

INTERTEXTUALITY AND THE STUDY OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE NEW

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Introduction

Julia Kristeva is generally credited as the first to introduce the term *intertextualité* into literary discussion in 1969. Drawing on the work of Bakhtin, Kristeva suggests a dialogical relationship between 'texts', broadly understood as a system of codes or signs. Moving away from traditional notions of agency and influence, she suggests that such relationships are more like an '*intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning)'.¹ Even the specific act of embedding one text inside another (the theme of this volume) does not result in a single resolution - the two shall become one - but a range of interpretative possibilities. The embedded text might be a faint echo, which barely disturbs the primary text, or a clanging symbol, which demands attention. It is the task of the reader, in his or her pursuit of meaning and coherence, to somehow configure these different 'voices'. And that involves choice, vested interests, and hence ideology.

The term was brought to the attention of biblical scholars by two books published in 1989. The first was a collection of essays entitled *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*, which contains both theoretical discussions and examples of biblical intertextuality. For Vorster, intertextuality differs from *Redaktionsgeschichte* in three significant ways:

1. 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' was written in 1966 and appeared in *Séméiotiké: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1969) in 1969. It was translated in *Desire and Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (ed. L.S.Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) and is now conveniently found in T. Moi (ed), *The Kristeva Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). The quotation is taken from Moi (ed.), *Kristeva Reader*, p.36 (emphasis original).

First of all it is clear that the phenomenon text has been redefined. It has become a network of references to other texts (intertexts). Secondly it appears that more attention is to be given to text as a process of production and not to the sources and their influences. And thirdly it is apparent that the role of the reader is not to be neglected in this approach to the phenomenon of text.²

The other book was *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, by Richard Hays. Hays does not mention Kristeva but draws on Hollander's work, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After*.³ Hays is impressed by the subtlety of Hollander's analysis and asks why this has not always been the case with biblical scholars. He attempts to put this right in a number of highly regarded studies on Paul, claiming that 'the most significant elements of intertextual correspondence between old context and new can be implicit rather than voiced, perceptible only within the silent space framed by the juncture of two texts'.⁴

Ten years on, the word intertextuality has become common coinage among biblical scholars. Critics who once spoke of 'sources' now speak of an author's intertextual use of traditions. In George Buchanan's *Introduction to Intertextuality*,⁵ the word covers traditional source criticism, Jewish midrash, typology and what Fishbane called 'inner biblical exegesis'. Literary critics describing the complex texture of a work speak of its deep intertextuality (the words 'tapestry' or 'mosaic' are sometimes used). Reader-response critics use it to show that a text does not simply disclose its meaning. What the reader brings to the text (the reader's own intertexts) has an effect on the reading process. Thus first century Christians reading the LXX were bound to import new meanings into old texts. Imagine what it must have been like to find *χριστός* and *εὐαγγελίζω* appearing in the ancient texts.

All this is good in the sense that scholars now realise that a text cannot be studied in isolation. It belongs to a web of texts which are

2 W.Vorster, 'Intertextuality and Redaktionsgeschichte', in S.Draisma (ed), *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings* (Festschrift B.van Iersel; Kampen: Kok, 1989), p.21.

3 J.Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

4 R.B.Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p.155.

5 G.W.Buchanan, *Introduction to Intertextuality* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994).

(partially) present whenever it is read or studied. And the way that a text has been interpreted down the ages is not irrelevant. It reveals something of the *potentiality* of the text, even if it cannot be shown that a particular interpretation was present in the mind of the author (can it ever?). These are positive gains from the use of the term intertextuality. But there is a down-side. The frequent use of the term is threatening to blunt the scholarly enterprise by lumping together a whole variety of approaches and calling them intertextuality. Even worse, it can sometimes be used to make vague and tenuous 'echoes' sound more credible. As a result, Porter suggests that the term is unhelpful and is best dropped from scholarly discussion.⁶ However, the same criticisms can be levelled at terms like 'midrash', 'typology' and 'exegesis', all of which have been used to defend 'uses' of the Old Testament which might otherwise appear arbitrary. Indeed, the title of this volume of essays is quite deliberate. I chose *The Old Testament in the New Testament* to avoid the implication that our only interest is in an author's 'use' of the Old Testament. As Bruns says, 'We need to get out from under the model of methodical solipsism that pictures a solitary reader exercising strategic power over a text'.⁷ The relationship between texts is never just one way. As Miscall notes, the

relationship between two texts is equivocal. It includes at the same time, both acceptance and rejection, recognition and denial, understanding and misunderstanding... To recognize that a text is related to another text is both to affirm and to deny the earlier text. It is affirmed as a type of model and source, while it is denied by being made secondary to the later text, precisely by being regarded as a model and a source that has been superseded.⁸

6 S.E.Porter, 'The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Method and Terminology', in Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (eds.), *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel. Investigations and Proposals* (JSNTSup 148; Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity, 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp.79-96. Vernon Robbins says that the 'current terminology of "intertextuality" collapses three arenas of analysis and interpretation together in a manner that is confusing' (*The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse. Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* [London: Routledge, 1996], p.33). I discuss his proposals in the final section of this essay.

7 G.L.Bruns, 'The Hermeneutics of Midrash', in R. Schwartz (ed.), *The Book and the Text* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p.192.

8 P.D.Miscall, 'Isaiah: New Heavens, New Earth, New Book', in D.N.Fewell (ed.), *Reading Between Texts. Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), p.44.

The value of the term ‘intertextuality’ is that it evokes such complexity and openness.⁹ However, if intertextuality is best used as an ‘umbrella’ term, then it requires subcategories to indicate the individual scholar’s particular interest or focus. In this essay, I suggest three such categories. The first I call *Intertextual Echo*. It is the bread and butter of many ‘Old Testament in the New’ studies and aims to show that a particular allusion or echo can sometimes be more important than its ‘volume’ might suggest. As I have said elsewhere, it is not just the loudest instruments in the orchestra that give a piece its particular character. Sometimes, subtle allusions or echoes, especially if they are frequent and pervasive, can be more influential than explicit quotations.¹⁰

The second category I have called *Dialogical Intertextuality*. This is where the interaction between text and subtext is seen to operate in both directions. As Davidson says of Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, ‘The work alluded to reflects upon the present context even as the present context absorbs and changes the allusion’.¹¹ One of the frequently debated topics in ‘Old Testament in the New’ studies is whether the new authors show respect for the original context of their citations.¹² The issue arises because on the one hand, the early church wants to claim that Jesus’ life and death is a fulfilment of Scripture (1 Cor. 15.3-4). On the other hand, it wants to claim that it is only in Christ that Scripture finds its true meaning (2 Cor. 3.15). Dialogical Intertextuality tries to do justice to both of these claims.

The third I have called *Postmodern Intertextuality*. Both of the above are aiming to secure meaning by defining (controlling) how a text interacts with a subtext. Dialogical Intertextuality acknowledges that this is

9 Miscall, ‘Isaiah’, p.44: “‘Intertextuality’ is a covering term for all the possible relations that can be established between texts’.

