

What Follows the Death of the Author?

Introduction

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Who wrote the Bible? The quest for the Hebrew scriptures' human authors has arisen on various occasions throughout the history of their transmission, especially in the context of canon debates.¹ From antiquity to Renaissance humanism, the criteria and concepts of authorship employed in the study of the Bible have changed considerably.² In the wake of the Enlightenment and Historicism, the issue of authorship became central for historical criticism of the Bible, with the discussion of each book's author(s) and their historical context becoming a fixed item of *Einleitungswissenschaft*.³ The essays in this volume stand in the tradition of studying the Bible from an historical perspective. They seek to re-evaluate the concept of authorship within the historical-critical study of the Hebrew scriptures and explore new avenues by which the discussion might be further progressed. In this introduction, I will briefly outline why such a re-evaluation is needed in current biblical scholarship and how the present volume will address this task. I will first sketch a general picture of the various challenges the concept of authorship faces in the historical study of the Hebrew Bible at present. I will then argue that, despite claims about the "death of the author," the concept of authorship continues to be widely used in biblical scholarship, often without critical reflection. This, in turn, points to the need to reconsider the concept of authorship in Hebrew Bible studies. After some general remarks on how the present volume will approach the issue of authorship, I will briefly present the essays in this volume, concluding with an outlook on further research perspectives.

¹ See Wyrick, *Ascension of Authorship*.

² A nice example is Isaac Abarbanel's critical re-examination of B. Bat. 14b–15b in the introduction of his commentary on the Former Prophets; for an English translation of the section discussing authorship, cf. Lawee, "Don Isaac Abarbanel," 65–73.

³ Since Eichhorn, *Einleitung ins Alte Testament*. On Eichhorn's work in the context of the history of *Einleitungswissenschaft*, see Smend, *Deutsche Alttestamentler*, 29–37.

1. The “Death of the Author” in Current Biblical Studies

In current biblical scholarship, the concept of authorship faces several challenges. Attempts to find a single, identifiable author of particular biblical books or works continue to lose ground in current research.⁴ Scholars have become aware that the modern idea of the author as a single producer of a unified, unchangeable text, claiming its intellectual property and controlling its meaning, is foreign to the worlds of the biblical texts and does not fit ancient dynamics of text production.⁵ To begin with, it is broadly acknowledged that the texts of the Hebrew Bible were not produced by a single person or handed down unchanged. Hebrew Bible texts are considered “tradition literature,” that is, literary texts with a complex history of transmission.⁶ Earlier research aimed at reconstructing the most ancient version of a text by removing later additions and changes to it. Recent scholarship, by contrast, has undermined the very idea that an ancient version of the text stands behind these supposedly later materials, and tends instead to assign large portions of the Hebrew Bible to late stages of its literary development.

The challenges to the notion of authorship implied by the complex history of biblical texts arose most prominently in the research on the formation of the Torah and the Former Prophets, on the one hand, and on the literary history of the prophetic books, on the other. Beginning with the farewell to the Documentary Hypothesis in the 1970s, there has been a clear tendency within Pentateuchal research to gradually repudiate the idea of (an) original author(s) and to rather focus on the redactional processes behind the final composition of the Torah. The complex literary growth of the Pentateuch not only challenges the notion of a single author, but also the certainty with which we can assign particular literary works to specific historical contexts.⁷ Similar effects have been felt in the study of the Deuteronomistic History. The idea that an individual author determined the shape of this composition – as advanced by Noth – has been abandoned in recent models, with the process by which this work was produced being transformed more and more into a depersonalized procedure of text production and redaction (*Block- and Schichtenmodell*). In research on the prophets, too, scholars have moved well away from the earlier idea of the creative genius of a single individual author, with

⁴ Such as Noth’s Deuteronomistic Historian (Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*) or Van Seters’s Yahwist (Van Seters, *Yahwist*); cf. also Whybray, *Making of the Pentateuch* and Weinberg, “Authorship and Author” as examples of the attempt to identify biblical authors.

⁵ For a short discussion of issues related to the term “author” and examples of ancient dynamics of text production, see Ska, “Plea.”

