideological smokescreen that distracts one from the injustice that surounds humanity.

According to Bloch, the whirlwind speeches, otherwise understood by the semantic node of *presence* as therapeutic theophany, underline the ultimate failure of theodicy to justify divine justice:

> In fact, Yahweh's appearance and his words do everything to confirm Job's lack of faith in divine justice; far from being the theophany of the righteous God, they are like a divine atheism in regard to (or paying no attention to) the moral order... [it is then] all the more certain that the would-be theodicy will tun out to be its opposite: the exodus of man from Yahweh, with the vision of a world that will rise above the dust (cf. 19:25).[200]

Bloch understands the God of the book of Job as a "divine atheist," one who does not believe in a principle of justice. As Bloch reads the text, Job courageously sets forth

198. See the incisive comments to this effect in Newsom, T*he Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations,* 150-65.

199. S. Pinnock, *Beyond Theodicy: Jewish and Christian Continental Thinkers Respond to the Holocaust* (Albany: State University of New York, 2002), 72.

200. E. Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom* (trans. J. Swann; new ed. London: Verso, 2009), 103-04.

in an "exodus from" this false god who only serves to pacify those who are oppressed by suggesting either that they have *earned* their suffering, or that *there is no justice* for which to even fight. Yet in the figure of the גאל, which Bloch understands to refer not to God but rather to "a blood avenger," the figure of the Exodus returns:

> The Avenger-figure (19:25) is in fact closer to the Yahweh of Exodus, the Yahweh of "Israel's courtship"–a spirit who has nothing at all in common with the present state of creation and world order.[201]

Job thus rebels against the oppressive God of the book of Job while holding out hope for the return of the liberative power of the God of the Exodus, the God who has before fought against the unjust structure of power that exists in the world, symbolized by Pharaoh. This is the disruptive YHWH who dismantles the unjust legal systems of those who oppress, who embodies the principle of justice-beyond-justice (and the systemic violence that accompanies it). Bloch is right to note that the divine speeches in the book of Job give no hint that God has any desire to upend the ethical and legal structure of the cosmos, even though it could produce a horrible breakdown of justice such as the calamities experienced by Job. Bloch seems to read Job's cry in a manner similar to Choon-Leong Seow, who understands Job's ironic reference to the גאל as a plea for God to once again claim the mantle of justice on behalf of those who suffer, effectively reclaiming the divine personality of the Exodus.[202]

Until the advent of critical biblical studies in the early modern era, the interpretive trajectory of *justice* seems to have been rather sparsely populated. Yet at least the *potential* for its manifestation was possible in the ancient world, as evidenced by the reading of Theodotion–Job.[203] In the late Second Temple period, an anonymous

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201. Ibid., 101.

202. Seow, "Job's Go'el, Again," 705.

203. For a discussion of Theodotion-Job, including the interesting conclusion that Theodotion-Job may be related to–but also varies significantly from–the broader *kaige* tradition, see Peter Gentry, *The Asterisked Materials in the Greek Job* (Atlanta: Scholars

Jewish translator's literal translation from the Hebrew text into Greek attempted to supplement or perhaps supplant LXX.[204] The "Theodotion" translation of the book of Job survives only in fragments, but what remains of 19:25-27 reads as follows:[205]

> (25) ὁ ἀγχιστεύς μου ζῇ καὶ ἔσχατον ἐπὶ χώματος ἀναστήσει

> (27) ἐξέλιποω οἱ νέφροι μου ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ μου

> (25) My kinsman lives, and he will stand up last upon the earthen mound...

> (27) My kidneys have become destitute in my chest...

Although Origen's sixth column of the Hexapla preserves little for the verses in question, it does appear that Theodotion–Job allows for a reading quite different than either the theophanic Syriac or the lament-psalmic Old Greek.

Theodotion–Job's choice of "kinsman" (ἀγχιστεύς) for גאל can be understood as a particularly "literal" translation, and thus of a piece with the overall translation profile associated with Theodotion–Job.[206] For the only other use of the word גאל in MTJob (3:5), Theodotion–Job supplies ἀγχιστευσάτω, which also suggests a fairly wooden approach to translation.[207]

Press, 1995), 406-10. See also *idem*, "The Place of Theodotion-Job in the Textual History of the Septuagint," in *Origen's Hexapla and Fagments: Papers Presented at the Rich Seminar on the Hexapla, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 25 July-3rd August 1994* (ed. Alison Salvesen; TSAJ 58; eds. Martin Hengel and Peter Schäfer, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 199-230.