10 S.Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (JSNTSup 115; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), p.18, and endorsed by R.M.Royalty, *The Streets of Heaven. The Ideology of Wealth in the Apocalypse of John* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), p.125, n.1.

11 H.Davidson, *T.S.Eliot and Hermeneutics: Absence and Interpretation in the Waste Land* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), p.117.

12 S.Moyise, ‘Does the New Testament Quote the Old Testament Out of Context?’, *Anvil* 11 (1994), pp.133-43; G.K.Beale (ed), *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994).

not straightforward but nevertheless endeavours to find ways of describing the result of such interactions. Postmodern Intertextuality turns this on its head and shows how the process is inherently unstable. The fact that a text always points to other texts and a reader always brings texts they know to every reading, means that there is never *only* one way of interpreting a text. Postmodern Intertextuality aims to show that ‘meaning’ is always bought at a price and explores what that price is. In other words, meaning can only result if some interactions are privileged and others are silenced.

It is not the aim of this study to argue that one of these categories is the correct one. The postmodern variety is closer to what Kristeva had in mind but as stated above, the term is now used in biblical studies in a variety of ways. But it is hoped that this analysis might help authors clarify what sort of intertextuality they have in mind, so that readers can know what is being claimed and how best to respond to it.

Intertextual Echo

In his ground-breaking book, Hays speaks of intertextual echo in order to suggest that echoes can be quite loud if they reverberate in an echo chamber. Previous studies on the Old Testament in the New have often divided references into quotations, allusions and echoes. There is no agreed definitions but generally, a quotation involves a self-conscious break from the author’s style to introduce words from another context. There is frequently an introductory formula like καθὼς γέραπται or Μωυσης λέγει or some grammatical clue such as the use of ὅτι. Next comes allusions, usually woven into the text rather than ‘quoted’, and often rather less precise in terms of wording. Naturally, there is considerable debate as to how much verbal agreement is necessary to establish the presence of an allusion.¹³ Lastly comes echos, faint traces of texts

¹³ Hays proposes seven tests, namely, availability, volume, recurrence, thematic coherence, historical plausibility, history of interpretation and satisfaction. These are useful things to bear in mind but it would be wrong to think that they act as ‘objective’ criteria. Rigorous historical enquiry might clarify ‘availability’ (could it have been known?) and ‘historical interpretation’ (has it been seen before?) but most of the others are subjective judgments. Indeed, Hays recognizes this: ‘Although the foregoing texts are serviceable rules of thumb to guide our interpretive work, we must acknowledge that there will be exceptional occasions when the tests fail to account for the spontaneous power of particular intertextual conjunctions. Despite all the careful hedges that we plant around...

that are probably quite unconscious but emerge from minds soaked in the scriptural heritage of Israel.

It is not difficult to see why studies on the 'Old Testament in the New' have often focused on quotations. There is not usually much controversy as to the source text and the author is clearly 'intending' the reader to acknowledge the citation by drawing attention to it. However, if a subtext is well known, the slightest of allusions is sometimes sufficient to evoke its presence. A popular game show on television required contestants to guess the title of a piece of a music from its opening bars. Sometimes, the winner managed this from just two notes. Similarly, not many words are necessary to evoke Israel's Passover or Exile. The themes are so well known (and repeated liturgically) that a seemingly innocuous mention of 'doorposts' (in the appropriate language, of course) might well be sufficient. As Hays says of Paul's letters,

Echoes linger in the air and lure the reader of Paul's letters back into the symbolic world of Scripture. Paul's allusions gesture toward precursors whose words are already heavy with tacit implication.¹⁴

Romans 8.20 and Ecclesiastes

In Paul's description of human depravity in Romans 1, those who did not acknowledge God 'became futile in their thinking' (v.21). The Greek word is μάταιος, which Liddell and Scott define as 'vain, empty, idle, trifling, frivolous, thoughtless, rash, irreverent, profane, impious'.¹⁵ Paul continues, 'Claiming to be wise, they became fools'. The same thought is found in 1 Cor. 3.20, where Paul quotes Ps. 94.11 in the form, 'The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile' (μάταιος). The wisdom of the world has not led to people believing in Christ and so from Paul's point of view, it is 'futile' (NRSV, NIV), 'worthless' (GNB), 'useless' (JB). Such contrasts between wise and foolish are of course frequent in the wisdom literature and appear in some of Jesus' parables. However, Paul goes further than this in Rom.

texts, meaning has a way of leaping over, like sparks.' (*Echoes of Scripture*, pp.32-33).

¹⁴ *Echoes of Scripture*, p.155.

¹⁵ H.G.Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.489.

8.20, where he claims that ‘creation itself was subjected to futility’ (ματαιότης). Lietzmann¹⁶ thinks this is referring to cosmic powers but the majority of commentators take ὑπεταγεί to be a divine passive: Creation was subjected to futility *by God*. Where did Paul get such a negative idea from? If we are looking for a text, the most likely is the book of Ecclesiastes, where the author says:

I, the Teacher, when king over Israel in Jerusalem, applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven; it is an unhappy business that God has given to human beings to be busy with. I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind (1.12-14).

The Hebrew underlying the word ‘vanity’ is חבל, frequently used for the ‘futility’ or ‘worthlessness’ of idols (Deut. 32.21; 1 Kgs 16.13; Ps. 31.6). Significantly, the Septuagint renders this with same word used by Paul in Rom. 8.20. And this is not an isolated instance. The book of Ecclesiastes continues to survey the activities of humankind and declares them all to be חבל. Not even wisdom and righteousness escape his biting analysis. Thus in 2.15-16, he concludes that ‘the same fate befalls all... there is no enduring remembrance of the wise or of fools... So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a chasing after wind.’ And righteousness fares no better. Grieved that ‘there are righteous people who perish in their righteousness, and there are wicked people who prolong their life in their evil-doing’ (7.15), the author offers the following advice: ‘Do not be too righteous, and do not act too wise; why should you destroy yourself?’

Jerome was aware of Rabbinic opposition to the book ‘for the reason that it affirms that the creatures of God are “vain”, and considers the whole (universe) to be as nothing’. Why then, he asks, was it ‘included in the number of divine volumes’? Because the last few verses proclaim that the duty of everyone is to ‘fear God, and keep his commandments’. Thus ‘it has from this one chapter acquired the merit of being received as authoritative’.¹⁷ In Rabbinic terms, it was a dispute over whether the book defiled the hands (i.e. regarded as sacred). Thus Rabbi Simeon

16 Quoted in J.A.Fitzmyer, *Romans. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 33; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), p.507.

17 Quoted in A.P.Hayman ‘Qohelet, the Rabbis and the Wisdom Text from the Cairo Geniza’, in A.G.Auld (ed.), *Understanding Poets and Prophets* (JSOTSup 152; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), p.161.

b.Menasia said, 'The Song of Songs defiles the hands because it was composed under divine inspiration. Ecclesiastes does not defile the hands because it is only the wisdom of Solomon' (*t.Yad.2.14*). The midrash on the book is a late composition but is testimony to the fact that the debate was not easily settled, observing that the 'sages sought to suppress the Book of Qohelet because they discovered therein words which savour of heresy' (*Qoh. R. 1.3*).

