READING "BEL AND THE DRAGON" AS NARRATIVE: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE OLD GREEK AND THEODOTION

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ABSTRACT

Narrative theory, especially as it pertains to biblical narrative, is in a nebulous state. This article points out the enduring importance of narrative criticism for biblical narrative by way of a comparison between the two extant versions of the ancient narrative of Bel and the Dragon. By using an eclectic model of narrative theory, three traditional focal points of narratology (time, character and space) are compared. In comparing these aspects of the two versions, certain emphases of each come to light, clearly showing the benefits of reading biblical narrative as narrative.

1   Introduction

Biblical narratives are fascinating. Their mesmerizing power is evident in the mere fact that they are still being read and valued to this day. For this reason, it is no surprise that, as Weitzman (2007:192) notes, "the attempt to understand it as a work of aesthetic and not just religious or historical value, is as old as most other methods of Bible study." Recently, however, there has been a move to study these narratives as *narratives* in a more systematic and scientific way. This has culminated in narratological works dealing explicitly with Biblical narratives (for instance, the works of Robert Alter (1981) and J. P. Fokkelman (1999)). Weitzman (2007:201–202), however, says of the present situation:

> ... it is not clear in what direction literary interpretation is moving. There is a general sense that we are living in a 'post-theory' age, but it is unclear whether that means that theory has prevailed and that the task is now to wrestle with its legacy, or whether theory has failed in some way and we are now all free to ignore its efforts to unsettle interpretation.

Indeed, narrative theories abound. One can name but a few outstanding works which – directly or indirectly – helped shape this article: general narratological works, including

that of Chatman (1978), Genette (1980), Brink (1987), Toolan (2001), and Rimmon-Kenan (2002); works on biblical narrative as such, including the classical work of Bar-Efrat (1989), the useful practical guide of Tolmie (1999), and the more recent work of Resseguie (2005); and dissertations on ancient narrative, such as De Villiers (2004) and Brink (2005). The useful summary of Powell (1995), which also attests to the eclectic nature of narrative theory, should further be noted, as well as the recent contribution by Kanonge (2009), which, however, deals with a specific theory (that of Greimas).

This article, then, is more an *application* of theory than an *elaboration* of theory. It merely seeks to highlight the importance of reading ancient narrative according to the theory (or theories) of narratology, while at the same time shedding light on the narrative of *Bel and the Dragon*. This ancient narrative is well suited to this task, as it exists in two versions, the Old Greek (OG) and Theodotion (TH).[1] No Hebrew or Aramaic version of *Bel and the Dragon* is known today (McLay 2007:1024). The basic plot of both versions is similar to a great extent and this makes for easy comparison. Although a study of the redaction history of the narrative will be an interesting venture, this study will be of a synchronic kind. Narratology, after all, "is not saddled with the task of determining origins and establishing ur-stories" (Chatman 1990:313). Rather, narratology deals with the text at hand. Such a study pertaining to *Bel and the Dragon* is viable, since both narratives, as they stand, "constitute a coherent and artistic whole" (Collins 1993:409).

This specific study is not a comprehensive narratological analysis of either of these two versions, although such an enterprise would indeed be fruitful. The focus will be on the *differences* between the two versions on the plane of narrative. To clearly point out some of these differences between the two texts, three traditional focal points of narratology will be looked at: that of time, character and space. Before such a study can commence, however, it is necessary to determine the episodic structure of both narratives.

2   Structure

Some scholars divide *Bel and the Dragon* into two episodes – as is also evidenced by the narrative's traditional name (cf. Doran 1986:301; Hammer 1972:235; Moore 1977:117). However, the narrative clearly unfolds in three distinct episodes (Collins 1993:409; Tilly 2007:43). Episode 1 (verses 3–22) and Episode 2 (verses 23–27) share the same basic structure: (a) A (logical) challenge by the king (b) is met by Daniel; (c) this claim is falsified and (d) the unmasked pretender to divinity is destroyed. In Episodes 1 and 2, then, Daniel relies on his own wits to outsmart his enemies (Collins 1992:336; 1993:413; Moore 1977:127). In Episode 3 (verses 28–42), Daniel is not the one who solves the problem. In fact, Daniel is confronted with a seemingly insurmountable problem; a problem which is only solved in the narrative through the use of *deus ex machina*. The basic structure of Episode 3, then, is different from that of Episodes 1 and 2: (a) A (physical) challenge by the king (via the people of the land – OG / via

the Babylonians – TH) (b) is suffered by Daniel; (c) his dire situation is only resolved through the intervention of the Lord (via Habakkuk) (d) with the destruction of Daniel's enemies as an end result.