⁶ On this complex history, cf., for instance, Carr, *Formation of the Hebrew Bible*; Schmid, *Schriftgelehrte Traditionsliteratur*; Kratz, *Composition*. Several contributions in this volume highlight the particular nature of biblical texts as tradition literature, see, for instance, the essays by George Brooke and Konrad Schmid.

⁷ The broad divergence in dating non-Priestly texts may be considered a case in point; cf. Kratz, “Pentateuch,” 46–49.

scholars now attempting to describe the literary growth of these works without attempting to pinpoint human agents (e.g., “a rolling corpus”⁸). In this, a pervasive trend has been to focus on the work of scribes in reusing, amplifying and modifying earlier traditions in the writing of new materials.⁹ This has allowed scholars to continue their analyses of historical processes of text formation, although they now increasingly attribute such processes to anonymous “scribes” who redact and update a corpus of Hebrew scriptures, with conscious borrowing from a variety of works within that corpus.

Moreover, as several contributors to this volume point out and discuss, biblical texts are generally anonymous. In this, they correspond to other ancient Near Eastern literature.¹⁰ The scribes who produced these ancient texts – be it by copying from an existing document, by transcribing, editing, modifying, adding to, rewriting a text, by writing down an orally transmitted tradition or even their own composition – do not highlight their own original contribution, but strive to fade into tradition. The quest for the “author” is thus not only foreign to the mode of production of these texts but also alien to the interests of their ancient writers and readers. Both ancient modes of literary production, but also cultural expectations of authorship that may have shaped the Hebrew scriptures cannot be properly assessed without recourse to comparative evidence from other ancient literary cultures. For this reason, this volume includes contributions on concepts of authorship in ancient Akkadian and Greek literature (see further below).

The anachronistic nature of the application of a modern concept of authorship is further accentuated by investigations of the material evidence of textual transmission. The discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls have played a crucial role in substantiating the claim that the texts of the Hebrew Bible were written as a collective scribal production rather than by individual authors.¹¹ Moreover, the manuscript evidence shows that multiple contemporary versions existed of a text. The pluriformity and fluidity of the textual tradition challenges the notion of a single producer controlling the meaning of a text.¹² These insights into the reworking and pluriformity of ancient Hebrew texts have led scholars to question the concept of authorship. Alternative concepts and terminology have become more popular, such as “scribe,” “editor,” “redactor,” “tradents,” “*Verfasserkreis*,” or at the very least the use of the plural “authors.” There is a shift of scholarly interest from “original” texts to textual growth and transmission.

⁸ This term was coined by William McKane with regard to the book of Jeremiah, see McKane, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, I.

⁹ Cf., for instance, Steck’s influential idea of “*schriftgelehrte Tradentenprophetie*” (Steck, *Studien zu Tritojesaja*, 18–19, 45, 191, 270–72; Steck, *Die Prophetenbücher*, 167).

¹⁰ In particular, cf. the essays by Ehud Ben Zvi, David Carr, and Konrad Schmid in this volume.

¹¹ Cf. Ulrich, *Dead Sea Scrolls* and the essay by George Brooke in this volume.

¹² Cf. Mroczek, *Literary Imagination*, 88–109 and the essay by Sylvie Honigman in this volume.

The reference to Roland Barthes's well-known catchphrase of the "death of the author" points to yet another set of questions. Many biblical scholars integrate insights from literary theory in their work. In particular, scholars with a text-centered approach, such as narratological exegetes, emphasize that the "author" is not accessible outside the text and tend to consider the "author" as a role within the text.¹³ They insist that interpreters should clearly distinguish between the author and the narrator of a text and not be lured by any lyrical "I" into mistaking it for the actual voice of an historical author.¹⁴ Scholars informed by theories of intertextuality point out that no text is an original creation of a single mind and tend to examine the circulation, entanglements, and re-uses of texts in abstraction of individual human agents.¹⁵ Reader-centered approaches have shifted the focus from the author to the reader as the place where the meaning of a text is produced.¹⁶ In other words, the *intentio operis* and the *intentio lectoris* have moved to the fore, while the *intentio auctoris* is considered both inaccessible and largely irrelevant for the interpretation of biblical texts.¹⁷ Even scholars using a more historical, traditionally author-centered, approach are aware of the "intentional fallacy" and refrain from the romantic and psychological author reconstructions which were dominant in earlier biblical research.¹⁸