Few today would deny its canonical status but opinion about its fundamental message remains sharply divided. Crenshaw represents the critical strand when he declares that the author 'examines experience and discovers nothing that will survive death's arbitrary blow. He then proceeds to report this discovery of life's absurdity and to advise young men on the best option in the light of stark reality.'¹⁸ On the other hand, there has recently been a concerted attempt to rescue Ecclesiastes from this negative image. Scholars such as Ogden¹⁹ and Fredericks²⁰ claim that interpreters have been unduly influenced by the Septuagint's use of

חבל and have largely ignored the positive statements in the book. For example, in 2.24 the claim is made that there is 'nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God'. True, life is short and holds many surprises, but that is all the more reason to make the most of it. Thus 5.18 says, 'This is what I have seen to be good: it is fitting to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of the life God gives us; for this is our lot.'

Taking this as their point of departure, Ogden and Fredericks argue that חבל should not be rendered by words like 'futility' or 'vanity' but something like 'transitory'. As the epistle of James puts it, life is like a 'mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes' (4.14) but few have taken this to imply that life is futile. Likewise with Ecclesiastes. They acknowledge that outside the book, חבל is often associated with idols and hence 'futility' or 'vanity' is a suitable translation. But the positive commands to enjoyment in Ecclesiastes (2.24; 3.12; 3.22; 5.18; 8.15; 9.7; 11.9) make it unsuitable here. Thus Ogden claims that

18 J.L.Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1988), p.28.

19 G.Ogden, *Qoheleth* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

20 D.C.Fredericks, *Coping with Transience. Ecclesiastes on Brevity of Life* (The Biblical Seminar, 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

the term *hebel* in *Qoheleth* has a distinctive function and meaning: it conveys the notion that life is enigmatic, and mysterious; that there are many unanswered and unanswerable questions. The person of faith recognizes this fact but moves forward positively to claim and enjoy the life and the work which God apportions.²¹

Returning to Rom. 8.20, it is interesting that Paul's claim that 'creation was subjected to futility' has not met the resistance with which *Ecclesiastes* has had to face. For example, Barrett claims that, 'Paul would doubtless agree that the creation apart from Christ could have only an unreal existence'.²² Nygren glosses over the word 'futility' and says that because of the curse of Gen. 3.17, the 'whole existence in which we are involved stands in bondage to corruption.'²³ Dodd draws a contrast to the state of humanity, which is our own fault, and the state of creation, which is 'by the will of God'. He adds that 'we cannot give any further answer to the question, Why?'²⁴ Dunn topically illustrates the meaning of *ματαιότης* as 'like an expensive satellite which has malfunctioned and now spins uselessly in space... or, more precisely, which has been given a role for which it was not designed and which is unreal or illusory'.²⁵

Two factors seem to have led to this acquiescence. The first is that while there might be some doubt over the meaning of *לִבְנֵי*, there is no such doubt about *ματαιότης*. Elsewhere in the New Testament, the word occurs in Eph. 4.17 ('you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds') and 2 Pet. 2.18 ('uttering loud boasts of folly' [RSV]). The verb only occurs once in the New Testament and that is Paul's statement in Rom. 1.20, that those who ignored God 'became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened'. It is hard to decide whether Paul has been directly influenced by the *ματαιότης* of *Ecclesiastes* for it is generally recognised that the LXX text is post-Christian. But there is no doubt about his meaning; creation was subjected to futility (by God).

21 Ogden, *Qoheleth*, p.22.

22 C.K.Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1962), p.166.

23 A.Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1949), p.331.

24 C.H.Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Fontana Books, 1959), p.149.

25 J.D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC, 38, Dallas: Word Books, 1988), p.470.

The second factor is that the context of Romans 8 is so overwhelmingly positive that the negative verdict has been completely swallowed up by 'the glory about to be revealed to us' (8.18). Indeed, the salvation that Paul is describing is enhanced by his negative verdict on creation. Creation was not subjected to futility as an end in itself but so that it might also 'obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God' (8.21). The catena of Rom. 3.10-18 has a similar role before the momentous 3.21-26.

Quotation, Allusion or Echo?

There is clearly no question of Paul quoting Ecclesiastes in Rom. 8.20. Indeed, according to the tables in the back of *UBSGNT*, there is not a single quotation of Ecclesiastes in the whole of the New Testament (though see below). Is it then an allusion? Does Paul's use of ματαιότης 'activate' the ματαιότης of Ecclesiastes (LXX), to use Ben-Porat's expression?²⁶ And if so, with what result? Traditionally, this question would be asked in terms of the author's intention. Was Paul consciously directing the reader to the book of Ecclesiastes? The article on ματαιότης in *TDNT* says that, 'R.8:20 is a valid commentary on Qoh.' It goes on to say that while the 'passage does not solve the metaphysical and logical problems raised by *vanitas*... it tells us plainly that the state of ματαιότης ("vanity") exists, and also that this has a beginning and end... Paul could speak of ἐλπίς and δόξα with an authority not found in Qoh.'²⁷ However, most commentators would want to see more evidence than Romans 8 can provide before agreeing that it was a *deliberate* allusion on Paul's part.

Is it then an echo or an unconscious allusion? Sanday and Headlam note that ματαιότης is the constant refrain of Ecclesiastes and therefore Paul's use of the word is 'appropriately used of the *disappointing* character of present existence, which nowhere reaches the perfection of which it is capable.'²⁸ The implication of this appears to be that while Paul is not consciously alluding to Ecclesiastes, he has nevertheless chosen a word that is thoroughly appropriate, given its particular usage

26 Cited in a very useful glossary at the beginning of Fewell (ed), *Reading Between Texts*, p.21.

27 *TDNT* IV, p.523.

28 W.Sanday and A.C.Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 5th edn, 1902), p.208. Emphasis original.

in that book. In terms of a theory of echo, we might say that Ecclesiastes is the 'cave of resonant signification', to use one of Hollander's terms. The reader is not specifically directed to the book of Ecclesiastes but the haunting prose of that book *accompanies* a reading of Romans 8 as 'shading of voice'. Or, as Hays puts it, it 'places the reader within a field of whispered or unstated correspondences.'²⁹ At any rate, Barratt says that the reader of Romans 8.20 'recalls at once passages such as Eccles.i.2'.³⁰

A further piece of evidence can be added. In the catena of Rom. 3.10-18, Paul strings together a number of quotations (ostensibly) to show the wickedness of all humankind.³¹ Since Rom 3.11-12 is drawn from Ps.13.2-3 (LXX), most scholars have concluded that Rom. 3.10 must be a paraphrase of Ps.13.1. But as Dunn observes, Paul's words are closer to the LXX of Eccles. 7.20 than to Ps. 13.1, and we know from *Sanh.* 101a that Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (late first century) used Ecclesiastes 7.20 to demonstrate the sinfulness of humankind.

οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος οὐδὲ εἷς (Rom. 3.10b)

ὅτι ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος ἐν τῇ γῆ (Eccles. 7.20)

οὐκ ἔστιν ποιῶν χρηστότητα οὐκ ἔστιν ἕως ἑνός (Ps.13.1)

On the assumption that Paul does not quote from the book of Ecclesiastes, most scholars opt for Ps. 13.1 as the source of Rom. 3.10b, even though it lacks the key word δίκαιος. Stanley, for example, says that the 'introduction here of a word from the δικ- group could hardly be more Pauline.'³² But if Rom. 8.20 can plausibly be seen as an allusion to the ματαιότης of Ecclesiastes, then it adds weight to the possibility that Rom. 3.10 is drawing on Eccles. 7.20 (indeed, a quotation according to Nestle-Aland), especially as it actually contains the phrase οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος. Thus what began as an investigation of a minor echo, could have a significant impact on a reading of Romans. The idea that 'no one is righteous' is hardly a common theme in the Old Testament. Nor is the idea that 'creation is subject to futility'. It could be that

²⁹ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, p.20.

³⁰ *The Epistle to the Romans*, p.166.

³¹ S.Moyise, 'The Catena of Romans 3:10-18', *ExpTim* 106 (1995), pp.367-370.

³² C.D.Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture. Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (SNTSM, 74, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.90.

the book of Ecclesiastes has been far more influential on Paul's thinking than the lack of explicit quotations would suggest.

One further point reinforces this. In Rom. 8.21, Paul says that creation is in 'bondage to decay'. Most commentators take this as an allusion to Gen. 3.17 ('cursed is the ground because of you; in *toil* you shall eat of it all the days of your life.') But in Eccles. 1.3, the first example of ματαιότης is *toil* ('What do people gain from all the *toil* under the sun?') Caution is needed since Ecclesiastes uses a different word for 'toil' than Genesis. But the link between 'toil' and 'futility' in Ecclesiastes might be the 'transumed text' (Hollander) that lies behind Rom. 8.20-21. Paul is never explicit about this and so certainty is impossible. But is there a better explanation of Rom. 8.20-21 than a background text which says οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος, which says life is ματαιότης and which links ματαιότης with the story of the Fall?

Dialogical Intertextuality

The previous case study illustrates how a relatively minor echo could have a big effect on how a text is read. But its parameters are one dimensional. There is an argument being pursued in Romans and a decision has to be made as to how much the context in Ecclesiastes (if at all) is allowed to influence it. But it is often more complicated than that. As Hays says:

Allusive echo functions to suggest to the reader that text B should be understood in light of a broad interplay with text A, encompassing aspects of A beyond those explicitly echoed...(it)...places the reader within a field of whispered or unstated correspondences.³³

His own exposition of 2 Corinthians 3 offers a good example. Firstly, Paul introduces the figure of Moses as a 'foil against which to commend the candor and boldness of his own ministry.'³⁴ The reader is led to expect a completely negative verdict of religion under the old covenant but v.16 introduces a turn as dramatic as the one mentioned in that verse ('but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed'). Initially, the implication seems clear. The generation of Moses was unable to see clearly but those who have responded to Paul's preaching (i.e. the readers) have had the veil removed. However, the mention

33 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, p.20.

34 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, p.147.

of 'veil' reminds Paul that Moses did in fact remove his veil when he entered God's presence. Thus Moses is both a contrast to ministry under the new covenant and a witness to it:

The rhetorical effect of this ambiguous presentation is an unsettling one, because it simultaneously posits and undercuts the glory of Moses' ministry... Since Paul is arguing that the ministry of the new covenant outshines the ministry of the old in glory, it serves his purpose to exalt the glory of Moses; at the same time, the grand claims that he wants to make for his own ministry require that the old be denigrated... by distancing his ministry from Moses, Paul paradoxically appropriates attributes similar to those that he insistently rejects; connotations bleed over from the denied images to the entity with which they are discompared.³⁵

According to Hays, this is achieved by Paul's allusive use of scripture, which 'leaves enough silence for the voice of Scripture to answer back.' Paul does not fill in all the 'intertextual space with explanations' but 'encourages the reader to listen to more of Scripture's message than he himself voices. The word that scripture speaks where Paul falls silent is a word that still has the power to contend against him.'³⁶

Revelation 5.4-5 and Genesis 49.9/Isaiah 11.1,10

Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.' Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

There is little dispute that the image of Jesus as the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David' is an allusion to Gen. 49.9 and Isa. 11.1,10. Both texts have a significant interpretative history. A messianic interpretation of Gen. 49.9 is found in both the Targumic literature and in the Dead Sea Scrolls.³⁷ Isa. 11.10 says, 'On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be righteous.' The prophecy was important to the Qumran community, who took it to be about the one who 'shall

35 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, pp.132-3

36 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, p.177.

37 *Targ. Neof.* and *Targ. Ps.-J.* of Gen. 49.9-12; *Tanh.* Gen. 12.12; *Gen. R* 97; 1QSb 5.21-29.

arise at the end [of days]... God will uphold him with [the spirit of might, and will give him] a throne of glory and a crown of [holiness] and many-coloured garments... and he shall rule over all the [nations].’ (4Q161) However, in Rev. 5.4-5, juxtaposed with these images of power is the image of a ‘Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered’. Aune notes that lambs or sheep are mentioned in the Old Testament with reference to the burnt offering (Exod. 29.38-46), the Passover (Exod. 12.1-20), rites of purification (Lev. 12.6), consecration (Num. 7), expiation of unintentional sins (Lev. 4.1-5.13), celebration of first fruits (Lev. 23.12), Nazirite vows (Num. 6.12) and as a metaphor for the Servant of God (Isa. 53.10).³⁸ Beale thinks that it basically boils down to two backgrounds, the Passover lamb and the Servant of God, and both are intended. As to the purpose of this juxtaposition, Caird’s view has been extremely influential,

‘Wherever the Old Testament says “Lion”, read “Lamb”.’ Wherever the Old Testament speaks of the victory of the Messiah or the overthrow of the enemies of God, we are to remember that the gospel recognizes no other way of achieving these ends than the way of the Cross.³⁹

Thus Sweet says:

We may agree, then, with Caird that what John *hears*, the traditional OT expectation of military deliverance, is reinterpreted by what he sees, the historical fact of a sacrificial death, and that the resulting paradox is the key to all his use of the OT, ‘as if John were saying to us... “Wherever the Old Testament says *Lion*, read *Lamb*”...’⁴⁰

In his own words, the ‘Lion of Judah, the traditional messianic expectation, is reinterpreted by the slain Lamb: God’s power and victory lie in self-sacrifice’.⁴¹ Boring says: ‘It is as though John had adopted the familiar synagogue practice of “perpetual Kethib/Qere,” whereby a word or phrase that appears in the traditional text is read as another word or phrase’.⁴² He then quotes Caird, ‘wherever the tradition says