Formal markers also serve to delineate the episodes in the narrative. In TH, "And it happened ... " (καὶ ἐγένετο) demarcates a new episode. The same expression occurs in TH verse 18, but there it is clearly linked to the preceding verse. In OG, "the Babylonians" of Episodes 1 and 2 move from the background to a more active role in the narrative in verse 28, where they are now described as "all the people of the land" (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς χώρας πάντες). Nevertheless, they refer to the same group of people and together with TH (where the term "Babylonians" is again used) this direct reference to the Babylonians signifies the start of a new episode. Verse 28 in both versions ties the following verses with both the incident of Bel (τὸν Βηλ κατέστρεψε – OG / τὸν βηλ κατέσπασεν – TH) and the Dragon (τὸν δράκοντα ἀπέκτεινε – OG / τὸν δράκοντα ἀπέκτεινεν – TH); not merely with Episode 2. The link between Episodes 1 and 2 is stronger in OG (καὶ ἦν δράκων ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τόπῳ - "and there was a Dragon *in that same place*") while the link is stronger between Episodes 2 and 3 in TH, although not as explicit (ὡς ἤκουσαν οἱ βαβυλώνιοι – "when the Babylonians heard (this)"). Nevertheless, the distinction between these episodes is clear in both OG and TH.

Episode 1 is prefaced by an introduction in both versions (cf. Collins 1993:409). Verse 1 of OG (ἐκ προφητείας Αμβακουμ υἱοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Λευι) should rather be construed as a heading than part of this introduction. The same can not be said of TH verse 1, which immediately gives background information to the narrative.

In light of the discussion above, the episodic structure of *Bel and the Dragon* can be presented as follows:

	Old Greek (Verses)	Theodotion (Verses)
Heading	1	None
Introduction	2	1–2
Episode 1: Bel	3–22	3–22
Episode 2: The Dragon	23–27	23–27
Episode 3: The Pit	28–42	28–42

3   Time

3.1   Episode 1

3.1.1   Duration

Striking in the narrative of *Bel and the Dragon* is that the pace of the narrative (i.e. the relation of narration time to narrated time) drops to scene in pivotal points of the discourse. In Episode 1, there are five such points:

1. the confrontation between the king and Daniel (5–7);
2. the confrontation between the king, the priests and Daniel (8b–9a);
3. the relation of how Bel's divinity will be tested (11b OG; 11 TH);
4. the discussion on the inspection of the seals (15b OG; 17 TH);
5. Daniel's pointing out of the priests' deceit (18b–20).

Episode 1 contains 485 words in OG, and 457 words in TH. Of these, 180 words in OG (37%) appear in scene, against TH's 157 words (34%). One can presume that both TH and OG cover the same amount of narrated time. This means that TH has a slightly quicker pace overall. However, in TH, the relation of how Bel's divinity will be tested is much more extensive than in OG. In fact, TH has 42 words in scene at this point, while OG has only 16. This is due to the direct speech of the priests, who in TH narrates what is about to follow. This direct speech has very few interruptions by the narrator (i.e. instances of pause, where direct speech is introduced): only six words in TH (thus giving a ratio of 6:42) while OG has three words (3:16). This has the effect that the implied reader's attention dwells more on the priests in Episode 1 of TH. This is an instance of focalization, where the implied reader is, so to speak, standing with the priests, anticipating what is about to happen. The testing of Bel's divinity itself is given in a very brief summary.

In OG, the focus is more on the inspection of the seals. Eighteen words in scene are spent on this instance, with only three words in pause (3:18). In TH, only seven words are used, with six words in pause (6:7). The implied reader of OG gets to dwell more on the importance of the seals and the fact that they were indeed not broken.

