

**COMING TO TERMS WITH INTERTEXTUALITY:  
METHODOLOGY BEHIND BIBLICAL CRITICISM PAST AND  
PRESENT**

BY

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A MINI-DISSERTATION SUBMITTED  
IN  
THE DEPARTMENT OF ANCIENT LANGUAGES, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
**MASTER OF ARTS**  
(ANCIENT LANGUAGES AND CULTURE STUDIES)  
IN THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA,  
HATFIELD

DECEMBER 2003

**ABSTRACT:**

Intertextuality, a handy label that signals interconnectedness between texts, has a long history of interconnectedness with texts. As an inherent feature of all literature, it could not have escaped biblical criticism. Its own historical-critical method, in particular, has been deeply intertextual in that it accounts for the cumulative textual processes behind the Hebrew Bible. It is, however, only in its theoretical expression of the late 1960s with a flat denial of historicism that biblical criticism has found intertextuality unpalatable.

This mini-dissertation is a brief cross-disciplinary gesture, aiming to frame the intertextual dilemma within the context of biblical criticism past and present, using its own literary critical and semiotic resources. As a random intertext, the biblical account of the Passover in two ‘parallel’ passages here complements the broad canvas of the intertextual theory, biblical studies of European and American vintage, history, philosophy, and postmodernism in outlining the paradigm transition from text- to reader-oriented biblical criticism.

From such an enterprise, intertextuality emerges as a mere critical, if useful, framework whose claims to ahistoricity (objectivity) and novelty are dubious and subject to the very methodological questioning it seeks to clarify. As an intertextual theory and practice in one, the following mini-dissertation is as much an example of its terminological precursor as an illustration of it.

**MOTTO:**

עשות ספרים הרבה אין קץ / There is no end to the making of texts

קהלת / Ecclesiastes 12:12b

**DECLARATION:**

With the exception of the sources specifically acknowledged in the text, this mini-dissertation is entirely my own work and as such has not been submitted to any other university.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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## BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

### **i.i.i FOREWORD ON THE BACKGROUND...**

The following essay is about methodologies, or, more precisely, one methodology underlying (an)other(s). That is, of course, if intertextuality, with all due respect, can pass for a *bona fide* methodology at all. An intellectual sidekick of the tumultuous late 1960s, a leftist, almost exclusively French bookish playground<sup>1</sup>, a broad-based poststructuralist neologism dismissive of Western logic, structuralist certainties and longstanding hermeneuticist tradition, intertextuality is bound to prove a controversial concept.<sup>2</sup> For starters, Mai laments its inherent lack of conceptual definition. “Unfortunately,” he adds, “there does not exist anything like a coherent theory of intertextuality, [either] (1991b:237).

Instead, there exists a longwinded “Intertextualitätsdebatte” (Schmelting 1988) which, since Kristeva’s coinage of “intertextualité” (1967), has spawned an impressive variety of terminological mutations: “autotexte” (Dällenbach 1976), “inter-semiocity” (Popovic 1980), “intratextual rewriting” (Altman 1981), “Interauktorialität” (Schabert 1983), “interdiscursivité” (Angenot 1983), and “intercontextuality” (Zurbrugg 1984), among others<sup>3</sup>. With little exaggeration, Mai speaks of a “terminological inflation” (1991a:31). Intertextuality, he concedes, may have become a global creed with international credentials since its *Tel Quel* days, yet ‘die Intertextualitätsdebatte’ has not seen “a fertile elaboration of a sufficiently defined and agreed upon concept but rather [...] a contest for meaning” (*ibid.*).

### **i.iii.i ...TOPIC...**

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<sup>1</sup> The origins of the intertextual theory rest with the elitist, avant-garde Parisian journal *Tel Quel* and its major contributors: Kristeva, Barthes, and Derrida, *inter alia*. Brütting (1976:115-120) and Ffrench (1995), respectively, provide a concise and a comprehensive history of the group’s composition and its general intellectual outlook.

<sup>2</sup> Mai (1991a:32) writes of the “present confusion and factiousness” of intertextual scholars (of which this essay gives a fair account).

<sup>3</sup> Pugliese (1988, note 66) provides further examples.

A parallel contest for meaning has been witnessed through, often reluctant, appropriation of intertextuality by literary criticism, both secular and biblical. The latter, especially, with its inherent hostility to theory and nostalgia for old structuralist certainties, has found intertextuality's outright rejection of historicism hard to digest. This mini-dissertation is, therefore, a cross-disciplinary attempt to intermarry the two allegedly irreconcilable, yet closely related bedfellows, by framing the intertextual dilemma within the context of biblical criticism past and present. Its structuring and reasoning, it is hoped, reveals a paradigm transition from text- to reader-oriented biblical criticism.

In doing so, Chapter One presents an overview of the issues and concepts raised in 'die Intertextualitätsdebatte' and their interdependence with contemporary history, philosophy and postmodernism. Chapter Two outlines the intertextual nature of the Hebrew Bible in general, and of its account of the Passover in particular. Chapter Three confronts the troublesome intertextual theory with some general requirements for their profitable application to biblical criticism. Chapters Four and Five, respectively, give examples of historical, and reader-oriented criticisms at work, and frame them within the context of intertextuality. Chapter Six draws inevitable conclusions and closes with a summary.

### **i.iii.i ... AND METHOD**

This essay, it must be pointed out, is hardly a structuralist tirade, comprising a detailed, verse-by-verse analysis of a biblical text. The recurring biblical accounts of the Passover in Exodus 12:1-13 and Deuteronomy 16:1-8 are treated strictly as *random* intertexts. Their concise subjection to the *Tel Quel* theory of intertextuality (Chapter Two) and their exemplary treatments by source-, form-, and tradition-historical criticism (Chapter Four) and intertextual transference (Chapter Five) are here to illustrate the *kinds* of results these methods yield under intertextual scrutiny. Given the tensions between theory and methodology, intertextuality and biblical criticism, argumentation and presentation, and spatial limits and intellectual scope to be experienced throughout, the following mini-dissertation is as much an example of the term *intertextualité* as an illustration of it.



On a related note, the general tendency is to let the intertextualists, as well as their critics and detractors, speak for themselves. (In the absence of a coherent intertextual theory, individual contributions may well be a necessity.) This, however, if pursued religiously, inevitably results in a kind of ‘mosaïque de citations,’ to borrow Kristeva’s term, hailing in itself, needless to say, an intertextual enterprise. A considerable effort has been made through countless rounds of editing to avoid jargon in favour of a (Barthes’s designation) “*lisible, readerly*” text. The ‘original’<sup>4</sup> and critical works are cited in English, French, and German, according to their limited availability in the South African university libraries.

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<sup>4</sup> The irony of this designation will become clear enough in the course of this work’s first chapter.

## CHAPTER ONE: TIDES OF INTERTEXTUALITY

After Adam, there are no nameless objects, nor any unused words  
Tzvetan Todorov (1984:10)

### 1.1.1 'NO TEXT IS AN ISLAND'

Grivel's dictum and by all means a suitable prolegomenon: "Il n'est pas de texte que d'intertexte" (1982:240) makes a bold proposition to the effect that no text, any text, exists in isolation but is always connected to (Grivel's earlier term) "les universaux de texte" (1978). This universe of texts is, of course, a mere terminological variation on Derrida's "texte général" (1973:310), Mailloux's "musée imaginaire" (1982), Barthes's "chambre d'échos" (1975a:78), and/or Grivel's (alternative) "bibliothèque générale" (1982:240), but the general idea holds. In this sense, intertextuality, is that total and limitless fabric of text which makes up our linguistic universe and from which all extant writings are vague *déjà-lu* or conscious impressions, untraceable or duly attributed quotations (Beal 1992:27). In this fashion, intertextuality reveals a text's dependence on and infiltration by prior codes, concepts, conventions, unconscious practices, and texts (Leitch 1983:161).

Kristeva, who, somewhat casually<sup>5</sup>, coined the term back in 1967, explains why. "Tout texte," she writes, "se construit comme mosaïque de citations" whereby "tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte" (1969:146). "[A] text," Barthes elaborates on this in a frequently cited passage,

is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture (1977:146).

Similarly, Derrida reflects on a text that is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other

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<sup>5</sup> Kristeva coined the term in conjunction with her review of the work of the Russian-Soviet postformalist Bakhtin (see below) whom she thus introduced for the first time to her French audiences.

than itself, to other differential traces (1979:84). Every text, Heath concludes, is always (an)other text(s) that it remakes, comments, displaces, prolongs, reassumes<sup>6</sup> (1972:24). Under such circumstances, “no text,” Miscall puts it aptly, “is an island”<sup>7</sup> (1992:45).

### 1.1.2 TEXT VERSUS INTERTEXT

It follows from Barthes’s notion of ‘multidimensional space’ that whenever a new text comes into existence, it relates to previous texts and, in turn, becomes the precursor of subsequent texts. Penchansky here pictures a kind of osmosis between discreet textual blocks without regard to chronology where exchanged information moves backwards and forwards in time (1992:77). The new text, on the one hand, is “[...] un croisement de surfaces textuelles, un dialogue de plusieurs écritures: de l’écrivain, du destinataire (ou du personnage), du contexte culturel actuel ou antérieur” (Kristeva 1969:144). On the other, writes Riddel with an eye on typology, it envisages a revisionist post-text, which is thus inherent within ‘multidimensional space’. “The literary text,” he believes,

is a play of textuality, not simply in the obvious sense that a “work” of art always originates in the historical field of predecessors. Its own play of differences mirrors its displacement and reappropriation of other texts, and anticipates the necessary critical text which must ‘supplement’ it [...] (1979:249).

The new text, Plett wraps it up, is pre-text and post-text simultaneously, and therefore an intertext (1991:17).

### 1.1.3 ‘CLASSICAL TEXT’

By now, most intertextualists (Weimann 1985:284-85; Mai 1991a:36) should agree, it has become a futile exercise to elaborate on intertext without a clear understanding of the concepts of Barthes’s “classical text” (1981a:33), which preceded it. If intertextuality, as the rare consensus (Brütting 1976; Hempfer 1976; Jefferson 1982; Pechey 1982; Tallis 1988) has it, is a poststructuralist enterprise, its premises must necessarily be rooted in

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<sup>6</sup> Heath here conveniently lists intertextual categories known as repetition, permutation and respectively (Plett 1991:17-25).

<sup>7</sup> Miscall’s phrase “No text is an island” is undoubtedly a paraphrase of Donne’s poetic line “No man is an island”, later appropriated by Ernest Hemingway as the motto for his novel *For whom the bell tolls*. Such recurrences, including the one in this text, are sure marks of intertextuality *per se*.

the structuralism and Saussurean linguistics of the sign and signification<sup>8</sup>, which engenders it (Allen 2000:62). Quite naturally, it is in Saussurean terms that Barthes defines his ‘classical text’:

The [structuralist] notion of text implies that the written message is articulated like the sign: on one side the signifier (the materiality of the letters and of their connection into words, sentences, paragraphs, chapters), and on the other side the signified, a meaning which is at once original, univocal, and definitive, determined by the correctness of the signs which carry it (1981b:33).

As a result, Barthes continues, “[t]he classical sign, is a sealed unit, whose closure arrests meaning [...]. The same goes for the classical text: it closes the work, chains it to its letter, rivets it to its signified” (*ibid.*).