38 D.Aune, *Revelation 1-5* (WBC, 52A, Dallas: Word Books, 1997), pp.372-73.

39 G.B.Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London: A. & C. Black, 2nd edn, 1984), p.75.

40 J.P.M.Sweet, *Revelation* (London: SCM Press, 1990), p.125.

41 Sweet, *Revelation*, p.125.

42 M.E.Boring, *Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), p.110.

“lion,” read “Lamb””. The implication for both Sweet and Boring is that the apocalyptic violence of chapters 6-19 must be seen in the light of the slain Lamb, and definitely not vice versa. Bauckham is more nuanced and recognizes that the ‘hopes embodied in the messianic titles of Rev. 5.5 are not dismissed by the vision of the Lamb.’⁴³ Nevertheless, he also quotes Caird and states that ‘by juxtaposing these contrasting images, John forges a symbol of conquest by sacrificial death, which is essentially a new symbol.’⁴⁴ Finally, Beale says that ‘John is attempting to emphasize that it was in an ironic manner that Jesus began to fulfill the OT prophecies’ and then paraphrases Caird, ‘Wherever the OT predicts the Messiah’s final victory and reign, John’s readers are to realize that these goals can begin to be achieved only by the suffering of the cross.’⁴⁵

On the other hand, there is a line of interpretation that draws a contrast between the all-powerful Lamb of Revelation and the Lamb ‘who takes away the sin of the world’ (John 1.29). Thus Dodd cites 1 *Enoch* 90 and *Test. Joseph* 19.8 and concludes that ‘we have here a prototype of the militant seven-horned “Lamb” of the Apocalypse of John.’⁴⁶ Barrett looks to passages like Exodus 12, Isaiah 53 and Leviticus 16 as possible backgrounds for the Lamb of John 1.29 but discounts *Test. Joseph* 19.8 since it ‘recalls the conquering lamb of Revelation... rather than the present passage.’⁴⁷ And Brown concludes his discussion of John 1.29 with the words, ‘Thus we suggest that John the Baptist hailed Jesus as the lamb of Jewish apocalyptic expectation who was to be raised up by God to destroy evil in the world, a picture not too far from that of Rev xvii 14.’⁴⁸ This line of interpretation reaches its climax in Ford’s commentary, who considers the book of Revelation to derive (largely) from followers of John the Baptist. Lion and Lamb, she says, are not contrasting symbols, as if one represented raw power while the other is about

43 R.Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), p.183.

44 Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, p.183.

45 G.K.Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), p.353.

46 C.H.Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1968), p.232.

47 C.K.Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John* (London: SPCK, 1978), p.147.

48 R.Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; AB, 29, Garden City: NY: Doubleday, 1966), I. p.60.

sacrifice and vulnerability. Jewish apocalyptic texts predicted a conquering Lamb who will appear in the last days and destroy evil, as *Test. Joseph* 19.8 makes clear:

And I saw that a virgin was born from Judah, wearing a linen stole; and from her was born a spotless lamb. At his left there was something like a lion, and all the wild animals rushed against him, but the lamb conquered them, and destroyed them, trampling them underfoot.⁴⁹

Ford maintains that there is nothing in the book of Revelation which compels us to depart from this picture. The Lamb of Revelation 5 has seven horns, indicating power, and seven eyes, a symbol of omniscience. In the very next chapter of Revelation, those who suffer the calamities set loose by the Lamb cry out:

Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?

And the picture does not change when the confederacy of kings in Rev. 17.14 confront the Lamb:

they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.

Ford thus concludes that John's use of the title 'Lamb' is thoroughly consonant with the 'apocalyptic, victorious, and destroying lamb' known to tradition.⁵⁰ Few Revelation scholars have agreed with this but it does highlight the difficulty of accepting the 'Caird position'. If John's intention was to offer the hermeneutic, 'wherever you see images of power, replace them with images of self-sacrifice', why does he continue to use images of power so extensively? As Aune notes, while it may be a plausible explanation of Revelation 5, it is a 'marginal conception elsewhere in the book'.⁵¹ Indeed, Revelation comes to an end with the description of Christ as the 'root and the descendant of

49 Though Bauckham thinks this verse 'has so evidently been rewritten - if not entirely composed - by a Christian editor, that it is no longer possible to tell whether the victorious lamb was already present in a Jewish version.' (*Climax of Prophecy*, pp.83-4).

50 J.M.Ford, *Revelation* (AB,38, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), pp.87-95.

51 Aune, *Revelation* 1-5, p.352.

David, the bright morning star' (22.16). There is no suggestion that this needs replacing or even reinterpreting. Images of sacrifice or 'victory through suffering' are not even in the vicinity.

My suggestion in *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* is that John does not want his readers to simply replace one set of images by another. Rather, he wishes to encourage their mutual interpretation. The images of power inform our understanding of the Lamb and the image of a 'Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered' provides a new context for the Old Testament messianic texts. I support this by noting that John uses this technique on other occasions. For example, in the opening vision, Jesus says to the seer, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever' (Rev. 1.17-18). Images of eternal existence from Isa. 44.6, 48.12 are juxtaposed with the stark, 'I was dead', from Christian tradition. We are not told how the eternal God could die or how the crucified Jesus can be the eternal being of Isa. 44.6/48.12. The ideas are simply juxtaposed and the reader is left to mutually interpret them.

In Rev. 7.4, John hears the number of those sealed, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. But in Rev. 7.9, he sees 'a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne'. Some scholars think that this refers to two different groups (Jews and Gentiles, martyrs and ordinary Christians) but the majority believe it is two ways of referring to the same thing. It does not appear to be John's intention to replace the image of the 144,000 by the image of the countless multitude. Nor does it seem to be his intention to reinterpret it, for he uses it again in chapter 14, this time without any corresponding reference to a great multitude. And if the image of the 144,000 is not replaced or reinterpreted, the only other option is that it is allowed to co-exist in creative tension with the image of the countless multitude. As Resseguie says, 'Although he heard 144,000, he saw a great multitude. The two are not separate, but mutually interpret each other'.⁵²

This does not mean that the reader can make these images mean whatever he or she likes. It is rather that the combination of Lion and Lamb points to a dynamic reality rather than a static one. Beale seems to accept this point when he says that

⁵² J.L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed. A Narrative Critical Approach to John's Apocalypse* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p.8.

the place of the Old Testament in the formation of thought in the Apocalypse is both that of a servant and a guide: for John the Christ event is the key to understanding the Old Testament, and yet reflection on the Old Testament context leads the way to further comprehension of this event and provides the redemptive-historical background against which the apocalyptic visions are better understood; the New Testament interprets the Old and the Old interprets the New.⁵³

However, his worry over intertextuality (and my approach, in particular) is the suggestion that readers *create* meaning. For him, the juxtaposition of images is a) simply an aspect of John's overall Semitic style; and b) does not result in ambiguity but finds a single resolution, which ultimately resides in John's intention:

The notion that readers create meaning is likely due in part to a hermeneutical flaw of confusing original 'meaning' with 'significance'... By way of illustration, we can compare an author's original, unchanging meaning to an apple in its original context of an apple tree. When someone removes the apple and puts it into another setting (say, in a basket of various fruits in a dining room for decorative purposes), the apple does not lose its original identity as an apple, the fruit of a particular kind of tree, but the apple must now be understood not in and of itself but in relation to the new context in which it has been placed... The new context does not annihilate the original identity of the apple, but now the apple must be understood in its relation to its new setting.⁵⁴

The point of the analogy is that though the apple might now be viewed in a different way, it never becomes a pear. Readers cannot make a text mean whatever they like. Old Testament allusions certainly gain new 'significance' by being placed in a new setting but this does not result in new 'meaning'. The distinction comes from Hirsch.⁵⁵ The meaning of an Old Testament text is what the original author intended and that never changes. It is only the text's 'significance' that changes. But does this really do justice to the Lion and Lamb of Revelation 5? Calling Christ 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah' suggests a powerful military leader because that was the meaning of the phrase in Gen. 49.9 and the tradition that stems from it. But Beale now wishes to understand the

53 G.K.Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (JSNTSup, 166, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p.127. Emphasis original.