Before the priests' deceit is announced, both OG and TH have Daniel laughing. Daniel goes further, though, in TH, by stopping the king from entering. This adds one more incident on the story level, possibly making the narrated time a tad longer. On the level of discourse (i.e. narration time) this takes longer too, keeping the revelation of the deceit back, so to speak, with the king's halt at the door. This event further functions to highlight the naive character of the king, since the ashes which he was about to disturb were already strewn on the floor in his presence the previous day. Extended narration time helps the implied reader to dwell on the fact of the king's naivety, or, at the very least, forgetfulness, before the discourse moves on.

At the end, the narrative develops quickly. Once the deceit is shown, things start happening. A rather large amount of time is needed to kill the priests and overthrow Bel's temple, but this is related in only 63 words in OG (13% of the total text) and 49 words in TH (11% of the story).

3.1.2   Order and Frequency

In OG Episode 1, anachrony helps to place emphasis on the secret entrance of the priests and the eating of Bel's food. In OG, this is done by way of two analepses in verses 15 and 21. Although the order is not disturbed much in verse 15, it is still a case of anachrony

since at the level of discourse, it is first stated that it was the next day (ἐγένετο τῇ ἐπαύριον) and only then that the priests came in through a secret entrance and ate and drank everything. This is necessary for the plot of the narrative, and can be classified as a *completing* analepsis, as it fills in a gap in the storyline. In verse 21, another analepsis reminds the implied reader of the priests' deceit.

Episode 1 of TH also contains cases of anachrony which place emphasis on the secret entrance of the priests. Reference is made to the habit of the priests to enter secretly and eat the food of Bel in verse 12. This iterative action can be taken as both analepsis and prolepsis. In TH, the event of entering and eating is related in the normal order of the storyline in verse 15, and then again referred to in verse 21 through an analepsis.

The death of the priests is referred to only two times in OG (verses 8 and 22). The reference in verse 22 is not as explicit: it is only stated that the king "handed them over to Daniel" (παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς τῷ Δανιηλ). In stark contrast, TH explicitly refers to the priests' death four times (verses 8, 11, 22 and 28). The first two cases are embedded prolepses; one uttered by the king, the other by the priests themselves. The event itself is narrated in the correct order, and then an analepsis in TH Episode 3 again reminds the implied reader of their death. Related to this use of repetition and order to highlight the priests' death is the progression of the words used to describe the incident: ἀποθανεῖσθε ("you will die") – ἀποθανούμεθα ("we will die") – ἀπέκτεινεν ("he killed") – κατέσφαξεν ("he slaughtered").

3.2 Episode 2

3.2.1 Duration

Time slows down to scene only twice in this short episode, highlighting the following two points:

1. the confrontation between the king and Daniel (24–26);
2. Daniel's comment on the Babylonians' objects of reverence (27b).

OG's total words in this episode number 97, of which 35% occur in scene (34 words). TH has 94 words, of which 45% occur in scene (42 words). In the first confrontation between the king and Daniel, OG has a greater amount of pause related to scene – seventeen words of introduction to direct speech, while thirty words are used for the direct speech itself (thus, a ratio of 17:30); in TH, 38 words of scene are related to thirteen words in pause (13:38). In both versions, then, the pace slows down. In TH, the implied reader gets to hear more of what the characters themselves are saying, while in OG, the action is held back by description on the part of the narrator.

3.2.2 Order and frequency

In both OG and TH, reference is made to the death of the dragon three times. First, Daniel promises that he will kill it (via embedded prolepsis in verse 25); second, it is

killed (verse 27); third, the people say that the king has killed it (via embedded analepsis in verse 28 in Episode 3). Clearly, the death of the dragon is an important motif in the narrative.

3.3   Episode 3

Both OG and TH have 298 words in Episode 3. The amount of scene in the whole episode is also very close to each other – roughly about 31% (93 words in OG; 91 words in TH). Taking one's cue again from the difference between action in summary and descriptive pause and scene, the following pivotal points develop around places where the pace drops to scene:

1.   the meeting of the Babylonians (28b);
2.   in TH, the Babylonians confront the king (29);
3.   in OG, the king gives Daniel over to destruction (30b);
4.   the discussion between the Angel of the Lord and Habakkuk (34–35);
5.   the discussion between Habakkuk and Daniel (37–38);
6.   the king's exclamation (41).