2. The Ongoing Use of the Concept of Authorship in Biblical Studies

However, despite a growing awareness of the problematic nature of the concept of "author," biblical scholars have not abandoned the notion of the "author" altogether. In exegetical practice – that is, in their actual interpretations of biblical texts – many scholars still use the term "author" without further clarification. Others replace the term "author" by concepts with little meaningful distinction from how authorial intentions and motivations were conceptualized in earlier scholarship. In particular, in source criticism (*Literarkritik*), in reconstructions of textual growth,

¹³ Cf. Eco, *Role of the Reader*, 11: "the 'author' is nothing else but a textual strategy."

¹⁴ On the importance of the distinction between author and narrator, cf. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 147–48; Ska, *Our Fathers*, 41–42; Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 13–14; Margolin, "Narrator" and the contributions by Ilse Müllner and Sylvie Honigman in this volume.

¹⁵ In a similar vein, cf. the processual reception history proposed by Breed, *Nomadic Text*.

¹⁶ Cf. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*; Eco, *Role of the Reader*; on reader-centered approaches in biblical studies cf. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 198–219.

¹⁷ On these concepts cf. Eco, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, 64–65; Eco, *Limits of Interpretation*, 50–60.

¹⁸ In particular, regarding prophetic figures, cf., for instance, Duhm, *Die Theologie*; Ewald, *Die Propheten*. For a criticism of the "romantic-historicist paradigm" of the "classical writing prophet," cf. Deist, "Prophets," 14. The concept of "intentional fallacy" has been coined by Wimsatt and Beardsley, "Intentional Fallacy."

and for the historical contextualization of biblical texts in general, scholars still rely on the category of authors and their intentions.¹⁹ Rather than doing away with the “author,” insights into the reworking of ancient Hebrew texts and a growing interest in the process of transmission seem to have led to a broadening of the concept of authorship. Based on the aspects of creativity and intentionality implied in “authorship,” the notion of “author” has been used to valorize the work of redactors or even translators of a text. Emphasizing that the scribes were not mere copyists, scholars describe the process of transmission of texts as comparable to the work of modern authors.²⁰ Hence, scholars working from historical perspectives, even though they may reject the idea of a creative single individual who holds absolute power and ownership over his or her text(s), do adhere to (implicit) concepts of authorship, which are rarely discussed or subjected to theoretical evaluation.

A similar gap between theory and practice regarding the concept of “authorship” can be observed in literary studies. Simone Winko, in an empirical study, examined the use of author-concepts in contemporary literary studies.²¹ She examined almost 400 contemporary text interpretations and concluded that even though some scholars advocated a different stance in theory (e.g., interpreters informed by post-modernism), they still used the concept of authorship in their argument. For instance, they used the concept of authorship a) to place a text in time and space; b) as a basis to assume unity and coherence of a work; and c) to establish which texts and contexts can be referred to in the interpretation of a text. The use of the concept of authorship observed by Winko seems similar to certain functions of the “author” in biblical studies. In literary studies, the insight that we cannot easily dispose of the concept of authorship led to a debate on the return of the author and to a renewed reflection on concepts of authorship. Since the 1990s, several collective volumes have attempted to provide a critical re-evaluation of the concept of authorship in literary studies.²² Interestingly, a similar debate bridging the gap between theoretical reflection and exegetical practice has not yet taken place in biblical studies.²³

¹⁹ As an example (among many) of the crucial role of authors and their intentions in redaction criticism, cf. Otto, “Temple Scroll,” 59–74. For a theoretical reflection on the role of authorial intention for Literarkritik, cf. Werlitz, *Studien zur literarkritischen Methode*, 47. Melanie Köhlmoos and Ilse Müllner discuss this issue in their contributions in this volume.

²⁰ Cf. Schmid, “Authorship”; and the essay by George Brooke in this volume.

²¹ Winko, “Autor-Funktionen,” 334–54.