54 *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, pp.51-2. For a reply, see my 'The Old Testament in the New: A Reply to Greg Beale', *IBS* (1999), pp.54-58.

55 E.D.Hirsch, *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

phrase in the ironic sense of 'victory through self-sacrifice'. Thus Jesus is not a Lion in the Gen. 49.9 sense but only in the *new* sense of 'victory through self-sacrifice'. Indeed, Beale can speak of John 'offering new understandings of Old Testament texts and fulfilments of them which may have been surprising to an Old Testament audience'.⁵⁶ It seems to me quite arbitrary to call this a change of 'significance' but not a change of 'meaning'.

Dialogical Intertextuality would agree with Beale that the 'new context does not annihilate the original identity of the apple' but would want to make more of the following phrase, 'but the apple must now be understood not in and of itself but *in relation to the new context* in which it has been placed'. It seems to me that Beale wants to have his cake (or apple) and eat it. He wants to assert that John offers 'new understandings of Old Testament texts', while insisting that those texts remain perfectly intact (nice shiny apples). But a better analogy would be that of a fruit salad, where we no longer have nice shiny apples but *pieces* of apple, mixed up with *pieces* of pear and *pieces* of banana. There is a *connection* with the shiny apple that once hung on a tree but also dramatic differences: It is no longer round, the skin has been removed and it has been severed from its core.⁵⁷ But the real problem with this type of analogy is its corporeality. Texts do not have hard surfaces that protect them from change of context. They are more like ripples on a pond, which spread out, intersect with other ripples and form new patterns. Or even less corporeal, texts are like sound waves which 'interfere' with one another, producing a series of harmonics and distortions (hence the 'echo-chamber' analogy).

Dialogical Intertextuality suggests that not only is the powerful Lion reinterpreted by the image of the slain Lamb. The image of Christ as a slaughtered Lamb also undergoes reinterpretation by being juxtaposed with the Lion. As Resseguie says,

The Lion of the tribe of Judah interprets what John sees: death on the cross (the Lamb) is not defeat but is the way to power and victory (the Lion)... the Lamb, though not in nature a strong animal, is a being of incontrovertible might in this book.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *John's Use of the Old Testament*, p.128.

⁵⁷ The fact that Rev. 5 goes on to allude to Ezekiel's scroll suggests another analogy - that John has taken bites from apples, pears and bananas and has chewed and digested them. I hardly like to continue the analogy but Rev. 3.16 is a clue!

⁵⁸ *Revelation Unsealed*, pp.34, 129. I find Beale's discussion of 'respecting the original context' similarly inadequate.

Postmodern Intertextuality

In the 1989 book, *Intertextuality in Biblical writings*, Ellen van Wolde describes the way a text is produced and read:

The writer assigns meaning to [their] own context and in interaction with other texts... shapes and forms [a] text. The reader, in much the same way, assigns meaning to the generated text in interaction with other texts [they] know... A writer does not weave a web of meanings that the reader merely has to follow, but... presents them to the reader as a text. The reader reacts to the offer and enters into a dialogue with the possibilities the text has to offer.⁵⁹

On this understanding, reading always has a subjective element for 'all interpretations must necessarily delimit a text's possible references in order to come up with a coherent meaning.'⁶⁰ And this involves choice and hence vested interests:

Every text - as an intersection of other textual surfaces - suggests an indeterminate surplus of meaningful possibilities. Interpretation is always a production of meaning from that surplus.⁶¹

He acknowledges that John sometimes uses Old Testament texts in ways that are very different (even diametrically opposite) to their Old Testament contexts. But this is explained by noting that 'these new interpretations are the result of John's new, presuppositional lenses through which he is now looking at the Old Testament... *Granted the legitimacy of these presuppositions*, John's interpretation of the Old Testament shows respect for Old Testament contexts' (John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation, p.45). I would suggest that a better way of putting this is to say that John shows an 'awareness' of Old Testament contexts but his Christian presuppositions nevertheless allow him to change, modify and even (on occasions) invert them. If 'respect for context' simply means 'understandable given the author's presuppositions', then it surely becomes a truism. Even the most bizarre allegorical use of Scripture could be said to 'respect the context' if we accept the legitimacy of the author's presuppositions (such as substituting like-sounding words). R.M. Royalty concedes that John's use of scripture 'shows conscious authorial intention' but argues that it is 'far-fetched to imagine that John's free recombination and rewriting of scriptural texts has anything at all to do with the purpose of the original passages.' (*The Streets of Heaven*, p.72 n.95).

59 E. van Wolde, 'Trendy Intertextuality', in Draisma (ed), *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*, p.47. The quotation has been altered so as to be inclusive.

60 T.K. Beal, 'Ideology and Intertextuality: Surplus of Meaning and Controlling the Means of Production', in Fewell (ed), *Reading Between Texts*, pp.30-31.

61 Beal, 'Ideology and Intertextuality', p.31. Emphasis original.

By exposing the bias of individual interpreters, Postmodern Intertextuality has much in common with feminist (some have played with the words intertextuality/intersexuality) and other liberation readings. And by focussing on the need for individual interpreters to 'produce meaning', it has much in common with those approaches broadly classed as deconstruction. For example, Seeley says of Matthew's Gospel, that its

presumed univocity is undermined and cracked by the multiplicity of voices embedded within and speaking simultaneously through it. These voices cannot be silenced by appeals to overall redactional coherence, or to a hierarchy of plots. They are all there, like an unharmonious choir demanding to be heard.⁶²

Boyarin has explored this with respect to Jewish Midrash. He argues that the purpose of midrash was not to expose, once and for all, the true meaning of a text and thereby end all discussion. Rather, it is the 'laying bare of an intertextual connection between two signifiers which mutually read each other. It is not, nor can it be, decided which signifier is the interpreter and which the interpreted.'⁶³

John 4.16-20

Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.'

The story of the 'woman at the well' has been the subject of a number of recent studies.⁶⁴ The 'traditional' reading sees Jesus (the male) in

62 D. Seeley, *Deconstructing the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), p.52.

63 D. Boyarin, 'The Song of Songs: Lock or Key? Intertextuality, Allegory and Midrash', in Schwartz (ed), *The Book and the Text*, p.223.