Structuralism therefore sees the text as a purely material sequence of specific words arranged in a specific order (Miscall 1992:43). Grimm, who ascribes such a definition to the French structuralist establishment in particular, finds that “[d]ie französische universitäre Literaturwissenschaft hat eine [...] Eigengesetzlichkeit des geisteswissenschaftlichen Gegenstandes nie reflektiert”. On the contrary, “sie sieht ihre Aufgabe allein in der Suche nach dem *einen* entstehungsgeschichtlich bedingten Sinn des literarischen Gegenstandes” (1987:134; emphasis his). Their quest for the ‘one meaning’ reveals the structuralist conviction that the text under scrutiny possesses and conveys such a meaning, imparted to it by its author (Allen 2000:72). The benefits are clear enough. Such a see-through text, Barthes believes, secures the stability of inscription and corrects the imprecision of memory. The ‘classical text’, he concludes, “is a weapon against time, oblivion and the trickery of speech, which is so easily taken back, altered, denied” (1981b:32).

#### 1.1.4 POSTCLASSICAL INTERTEXT(S)

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<sup>8</sup> For Saussure, the sign is a basic element of communication, divided into two parts: the signifier (the ‘material’ written or spoken word), and the signified (the concept associated with that particular signifier) (Allen 2000:218; for a detailed account see Saussure 1959). From this particular vision of linguistic communication stems the structuralist brand of literary criticism, which accounts for the text in terms of its underlying sign-system (Allen 2000:219), in which, it is believed, the meaning of that text is inherent (Barton 1993:39).

Unlike their structuralist predecessors, Brütting points out, “die avantgardistischen Theoretiker [...] den Begriff *texte* nie streng formuliert haben und dies in gewisser Weise sogar unmöglich ist” (1976:73). Accordingly, in the work of the *Tel Quel* ensemble and their disciples, the text becomes (and remains) “the site of a resistance to stable signification” (Allen 2000:33). For one thing, the transition from the *delimited* ‘classical text’ to a set of *de-limited* intertexts, as Plett (1991:5) puts it, marks an all-out attack on the structural semiotics:

Meaning in this view derives from the *collusion* of sign clusters whose signification changes as the clusters interact with each other, and this *infinite* interplay disguises the *absence* of meaning outside the language system or the so-called linguistic universe (Detweiler 1993:457; emphasis mine).

This process sees nothing less than previous assertions of objectivity, scientific rigour, methodological stability and other highly rationalistic-sounding terms giving way to a vague emphasis on uncertainty, indeterminacy, incommunicability, subjectivity, desire, pleasure and play (Allen 2000:3). The greatest uncertainty of all, needless to say, concerns the very definition of intertext.

What *exactly*, intertextualists keep on asking against all odds, is an intertext? In answer to this, Plett offers a handy etymological view of “a text *between* other texts” (1991:5; emphasis his). Mai (1991a), on the contrary, rules it out as unhelpful on contextual grounds. “Greek and Latin morphemes have always served as a reservoir for neologisms,” he claims, “[b]ut Kristeva, for one, did not expound her concept of intertextuality by reference to (or even reverence for) the ancients. Her points of reference are not Plato/ Aristotle/ Ovid but Hegel/ Marx/ Husserl/ Freud/ Saussure/ Chomsky” (32). Etymology failing, the resort in search for intertext must be to more authoritative dicta. “Every text is intertext,” Leitch (1983:59) states, with an air of semantic confidence. “All intertexts are texts,” Plett (1991:5) counters, with equal conviction. Yet does not the reversal of the equation imply that text and intertext are identical? If so, why the need for a distinguishing ‘inter’?

### 1.1.5 TWO EXTREMES

Simply because the intertext, unlike the text, claims one extreme view, is characterised by attributes that exceed it, since its constituents refer to constituents of one or several other texts (Plett 1991:5). Consequently, this view has it that all that is needed for the text to function is the presupposition of the intertext (Riffaterre 1980a:239) - the intertext being the “corpus of texts the reader may legitimately connect with the one before his eyes, that is the texts brought to mind by what he is reading” (1980b:626) Of course, some from this vein of thought have gone beyond ignoring the text to denying it in favour of intertextuality. “There are *no* texts, but only relationships between texts,” Bloom (1975:3; emphasis his), for one, declares, rephrasing what Butor had said before him: “Il n’y a pas d’œuvre individuelle. L’œuvre d’un individu est une sorte de noeude qui se produit à l’intérieur d’un tissu culturel” (1969:2).

The other extreme view heralds downright escapism to abstraction. For Ruprecht, who sees it floating in a “state of *dynamic nonequilibrium*” (1991:60; emphasis his), the intertext is “absent in the innermost recesses of its very presence” (61). Like an *idée fixe*, he goes on, “the salient and intriguing feature of spreading ‘intertextual connections’ is their overrunning ‘everywhereness’ in the open heterotopia of the absent” (*ibid.*). To say that the text is constructed from a mosaic of quotations, Allen speculates in plain English, does not mean one can find the text’s intertexts and then view them as the signified of the text’s signifiers.<sup>9</sup> “The inter-texts, other works of literature, other kinds of texts,” he writes on, “are themselves intertextual constructs, are themselves able to offer us nothing more than signifiers” (2000:73). The outcome of such abstractionism is equally bewildering. Instead of literature we have textuality; in place of tradition, intertextuality (Leitch 1983:122).

### 1.2.1 CRITICAL CONTEXT (I)<sup>10</sup>

The trio referred to most frequently with regard to poststructuralist notions of (inter)textuality consists of Kristeva, Barthes and Derrida<sup>11</sup> (Morson 1986; Worton &

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<sup>9</sup> For a brief definition of the Saussurean terms referred to here by Allen, see note 8 above.

<sup>10</sup> The contemporary critical context of the intertextual theory will be dealt with only briefly and in so far as it proves relevant for the thematic scope of this essay.

Still 1990). The now canonised legend has it that in the late 1960s, Kristeva borrowed from the prestige Derridean philosophy, neo-Marxist political science and Lacanian psychoanalysis conferred at the time, and appropriated them for her own intertextual crusade (Mai 1991a:33, 38-41). The formidable result, as Mai further observed, may have been a “deliberate conceptual muddle” (1991a:38), yet, in the light of the subsequent ‘Intertextualitätsdebatte’ it served its original purpose of a textual/cultural revolution (Weimann 1985:278-84; see below). Kristeva’s radical and explosive potential, the legend continues, had a prehistory in Bakhtin’s concept of ‘dialogicity’ or ‘dialogism’<sup>12</sup>, which the Soviet-Russian critic had worked out and reapplied during the cultural revolution of the 1920s (Pfister 1991:211; Allen 2000:21-30).

Bakhtin’s claim to fame stems from his postulation that a word (in text or language) is no longer to be considered as a *point* of fixed meaning, but as a *place* where various textual surfaces and networks cross (Féral 1980:275; emphasis mine; cf. Kristeva 1969:144 below). At the heart of it is Bakhtin’s recognition that the language we use is never our own, that no interpretation is ever complete because every word is a response to previous words and elicits further responses (Allen 2000:27-8). “The word in language,” asserts Bakhtin himself, “is half someone else’s” (1981:293). By dialogism, he suggests a “dialogue of voices” inherent in every text and a “polyphony” of every utterance within any social context (1979:169; translation mine). Inherent in language itself, dialogism is that open-ended, back-and-forth play between the text of the sender, the text of the addressee and the text of culture which presents a challenge to the text’s supposedly closed structure and univocal meaning (Beal 1992:29). It is essentially this “dynamisation du structuralisme” (Kristeva 1969) that paves the way for the theory of intertextuality.

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<sup>11</sup> Kristeva’s and Barthes’s positions are crucial for both the intertextual theory as such, and the purposes of this essay. In addition to what follows below, Harland (1987:167-169), briefly but most perceptively, sketches both positions and their analogy with Derrida’s philosophy of language. Since Derrida is less concerned with literature, he will play only a marginal role here. An extended critical discussion of Derrida can be found in Seung (1982).

<sup>12</sup> See note 5 above. Some, namely Mai (1991a:33), find Bakhtin’s relevance for the intertextual debate “rather doubtful” on contextual grounds (such as Bakhtin’s affiliation with formalism and sociology).

In its first articulation by Kristeva<sup>13</sup>, Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism comes to play a key role. “A la place de la notion d’intersubjectivité [which Beal (1992:30) equates with authorial intentions],” she writes, “s’installe celle d’intertextualité, et le langage poétique se lit, au moins, comme *double* (1969:146; emphasis hers). The text, it follows, ‘is read as *double*’ along two trajectories (Chandler 2001: Internet), which Kristeva herself terms horizontal (subject-addressee) and vertical (text-context) axis (1969:146). The intertextual theory here refers to a kind of syllepsis<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, in Barthes’s hands, Bakhtin’s double-voiced discourse or dialogic word gives way to a vision of the text in which no word means one thing alone, in which no signified stabilises meaning, and in which the reader no longer ‘discovers’ meaning but follows the passage of meaning as it flows, explodes and/or regresses (Allen 2000:67). The reader of such a text, Barthes concludes, may be compared to “someone at a loose end” (1977:159).

### 1.2.2 ‘THE TIME OF THEORY’<sup>15</sup>

The French intellectual *Weltanschauung* into which intertextuality arrives in the late 1960s is one in which an array of established positions within philosophy, political science and psychoanalytic theory are being transformed by a critique of structuralism (Allen 2000:30). While acting as one of its premier agents, Kristeva herself diagnoses in 1967 a “cultural subversion, which our civilization is undergoing”<sup>16</sup> (1986:75). Mai, in turn, understands the emerging concept of intertextuality as “one of the symptoms”

<sup>13</sup> Whereas Bakhtin’s argument rests on actual human subjects employing language in specific social situations, Kristeva’s appropriation of these points evades human subjects in favour of the more abstract terms: text and textuality (Allen 2000:36).

<sup>14</sup> Riffaterre (1980) explains Derrida’s term as follows:

Syllepsis consists in the understanding of the same word in two different ways at once, as *contextual meaning* and as *intertextual meaning*. The contextual meaning is that demanded by the word’s grammatical collocations, by the word’s reference to other words in the text. The intertextual meaning is another meaning the word may possibly have, one of its dictionary meanings and/or one actualized within an intertext. In either case, this intertextual meaning is compatible with the context and pointless within the text, but it still operates as a second reference – this one to the intertext (637-638).

<sup>15</sup> The following three subheadings usher by no means exhaustive accounts of intertextuality’s complex place within history, philosophy and postmodernism. Rather they serve as conceptual springboards for the issues to be discussed in Chapters Three and Four of this essay.

<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Weimann pictures a crisis of the traditional definition of the cultural function of the humanities, and especially the study of literature (1985:278). He (1985:278-84) and Allen (2000:30-5) have conveniently summarised the bones of contention in question.



(1991a:33) of that subversion, and an effective “counterstrategy” (36) against it. In any case, the atmosphere of the late 1960s Paris can justifiably be styled, to employ French’s designation, “the time of theory” (1995), which he dates between 1966 and 1975. It is within this time bracket that deconstructive theorists conceive intertextuality as something of a weapon to be used in the contemporary struggle over meaning and truth<sup>17</sup> (Leitch 1983:161).