²² Cf. Biriotti and Miller, *What Is an Author?*; Detering, *Autorschaft*; Donovan, Fjellestad, and Lundén, *Authority Matters*; Dorleijn, Grüttemeier, and Korthals Altes, *Authorship Revisited*; Jan-nidis et al., *Rückkehr des Autors*; Schaffrick and Willand, *Theorien und Praktiken*; Woodmansee and Jaszi, *Construction of Authorship*. Cf. also the monograph by Burke, *Death and Return*. More recent text books also reflect this “return of the author,” cf. Burke, *Authorship*; Bennett, *Author*.

²³ For a similar enterprise, but with a focus on literary theory (rather than historical approaches) and New Testament texts (where the issue of historically graspable authors is a bit different) cf. now Breu, *Biblical Exegesis*.

3. Re-evaluating the Concept of Authorship: General Remarks on This Volume's Approach

The present volume seeks to foster this discussion. It is based on a conference held in Augst (Switzerland) from September 11–13, 2018 under the title “What follows *la mort de l’auteur*? Re-Evaluating the Concept of Authorship in Hebrew Bible Studies.” Based on the developments and observations outlined above, the conference was organized around the following guiding questions:

1. Can the category of authorship be justifiably applied to ancient ways of producing texts, even as a heuristic tool? How does it need to be re-fashioned in order to take into account the specifics of *Traditionsliteratur*? And how should it be re-conceptualized in light of the fluidity between composition and transmission in the formation of the Hebrew scriptures?

2. How do alternative concepts which are currently in use (e. g., redactor, scribe, compiler) interact with the concept of “author,” or move beyond it? Are there other, alternative concepts which should come to the fore in the analysis of text production in ancient Israel? Or should scholars adopt altogether different approaches and perspectives, such as focusing on the ancient reader or text community as opposed to the ancient producer of the texts at hand?

3. What are the implications and consequences of questioning the concept of authorship for historical-critical research? For example, if scholars deem the attempt to reconstruct (an) author(s) behind the text to be problematic, where does this leave the socio-historical analysis of texts and text production in ancient Israel?

The essays in the present volume engage in various ways with aspects of these questions and provide a range of possible answers based on the respective approach of the contributors. The volume does not aim at developing a new model, but rather to engage in a critical, multifold dialogue in order to compare and contrast different approaches in an original and fruitful way.

Both for the conference and for the present volume, we decided to leave open the question of a definition of an “author” in order to allow the contributors to bring and discuss diverse notions of authorship. Any discussion of “authorship” faces the problem of changing concepts of the “author” through history.²⁴ A common and intuitive understanding of the “author” is the author as producer of a text.²⁵ However, at a closer look, this “author” implies multiple roles: Are we talking about the person who writes a text down? The person who produced (performed) the text orally? The person who should be considered the intellectual originator of a text? The person who takes on responsibility for the contents, or claims of ownership? Are persons who edit, rework, or publish to be considered as “authors,”

²⁴ For an overview, cf. Burke, *Authorship*.

²⁵ Cf. Schönert, “Author.”

or were they considered as such in a given historical context?²⁶ Not all of these roles are similarly applicable to ancient contexts of text productions. The essays in the present volume address the complexity of authorial roles, focusing on their different aspects. I mention only two examples: Thomas Krüger, in his discussion of wisdom sayings, points out that the phrase “words of NN” does not imply a concept of the author as the person who formulated these words for the first time. Rather, the phrase could designate “words that NN heard, found to be good and passed on; i.e., sayings or words that NN did not invent but adopted.”²⁷ Ilse Müllner, from a more theoretical point of view, proposes that scholars should discuss the “subject position of text-based communication,” that is, who is speaking to us when we read a text?²⁸ These two examples illustrate two different perspectives on “authorship” discussed in this volume:²⁹

1. Concepts of authorship attested in the cultural world of the text and its first recipients: Several contributions describe concepts of authorship in the ancient world and investigate their literary and social functions.³⁰ They deal with explicit and implicit claims in a text about who “authored” them and address phenomena such as pseudepigraphy and anonymity.

2. Concepts of authorship used by contemporary literary critics or biblical scholars: Some of the contributions discuss the concepts of authorship that scholars create and use.³¹ They discuss functions of author-concepts in biblical studies, why and how they matter, and suggest concepts that can be fruitfully applied to the study of Hebrew Bible texts.