The most salient difference in this episode is that in TH the meeting of the Babylonians and the subsequent confrontation with the king takes up a great amount of scene (28 words in TH; at this point in OG, only 16 words are used). This results in a longer pause before the action really starts to develop. In OG, however, the king immediately gives Daniel over for destruction.

The final point where the pace again slows to scene is a crucial part in the narrative. The exclamation of the king in verse 18 (OG μέγας ἐστὶν ὁ Βηλ καὶ οὐκ ἔστι παρ᾽ αὐτῷ δόλος; TH μέγας εἶ Βηλ καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν παρὰ σοὶ δόλος οὐδὲ εἷς) is repeated in verse 41 as the highlight of the narrative, but this time with the Lord as the subject instead of Bel (OG μέγας ἐστὶ κύριος ὁ θεός καὶ οὐκ ἔστι πλὴν αὐτοῦ ἄλλος; TH μέγας εἶ κύριε ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Δανιηλ καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν πλὴν σοῦ ἄλλος). Both exclamations in OG are in the third person, while both exclamations in TH are in the second person. The second exclamation forms a counterpoint to the first exclamation (Collins 1993:417). The king's understanding has reached its highest point!

3.4   Time in the Narrative as a Whole

Of OG's total of 880 words, 307 words occur in scene (35%). For TH, 290 of 849 words are given in scene (34%). The narrative as a whole covers the same amount of time. Therefore, it looks as if the pace of both stories is about the same. However, in comparison, OG's pace seems to pick up towards the end, while TH slows down in the middle of the narrative, and then picks up again.

4 Character

4.1 Daniel

The differences on the plane of narrative between the two versions of *Bel and the Dragon* are clearly visible in the way the characters are portrayed. From the start, differences can be seen in the characterization of Daniel. In OG he is a priest, the son of Abal (verse 2). This fact is elided in TH, where instead he is introduced as more honoured than all his friends (ἔνδοξος ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς φίλους αὐτοῦ). Both versions thus establish that Daniel was an honoured man, yet each in its own way. This is also shown by the honourable position of being the "companion of the king" (συμβιωτὴς τοῦ βασιλέως). First impressions last; this is also true of narrative. The first direct speech of a character is therefore important. Daniel's first words in both versions establish him as a faithful follower of the Lord (verse 5). This is echoed by his last instance of direct speech, in which *he* proclaims the faithfulness of *the Lord* (verse 39).

All in all, Daniel plays a more central role in the basic plot in OG than in TH (contra Moore 1977:138). He is the one who suggests that the doors be sealed (verse 14); he is the one who points out the secret entrance to the king (verse 21); he is the one who kills the priests (verse 22). In TH, however, Daniel is clearly the one responsible for the destruction of Bel; in OG, this is a possibility, although it is more likely the king himself, since the three previous verbs undoubtedly have the king as subject (cf. Moore 1977:138). Nevertheless, Daniel's character is more rounded in TH. Twice he laughs before speaking (verses 7 and 19) while in OG he laughs but once (verse 19). His relationship with the king in TH is of such a kind that he is able to touch him and stop him from entering (cf. Moore 1977:132).

Daniel's character, although rounded, does not develop in either OG or TH. His character is static – he is, and remains, the "great non-conformist" (Hammer 1972:235).

4.2 The King

The implied readers' first impressions of the king also differ with regard to the two versions. In TH, he is identified quite specifically: he is the Persian, Cyrus, who receives Astyages' kingdom. His first words set the scene for his character's development: initially, he is so devout a follower of the Babylonians' gods that he is unable to even comprehend why Daniel does not revere Bel (verse 5). This is emphasized in TH by the king's assumption that Daniel blasphemes against Bel (verse 8). His initial eulogy to Bel is also more prominent – and longer – in TH (verse 18).The king's last words trenchantly show his development: echoing his words in verse 18, he proclaims the Lord great and without parallel.