### 1.2.3 INTERTEXTUALITY AND PHILOSOPHY

Furthermore, this struggle is an attack against nothing less than the foundations of Western logic<sup>18</sup>, which stems from the Aristotelian principles of singularity and non-contradiction and hence asserts that something cannot at one and the same time be something (A) and something else (not-A)<sup>19</sup> (Allen 2000:43). The dialogic word, on the contrary, is double-voiced, a *heteroglot*, and therefore possesses a meaning (A) at the same moment that it possesses (an) alternative meaning(s) (not-A) [*ibid.*]. Dialogism, however, has little to do with the Hegelian dialectics. Kristeva is quick to warn:

The notion of dialogism, which owes much to Hegel, must not be confused with Hegelian dialectics, based on a triad and thus on struggle and projection (a movement of transcendence), which does not transgress the Aristotelian tradition founded on substance and causality. Dialogism replaces these concepts by absorbing them within the concept of relation. It does not strive towards transcendence but rather toward harmony, all the while implying an idea of rupture (of opposition and analogy) as a modality of transformation (1980:88-9).

The transition from structuralism [which, Allen (2000:62) notes, marks the logical endpoint of Western logic] to intertextuality, Barthes (1977) insists, is both disciplinary and generic, comparable to the shift from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics. Just as the latter demands that “*the relativity of the frames of reference*” be included in the object studied, so intertextuality requires a wholesale “relativisation of the relations of writer, reader and observer (critic)” (1977:156; emphasis his).

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<sup>17</sup> For instance, the political militancy behind the *Tel Quel* group rests on analogies between traditional criticism’s tendency to accumulate ‘precious’ meaning with the capitalist’s hoarding of profits (Mai 1991a:47).

<sup>18</sup> Derrida (1972) ontological critique of what he refers to as the “logocentric foundationalism of modern Western thought” provides a detailed background to the points briefly raised below.

<sup>19</sup> Such logic has dominated the humanities from the bulk of uncompromising medieval exegesis (Smalley 1941; McGrath 1998) to Saussurean semiotics personified by structuralism (Allen 2000:62).

#### 1.2.4 INTERTEXTUALITY AND POSTMODERNISM

The concept of intertextuality, it must be acknowledged, was coined under the auspices of postmodernism (Pfister 1991:209). For instance, in the same year 1967, in which Kristeva made current the word *intertextualité*, Barth announced that we have entered a terminal literary phase dominated by the “Literature of Exhaustion” (1982), in which all creative impetus is spent and in which originality can only survive in the form of sophisticated games with extant texts. Similarly, for Fokkema, “the Postmodernist is convinced that the social context consists of words, and that each new text is written over an older one” (1984:46), for intertextuality - the very prerogative. Overtime, such sentiments have resulted in the ubiquity of “intertextual knowledge” (Eco 1979:21), in the sense of critical awareness that ‘things haven’t been the same since’.

Today, intertextuality, Mai claims, often serves as a synonym for deconstruction or post-structuralism (1991a:31), which, for Allen, are mere “aspect[s] of a Postmodern age” (2000:181). Hassan’s famous list of the key determinants of modernism and postmodernism, styles them as clear opposites:

<b>MODERNISM</b>	<b>POST-MODERNISM</b>
Purpose	Play
Design	Chance
Centering	Dispersal
Genre/Boundary	Text/Inter-text
Interpretation/Reading	Misinterpretation/Misreading
	(1993:152; abbreviated)

The less subtle parallels are there, too. Nye, for one, clearly equates the “intertextual, an irregular mesh of differences and deferrals”, with the Derridean notion of *différance*<sup>20</sup> (1987:669). Along the same lines, Leitch freely refers to intertextualists as “deconstructive theorists” (1983:161). By now, Pfister announces, intertextuality has become the very trademark of postmodernism (1991:209). But how plausible is this view beyond post-modern argumentation?

### 1.3.1 INTERTEXTUALISTS ET AL

The unfolding of ‘die Intertextualitätsdebatte’ over the years has been overwhelming and, quite frankly, frustrating.<sup>21</sup> Intertextuality, Verweyen & Witting allege, has been “talked into being” (1991:165) via a host of explicatory publications whose increasing numbers, Plett remarks (1991:3), have only added to the confusion. Much of the reasoning involved, Lindner complains, has lacked “terminologische Sauberkeit und logische Stringenz” (1985:199), let alone one coherent theory of intertextuality. (Allen [2000:78] even speaks of tension between a historical and a theoretical account of intertextuality.) With his tongue in cheek, Bennett parodies the academic scramble for intertextuality as a “consumer revolution in literary theory” (1987:249). The basic disagreement concerns its emergence as a self-consciously original concept and its subsequent (in)applicability. In the debate, two groups of intertextualists, the progressives and the traditionalists, respectively, are confronted by a body of anti-intertextualists (Plett 1991:3).

The progressives are there to cultivate the revolutionary heritage of the masters. With a kind of self-absorbed *l'art pour l'art* attitude, they do not tire of quoting, paraphrasing and interpreting the writings of Bakhtin, Kristeva, Barthes, Derrida and others (Plett

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<sup>20</sup> Derrida’s coinage combines Fr. ‘to defer, postpone, delay’ with ‘to differ, to be different from’ to illustrate that language involves at one and the same time the differences between and the deferral of meanings (Allen 2000:211).

<sup>21</sup> The most comprehensive overviews of the ‘intertextuality debate’, both in terms of theory and practice, with its twists, progressions and regressions, have appeared in Ette (1985), Plett (1986), Worton & Still (1990), Plett (1991), and, most recently, Allen (2000). In stark contrast to these efforts comes Schoeck’s complaint that “[i]ntertextuality has its own history, although it is not yet written” (1991:181).

1991:3.). Their *œuvres*, much like the originals, smack of a “strangely abstract quality, at a decided remote from reality”<sup>22</sup> (4; Pfister 1991:221). The traditionalists, for the most part, are conventional scholars, including literary and biblical critics, who ask themselves whether and how the insights of the ‘Intertextualitätsdebatte’ could be applied profitably to their own concerns. Depending on their critical emphasis, their answers differ. Those who are concerned with theoretical advances in their discipline, use intertextuality as a general term to improve their methodological and terminological arsenals (*ibid.*).

Finally, a third party – anti-intertextualists express their opposition to the concept by declaring intertextuality mere “old wine in new bottles” (Boyarin 1987), and emphasising that they themselves have worked intertextually all along. Their view of intertextuality is that of a “newly created, though not entirely novel” (Hebel 1991:135) theory, whose venerable practice of more than three thousand years dates back to the *imitatio auctorum* of the Greco-Roman antiquity, the typological *allegoresis* of Hellenism and patristicism (Plett 1991:5), not to mention the intertextual compositions of the post-biblical corpus.

“From the earliest traceable origins onwards,” Pfister reminds,

literary texts have always referred not only to reality (*imitatio vitae*), but also to previous other texts (*imitatio veterum*), and the various intertextual practices of alluding and quoting, of paraphrasing and translating, of continuation and adaptation, of parody and travesty flourished in [...] late classical Alexandria, in the Renaissance, in Neoclassicism and, of course, in “classical” Modernism<sup>23</sup> (1991:210).

Accordingly, intertextuality is put through critical mills and accused of being incomprehensible and inapplicable on the one hand, and of being second nature on the other. So many intertextualities, so many intertextualists, so many anti-intertextualists - that is the result, concludes Plett (1991:5).

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<sup>22</sup> The critical reviews are amazingly uniform. Pfister speaks of “fascinating beauty and irritating strangeness” (1991:221).

<sup>23</sup> The consensus seems to be that intertextuality is not a time-bound feature in literature and the arts but certain cultural periods incline to it more than others (Plett 1991:26). Modernistic literary technique known as ‘stream-of-consciousness’ is often mentioned as the beginning of self-consciously intertextual writing.

## CHAPTER TWO: BIBLE AS INTERTEXTUAL CASE STUDY

שמור את־חדש האביב ועשית פסח ליהוה אלהיך כי  
בחדש האביב הוציאך יהוה אלהיך ממצרים לילה:

Observe the month of Abib by keeping the Passover to the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night.

דברים / Deuteronomy 16:1

### 2.1.1 BIBLE AS LITERATURE

“At its least ambitious,” Tallis generalises, “the ‘intertextuality’ thesis is about literature. Non-contentiously,” he goes on,

it takes its rise from the obvious fact that many literary works are explicitly or implicitly allusive. Scholarly references, quotations, echoes, reworkings of traditional themes, deliberate employment of established styles and retelling classic or archetypal ‘literary’ stories [...] - these intertextual features have been the very stuff of literature since ancient times (1988:31).

Being the “literary masterpiece” that it is (Habel 1971:1), the Hebrew Bible is an unrivalled, encyclopaedia-like compilation of intertextual features, comprising instances of parallel passages, repetitions, *leitmotifs*, oath formulae, rhetorical techniques, textual citation, allusion, echo, allegory, typology, textual commentary, to name a few. Long recognised by ordinary readers, intertextual features have elicited varied responses, ranging from the enthusiasm of thorough cross-referencing by some eager rabbis, to rich exploitation through the ‘fourfold’ reading of the Scripture in the Middle Ages (Smalley 1941; McGrath 1998), to the cover-up by biblical redactors via harmonisation of one text in the light of other divergent readings.

The systematic attention biblical intertextuality had been waiting for only arrived with biblical criticism *per se*. Even here, Rashkow complains, they are most often discussed “in terms of the biblical *writer*’s ability to shape the text, rather than the *reader*’s role in interpreting it” (1992:57). Such attitudes are apparent in Weinfeld’s appendix (1972) of the jargon which he ascribes to a Deuteronomic School, in Fishbane’s view of stylistic

“anthologized reuses of the vast biblical thesaurus” (1985:9), in Habel’s notion of a reservoir, or “common stock of tradition” (1971:8) with parallels in the literatures of the Ancient Near East, in Boyarin’s (1987) work on midrash, in Weingreen’s theory of “proto-Mishnah (1976), in Hays’s thoughts on “echo” (1989), in Ben Porat’s meditation on allusion (1978), Lindbeck’s publication on “intratextuality” (1984), Renza’s hypothesis of “poetic influence” (1990), and Rosenberg’s contribution to typology (1984), *inter alia*. Most notably, Rashkow herself sticks to a tried structuralist classification (Culley 1976; Williams 1980) of intertextual features on micro- (individual phrases), and macro-levels (sequential narrative episodes and type-scenes) [1992:57]. It is therefore no wonder that the images of the biblical redactors as “recasting” thematic material” (George 2000:357) are frequent enough even within ‘post-intertextual’ biblical criticism.

Considerably more rare are those scholarly attempts, which apply intertextual features profitably for intertextual means. Berlin (1989), for one, explores how “lexical cohesion” (linguistic sequence of words) plays a role in interpretation and how an awareness of this relationship can lead to better readings. Bloom (1976), in a very different kind of scholarship, pursues a notion of “poetic crossings” (the ways in which a text can destroy its own integrity if examined within a framework of lexical cohesion). Given its complexity, (inner-)biblical commentary enjoys within intertextual studies a privileged position since it “hails the emergence of traditions [...] supplement the original authoritative teachings”<sup>24</sup> (Fishbane 1985:1). Fishbane’s own contribution is the thesis of ‘inner-biblical exegesis’ (1985), which affirms that the Hebrew Bible has “an exegetical dimension *in its own right*” (14), by virtue of being a response to life, and as such constantly adapting itself to the needs of the people (Sarna 1975).