The title of our conference – “What follows *la mort de l’auteur*?” – alluded to the French publication of Roland Barthes’s essay *La mort de l’auteur*, 50 years before our conference.³² In this essay, Barthes questions the idea that texts have a fixed meaning controlled by the Author. While Barthes was certainly not the first to criticize the modern concept of authorship, his “death of the author” formula became widely cited and influential in the subsequent discussion. We rapidly no-

²⁶ Nowadays, the complexity of the notion of authorship and the many roles involved are discussed in particular with regard to media studies (e.g., to what extent can the producer of a movie be considered an “author?”); cf. the essays in Gray and Johnson, *Companion to Media Authorship*.

²⁷ Krüger, “Authors and Narrators,” 210 (in this volume). Cf. also Millard, “Authors”; Mroczek, *Literary Imagination*.

²⁸ Müllner, “Between Narrator and Author,” 177 (in this volume).

²⁹ Sophus Helle and David Carr, in their contributions in this volume, discuss a similar distinction of approaches using the terminology of “emic” and “etic.”

³⁰ See the contributions by Sophus Helle, Sylvie Honigman, Christophe Nihan, Thomas Krüger, Konrad Schmid, Christian Frevel and Julia Rhyder.

³¹ See the contributions by George Brooke, Ilse Müllner, Melanie Köhlmoos, Ehud Ben Zvi, David Carr, and Katharina Pyschny.

³² Barthes, “*La mort de l’auteur*.” The English publication in *Aspen* 5/6 preceeded this French publication.

ticed, however, that Barthes's essay did not address the issues we were concerned with as scholars of ancient literature. As several contributors point out, Barthes's preoccupation has more to do with the displacement of the subject in post-modern philosophy, and the Author he is dealing with does not correspond to concepts of the author in contemporary biblical studies.³³ For our conference, and the present volume, Foucault's essay "What is an author?" in response to Barthes has been found more productive.³⁴ Foucault proposes that we should regard authorship as a function which serves to organize discourses in a society. To consider authorship as a function has proved a fruitful angle to take for re-conceptualizing authorship in biblical studies.³⁵ Several contributions in the present volume explore functions of authorship within a text as a key for the construction of its meaning, focusing on explicit and implicit attributions.³⁶ In manifold ways, the essays in this volume illuminate the purposes of ascribing texts to "authors," for the ancient audience or for biblical scholarship.

4. Outline of the Volume

The volume starts with three essays discussing comparative material and contexts for the study of authorship in Hebrew Bible texts. Because the Hebrew scriptures form part of the larger world of ancient literature, the first two essays investigate concepts of authorship in Mesopotamian and in Greek literature, allowing the reader to appreciate possible backgrounds and specific developments of the concepts of authorship found in the biblical texts.

Sophus Helle's contribution deals with Mesopotamian literary texts and several theoretical issues in scholarship on authorship. Discussing examples such as Lu-Nanna (the author of the *Etana* epic according to the Assyrian *Catalogue of Texts and Authors*), Sîn-leqi-unnenni (alleged author of *Gilgamesh*) or the Sumerian poet Enheduana, Helle proposes that we should use Akkadian narratives of authorship to gain insights into cultural concepts of authorship. Distinguishing between an emic and an etic approach, he argues that the fictional attributions and stories about Akkadian authors provide information on cultural expectations of authorship and on the classification of literature rather than information on the historical

³³ Cf. the contributions by Ehud Ben Zvi, Ilse Müllner, and George Brooke in this volume.

³⁴ Foucault's essay has been first published in French: Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" The English version is slightly modified (Foucault, "What Is an Author?").

³⁵ Thus, scholars explored biblical figures such as Moses or the prophets in light of Foucault's proposal of the "author" as a founder of discourse. See, in particular, Najman, *Seconding Sinai*; cf. further Berges, "Kollektive Autorschaft," 30; Otto, "Welcher Bund ist ewig?" 161. Cf. also Schmitz, *Prophetie und Königtum*, 81–98 for a methodological proposition regarding functions of authorship in biblical studies.