204. See Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd rev. ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 145.

205. For the fragmentary text of Theodotion Job 19:25, 27, see Frederick Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive, Veterum interpretum graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University, 1871), II, 36.

206. See Gentry, "The Place of Theodotion-Job," 229.

207. Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum,* II:9.

While Theodotion–Job does not force readers into a "forensic" interpretation of this text, it does offer the *potential* for reading "kinsman-redeemer," "legal vindicator" or "blood avenger" (and thus their forensic connotations) in a way that LXXJob and Pesh-Job do not. Furthermore, in Theodotion-Job this "kinsman" stands upon "the earthen mound" (χώματος); this term, while vague, can potentially refer to Job's grave, while, likewise, LXXJob and Pesh-Job cannot.

Within what little literary context we have, it appears that readers of Theodotion-Job could understand 19:25-27 to claim that Job's kinsman-redeemer will violently avenge Job's death, or that Job's kinsman will continue to assert Job's legal complaint even after his death. The object of this vengeance would, in Theodotion–Job's time, more likely be understood as the friends than God. Job has, in this same chapter, accused the friends of dismembering them (19:2), and follows 19:25-27 with a warning that, in response to the friends' verbal attacks (19:28) there will be "a punishment of the sword" that renders "a judgment" (19:29). Yet it would not be out of the question for an ancient reader to understand Job's angry complaints directed at God to culminate in this call for a "kinsman" to continue his complaints. The *probability* of a reading (whether it is "likely" or "unlikely") does not necessarily help a reception historian adjudicate that reading's worth.

Regardless of the intention in the mind of the translator of Theodotion–Job, the semantic *potential* of ἀγχιστεύς provided interpretive options that were unavailable to those reading ἐκλύειν in LXX. One *could* construe Theodotion–Job's text in a "forensic" sense, whereas for LXX and Pesh-Job this was not a clear potential of the text.[208]

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208. Perhaps it is, but this potential has not yet manifest itself, and I cannot see how it would emerge.

This potential did, in fact, manifest itself–albeit rarely–in the medieval period. ISeveral prominent medieval Jewish interpreters, for example, seem to have understood Job's cry for a גאל to be a request for a גאל־הדם. Rashi, for example, stresses this element of Job's plea. Rashi's commentary on the book of Job reads:

> "But I know that my Redeemer lives": You persecute me, but I know that my Redeemer lives to requite you, and He will endure and rise.
>
> "And the last on the earth, He will endure": After all earth dwellers will perish, He will endure last.'
>
> "And after my skin, they have cut into this": Yet they do not pay heed to my Redeemer, but after the plague of my skin, they cut, strike, and pierce. This vexation and persecution that I mentioned, which is to me like one cutting into my skin.[209]

That is, Rashi sees God as Job's גאל־הדם, who is ready to wreak havoc on Job's friends for persecuting him. Though Rashi's comments are hardly radical in a theological sense, at issue is neither Job's physical restoration nor Job's interaction with God; rather, Rashi envisions a particular assertion of justice on behalf of Job.

Perhaps one of the most compelling formulations of this semantic node was provided by the nineteenth century Jewish historian and founder of *Wissenschaft des Judentums,* Leopold Zunz. In 1845, Zunz published a history of Jewish culture, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur,* in which he analyzed the ways in which Jews commemorated their righteous dead, elaborating on the history of tombstones and epitaphs.[210] In the chapter titled "Remembrance of the Righteous," Zunz defended his seemingly antiquarian interests in vandalized tombstones and worn inscriptions. For Zunz, his work was not merely an escape into the past: rather, this micro-historical work helped the Jewish community to reclaim the memory of their own past, to give

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209. Translated from Avraham Shoshanna, ed. *Sefer Iyyov Be-Veit Midrasho Shel Rashi (The Book of Job in the School of Rashi)* (Jerusalem: Makhon Ofeq, 2000), 116-117.

210. Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur,* 121-310.

honor to the righteous dead, and to protect and pass down their names.[211] In short, Zunz sought to redeem the repressed memories of the oppressed European Jews.