### 2.2.1 THE PASSOVER: AN INTERTEXTUAL CASE STUDY<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Fishbane goes as far as to claim that in Judaism “the original hierarchical relationship of revelation to exegetical tradition has been inverted for all practical purposes” (1985:2).

<sup>25</sup> The Passover is treated here in general terms as a classic biblical intertext. The focus is therefore on the features, which render it as such, rather than on a factual analysis of the rite.

One example of an intertext recurring throughout the Pentateuch (Ex 23:10-19; 34:18-26; Lev 23:4-8) and beyond (Ezek 45:21-24; Ezra 6:19-22), is the account of Yahweh's Passover, as presented in its two major 'parallel' passages in Ex 12:1-13 and Deut 16:1-8. As the rite commemorating the Israelite exodus from Egypt, the Passover is bound to echo throughout the biblical corpus as a binding theme, subject to further harmonisation, editing, adaptation, and quotation, reflecting various theological focal points ascribed to it for different reasons (domestic versus national rite) by different redactors (Priestly writer versus Deuteronomist) [Rylaarsdam 1962; Bosman 1997]. Moreover, the biblical account in question happens to be *intratextual*, and that on two different levels: 1. in that it combines the Passover with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, without either losing its distinguishable characteristics, and 2. in that it contains internal intratextual elements (Priestly versus Deuteronomistic vocabulary) [*ibid.*].

But, putting contextual concerns aside, what, given the *Tel Quel* theory and beyond, renders the two 'parallel' passages intertextual? Here follows their synoptic layout<sup>26</sup>:

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<sup>26</sup> A parallel is drawn here with the scholarly arrangement of the three Synoptic Gospels.

Ex 1<sup>27</sup> The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: 2 “This month is to be the first month of the year for you. 3 Tell the whole congregation of Israel: On the tenth day of this month each man must choose a lamb per family or household. 4 If his household is too small to eat a whole lamb, he and his next-door neighbour may share it in proportion to the number of people and the amount each person can eat. 5 You may choose either a sheep or a goat, but it must be a one-year-old male without any defects. 6 You must keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembled community of Israel is to slaughter it at twilight. 7 The people are to take some of the blood and put it on the doorposts and the lintel of the houses where they eat it. 8 That night the meat is to be roasted with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but eat it roasted whole, including the head, the legs, and the internal organs. 10 You must not leave any of it until morning; you must burn whatever is left over. 11 This is how you are to eat it: quickly, dressed for travel, with your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. It is the Passover of the Lord. 12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, killing every first born male, both human and animal, and punishing all the Gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. 13 The blood on the door posts is to be a sign marking the houses in which you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and will not harm you when I strike the land of Egypt.”

Deut 1 “Honour the Lord your God by celebrating the Passover in the month of Abib; it was on a night in the month of Abib that the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt. 2 You are to offer the Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God, from the flock and the herd, at the place that the Lord will choose as a place for worship. 3 You must not combine it with anything leavened. For seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, the bread of suffering, because you came out of the land of Egypt in such a hurry, so that as long as you live you will remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt. 4 For seven days no one in your territory is to keep yeast in his house, and none of the meat of the animal slaughtered on the evening of the first day is to be left over until morning. 5 You are not permitted to offer the Passover sacrifice in any of your towns that the Lord your God is giving you. 6 But at the place the Lord your God will choose as a place for worship, only there you are to offer the Passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, when you departed from Egypt. 7 Boil it and eat it at the one place the Lord your God will choose; and the next morning return to your tents. 8 For the next six days you are to eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh days there will be a solemn assembly for the Lord your God. Do no work on that day.”

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<sup>27</sup> Own translation based on Rudolph, W & H P Rüger (eds.) (1967-1977) נביאים וכתובים (1967-1977) תורה: *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.



Quite clearly, the latter text, if the obvious chronology of Exodus preceding Deuteronomy is honoured<sup>28</sup>, reflects, to quote Kristeva, “absorption et transformation de l’autre texte” (1969:146), an intertextual phenomenon.

The later text, as Leitch theorises, reveals its dependence on and infiltration by prior codes (divine instruction), concepts (ritual sacrifice), conventions (exodus from Egypt), unconscious practices (ideological/ Deuteronomistic bias), and text itself (1983:161). Yet the gist of the ‘infiltrated’ text survives: observe a religious holiday on a certain date, in a particular manner, to commemorate one event. The rest are contextual variables. Most notable among them is the shift in focus. Whereas the Exodus passage expounds on the technicalities of the sacrificial rite (vs 3-6, 9-11) and the exodus tradition (vs 7, 12-13), the Deuteronomy account seems to dwell on the centralised worship (vs 2, 5-7) at the expense of the previous focus. In this sense, to borrow from Riddel’s critical terminology, the latter is a revisionist post-text (1979:249). This effectively makes the Exodus passage a pre-text, while the resulting intertextual relationship assumes the dimensions of Derrida’s “differential network” (1979:84), not least in the light of later biblical, rabbinic, medieval, contemporary and other comment on the Passover.

As a result, the intertextual analysis of the two passages reveals *one*, not two intertexts. The ‘parallel’ account of the Passover in Ex 12:1-13 and Deut 16:1-8 thus becomes Barthes’s “multidimensional space” (1977:146) with its different foci and corresponding theological messages; in other words “un croisement de surfaces textuelles (gist of the passages in question), un dialogue de plusieurs écritures: de l’écrivain (earlier Pentateuchal sources versus Deuteronomist), du destinataire (ou du personnage), du contexte culturel actuel (Deuteronomistic redaction) ou antérieur (Exodus composition)” (Kristeva 1969:144). As a whole, the account of the Passover in Exodus and Deuteronomy, Kristeva recommends, is to be read as *double* (146). Accordingly, Grivel’s “bibliothèque générale” (1982:240), for which it stands here, extends to the rest of the

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<sup>28</sup> Honouring textual chronology here would seem to contravene most of the intertextual theory discussed above (see PENCHANSKY 1992). The practical implications of such delimitation will be considered in Chapter Three.

Pentateuchal corpus horizontally, and to the Passover tradition vertically. Under these circumstances, Grivel's dictum seems valid: “Il n'est pas de texte que d'intertexte” (*ibid.*).

## CHAPTER THREE: THEORY VERSUS METHODOLOGY

Wer nichts von der Sache weiß, der spricht von der Methode  
Helmer Ringgren (1966:266)

### 3.1.1 ‘DISSEMINATION OF INTERTEXTUALITY’

Chapter One has demonstrated, in theoretical terms, how Kristeva, Barthes and Derrida came close to defining intertextuality as that perpetual and indeterminable deferral from text to text to text. “The lines of influence by which it has been carried into biblical interpretation are [equally] impossible to trace,” Beal draws a fitting parallel with the practical concerns of Chapter Two and goes on to bemoan “this seemingly boundless dissemination of ‘intertextuality’ within our discipline” (1992:27). The short and perhaps malicious answer to this charge would be that intertextuality has, quite deviously, been subjected to the very phenomenon it attempts to describe and apply, respectively (37, note 1). Intertextuality, after all, will not stay within the bounds of any definition, Derrida (1981) reminds us, “as if it were the nature of intertextual space, its codes and conventions, to evade description [and, subsequently, application],” explains Culler (1976:1383-4). What, for the sake of literary criticism in general and of biblical criticism in particular, are the practical consequences?

### 3.2.1 TOTALITY VERSUS REDUCTIONISM

Such a concept of intertextuality as Kristeva’s (characterising the ontological status of texts in general) is, Pfister notes, inevitably descriptive rather than programmatic (1991:210). “According to her theory *all* texts are intertextual,” he writes (*ibid.*; emphasis his), prompting *all* structuralist critics to remonstrate against her that an all-comprehensive concept of intertextuality, as appealing as it may seem, is of little use when it comes to interpreting individual texts (Hempfer 1976:53-5 and 1983:14-8; Kloepfer 1982; Stierle 1983). This, of course, marks the basic scholarly disagreement about intertextuality: whether it is to be regarded as a *general* state of affairs textual or as

an inherent quality of *specific* texts (Mai 1991a:31). From here, Allen wonders further whether intertextuality is concerned with *finite* or *infinite* and overwhelming dimensions of meaning (2000:59). To Beal, who shares these dilemmas, it comes as no surprise that intertextuality has been developed as a theoretical rather than a methodological term (1992:27).

How, then, does one apply a theory so much at loggerheads with practice as intertextuality? Alerted to this bleak vision, the ‘Intertextualitätsdebatte’ has itself seen the narrowing of Kristeva’s original “lieu d’énonciation” (1969). The progression has been from her own attempts at systematisation of intertextual space [“L’énoncé poétique est un sous-ensemble plus grand qui est l’espace des texts appliqués dans notre ensemble” (1969:194)] towards Genette’s understanding of intertextuality as “une relation de co-présence entre deux ou plusieurs textes, c’est-à-dire, eidétiquement et le plus souvent, par la présence effective d’un texte dans un autre” (1982b:8). Since no intertextual reading, the successive generations of intertextualists have argued, can choose Derrida’s ‘le texte général’ as its object of interpretation, for “it is difficult to make that universe as such the object of attention” (Culler 1976:1384), one must devise certain lines of delimitation, “no matter how arbitrarily they may be set, and no matter how quickly they may be transgressed” (Beal 1992:28).

### 3.2.2 STRUCTURALIST U-TURN

The practice of intertextual reading, Beal suggests, must find its place “somewhere between the closed structure of a single text (however defined) and the uncontainably surplussive fabric of language (called intertextuality)” (1992:28). By using the once offensive structuralist lingo like ‘closed structure’, such an enterprise presupposes that an intertextual flux can, at least intermittently, be arrested, affording a ‘fixed position’ from which to develop intertextual ‘categories’ and ‘classifications’<sup>29</sup> (Plett 1991:6). Such an enterprise, needless to say, fundamentally contravenes the intentions of intertextuality’s

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<sup>29</sup> Indicative of such classifications is Foucault’s image of well-ordered archives of meticulously researched intertextualities (1977), as opposed to a diffuse echo chamber (Barthes 1975b).

originators who maintain that the intertext cannot be pinned down. [“*The Text*,” Barthes insists, “*is experienced only in an activity, in a production*. It follows that the Text cannot stop (for example, at a library shelf); its constitutive moment is traversal (notably, it can traverse the work, several works)” (1986:58; emphasis his)]. What is still worse, Mai believes, such a restricted conception of intertextuality does not possess any significant heuristic advantages over more traditional approaches (1991a:30).