³⁶ In particular, the essays by George Brooke, Christophe Nihan, and Julia Rhyder; from a literary perspective without reference to Foucault, see the contribution by Thomas Krüger.

circumstances of a text's production. He advocates a narrative understanding of authorship as a story of origin.

Sylvie Honigman's essay analyzes Greek concepts of authorship. The influence of Greek conceptions of authorship is generally assumed to be the most important factor in the development of authorial attributions in Second Temple literature. Honigman's contribution nuances this picture by showing that the attributions of authorship in Greek and Judahite texts of the Hellenistic period were based on quite different cultural presuppositions. Focusing on the representation of past events, she shows how the Greek concept of authorship was transformed in the transition from lyric poetry to historiographic prose, leading to the correlated notions of author, book, and event as singular entities. In Judahite historiography, in contrast, the narration of the past is organized by theme, allowing for multiple versions of the representation of reality. Honigman's essay ends with a discussion of structural differences between Greek and Judahite societies underlying the diverging approaches to individuality and personal autonomy.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and in particular the study of the manuscripts related to the Hebrew Scriptures, led scholars to reconsider the production and transmission of scriptural texts. In his contribution, George J. Brooke explores what the manuscripts from the Qumran caves might contribute to the discussion of authorship in Second Temple times. He argues that in light of the attested plurality of textual forms – even for presumably legal texts such as the Rule of the Community – conceptions of textual stability and individual authors need to be revised. Brooke discusses possible approaches for further research that takes seriously the issues raised by the study of the Qumran manuscripts. Rather than searching for historical authors of particular literary works, such research might focus on the functions of texts, study parameters of ancient discourse and appreciate the process of rewriting.

The following three essays enter into the subject of authorship and Hebrew Bible studies. They present the main issues from the perspective of history of research (Köhlmoos), from a socio-historical perspective (Ben Zvi), and from a perspective of literary history (Schmid).

Taking into account the pitfalls of traditional concepts of authorship does not necessarily exclude the question of intentionality. As a possible way of approaching this issue, Brooke proposed that rewriting could be seen as a process in which every product reflects multiple editorial decisions. The essay by Melanie Köhlmoos focuses specifically on the issue of authorial intentions and reviews its place in biblical research. In her contribution, Köhlmoos stresses the enduring relevance of authors and their intentions for the study of biblical texts. Interpreters of texts refer to authors and their intentions in various ways in order to close the gap between what is said and what is meant. Following Karl Eibl, Köhlmoos distinguishes three perspectives on authorship (the author as "originator of linguistic artifacts," "of metaphorical speech," and "as individual") and explores their significance through

the history of Christian exegesis. She argues that the author in biblical studies is relevant not as the actual writer of a text, but as part of a model for how texts were produced and gained meaning and coherence.

Ehud Ben Zvi's contribution addresses the concept of authorship in Hebrew Bible studies from a socio-historical perspective informed by memory studies. Using the reference to Barthes in the announcement of our conference as a launch pad for exploring general issues surrounding the concept of authorship, he points out that authorship is a property associated with the text as it is read by a particular community. His observations refer to matters of authorship, anonymity, and authority among the Judean literati of the late Persian and early Hellenistic period. He shows that two complementary approaches to authorship are reflected in Hebrew Bible texts: on the one hand, a preference for the selection of anonymity for the slot of the author, and on the other hand authoritative characters performing "authorship" within anonymous books. Discussing the example of a "Mosaic" Torah and passages of Chronicles, he shows that biblical texts presuppose a complex understanding of authorship, transcending the temporal and situational dimension of a historical character. Rather than concluding the issue, Ben Zvi's contribution outlines possible avenues for further investigations on power, authority, and authorship in Second Temple Judah.

From the perspective of literary history, Konrad Schmid discusses the main issues and stages of a developing idea of authorship in Hebrew Bible texts. While Hebrew Bible texts are generally transmitted anonymously, it is conspicuous that prophetic books are always associated with a specific person. Drawing a line from Amos to Jeremiah to biblical and post-biblical notions of Mosaic and Davidic authorship, Schmid shows how the biblical concept of authorship developed from prophetic literature. Eventually, authorial figures in and of biblical texts were generally construed as prophets. Schmid argues that elaborated ideas on biblical authors are a late phenomenon, using the prophetic model to attribute the "real" authorship behind the human author to the divine.