Dominant Christian construals of Jewish history had, for the most part, been designed merely to denigrate and marginalize Jews. For example, for centuries the "histories" of the 1096 Christian massacre of Jews in the town of Worms had either recounted the story dispassionately or actively characterized the Jews as aggressors or thieves.[212] Yet Moses Mannheimer, following the work of Zunz, saw these events instead as a tragedy that cries out for justice. Mannheimer argued that those slain Jewish inhabitants of Worms did not deserve of their punishing, nor were they being tested: on the contrary, they were tragic martyrs for the Jewish cause. Mannheimer then called for action, and encouraged Jewish scholars across Europe to restore and preserve Jewish tombstones, including the tombstone of twelve of the Jewish martyrs from Worms, believed to have been slain in 1096. Ludwig Lewysohn, a participant in this effort, wrote:

> Soon 800 years will pass since these horrifying events took place. The memory of these immortal martyrs will be kept alive by their descendants... This painful and extensive, anguished and glorious past may teach Israel the task for the present and its obligation to the future.[213]

Like Zunz, Lewysohn sought to persuade Jewish historians to re-read and thus re-define the past for the sake of those who have already perished.

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211. N. Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-century Germany: Between History and Faith* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2005), 68. See also Roemer, "Turning Defeat Into Victory: Wissenschaft Des Judentums and the Martyrs of 1096," 65-80.

212. Ibid., 70; 69.

213. Luwig Lewysohn, *Nafshot Zadikim: Sechzig Epitaphien von Grabstein des israelitischen Friedhofs zu Worms* (Frankfurt a. M.: Naer, 1855), translation quoted from N. Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture*, 70.

Thus, Zunz saw his work as primarily redemptive in nature–if not for the actual dead, at least for their memories. In *Zur Geschichte und Literatur,* during his discussion of his scholarly work on the history of Jewish tombstones, and in particular their tombstones and epigraphy, Zunz notes that, quite often, the tombstones of medieval Jews have been mutilated or reused. Zunz laments that, though time has "extinguished the memory" of the deceased, they nevertheless continue to be "wounded" in death, but then triumphantly cites his own idiosyncratic translation of Job 19:25, which reads: "Aber es lebt ihnen ein Anwald, und wär' es der späteste, der auf dem Staube aufsteht!" (But there is a living advocate for them, and he will be the last to arise from the dust!)[214] For Zunz, the mantle of Job's גאל cold be claimed by the historian: writing history allowed one to function as the advocate, the vindicator, the redeemer of the past, the one who restores justice–simply by rereading and rewriting the dominant histories of the day. Zunz's translation of Job thus invokes an understanding of history in which the Jewish historian is called upon to be the "advocate" of the Jewish dead.

Walter Benjamin, discussing the writing of history, agrees with Zunz that history can be used as a weapon to harm even the dead by destroying their memories, but by that same token, the historian can work against this "enemy":

> Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.[215]

Though Zunz fought on behalf of the memories of a specific people, one may take a broader view of this project of historical redemption. Much of the discourse of bibli-

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214. Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur,* 421.

215. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (ed. H. Arendt, trans. H. Zohn; New York: Schocken, 1968), 121.

cal scholarship has focused on the project of *reducing* the number of interpretive op-

tions of a given text to, ideally, a single reading. This project is, however, entirely

contingent: there is no natural imperative that requires critics to advocate for one

reading only. This *law-like* project ("find the meaning of the text!") finds itself at

odds with interpretive *justice* (in the sense of fairness, equity, and impartiality). In

the face of an unjust structure, the reception historian, like Leopold Zunz, can advo-

cate for the even-handed inclusion of those interpretive voices whose memories have

been all but extinguished.

5   CONCLUSION

Whatever Job says in 19:25-27, it seems beyond doubt that it stands in contrast to

the extended lament uttered in 19:2-22. Job may wish that his cry be heard in a ce-

lestial court of law; he could hope for a theophanic encounter with the divine; or–

among other options–he may imagine a recovery of the various aspects of his life. All

of these constructions of the text assume that Job here images something other than

his current state: thus, the tension between *what is* and *what should* or *will* be forms

part of the contour of this text. Hope implies a difference between present and fu-

ture, and thus asks readers to ponder the relationship between the *actual situation* at

hand and its *virtual potentiality* for change. Like the manifold readings of the text it-

self, Job's cry gestures towards the dynamic capacities of the process of life.