This is especially true of the ‘structuralist version of intertextuality’<sup>30</sup> (Pfister 1991:210) practiced by those who *think intertextually* but *work structurally*. They, like Verweyen & Witting, nostalgically claim that intertextuality’s “apparent conceptual modernity or universality makes one forget terminological tools which traditional literary criticism has long held in store” (1991:165). To them, only those textual references count as intertextual that are clearly intended by the author, distinctly marked in the text and recognised as such by the reader. To them, the author retains authority over his/her text, the unity and autonomy of the text remain intact, and the reader does not get lost in a labyrinthine network of possible references but realises the author’s intentions<sup>31</sup> by decoding the signals and markers inscribed into the text (Genette 1982b; Jenny 1982). Such procedures see intertextuality as little more than a restrictive tool for nailing down authorial intent and literary influence (Aichele & Phillips 1995:7), and as such merely replicate what traditional literary criticism did and still does (Mai 1991a:47).

This approach has been pioneered, championed and advanced by critics whom Mai (1991a) accuses of “split affinities” in that “they feel tempted by certain poststructuralist notions but cannot accept the unlimited creation of intertextual relationships through the reader [...] because they ‘put the literary text first’”<sup>32</sup> (44). The dangers resulting from

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<sup>30</sup> The background to the ‘structuralist version of intertextuality’ reads like something of an anticlimax: As the political charge mounted against structuralism (see note 18 above) proved to be a passing interest, busy applicators from the field of literary studies took over (Mai 1991a:44-5). Jenny, for one, asked a long-awaited question: “How does a text assimilate pre-existing utterances?” (1982:50).

<sup>31</sup> The critical concern with authorial intentions dates back to Schleiermacher, who seems to have understood hermeneutics as the reconstruction of the author’s mental process (Mudge 1983:251).

<sup>32</sup> Neo-Marxism, for instance, pictures them as control freaks, who exercise as much control over the literary text as other positivist sciences do over other phenomena of life (Mai 1991a:47).

this (structuralist) version of intertextuality are there to see. “Systematic interest, [for one],” Plett warns,

easily leads to narrow thinking, emphasis on terminology to batteries of scholastic nomenclatures, largely devoid of content. This obstructs the dynamism of intertextual sign processes. [Genuine practice of intertextuality] is replaced by a static phenomenological accountancy (1991:4).

The somewhat banal source-hunting and allusion-counting, as advocated by Genette (1982b) and Jenny (1982), are examples of such accountancy. To Kristeva, however, such passing-for-intertextual-yet-at-heart-source-critical procedures prove exceedingly thin as they fail to take into account the historical and cultural nature of textual productivity (1984:60). Intertextuality, Aichele & Phillips explain, is not some neutral literary mechanism but rather a means of ideological and cultural expression and social transformation<sup>33</sup> (1995:9).

### 3.3.1 NEW HERMENEUTICS

For Kristeva et al, intertextuality has little to do with matters of influence (of one author on another, or of one literary source on another literary work). Instead, intertextuality signals fundamental systemic relationships and processes, namely “the transposition<sup>34</sup> of one (or more) system(s) of signs into another” (Kristeva 1984:59-60). Chapter One has explained how, for the founding mother, the ‘transposition’ (or intertextuality), occurs on two levels: horizontally (subject-addressee) and vertically (text-context). The latter axis, Aichele & Phillips (1995:9-10) here elaborate, is inclusive of history and society, which are to be conceived as part of that larger textuality Derrida refers to as ‘le texte général’ [*il n’y a pas de hors-texte*, he claims (1976:158; emphasis his)], rather than as objective realities lying somewhere outside of the text. As Kristeva puts it:

Nous appellerons INTERTEXTUALITÉ cette inter-action textuelle qui se produit (via both intertextual trajectories, or axes) à l’intérieur d’un seul texte. Pour le sujet connaissant, l’intertextualité est une notion qui sera l’indice de la façon dont un texte lit l’histoire et s’insère en elle (1969:443).

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<sup>33</sup> Similarly, for Culler, intertextuality is less a name for a work’s relation to prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture (1981:103).

<sup>34</sup> Kristeva (1984) later jettisoned the term intertextuality in favour of ‘transposition’.

The intertextual practice should, therefore, she goes on to suggest, “by studying the text as intertextuality, consider it as such within (the text of) society and history”<sup>35</sup> (1980:37).

In this view, intertextuality is the product of various cultural discourses (Culler 1982:32), and, since the task of its practitioner is, as Kristeva proposes, to define “the specificity of different textual arrangements by placing them within the general text (culture) of which they are part and which is in turn, part of them” (1980:36), the “alternative, self-critical hermeneutics of intertextual nature” she once envisaged (Mai 1991a:48), resembles very closely a “sociological theory of literature” (40). What, however, makes intertextuality different from traditional contextual studies (such as the form-critical notion of *Sitz im Leben*) is not merely its concern for a “text’s emergence from the ‘social text’ but also its continued existence within society and history” (Allen 2000:36). Similarly, intertextual analysis seeks to trace the manner in which the text ‘explodes and disperses’, as opposed to the traditional search for a final meaning (Barthes 1981a:135). Even if traditionalists are hermeneutically aware that the final meaning cannot be fixed because the historical process of appropriation never stalls, they still do not give up the possibility of ‘actual’ meaning (Mai 1991a:47) - in intertextual terms, a futile exercise.

### 3.3.2 CENTRE OF INTERTEXTUALITY

“What,” reads another dictum, “can be said for the production of texts also applies to their reception” (Plett 1991:17). Yet most intertextualists have been confronted with the fundamental dilemma. “Is intertextuality,” Mai, for one, asks, “an artistic procedure and hence a quality inherent in a work of art, or a function of a critic's (reader's) activity?” (1991a:36). Traditionalists, he writes, cling to the view that literary studies are essentially work- (and author-) oriented: “They hold that literary works are something fit to be respected, if not admired, something authoritative” (47), hinting at the embedded notions of originality and authorial intent. The structuralist intertextualists, like Jenny, advocate a compromise by suggesting that

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<sup>35</sup> Frow (1986) accuses Kristeva of describing literary transpositions in non-literary terms. Such a practice, he maintains, cannot do justice to the manner in which transformation of genres and forms within the literary system reflect literature’s response to society and history (127).

“L’intertextualité designe non pas une addition confuse et mystérieuse d’influences, mais le travail de transformation et d’assimilation de plusieurs texts opéré par un texte centreur qui garde le *leadership* du sens” (1982:262).

However, what Barthes famously styled ‘the death of the Author’ (1977:142-148), sums up the opposing view<sup>36</sup> of intertextuality: “A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation,” he writes,

but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused, and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted (1977:148; emphasis his).

The onus of intertextuality thus resides with the reader and the corresponding transition in literary theory is from text-based to reader-oriented criticism.

### 3.4.1 ‘STRANGE BEDFELLOWS’

In the sense of ‘η κριτική τεχνη (Grobel 1962:407), biblical criticism is an off-shoot of secular literary theory in that it applies rational methods of enquiry to the text, as it happens, of the Bible (Morgan 1988). Since most modern methods of enquiry might reasonably be called critical, Barton remarks, biblical criticism likes to restrict itself to those that are closest to the biblical text<sup>37</sup> (1993:35). And since the biblical text has, Chapter Two has amply illustrated, long been known to comprise an elaborate body of intertexts, biblical criticism could not help but treat them accordingly. For example,

[s]ource criticism arises from the discovery that a given text cannot be understood because it is incoherent, and this results in the conclusion that it is [...] the amalgamation of several separately coherent texts to make one incoherent one. Form criticism argues that the text is more comprehensible if it is seen as in origin oral rather than written. Redaction criticism notes that certain details of the text make more sense if they are the work of an overall editor, whose intentions can be discerned [...] (38-9).

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<sup>36</sup> On this point, ‘die Intertextualitätsdebatte’ has witnessed near consensus with the notable exception of Allen (2000:75) who claims that Barthes merely replaces one figure of mythical authority (author) with another (reader).

<sup>37</sup> For the sake of clarity, Barton insists that biblical criticism excludes historical and sociological study of the Old Testament world, as well as biblical archaeology and Old Testament theology. These disciplines draw on biblical criticism rather than form part of it (1993:35).



Underlying these methods is the frantic quest for a hypothetical Ur-text<sup>38</sup> (Grobel 1962:412), fuelled by the firm belief that the meaning of such a text is inherent in its internal structures (Barton 1993:39), be they of source-influence, generic, or stylistic sort. It is only in the intertextual theory of a *Tel Quel* provenance and its “*laissez faire* hermeneutics” (Detweiler 1993:460) that biblical criticism finds a strange bedfellow.

### 3.4.2 CRITICAL CONTEXT (II)

Yet many of biblical criticism’s qualms about the perceived excesses of the intertextual theory seem to stem from sheer complacency. As Brütting notes:

[D]ie oft überspitzten und radikalen Kritiken der literaturtheoretischen Avantgarde in Frankreich nicht zu verstehen sind, wenn man sich nicht vor Augen hält, *gegen* welche literarischen Traditionen und Ideologien, *gegen* welche literarischen Institutionen sie sich zu situieren versuchen. [...] In der [*explication de texte*] lebt das 19. Jahrhundert weiter, das sie erfunden hat [...] (1976:32; emphasis his).

The ‘literary traditions’ at ‘the time of theory’ to become *démodé* shortly thereafter, were two in number (Beal 199:27-30). On the one hand, the hermeneuticist notions of linear tradition history aspired to trace the lines of influence between authors, texts and readers.<sup>39</sup> On the other, the structuralist assertions of textual closure were believed to enable the ‘correct’ exegesis. Against the latter intertextuality asserts that “le ‘mot littéraire’ n’est pas un point (un sens fixe), mais un croisement de surfaces textuelles [...]” (Kristeva 1969:144), and in doing so frustrates any attempt to arrest meaning because the text-as-dialogue is always referring to other (con)texts beyond itself. Against philosophical hermeneutics intertextuality challenges the notion that interpretation is an intersubjective process, since “le texte est une productivité, ce qui veut dire: son rapport à la langue dans laquelle il se situe est redistributif [...]” (113). To trace a subject’s influences under such circumstances is nothing short of impossible, since a line requires two fixed points. As a result, “*linear* history appears as abstraction” (1980:65; emphasis Kristeva’s).

<sup>38</sup> The conventional view of biblical criticism distinguishes between ‘lower’ (textual) and ‘higher’ (literary) criticism. Both are united in the quest for the Ur-text. The former is concerned with the transmission of the *textus receptus*, the latter (comprising source-, form-, and redaction criticism) with its literary growth (Grobel 1962:412).

<sup>39</sup> Philosophical hermeneutics found ample expression in the historicism of *explication de texte*, *critique universitaire*, *critique scolaire* (Hempfer 1976:51), and biblical criticism at large.

After “la révolution structurale”<sup>40</sup> (Benoist 1975), which brought about near-collapse of historicist-based methods of enquiry, and for which it is partly responsible, intertextuality, asserts Phillips, provides a strategic means for explaining the nature and function of texts as well as the critical task (1991:78). Its usefulness as a conceptual category (cf. Barthes 1981b; LaCapra 1983:25-63) for illuminating various exegetical phenomena, such as textual citation, allusion, allegorical interpretation, typology, rhetorical and discourse structures, reader-response strategies, canonical formation, and the like, has, Phillips regrets, not been fully exploited (*ibid.*). The prevailing approach to these matters, he further remarks, is to treat them as discrete and essentially unrelated, or to explain them in theological terms<sup>41</sup> (*ibid.*, note 1). ‘Pre-intertextual’ biblical criticism, Miscall complains, thus restricts itself to instances of “textual borrowings” of individual phrases, names, images, themes and structures, which it probes with strictly factual and focused questions and answers with specific and confident solutions (1992:41-2).