64 I.R. Kitzberger, 'Border crossing and meeting Jesus at the well: An autobiographical re-reading of the Samaritan woman's story in John 4:1-44', in I.R. Kitzberger (ed), *The Personal Voice in Biblical Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.111-127; G.A. Phillips, 'The Ethics of Reading Deconstructively, or Speaking Face-to-Face: The Samaritan Woman Meets Derrida at the Well', in E.S. Malbon and E.V. McKnight (eds.), *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (JSNTSup, 109, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp.283-325; T. Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission:*

conversation with the Samaritan (the female) but operating on a different (higher) plane. Her mind is set on earthly matters. She has come to the well for ordinary water (4.7). When Jesus speaks of 'living water', all she can think of is 'Sir, you have no bucket'. When he explains that: 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty', her interest is aroused but only to save herself the daily journey (4.15). When Jesus exposes the fact that she has had five husbands, she tries to embroil him in a theological discussion about places of worship. But once again, Jesus is on a higher plane. Worship is not about place but spirit and truth (4.24). Lastly, she voices a basic tenet of her Samaritan beliefs: 'I know that Messiah is coming... When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' (4.25) Jesus replies, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.' (4.26) Schneiders calls this the typical male reading of the story which

presents the woman as a disreputable (if interesting) miscreant who, failing in her attempt to distract Jesus from her sexually disgraceful past, surrenders to his overpowering preternatural knowledge of her, alerts her fellow townspeople to his presence, and then fades from the scene as they discover him for themselves and come to believe in him.⁶⁵

A different reading is possible, however, for it is *Jesus* who asks for a drink. It is not that the woman can only think in earthly terms; this is what Jesus asks for. He is sitting by Jacob's great well and asks her for a (material) drink. But the woman looks beyond the material to ask why social taboos are being ignored for 'Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans' (4.9). Jesus replies that he can offer 'living water', which the woman (rightly) takes as a religious claim to be superior to Jacob and the patriarchs. Jesus then elaborates that the water he offers is such that those who drink of it will never again be thirsty, for it 'will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life'. The woman is interested and replies using the same metaphor as Jesus used: 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water' (4.15) Thus it is possible to read the text as a serious theological

Contextual Study of John 4:1-42 (Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr, 1988); G.R.O'Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

⁶⁵ S. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text. Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (San Fransisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p.194.

exchange and not a (foolish) woman continually misunderstanding the (superior) male. On this reading, she is far more astute than Nicodemus in the previous episode (3.1-21) and the disciples in this one (4.27).

However, it is problematic to this reading that Jesus says in 4.18: 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' Is this not confirmation that the story is about her 'sexually disgraceful past', even if male scholars have exaggerated this? But it has often been noted that (1) adultery is a common metaphor in the Old Testament for spiritual unfaithfulness, which is precisely what the Jews thought of the Samaritans; and (2) that the reference to five husbands is an allusion to the repopulation of Samaria in 2 Kings 17:

The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria in place of the people of Israel; they took possession of Samaria, and settled in its cities... every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the people of Samaria had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived; the people of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the people of Cuth made Nergal, the people of Hamath made Ashima; the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim (2 Kgs 17.24, 29-31).

This allegorical interpretation was once quite popular though the Enlightenment has made it difficult for moderns to accept (allegory was the enemy of rationalism). However, given the symbolic nature of much of John's Gospel, one has to admit with Brown and Schnackenburg that it is a *possibility*.⁶⁶ If the reader is supposed to know that 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (John 2.19) is a reference to the 'temple of his body', it is certainly possible that a chapter which

⁶⁶ 'The unusual life-story of the Samaritan has led many exegetes to suppose that she is a symbolic figure, representing the people of Samaria and the religious apostasy of this hybrid nation by the usual image of marital infidelity' (R.Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John* [Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1968], I, p.433). However, he notes that the analogy is not exact for while 2 Kgs 17 mentions five nations, it actually lists seven gods. He therefore concludes that the 'symbolic interpretation, at least if given in isolation as the only one, is unacceptable.' Brown (*Gospel of John*, p.171) says: 'Such an allegorical intent is possible; but John gives no evidence that it was intended, and we are not certain that such an allegory was a well-known jibe of the time which would have been recognized without explanation.'

discusses whether Jerusalem or Gerizim is the proper place for worship, assumes the reader is acquainted with Samaritan history. That being so, Moore notes that there is more at stake here than simply deciding between competing interpretations. For those who wish to condemn the woman for taking everything literally can do so only by insisting that 4.18 is taken literally. In other words:

They can condemn her only if they participate in her error, can ascribe a history of immorality to her only by reading as “carnally” as she does - at which point the literal reading of 4:18 threatens to become a displaced reenactment of yet another Johannine episode, one in which an unnamed woman is similarly charged with sexual immorality by accusers who themselves stand accused (8:1-11).⁶⁷

Postmodern Intertextuality draws attention to two aspects of reading. First, no text is an island.⁶⁸ Its words have all been used before, sometimes in very significant ways. In every reading of the primary text, other texts are present and this leads to multiple interpretations (polyvalency). There is never just one way of ‘configuring’ the interaction between text and subtexts. Secondly, in every reading of the primary text, the reader brings with them texts they know and in the case of biblical studies, quite often a whole history of interpretation. Thus Protestant scholars have only recently acknowledged the fact that their reading of Paul owed a great deal to significant ‘intertexts’, such as the writings of Luther and Calvin. They were aware, of course, that Paul’s letters contain numerous references to the Jewish scriptures but were much less aware of the ‘intertexts’ that they themselves were bringing to the task.⁶⁹

For some, Postmodern Intertextuality, like deconstruction, will seem a pointless exercise. The task of the interpreter is surely to grapple with a text until its meaning is disclosed, or, more realistically, to get as close to that meaning as possible. What possible benefit is it to show that all interpretations are inherently flawed? At least three answers can

67 S.D.Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament. Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), p.49.

68 Miscall, ‘Isaiah’, p.45. More fully, but perhaps less elegantly, ‘no text is an autonomous and self-sufficient entity, but is always open, literarily and pragmatically.’ (I.H.Kitzberger, ‘Introduction’ in idem, [ed],*The Personal Voice*, pp1-11[6]).

69 As ruthlessly exposed by E.P.Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism. A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977), pp.1-59.

be given to this. The first is that Postmodern Intertextuality is not saying that meaning is impossible. It is simply pointing out that a reader cannot derive meaning without 'touching' the text (Derrida). As Kitzberger says,

Entering John's story-world from my own story-world and entering my own story-world from John's story-world, both have been informed and transformed intertextually. In this process a new story has emerged which is no longer one or the other, but both, a story of mixture and otherness.⁷⁰

Meaning, in the sense of communication, is certainly possible, but always at a price. Reinterpreting the apocalyptic violence of Revelation in the light of Christ's self-sacrifice is certainly a *possible* way of reading the book. One might even say that it is ethically imperative that it is read in this way. But it cannot be said to be the only way or even the obvious way. In terms of the sheer quantity of material, the language of conquest and destruction in Revelation far outweighs the language of love and forgiveness. That is why Christian interpreters have to work so hard to persuade 'the public' to read it differently. It is the sheer quantity of violent and destructive language that people find so difficult.⁷¹ The Christian interpreter 'chooses' to read the language of conquest and destruction in the light of the cross of Christ.