Each semantic node determines this tension between the *actual* and the

virtual in a different manner; each of these readings opens up different problematic

fields to explore. The node of *survival,* for example, explores the complex relation-

ship between life and death. The node of *presence* imagines different modes of associating–but never sublating–the mundane and the divine, which is to say the material and the transcendental. Finally, the node of *justice* surveys the tension between the contingency of local manifestations of law and justice itself. All three of these interpretive nodes proffer a constellation of concepts that have no clear resolution: rather, they create a space–a "spacing"–within which one may think. This space functions as an *internal border* that runs through the middle of the text itself as well as each concept one may use to interpret it. This is the truly natural, necessary borderline: the internal complicating folds that precede any external differentiation.

As we have seen in the previous two chapters, all three broad domains are justifiable according to the various manifestations of the text. No general or particular solutions can extinguish these problematic fields: who can offer *the answer* to the questions of survival, presence, and justice?

Conclusion

I introduced this work with a brief meditation on borders, divides, and gaps. What, I asked, separated the "original" from its "receptions?" Here, at–or at least near–the conclusion, I return to the question posed at the outset.

With respect to the "original text," I have concluded that the very notion of the "original text" of a biblical book is a paradox that obfuscates the processual dimension of all texts, especially those related to the traditions of a community (or, more precisely, many communities). The processual nature of biblical texts requires us to think in terms of *time,* and thus we must understand change–or difference–to be a fundamental part of the identity of biblical texts. That is, *internal difference* marks the identity of any biblical text. Furthermore, there is no natural or necessary hierarchy that emerges from the group of manuscripts, including translations, that function as the biblical text. One may organize these versions of the text in many different ways by means of many different criteria. Relative age is only one possibility, but there are others. As a result, I have offered a general means of drawing lines in order to differentiate texts (e.g., the book of Job from *The Testament of Job*), but I have not found clear borderlines running between different forms of the same text. The Septuagint version of Job, for example, is very different than the Masoretic Text of Job, but one cannot justify the universal necessity of either of them claiming the mantle of "original" and thus clarifying the border between "the original book of Job" and "the reception of the book of Job."

With respect to the "original context" for any one of these forms of a particular biblical text, I have concluded that the very notion of the "original context" of a

biblical book is a problematic concept. Biblical texts are, from the very moment of their initial inscription, already sedimented with various semantic, literary, and historical contexts. In addition, contexts themselves are not given, pre-determined and pre-delineated units that automatically clarify the referential structure of texts. On the contrary, contexts initially provide the raw materials for an active determination (or construction) that then bears the title of "the context." But contexts are, from the very start, capable of signifying very different things to different people. While some construals are *wrong,* there is no particular construal of a context that is in any universally necessary sense *right.* Contexts, like texts, can mean many things. Thus, I have not found clear borderlines even to differentiate the "original context" of a text from "later contexts" in which one would find "receptions." Instead, the borders that I find separate a context from *itself:* that is, the many different potential determinations of a particular context show that the difference between "original" and "reception" resides within every context, even before it emerges in space and time.

As a result, I have concluded that reception history is *nothing* if it is understood as "analyzing that which comes after the original." There is no such thing, since there was nothing entirely original in the first place. But by that same token, *everything* is then reception history if it is understood as "analyzing how unoriginal texts manifest unoriginal meanings."

Thus, I have offered a different conception of reception history that does not found itself on a division between the original text, its original context, and later texts and contexts. Instead, one may understand the biblical text as a series of processes (text, reading, transmutations, and non-semantic impact) whose nature it is to change over time. This change can manifest potentials proper to the text (e.g. different readings that account for the text in different but equally justifiable ways), or it can re-order the structure of the text from without (e.g., scribal redactions or

translations), thus changing the constellation of potential readings that it may produce. In order to think of both the local realizations of the text as well as its excess in relation to all of its local realizations, I have turned to the thought of Gilles Deleuze.