### 3.4.3 HOSTILITY TO THEORY

Hostility to theory, Eagleton points out, usually means an opposition to other people’s theories and an oblivion of one’s own (1983:viii). The general reluctance of biblical criticism to engage theory as a means for explaining intertextual phenomena, Phillips suggests, is deeply rooted in disciplinary (clear delineation of the biblical corpus as opposed to Derridean ‘le texte général’) and ideological (predominantly positivist) constraints<sup>42</sup> which frame the modern text-critical problematic, namely, “*that of overcoming the text’s otherness as an object and recouping its distanced meaning*”

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<sup>40</sup> Benoist’s (1975) designation for the epistemic environment in the aftermath of the (post)structural revolution across both the human and social sciences. The ‘structural revolution’ brought about near-collapse of the historicist-based methods of enquiry. Not to be confused with structuralism which, “from the perspective of biblical structuralism, [...] was a late-modernist strategy projecting confidence in the hope that its applied linguistic formulas could produce definitive interpretations to bolster those of a historicism now showing the ravages of age (Detweiler 1993:460).

<sup>41</sup> For example, the Pauline appropriation of Hebrew Scriptures is read with a view toward explaining a Christian theological purpose rather than as an instance of rabbinic-style intertextual practice (Phillips 1991:78, note 1).

<sup>42</sup> To these objections Detweiler adds that of ‘personal’ antipathy felt by biblical criticism towards poststructuralism’s perceived hostility to religious faith (1993:459).

(1991:79-80; emphasis his). Viewed as an “imposition upon the text” (Aichele & Phillips 1995:13), theory supposedly detracts from the biblical exegete’s primary effort, which is to describe the text and interpret its meaning, and which, in turn, means to read and interpret texts using tried historical and philological methods (Phillips 1991:79). Theory, in other words, obscures, delays and frustrates the effort to disclose the truth of the text because it does not remain with a certain type of historical question<sup>43</sup> (*ibid.*).

Such attitudes, Phillips writes, have entrenched biblical criticism in a basic division of labour between descriptive (methodological) and interpretive (hermeneutical) interests (1991:80), along the lines of the traditional *modus operandi* based on Dilthey’s notion of *Verstehen* (Mudge 1983:251), incorporating a further distinction between *description* and *explanation* (Ricoeur 1971:135-45). From here, the European historical-critical traditions affiliated with Tübingen and Cambridge have set the methodological pace for the better part of two centuries: identification of documentary evidence, archaeological sources, rhetorical forms, stages of compositional development, oral precursors, *Sitz im Leben*, and the like (Phillips 1991:80). Based on the same operative distinction, American exegesis has, by contrast, developed a pragmatic marriage of close textual reading, literary theory and rhetorical criticism indigenous to the North-American interpretive scene (Frye 1973): the preoccupation with metaphor and parable, contemporary rhetoric structuring, and, most recently, reader-response criticism (Phillips 1991:80).

### 3.5.1 PRACTICE OF INTERTEXTUALITY

To those who have overcome their revulsion to theory, intertextuality opens (not so) new, but nevertheless liberating vistas. Most importantly, the post-structuralism of Barthes, Kristeva and Derrida moves away from structuralism with its belief in the possibility of a totalising or scientific methodology, by privileging and promoting the notions of difference (Allen 2000:76). “This approach,” Beal argues,

[...] does not delegitimize a hermeneutical negotiation of relationships between texts any more than it delegitimizes any other sort of reading. It does, however, undermine such a

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<sup>43</sup> This in spite of the etymological significance of *theorein* as “to see as, to visualize, to gain a perspective” (Phillips 1991:79, note 5).

reading's *privileged position* of interpretive authority, placing it on more equal footing with other achronic, synchronic, and even (those academically abominable) typological and allegorical approaches (1992:31; emphasis his).

In this way, intertextuality is, as Miscall sees it, a mere “covering term” (1992:44), under which all varieties of intertextual interpretation are subcategories<sup>44</sup> and, necessarily, abstractions (Beal 1992:31). Such a textual approach, Mai points out, is not to be equated with mere subjective caprice (1991a:42). On the contrary, Barthes claims, it is “a critical science [...] which [...] permanently calls into question its own discourse” (1981b:43). On the whole, this methodological principle, he concludes, “does not necessarily oblige us to reject the results of the canonical sciences [...] but it leads us to use them partially, freely, and above all relatively” (*ibid.*).

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<sup>44</sup> These comprise countless methodological arsenals, depending on a reading's specific requirements. Pechansky (1992:77-8), for one, explores three definitions of “text”, as (1) the literary text (simply written and preserved material; intertextuality is the relationship between juxtaposed literary texts); (2) the social text (the text of culture; the social context originally ‘read’ by author interacts with the social text); and (3) the interpretive text (a *new product*, joint venture of the interpreter and his/her audience).

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE REIGN OF THE TEXT

Nothing is Text but what was spoken in the Bible, and meant there for Person and Place, the rest is Application [...]

John Selden (1689)

### 4.1.1 'HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD'

Parts of biblical criticism, which survived the intertextual deluge, continue to go by the alternative designation of 'historical-critical method'<sup>45</sup> (Barton 1993:36). As a joint venture of like-minded interests, Rylaardam writes, historical criticism aspires to tell the story of how the Bible came to be (1971:iii). To do just that, it asks questions about origin, authorship, date, chronology and the like, and answers them with a strong commitment to what Barthes terms 'epistemological concern with objective signification' (1981b:37). Accordingly, the ambitious 'big picture' of the literary development of the biblical text; its oral prehistory; and its diffusion into separate traditions, is pursued by the fragmentary means of source criticism, form criticism, and tradition-history,<sup>46</sup> respectively. Each one of these, Rylaarsdam explains, constitutes "a sort of crosscut attempt" at giving the account of the whole (1971:iii). These methods, he insists, must therefore be seen as "interrelated", "organic", "logical", and "complementary"<sup>47</sup> (*ibid.*).

What is presently perceived as factiousness of historical criticism stems, according to Bodine, from its overriding thrust toward detailed analysis [in the sense of breaking something down into its component parts] (1995:5-6), which duly cumulated in structural analysis of the 1970s (Patte 1974). Although essentially intertextual in analysis of "textual borrowings" (Miscall 1992:41-2; see above), the individual historical-critical

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<sup>45</sup> Although even Barton who brings the term up, questions it vigorously, since the historical-critical method, he argues, is neither historical but rather a literary procedure, or a method but rather a set of questions which biblical critics put to the biblical text (1993:36), this designation will serve here as a convenient antidote to intertextual theory.

<sup>46</sup> The following list of biblical criticisms is by no means exhaustive. In addition to source criticism, form criticism and tradition-history, which are deemed relevant for the purposes of this essay, the historical-critical method shelters redaction (composition) criticism, canonical criticism, etc. (Barton 1993:35-41).

<sup>47</sup> Perhaps too often, however, they seem to yield mutually exclusive results (Liptak 2001).

methods have inevitably resulted in a “loss of holistic dimensions of the text” (1995:6, note 21). With a particular reference to the biblical account of the Passover, Rylaarsdam (inadvertently) reveals how source criticism, form criticism and tradition-history tend to frustrate each other’s endeavours:

[E]ven where it is possible to be relatively certain about the date of the composition of a given literary unit, it is increasingly difficult with real confidence to associate its account of the feasts with that date alone. Current (early 1960s!) methods of historical criticism have persuasively shown that, notably with reference to cultic practices and traditions, relatively late documents often incorporate much older forms or reinterpret older practices (1962:665).

From a strictly intertextual standpoint, the futility of asking historical questions is here directly juxtaposed against the fragmentation of the text. To this effect, Durham, himself not an intertextualist, makes a profound critical observation: “The text at hand is always a certainty, and has been brought to its canonical form for specific theological and cultic reasons, even though they may no longer be recoverable” (1987:152).

#### **4.2.1 SOURCE CRITICISM AND FRAGMENTATION**

The historical-critical methodology to have gained ascendancy first is source criticism. Its earliest successes stem from the analysis of the Pentateuch (Rogerson 1984) and culminate in Wellhausen’s documentary hypothesis, in which unified texts give way to four (written) sources disparate in time and place of origin, namely J, E, P, and D (Barton 1993:36). The facets under source-critical scrutiny include the styles and language of different writers and periods<sup>48</sup>, the obvious inconsistencies, contradictions and duplications (indicative of multiple authorship), the variations in theological viewpoint, historical allusions (for the purposes of relative dating) (Tucker 1971:18). Although based on a sound intertextual premise of identification and disentanglement of intertexts (Mai 1991a:47), source criticism finds itself trapped within limits of historicism.<sup>49</sup> On the

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<sup>48</sup> The tendency is towards presenting the distinctive styles of individual writers as cumulative prototypes, although some source critics, namely von Rad (1966:50-74), did clearly appreciate the literary and theological nuances of the Yahwist.

<sup>49</sup> These point to the speculative nature of source criticism. As Barton (1993:36) concludes, Wellhausen’s documentary hypothesis has been attacked from all sides. Some have argued that it is wrong in detail: that there were more sources than Wellhausen supposed or, on the contrary, that some never existed (like E – the most fragmentary of the four). Others have argued that source criticism is mistaken in principle: that the idea of the written sources is deemed anachronistic given the predominantly oral

whole, it amounts to what Plett dismisses as “static phenomenological accountancy” (1991:4), which, as Tucker puts it, simply restricts the literary history of the Old Testament to the biographies of its authors (1971:5).

#### **4.2.2 A SOURCE-CRITICAL EXCURSION (EX 12:1-13)**

Such a complex assemblage of diverse though related material as Ex 12, Durham notes, has, quite understandably, led to an equally diverse set of opinions concerning its sources (1987:152). The section in question, Ex 12:1-13, which sets out cultic requirements for the annual observance of Yahweh’s Passover, has invariably been assigned to P (Beer 1937:60-1, who includes v 14; Noth 1972:94-6, Durham 1987:152-3) on the basis of (sacral) content and peculiar stylistics<sup>50</sup>. On the contrary, sharply criticised by Van Seters (1983:172-5; & Durham 1987:152), Childs proposes assigning vv 2-23 to J (1974:184-5). Fohrer goes even further to propose the incorporation of yet another - N(omadic) source (1970:87-9). Segal, in sharp contrast to these efforts, dismisses the source documentary approach in favour of a theory of compilation reflecting the chronological evolution of the Passover ritual (1970:42-77). In his conclusion, Durham resorts to a clearly rhetorical-critical view of source criticism:

It is the principle by which cultic requirements are set into the narrative that justifies them. What strikes us as disunited, a patchwork, must be seen in terms of the purpose suggested in the compilation before us, rather than in terms of our own expectation of a logical and coherent sequence (1987:153).

“The confused textual patchwork that scholarship has often found,” Alter seconds this view, “[...] may prove upon further scrutiny to be purposeful pattern” (1981:133).

#### **4.3.1 FORM CRITICISM AND SERIALISATION**

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culture of ancient Israel or that the Pentateuch is essentially a unity incorporating later additions (Whybray 1987).