As Collins (1992:335) and Tilly (2007:43) note, the king is viewed as positive in both versions. In TH, however, the king is viewed in a slightly more positive light. The Babylonians has to force him to hand over Daniel (TH verse 29). He takes more strict action against Daniel's opposition (cf. ἀπέκτεινεν "he killed" – verse 22 in TH against

OG's παρέδωκεν "he handed over"). Furthermore, in TH, Daniel is allowed to touch the king and stop him from entering (verse 19).

In an enlightening article, Claudia Bergmann (2004:268-269) notes the different verbs used to denote the eating of Bel. In the king's initial reference in OG, he uses δαπανάω (verse 6); Daniel answers by using βιβρώσκω ("eat" – verse 7), and later, he refers to the action as κατεσθίω ("devour" – verse 9). The king very courteously uses ἐσθίω ("eat" – verse 8) when he speaks to the priests; they, however, knowing the true secret of the food's fate, also use κατεσθίω (verse 8). In TH, the king immediately uses ἐσθίω ("eat") when speaking to Daniel (verse 6), but seems to be swayed by Daniel's answer, as he changes to κατεσθίω ("devour" – verse 8) when speaking to the priests. Once again, the king's positive attitude towards Daniel is emphasized more in TH.

4.3   Bel

Bel functions as a character in the narrative, even though he is not alive. Devices of indirect characterization elucidate his character traits. This is done from the point of view of three characters: that of the king, Daniel and the narrator. The narrator, who has an authoritative voice[2] in *Bel and the Dragon*, describes him from the start as an εἴδωλον (verse 3). Daniel, who also proves to be a trustworthy source, describes him as being clay inside and bronze outside, and not able to eat (or drink – TH) (verse 7). The initial opinion held by the king is that he is a god – in TH, a "living" god (verse 6). According to the king in TH, it is also possible to blaspheme against him (verse 8). This makes for a more stark contrast in TH with the Lord, who is also depicted as a "living God" (see the discussion on God's character below), and sets the stage for a more poignant revelation at the end of the narrative.

Reference to Bel's act of eating – and the amount of food he 'consumes' – also helps to shape his 'character'. The four words used to denote the "eating" done by Bel "leaves the [implied] reader with the impression that Bel's "eating" is indeed unusual" (Bergmann 2004:269). The most common word (in both OG and TH) to describe Bel's eating is κατεσθίω ("devour") – however, this is always done in direct speech and *never* by the narrator. The word stresses the animal-like quality of Bel. The narrator, however, never refers to Bel's eating, as Bel never truly does eat.

The amount of food spent on Bel differs in each version. In OG, it is twelve measures of flour, four sheep and six measures of oil (σεμιδάλεως ἀρτάβαι δέκα δύο καὶ πρόβατα τέσσαρα καὶ ἐλαίου μετρηταὶ ἕξ – verse 3). In TH, it is also twelve measures of flour, but forty sheep and six measures of wine (σεμιδάλεως ἀρτάβαι δώδεκα καὶ πρόβατα τεσσαράκοντα καὶ οἴνου μετρηταὶ ἕξ – verse 3). If, as Hammer (1972:238) notes, the "text ... emphasizes the enormous amount of food and drink supposedly consumed by the idol ..." this is even more the case in TH.

4.4   The Babylonians

The first hint of characterisation of the Babylonians is their worship of the idol, Bel. Likewise, the second direct reference to οἱ Βαβυλώνιοι in both OG and TH is their worship of the Dragon. In TH, this exact group is also the opponents in the third episode, called so by name (οἱ Βαβυλώνιοι – verse 28). In OG, it is οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς χώρας πάντες ("everyone from the country" – verse 28) and ὁ ὄχλος τῆς χώρας ("the crowd of the country" – verse 30) who are the antagonists in Episode 3. One can assume that they are the same group as those first referred to in OG as the worshippers of Bel and the Dragon – namely, the Babylonians.