As Schmid points out, the approaches to authorship in biblical texts seem to vary in relation to their genre. The essays that follow – focusing on specific parts and texts of the Hebrew Bible – are therefore grouped by sections according to genre. Starting with the anonymous narratives of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets, the volume moves on to various strategies of attribution and implied authorship in Psalms and Wisdom Literature, and ends with Prophetic Literature.

David Carr's essay sets out with an analysis of the "prophetic-sender model for textual production" with regard to the book of Deuteronomy. He investigates the nature and purpose of the elements of authorial figuration in Deuteronomy in light of an oral-primary environment and shows how they function as a form of self-authorization in the book, and in particular serve to secure the authoritative status of its written exemplars. Subsequently, Carr discusses inquiries on the anonymous creators of Pentateuchal texts in contemporary, historically-oriented biblical

scholarship and critically evaluates the concept of the “implied author.” Reflecting on the institutional context and task of biblical exegesis, he suggests that historical research on biblical texts might focus on illuminating the texts by reconstructing the meaning world of the intended recipients.

Focusing on the legal texts specifically, Julia Rhyder’s essay sheds light on issues of authority and textualization in the Pentateuch from an additional angle. Her essay reassesses the significance of the claim made in certain biblical traditions that their laws emanated from Israel’s patron divinity. She explores how the claim of divine origins of the law across diverse legislative traditions serves to position the Israelite divinity as performing what can be considered with Foucault an “author function.” Her essay traces the development of the divine voicing of the law from the Covenant Code to its spatial and situational embedding in Deuteronomy, the Priestly traditions, and the divine “tablet texts” of Exodus, and compares these to Ezekiel’s “law of the temple” and later traditions such as Jubilees. Rhyder shows that, while divine authorship remained a constant literary strategy for investing Israel’s legislative traditions with authority from the Iron Age II to the Hellenistic period, there was a rich diversity in how the deity’s role as legislative author was conceived. This, in turn, should prevent scholars from treating the question of the historical *origins* of divine voicing as providing a totalizing explanation of Yhwh’s author function. Instead, she argues it was the capacity of divine authorship to change over time that enabled it to endure as a literary strategy.

The issue of voices and implied authorship in anonymous biblical prose is further investigated by Ilse Müllner from the perspective of historical narratology. While the quest for biblical “authors” is typically associated with so-called diachronic approaches, Müllner aims at bridging the gap between diachronic and synchronic approaches and proposes that the narratological concepts of the narrator and the implied author can be helpful to specify the concept of authorship in historical exegesis. She argues that the “author” referred to in biblical scholarship corresponds more closely to the concept of the “implied author,” that is, the picture of an author as it is evoked by a particular text (and completed by historical knowledge). Taking as an example the diverging accounts of the death of Saul in 1 Sam 31 and 2 Sam 1, she demonstrates the insights that such an approach can provide for a careful discussion of the possible historical settings of biblical texts.

Moving on from the anonymous narratives of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets to Psalms and Wisdom Literature, we encounter another common feature of ancient literature: the ascription of texts to illustrious figures of the past. Christophe Nihan’s contribution explores the functions of such attributions through an examination of Psalm superscripts containing the phrase לְדָוִד. He discusses the evidence for these Davidic Superscripts in the MT, the LXX and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Pointing out that the functions of David in these superscripts are related to ancient concepts of authorship, Nihan analyzes the roles of David “as index,” “as performer,” and “as writer.” Regarding the functions of the superscripts themselves, he

argues that the ascription to David does not merely serve an authoritative function, but constructs a memory of David as a model of the pious king (“historiographical-liturgical function”), stimulate the audience’s identification with the figure of David (“emulative function”), and advise the audience to read and interpret the various texts associated with David in light of each other (“didactic function”).