<sup>50</sup> On the Priestly handling of sacral and festal instructions see Weinfeld (1972:210-24). Stylistics here refers to the manner in which Ex 12:1-13 sharply interrupts the narrative of the tenth mighty act into which it has been set (Durham 1987:152-3).

As a direct critical follow-up<sup>51</sup> on source criticism, form criticism rests on the intertextual assumption that genre is not *sui generis* or unique. Gunkel, who is credited for its inception, draws (mostly with reference to the Psalms) on the striking “sameness of content [...] the same thoughts, moods, forms of expression, metaphors, rhetorical figures, phrases” (1928:58-9) throughout the biblical corpus. Form criticism traces these intertexts back to their pre-literary stages of development where, it believes, oral genres could be discerned (Koch 1969). Its key element, it follows, is to identify the oral setting of each genre in the life of the ancient community, known as *Sitz im Leben* (Barton 1993:37), as “[e]very ancient literary type,” Gunkel explains, “originally belonged to a quite definite side of the national life of Israel” (1928:61). In practice, form criticism distinguishes between *structure* [pattern of a given passage] and *genre* [general type, or *Gattung*] (Tucker 1971:12), with a tendency to isolate and explain smaller units, and generally equate the shorter with the earlier (Gunkel 1928:62).

From a purely intertextual view, the form critical focus on oral setting<sup>52</sup> spells trouble since a “text is written,” Ricoeur is adamant, “precisely because it is not said”<sup>53</sup> (1981:146). On the other hand, *Sitz im Leben*, with its emphasis on cross-cultural discourse (Tucker 1971:1) and stereotyped formulae (2), is a decidedly Bakhtinian concept. Tucker drops another Bakhtinian hint by suggesting that it can be recovered through a study of the genre itself (9). Intertextuality would credit form criticism for its “lack of literary self-consciousness,” for it perceives literature as “the common property of the community” (3) - a kind of *bibliothèque générale*, pending Barthes’s ‘the Death of the Author’<sup>54</sup> (1988). The paramount charge mounted against form criticism remains its construction of ideal, often hypothetical, genres, which, in intertextual terms (Plett 1991), smacks of structural substitution (20-1), and serialisation (23-4). As a result, form criticism, Bodine complains, may not have reversed the set analytical trend (1995:6) but

<sup>51</sup> Barton treats form criticism as “one of the earliest forms of dissatisfaction with source criticism”, which, he alleges, had deflected attention from the text’s pre-literary growth (1993:37).

<sup>52</sup> Tucker writes in defence of form criticism, pointing out the ancient Israelite dependence on the spoken word. He is eager to quote the prophets who *spoke* the word of God (1971:6-7).

<sup>53</sup> Parallel to the dilemma of written versus oral text is the one introduced by Saussure (1959:106-24) concerning the sentence, namely whether it belongs to language (*langue*) or speaking (*parole*), and, consequently, whether it can be considered the concrete unit of language.

<sup>54</sup> Tucker shares Barthes’s view that prestige authorship emerged as a Renaissance sidekick (1971:3).



it seems to have adopted a distinctly rhetorical view that “a text ‘lives’ in relationship to an audience,” (Patrick & Scult 1990:14), albeit an ancient one.

#### 4.4.1 TRADITION-HISTORY AND AMALGAMATION

Tucker (1971) rightly perceives tradition-history as a synthesis, an attempt to bring together the results of both source and form critical work, and outline, as Fishbane has it, “the lively relationship between the traditions and their transmission in ancient Israel” (1985:6). It is for this reason that Barton refers to tradition-history as “the form criticism of very large block of material” (1993:37). While Von Rad (1966) believes to have extracted the basic ‘historical credo’<sup>55</sup> around which the Pentateuch is (intertextually) construed, to Noth (1972) its *textus receptus* represents the (intertextual) amalgamation of originally separate and diffused, and orally transmitted traditions into a continuous narrative, presenting each as though it were a common possession of all tribes of Israel, when, he believes, it had originally been a folk memory of only one small group.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Fishbane (1985) distinguishes between the authoritative, received *traditum*,<sup>57</sup> and the subsequent (re)interpretations of it (*tradio*), through the intertextual practice of “inner-biblical exegesis” (6-9).

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<sup>55</sup> Von Rad (1966) believes this ‘credo’ to rest within the thematic body of Deuteronomy 26.

<sup>56</sup> In this way, Fishbane agrees, numerous traditions had been “detrribalized and nationalized; depolytheized and monotheized; reorganized and reconceptualized” (1985:6).

<sup>57</sup> Fishbane, however, understands *traditum* as “the stabilized literary formulation” (1985:7), a *textus receptus*. On a related note, Sanders (1972 and 1976) has frequently articulated the link between tradition-history and midrash (which Fishbane equates with inner-biblical exegesis).

## CHAPTER FIVE: READERS RULE

Authors die so that readers may come into prominence

Vincent Leitch 1983:122

### 5.1.1 PARADIGM CHANGE

Like Barthes (1977), who has earlier compared the transition from structuralism to intertextuality to the shift from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics, Robertson has spoken of the shift from reading the Bible in view of historical-critical criteria to reading it as literature in identical terms, as a paradigm change of the first magnitude<sup>58</sup> (1977:4-5). Just as the passage from Newton to Einstein demands that “*the relativity of the frames of reference*” be included in the object studied, it has been pointed out earlier in a parallel reference to philosophy,<sup>59</sup> so literature as intertextuality requires a wholesale “relativisation of the relations of writer, reader and observer (critic)” (Barthes 1977:156; emphasis his). For all their theoretical eclecticism, it must be duly acknowledged, Barthes and Kristeva helped usher tendency toward a more reader-oriented criticism in the 1970s (Mai 1991a:44), a notable accomplishment based on a simple view of literature: not as (previously) “the container of meaning, but as a space, in which a potentially vast number of relations coalesce” (Allen 2000:12).

The paradigm change may look inevitable, as within biblical criticism dissatisfaction with earlier approaches has been palpable. Quite understandably, the charges mounted against historical criticism have been both qualitative and quantitative. The discipline has been accused of statistical obsessions; it reduced unique biblical narratives to “stereotyped language”, and searched for the “typical and the representative” (Mullenburg 1968). Similarly, the “reports of personal revelations were categorized as repeated liturgies; thundering commands, shattering judgements, and rousing promises became cultic

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<sup>58</sup> Fokkelman (1991:vii-ix) shows that the paradigm shift has not occurred without fierce opposition from the established academia.

<sup>59</sup> This intertextual quote of (my earlier) quote (of Barthes) of (Barthes’s) quote (of his pre-text) is in itself, a case in point.

formulas in a self-enclosed liturgical drama” (Patrick & Scult 1990:11). From here, busy applicators<sup>60</sup> took over. Thinly veiled in their efforts to employ intertextuality as a condition of the text, whether semantic, linguistic, or structural (Wood 1991:193), Aichele & Phillips allege, is the tendency to nail down authorial intent and literary influence (1995:7). Even when labelled as ‘reader-oriented,’ their criticism often requires the reader to, as Ricoeur puts it, “remain in the suspense of the text, treat it as a wordless and authorless object; [and] explain the text in terms of its internal relations, its structure” (1981:152).

### **5.2.1 LONG LIVE THE READER**

While the collapse of the ‘old historicist paradigm’ and the transformation of ‘literary into cultural studies’, which, Easthope claims, is under way within secular criticism (1991), is, Aichele & Phillips argue, hardly imminent in biblical criticism, there are clear signs that the modern view, which promotes ‘intertextuality as influence’ is superficial and suspect (1995:12), as mere structuralism in an avant-garde disguise. In eschatological terms which should make traditional biblical scholars flinch, Bloom has predicted that the “wearisome industry of source-hunting and allusion-counting, an industry that will soon touch apocalypse anyway when it passes from scholars to computers” (1975:31) is about to be reversed, or in the terminology of information science, rebooted. And rebooted it can be, Aichele & Phillips propose, only through an unlimited involvement of the reader (1995), who, Ricoeur’s quotation goes on, “[...] can lift the suspense and fulfil the text in speech, restoring it to living communication; in this case, [...] interpret the text (1981:152).

Whereas the reader’s role in the production of meaning is deemed an undeniable fact, intertextuality is hardly united in its relation of the details. The intertextual dialogue, Hutcheon argues, takes places between the reader and his/her memory of other texts (1986:231). “The term indeed refers to an operation of the reader’s mind [...],” claims Riffaterre (1984:142), who describes intertextuality as “a modality of perception, the

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<sup>60</sup> The reference is to Mai’s critics with “split affinities” (1991a:44; see above).

deciphering of the text by the reader in such a way that he identifies the structures to which the text owes its quality of work of art” (1980b:625). Ricoeur draws on these insights and introduces a new one by suggesting that

the interpretation of a text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who henceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself. [...] explanation is nothing if it is not incorporated as an intermediary stage in the process of self-understanding (1981:158).

Some, notably Young (1981) go even further and argue, that the concern of the intertextualist has moved away from the creative function of the author to the *perceptive faculty* of the reader, from the craft of the maker to – in line with Barthes’s notion of *plaisir de texte* (1975b) - the *enjoyment* of the receiver.

## 5.2.2 THE AUTHOR REVISITED

With the author, who was once responsible for the intertextual work, now officially dead (Barthes 1988), intertextual theorists have shown little interest in his relevance for intertextuality (Hutcheon 1986:231; Wood 1991:193-194). According to Barthes,

[t]he writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others [...]. Did he wish to *express himself*, he ought to at least know that the inner ‘thing’ he thinks to ‘translate’ is itself only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words [...] (1988:170).

Some, of course, have gone beyond ignoring the author’s activity to denying it flatly. Eco, for one, insists that “it is not true that works are created by their authors. Works are created by works, texts are created by texts, all together they speak to each other independently of the intention of their authors” (1986:199). Along the same lines, Martin “abolishes effectively the poet as unique innovator”. For Martin, he is merely “the well-instructed missionary of the language which constitutes both its own subjectivity and that of his culture. And the site of his mission is the literary past” (1980:667).

Yet some, like Hutcheon, question Barthes’s mental picture of the author as a barman mixing writings by admitting that “*someone* obviously had to place those strategies in the text” (1986:234). According to Voelz,

[t]exts are not arbitrary collocations of signs, with no pre-conceived intentionality (such as a pattern made by ink dripping from an uncapped pen), neither are they chance collocations of such signs (such as abstract art produced by paint thrown upon canvas). Texts have meaning which is intended (1995:157).

Since the text has its integrity, sovereignty and individuality, Wood argues, the activity of shaping or mixing that text must be a valid subject for critical enquiry (1991:194). “After all,” he claims, “the author is also a reader, in fact the first, more or less critical, reader of the text” (*ibid.*). Similarly, Verrier states: “L’écrivain lit et est lu; le lecteur écrit et est écrit. C’est le mouvement circulaire ou en spirale, que doit suivre notre lecture: l’écrivain devenu lecteur-voyeur est plus que jamais identifiable au scripteur” (1976:346). The compromise view thus perceives the production of meaning as a joint venture of both: “Productivity,” Barthes writes

is triggered off [...] either (in the case of the author) by ceaselessly producing 'word-plays', or (in the case of the reader) by inventing lucid readings, even if the author of the text had not foreseen them, and even if it was historically impossible for him to foresee them [...]" (1981b:37).