In particular, I found three of Deleuze's concepts helpful for the task of re-imagining biblical reception history. First, I considered the biblical text in terms of its *virtual* and *actual* dimensions, instead of thinking of it in terms of the *possible* and the *actual*. Whereas "possible" readings are not thought of as *real* meanings of a text, the "virtual" aspect of a text accounts for those possibilities–or potentials–of a text that may not be present-at-hand but are nevertheless very real. For example, my own reading of Job 19:25-27 *actualizes* what was always a *virtual* potential of that text, even if it is a novel reading. One could certainly judge a particular reading as "not real," or not a part of a text's virtual capacities, but one could not claim that a potential reading should not be actualized. This shift may help biblical scholars to allow for the multiplicity of a given text's potential significations while nevertheless retaining the capacity for critical judgments. Likewise, I have followed Deleuze's advice that it is more helpful to think in terms of *problematic structures* than it is to think in terms of *problems in search of the correct solution*. In some aspects of life, the latter sort of thought is doubtless more helpful, but for the criticism of literature, the former helps a reader to see far more of a text's capacities. Finally, I addressed the question of adjudicating "good" and "bad" readings through the metaphor of *topology*. In topology, forms are considered homeomorphic (or equivalent) if they can be stretched into each other without ripping or suturing. In the same way, two readings of a text may be considered virtual semantic potentials of that text if they can account for the text and its literary context without deforming the text to the point of collapse.

I then cast the task of reception history as that of an author: one must tell the story of the text's development by portraying the text as the protagonist. In order to achieve this goal, the reception historian must seek a viewpoint–or, more precisely, a series of different viewpoints–that reveals the text's own variation over time. With a mass of viewpoints in hand, the reception historian can then attempt to sort through them by means of "nomadic distribution," which is Deleuze's term for an organization of material that divides by means of internal, not external, criteria. In practice, this method asks reception historians to group readings by the contours of the readings themselves as opposed to the nationality, or religion, or gender, or temporal horizon of the given readers. I have suggested that reception historians may find it helpful to posit semantic nodes from which to gather diverse readings into manageable groups that retain many differences while nevertheless retaining points of comparison. These "semantic nodes" are heuristic devices that aid in the sorting of materials, but they also should reflect general determinations of a given text's problematic structure.

Finally, I offered the example of Job 19:25-27. At first, I showed that the original text and context harbor within themselves an array of potential determinations. These virtual multiplicities are brimming with semantic capacities that can be actualized in very different ways. I first analyzed the "degrees of semantic freedom" that the text offers, and then I formed three semantic nodes (*survival, presence,* and *justice*) that allowed me to gather together diverse readings.

In short, this entire work has concerned itself with borderlines, or that which creates *space* between two separate entities. Repeatedly, I have found that this spacing exists not between different manuscripts, or different contexts, but rather it exists as an internal differentiation *within each text* that does two things, simultaneously: it (1) creates the conditions that allow for that text and its significance to

change over time, but it also (2) limits any particular manifestation of a text or its significance from achieving dominance over the others since it, too, is but one of many potentials. In other words, everything is both its own original and its own reception–simultaneously "source text" and "translation." The thing itself is its own boundary, and the natural lines are the internal ones.

As a result, we must re-conceive the task of the biblical scholar. Though we should not ignore the initial context or the earliest recoverable forms of the text–they are important, too!–we must realize that any one determination of a text, context, or meaning is a limited and impoverished viewpoint on the given "objectile." A single determination of a text reveals merely a fraction of that text's contour.

Within the field of biblical studies, we too often shut out the voices and memories of those who have actively participated in the production, redaction, preservation, and ongoing development of the text, simply because they find themselves on the wrong side of the "Great Divide." Yet, in this dissertation, I have argued that this notion of the "Great Divide" is *false:* it creates a line where none exists, and as a result separates people from their ancestors and creates a hierarchy of text and meaning, subordinating some and glorifying others "for no cause," as the book of Job puts it. As I argue, the *true* "Great Divide" does not run through any historical era, nor does it run between particular ethnic or religious groups; it does not divide texts into claimants and pretenders, nor does it bless one meaning as the real meaning of a text, relegating the others to the status of phantasms. Rather, the *true* "Great Divide" runs through the middle of every text, every meaning, every production and reception. I have proposed the concept of the *text as dynamic process* in order to offer theoretical resources to help biblical scholars re-imagine the text in all of its productivity and virtual potential. The practice of reception history offers biblical scholars the opportunity to dig through the debris of past textual interpretation and find

again those fragments of the past that, though bearing their scars, may offer us yet more distinctive viewpoints from which to map the process of a biblical text.[1]

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1.   This last chapter, of course, only offers a sketch of a theoretical orientation to biblical reception history, but my hope is that it may develop into a more thorough and detailed analysis of the history of this text. But if biblical reception history is to fulfill something approaching its potential, then it must develop more collaborative relationships and projects. No scholar can cover an much ground as a biblical text, so the cartographers must work as a collective.

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