It is sometimes believed that the literary discussion of concepts of authorship is of little interest to biblical studies because authorial roles and voices in biblical texts are not as complex or sophisticated as in 20th century novels. Thomas Krüger’s close reading calls this assumption into question. In his contribution, he compares the books of Proverbs, Qoheleth, and Job in terms of the literary presentations of their authors. On closer inspection, none of these books is attributed to a single voice, but rather to various (and sometimes contradicting) voices. Focusing on the text-pragmatic functions of implicit or explicit attributions, Krüger suggests that the different authorial concepts found in Proverbs, Qoheleth, and Job respectively are connected to their different approaches to the teaching of wisdom.

Christian Frevel’s contribution shows how a refined concept of authorship can help to revalorize early biblical interpretation and draw new insights from it. Historical biblical scholarship has refuted the traditional view of Jeremiah as the author of Lamentations. Instead of merely discarding this traditional attribution, Frevel investigates what prompted early interpreters to identify Jeremiah as author of Lamentations. In his contribution, he traces the emergence of the traditional view and discusses the earliest textual evidence. He argues that the links between Lamentations and Jeremiah – rather than pointing to the historical writer – function as indexical signs for the implied authorship of Jeremiah. Much more than a statement on text production, this attribution guides the understanding of the book of Lamentations.

The essay by Katharina Pyschny aims at bridging the gap between theoretical reflection and exegetical practice by using the book of Ezekiel as a case study. She argues that contemporary literary theories have gone beyond the traditional sense of authorship. Several new aspects allow for a definition of authorship which, in fact, is quite similar to the idea of ancient tradent circles: the inclusion of oral utterances; models of collective and collaborating authorship; the trend to reduce the authenticity, individuality and identity of the author; the fact that originality is no more a parameter for authorship; etc. Considering the intersections between authorial function and author figuration, she focuses on aspects of author figuration in the book of Ezekiel. While emphasizing the role of biographic information in the context of author figuration, she draws on Michael Konkel’s hypothesis of the depersonalization of the prophet. It is shown how both the autobiographic style and the exact historical contextualization of the book served to enforce the authenticity of the message, rather than to enhance the figure of Ezekiel, who instead was stripped of his personality and totally reduced to a medium or God’s mouthpiece. Thus, on a literary level the particular way of

author figuration in Ezekiel serves to highlight not the prophet but God himself as the author of the book.

The essays in this volume corroborate the problematic nature of the concept of the “author” pointed out by literary theorists. From the perspective of the study of ancient literature, they add further points of concern about the quest for “authors” as identifiable historical writers of particular texts. The complex transmission of ancient Hebrew texts and the very different cultural functions of their attribution to particular figures advocate against the use of the concept of the “author,” so long as this is taken to mean an individual historical figure. However, the essays in this volume impressively demonstrate that dismissing this concept of the “author” does not invalidate the concept of authorship, which, as a heuristic tool, raises interesting perspectives for further research.

Thus, with regard to the historical context of text production, the focus on theoretically sound concepts of authorship highlights that all historical constructions of the origins and literary growth of ancient texts are model-based and schematic. The essays in this volume propose methodological tools to adapt models from literary theory and show where the specifics of ancient Hebrew scriptures require modifications and contribute to refining the models from literary theory. In discussing concepts of authorship in the framework of such models, they reflect on the limits of what we can know about the past, and which aspects need to be illuminated further in order to deepen our understanding of the production of ancient texts, their transmission and use.

Moreover, the essays in this volume show that the quest to uncover concepts of authorship in ancient texts opens a wide field of fruitful research. Looking for “authors” directs attention to claims of authorship, explicit and implicit attributions of texts to specific figures and “authoring” voices within texts. In this sense, authorship is not something external, but a function of the text and an inherent feature of every part of the Hebrew Bible. The investigation of the variety and the developments of cultural concepts of authorship in ancient literature in this volume demonstrates how literary, text-pragmatic and discursive functions of ancient concepts of authorship can be uncovered and described, and how they add to our understanding of ancient texts. Thus, this research perspective sheds new light on well-known features of biblical literature such as anonymity or divine speech. Taking seriously the concerns raised in literary studies as well as recent developments of historical research on the Hebrew Bible, the volume therefore does not stop at the “death of the author,” but rather encourages further engagement with issues of authorship.

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