### 5.3.1 INTERTEXTUALITY AND TRANSFERENCE

One compelling example of the ‘*laissez faire* hermeneutics’, outlined by Detweiler (1993) as prompted by intertextuality, is Rashkow’s application of transference (1992:59-68). Transference, as Lacan (1977) defines it, is a psychoanalytic process quite similar to reading. Rashow’s focus is on the process by which the individual readers confer meaning of the text and perceive its intertextuality (59). It follows that the relationship between the reader and the text replicates that of analyst and analysand, interpreter and code, respectively. Just as the analysand views the analyst as a subject presumed to know, the reader approaches the text as the place where meaning resides. (Thus, the reader simultaneously occupies both positions.) Psychoanalytically speaking, the structures of the unconscious are revealed through the analyst’s encounters with the analysand’s discourse (Lacan 1977). The analyst relates the experience described by the analysand (in this case prior readings, which reveal recurrences of textual structures indicative of underlying intertextuality) [59]. It is this self-reflexiveness that denies the text a closure but rather leads to a multiplicity of representations. And plurality here, Rashkow stresses,

does not mean *several* meanings, but rather that the text cannot be reduced to *a* meaning (59-60).

### 5.3.2 THE READER *IN/OF* DEUT 16:1-8

Through its application to the biblical intertext in Deut 16:1-8, the reader finds him/herself at the same time the reader *in/of* the text in question (Rashkow 1992:60). *In practice, this process was largely retrospective since the account of the Passover in Deut 16:1-8 is a well-known biblical prelude.* The disturbing focus is simultaneously on the text itself (common rhetorical or stylistic features of the Deuteronomist, ‘his’ intertextuality) and own response to the text (transference). *The divine instruction urging to observe a religious holiday under clearly delineated circumstances of ritual sacrifice was familiar from elsewhere in the Pentateuch, not least from the parallel intertext in Ex 12:1-13. The pending response was inevitably that of a déjà-lu impression.* Like analysis, reading is a two-way process consisting of disorganisation and reorganisation. *The most vivid ‘disorganisation’ stemmed from the introduction of the centralised worship into the Passover rite (vs. 2, 5-7), which is in direct contradiction of the personalised ‘household’ worship of Ex 12:3-4. ‘Reorganisation’ followed from a contextual consideration of Deuteronomy as a whole.*

In this way, the reader looks back in the text for clues to explain perceived ambiguities while simultaneously anticipating future possibilities and larger patterns, based on individual response. *The larger pattern was supported by the near-parallel handling of the ritual sacrifice (vs 2-8 mirrored by Ex 12:3-6, 9-11), and the exodus tradition (vs 1, 3, 6 echoed by Ex 12:7, 12-13) by both parts of the Passover intertext.* Textual duplications lead to larger motifs while unsure explorations in different directions condense into one focused moment, not to provide the authoritative interpretation, but rather to supply new perspectives, discover new relationships, change emphases. *Textual duplications led to an integrated view of Deut 16:1-8 as a part of one larger biblical intertext.* The reader thus re-creates the text and re-combines intertextual déjà-lus with his/her own characteristic processes of mind.

## CHAPTER SIX: THE TRUTH ABOUT INTERTEXTUALITY

[...] literature [...] does not refer to life but rather to itself  
Heinrich Plett (1991:27)

### 6.1.1 CONCLUSIONS

Having explored (but hardly exhausted) its theoretical moorings, the most that can be said about intertextuality, is that it is here to stay<sup>61</sup> (Morgan 1985:35), and serve as a mere critical *entrée*, a gateway that opens out onto matters of ideology, subjectivity, material production of meaning, and accountability for the complex relationship of texts to texts, to interpretive traditions, to writers and readers, and to institutional contexts (Aichele & Phillips 1995:7). In theory, intertextuality, by definition, “cuts across different theoretical and methodological borders” [of semiotics, discourse analysis, post-structuralism, and deconstruction, to name a few] (*ibid.*), while it redefines others [historical criticisms]. In practice, by the same definition, it has barely scratched the surface of the traditional, restrictive notion of literary influence. That poststructuralist critics, Allen concludes, employ intertextuality to disrupt notions of meaning, whilst structuralist critics employ the same term to locate and even fix literary meaning, is proof enough of its ambiguity, versatility, flexibility and ‘dissemination’ as a concept (2000:4).

### 6.1.2 ‘TROUBLE AND DISTURBANCE’?

The well-documented *leitmotif* suggests that writers who use the term and concept of intertextuality generally imply trouble and disturbance in textual relations (Fewell, 1992:22-3; Miscall 1992:44). “The relationship between two texts,” Miscall goes on,

is equivocal. It includes, at the same time, *both* acceptance and rejection, recognition and denial, understanding and misunderstanding, and supporting and undermining. 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 source that has been superseded. The later text displaces its model (*ibid.*, emphasis mine).

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<sup>61</sup> Essential to humanists and scientists alike, Morgan claims, the notion of intertextuality is the necessary interdisciplinary dimension of a semiotic of knowledge (1985:35).

Similarly, Allen extends this disturbance to the apparently stable oppositions of: reading and writing, author and critic, and meaning and interpretation (2000:68). The disturbance inherent in intertextuality, he explains, has to do with its psychological drive for a split subject - between the conscious and the unconscious, reason and desire, the rational and the irrational, the social and the pre-social, the communicable and the incommunicable (47). After all, Worton and Still remind the disciples of intertextuality that, for Kristeva, intertextual relationships are disturbing ones<sup>62</sup> (1990:18). Reading the Bible intertextually therefore ought to be disturbing in so far as it leads to determining, in Kristeva's words, "the specificity of textual arrangements" by "studying the text as an intertextuality within society and history," today's and yesterday's. "This," Aichele & Phillips explain,

means nothing less than a deconstructive search for the inherent conflicts, tensions, and aporias in the transposition of systems and subjectivities, in the violent juxtaposing, to borrow the Gospel of Matthew's words, what is new and what is old from the treasure room [13:52] (1995:11).

This, intertextuality suggests, may well be the only *entrée* to contemporary meaning in the ancient texts of the Bible's league.

### 6.1.3 HISTORY IN DENIAL?

Given the amount of contempt intertextuality displays for the nuances of historical criticism, it is only fair to ask how ahistorical intertextuality is itself. In response, Dentith argues on Kristeva's behalf that

[...] the production of meaning happens as a result of purely textual operations independent of historical location; the multiplicity of possible meanings in a text spring from that text and not from the multiplicity of possible occasions in which the text can be read (1995:98).

"Intertextuality, as a concept," Allen counters this striking fallacy, "has a history of different articulations which reflect the distinct historical situations out of which it has emerged" (2000:58). The number of examples of intertextuality as a recurring historical

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<sup>62</sup> Perhaps it is this anxiety that Derrida has in mind when he claims of texts that "perpetually and essentially, they run the risk of being definitively lost" (1981:63). Clearly distinct is Bloom's theory of anxiety of influence (1973), of coming too late on the scene and of the conflict with the precursor whereby author establishes his "originality" in contradistinction with that of earlier masters.



phenomenon and, therefore, a reflection of particular circumstances<sup>63</sup> is quite overwhelming. Comparing Bakhtin and Kristeva, Allen refers to two distinct representations of, and vital responses to social liberation. “The post-Revolutionary Russia of the 1920s, 1930s and beyond,” he writes, “understandably produced different visions of liberation from that imagined in the heady days of communal revolt in late 1960s Paris” (*ibid.*). To a similar effect, Pfister draws an important distinction between the deconstructivist theory of intertextuality of European vintage and the practice of intertextuality characteristic of American postmodernism:

While Bakhtin, Kristeva and the *Tel Quel* group have evolved their theory of intertextuality in order to deconstruct the bourgeois ideology of the subject and to undermine all traditional certitudes and authorities, the “random cannibalism” (Jameson 1984) of the American postmodernist movement [...] no longer threatens any authority; on the contrary, [it] is tolerated or even welcome by those in power, as it helps to take people’s minds off those life-endangering facts which are in the meantime eagerly brought about by them, backstage (1991:221).

#### 6.1.4 ‘A NEW SCIENCE’?

Intertextuality’s claim to novelty does not rest with *imitatio veterum*, as some have suggested above, but with a kind of *simulacrum*<sup>64</sup> (Baudrillard 1988), parallel with Kristeva’s “deliberate conceptual muddle” (Mai 1991a:38). Like Kristeva et al, Barthes also believes that the perceived limitations of the linguistic-structuralist approach can be overcome by embracing ‘a brand new field of reference’ (1981b:35). “For there to be a *new science*,” he prophesises,

it is not enough, in effect, for the old science to become deeper and wider (which is what happens when one passes from the linguistics of the sentence to the semiotics of the work); there has to be a meeting of different epistemes, indeed ones that normally know nothing of each other (as is the case with Freudianism, Marxism, and structuralism), and this meeting has to produce a *new object* [...] that we call text (*ibid.*; emphasis mine).

The ‘new science’ is thus “no longer a question of a new approach to an old object” (*ibid.*). Nor is the ‘new object’ the ‘old’ literary text with which traditional criticism used

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<sup>63</sup> A plausible parallel may even be drawn between the emergence of intertextuality and theologically driven nationalism crucial to the rise of biblical “higher criticism” in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany (Oden 1987:1-39).

<sup>64</sup> Baudrillard’s term (1988), taken from the work of Plato and referring to a copy, which does not possess an original. A post-modern maverick (Allen 2000:182).

to deal.<sup>65</sup> “Actually,” Mai explains, “it is no object at all; it is, as a way writing (*écriture*), a productive (and subversive) process” (1991a:37), it is, in short, a literary intertext. And since, for all its objectifying stance, the literary representation of reality, Riffaterre reasons, is essentially an interpretive discourse, “intertextuality cannot avoid being hermeneutic” (1984:159-160). The end-result, it follows, is an “alternative, self-critical hermeneutics of intertextual nature” (Mai 1991a:48) that Kristeva once envisaged, though, by now, to paraphrase Pfister, smacking too much of the stuffy library air, dusty volumes begotten from other dusty volumes (1991:213).

### 6.1.5 SUMMARY

Thirty-six years after Kristeva coined the term, intertextuality remains one of the most used, misused, and/or abused terms behind one of the most densely argued theories. As an inherent feature of all literature, not least the Hebrew Bible, it could not have escaped the attention of biblical criticism, whose historical-critical method, in particular, has been intertextual all along in unearthing the cumulative textual processes behind the biblical text. It is only through its theoretical expression in the late 1960s and a flat denial of the fragmentary and speculative historicism that biblical criticism has found intertextuality incomprehensible and inapplicable. Aware of the shortcomings of historicism, some biblical scholars have developed second thoughts about intertextuality. A structuralist remake, which still views intertextuality as influence, is the product of such cross-disciplinary leanings and, some believe, a beginning of a *laissez faire* reader-oriented hermeneutics, which, some hope, will accomplish the paradigm transition from text- to reader-oriented biblical criticism. This intertextuality has promised, and biblical criticism duly delivered.

Pretoria,  
December 2003

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<sup>65</sup> It is debatable whether the following reasoning stems from or expands Schleiermacher’s ‘ground-breaking observation that any exposition of a text becomes for others a text itself’ (Barton 1993:38).

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