In order to prevent misunderstanding, I should point out that in using the word 'chooses', I am not suggesting that interpretation is arbitrary and merely the product of an author's whim. Interpreters adopt certain positions because they believe the evidence 'compels' them to see it that way. But the fact that equally sincere scholars feel 'compelled' to see things differently suggests that this process is not ideologically neutral. Robbins recognizes this in his attempt to describe intertextual-

70 Kitzberger, 'Border Crossing', p.123. Male scholars have generally treated the Samaritan woman as the exploiter (eagerly moving from husband to husband) rather than the exploited (five husbands have married and divorced her and the present one refuses to marry). But the text is open on this point and it would be a naive scholar that thought his/her gender and experience of life had no effect on their judgment.

71 'Lurid and inhumane, its influence has been pernicious... Resentment and not love is the teaching of the Revelation of St. John... It is a book without wisdom, goodness, kindness, or affection of any kind' (H.Bloom, *The Revelation of St John the Divine*, Modern Critical Interpretations; New York: Chelsea House, 1988), pp.4-5. Stephen Moore's contribution to Kitzberger (ed), *The Personal Voice* is called 'Revolting Revelations', pp183-200.

ity as an aspect of what he calls Socio-rhetorical criticism. He notes that most examples of biblical intertextuality have already made fundamental decisions, such as (1) giving priority to Jewish texts rather than Greek or Roman texts; (2) emphasizing the influence of texts over other expressions of culture; and (3) confining itself to historical and literary modes of discourse. But such choices already demonstrate the ideological nature of all interpretation:

the ideological nature of all interpretation manifests itself in the interplay between the choice of a mode of interpretive discourse and the choice of dimensions of the text the interpreter reinscribes.⁷²

For example, in choosing to read Rom. 8.20 in the light of Ecclesiastes, I made at least two assumptions. First, I assumed that it would be more profitable to look for a Jewish text rather than one from Greek or Roman literature. But given Paul's background and cultural context, it is quite possible that he has been influenced by discussions of 'futility' in Greek philosophy. Second, I assumed the influence was primarily from 'texts', rather than some other expression of cultural life. But it may have been an artifact 'to an unknown god' that weighed heavily on Paul's mind. Or a discussion on the future of 'tent-making' after a series of cancelled orders. Robbins points out that words not only evoke other texts but also data from the wider 'cultural, social and historical world in which they participate and in which people live.'⁷³ In showing how complex it is to pin-down 'influence', Postmodern Intertextuality draws attention to the fact that choices have already been made:

Different ideologies... establish different boundaries for intertextual analysis and these different boundaries encourage significantly different strategies of interpretation.⁷⁴

Second, in showing how a text can point in a number of directions, one is actually saying something important about the text. I do not know for certain if Ecclesiastes was in Paul's mind when he wrote Rom. 8.20. But in drawing out what the text would mean *if* it were in his mind, I am revealing something about the *potentiality* of the text. To use an analogy from science, it is like shining a particular light on a substance and observing the resulting pattern. And then changing to

⁷² Robbins, *The Tapestry*, p.213.

⁷³ Robbins, *The Tapestry*, p.238.

⁷⁴ Robbins, *The Tapestry*, p.101.

ultra violet light and observing a different pattern. In neither case are we actually 'seeing' the substance as it is. But observing the different patterns is telling us something 'real' about the substance. A scientist would laugh at the suggestion that such a procedure is making the substance mean whatever we like. Similarly, using different interpretative strategies to examine a text is not making a text mean whatever we like. It really is saying something about the text, though not as directly as the hermeneutics of the Enlightenment would prefer.

[S]ocio-rhetorical criticism uses a strategy of reading and rereading a text from different angles to produce a 'revalued' or 'revisited' rhetorical interpretation... The goal is to use the resources of other disciplines 'on their own terms' and to allow these resources to deconstruct and reconfigure the results of a particular focus and set of strategies in a particular discipline.⁷⁵

Third, since it is clearly impossible for any one individual to perfectly grasp the meaning of a text, it seems to me inescapable that Postmodern Intertextuality is true *to some degree*. The critical question is whether this is significant or is simply an aspect of being human (finite). For example, every performance of a musical symphony is different. The conductor will never conduct in exactly the same way. Each of the violinists will differ depending on how they feel that day. The horns will differ. Sickness might mean that one or two players are making their debut. All of which means that there are literally thousands of interacting factors which determine the final performance.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, there will be no doubt that one is hearing Beethoven's fifth symphony and not his sixth (for example). The differences are real and worthy of study since they greatly affect one's pleasure (or annoyance) at the performance. But they should not be used to suggest that we can never know or say *anything* about a text.

Conclusion

Frequent use of the term intertextuality is threatening to make it

⁷⁵ Robbins, *The Tapestry*, pp.40-1.

⁷⁶ This seems to be A.C.Thiselton's concern when he writes, 'What is problematic about current notions of intertextuality is *not the huge scope* of the boundaries which have been enlarged, but the transposing of horizons of understanding into matrices which generate an infinite chain of semiotic effects' (*New Horizons in Hermeneutics* [London: HarperCollins, 1992], p.506).

meaningless unless more attention is given to definitions. One option would be to focus on the meanings given to it by particular theorists (Kristeva, Barthes, Derrida, Eco, Riffaterre) and declare other uses invalid (or 'thin') This is the stance taken by Aichele and Phillips in their introduction to the 1995 edition of *Semeia* devoted to biblical intertextuality. Compared with what Kristeva had in mind, they declare that most examples of biblical intertextuality are doing little more than traditional source criticism:

Traditional 'banal' source critical ('intertextual') explanations of citation, allusion, allegoresis and the like, which claim a concern for history, prove exceedingly thin by comparison because they fail to take into account the historical and cultural nature of textual productivity and the implicature or readers and readings in the production of meaning... what they are really concerned with is agency and influence.⁷⁷

On the other hand, the word 'intertextuality' has taken on a life of its own and now has to be interpreted (or abandoned) in the light of current practice rather than the originating moment (an irony not lost on Aichele and Phillips). My suggestion in this essay is that in the light of current usage, it is best used as an 'umbrella' term for the complex interactions that exist between 'texts' (in the broadest sense). It is an evocative word, like 'textuality', which reminds us that such interactions are rarely straightforward. However, the weakness of this suggestion is obvious; no one can tell what is being claimed when different scholars speak of intertextuality. It is hoped that the three categories described and illustrated in this essay will go some way towards meeting this need.

⁷⁷ G.Aichele & G.A.Phillips, 'Introduction: Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis', *Semeia* 69-70 (1995), p.11.