This group of people remains static throughout the narrative, showing no sign of development. The Babylonians are rather flat characters; they remain the opponents of Daniel and, later, the king, right to the end of the narrative. The OG has them oppose Daniel more than TH (but cf. Haag 1993:95). Apart from the (reliable) narrator's comment that they conspired against Daniel (verse 28; in TH it is against the king!), the OG narrator also informs the reader that Daniel was to be thrown in the pit so as to not have a burial (verse 31) – a terrible fate according to the belief system of the Ancient Near East! Ironically, a part of this group meets their fate in exactly this way (verse 42).

4.5   The Priests

The priests' first direct speech in OG is a blatant lie (verse 8). In TH, it is a command – or at least, a description of what is about to happen (verse 11). Apparently, the priests have more authority in TH – even more so if the genitive in verse 8 is constructed to mean that the priests are those of the king (ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐκάλεσεν τοὺς ἱερεῖς αὐτοῦ). However, in OG, some of the priests add their seals to the door (verse 14), while in TH, it is the king's seal alone which safeguards the temple (verse 11). This sets the scene in OG for Daniel to address the priests as "men, priests" (ἄνδρες ἱερεῖς – verse 15); a statement which is echoed in the denouement in verse 20, where the king sees the footprints of "*men* and women and children" (ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν καὶ παιδίων).

Since Daniel is named as a priest in OG, the conflict is between the "priests of rival religions" (Collins 1992:336), while this is not the case in TH.

4.6   The Dragon

The Dragon is a flat character in both narratives. Its only purpose is its inability to distinguish between edible and inedible food (cf. Collins 1993:414). In TH, the narrator describes it as being "big" (μέγας – verse 23). The king describes it in both versions as a "living god" – this is more effective in TH, since there it is in contrast with Daniel's description of the Lord as a "living God".

4.7   Habakkuk

In OG, Habakkuk is already named in the introduction. This gives him a more prominent place in OG from the start. Of course, this device also serves as a type of *inclusio*. He is not introduced again at the start of Episode 3 in OG. Habakkuk is described as the Son of Jesus of the tribe of Levi (verse 1 - OG). In TH, he is introduced in verse 33 as a prophet in Judaea. Although not explicitly called a prophet in OG, one can deduce from the fact that the whole narrative is ἐκ προφητείας Αμβακουμ ("from the prophecies of Habakkuk") that he is indeed a prophet. This is in step with the function of Habakkuk in both narratives: he merely serves as a conduit for God's plan (cf. the reference to God who "sent" (ἀπέστειλεν) the food in verse 37). In fact, Habakkuk's first words in both OG and TH are addressed to the Lord, and serve to confess his ignorance of Babylon and the pit. He receives no answer, but is taken to the pit without further ado – to do God's work. Habakkuk is the only (named) kinsman of Daniel in the narrative, and in both OG and TH, the narrator goes "to great lengths to portray Habakkuk's preparation of the meal and Daniel's consumption of it in such a way that there is no longer any doubt that the two of them are the most advanced and cultured personalities in the story" (Bergmann 2004:275).

Habakkuk's character is not that well defined, and can be described as rather flat. Although he "is only a minor character in the overall [narrative] ... he becomes an important mediator ... " (Bergmann 2004:274), at least with respect to the motif of eating which pervades the narrative.

4.8   The Angel of the Lord

The Angel of the Lord receives no introduction in the narrative. His appearance is without prior warning (verse 34). The Angel announces his commission from the Lord God in OG, but in TH, his first direct speech towards Habakkuk is a command. The Angel of the Lord is an interesting character as he can seemingly move across space in a very short distance of time, unlike humans. However, he is depicted as a flat character. His only function in the narrative is to convey Habakkuk, a prophet (OG) or an inhabitant of Judah (TH) to Babylonia in order to feed Daniel.

4.9   The Lord

The Lord is mostly described indirectly in both OG and TH. According to Daniel, whose voice is reliable, he is "the Creator of the heaven and the earth, having dominion over all flesh". In OG, he is repeatedly called κύριος (ὅ θεός) by the narrator (verses 4 and 39), Daniel (verses 5, 7 and 38), the Angel of the Lord (verse 34), Habakkuk (verses 35 and 37) and finally, the king (verse 41). In TH, he is called θεός (ζῶν) by the narrator (verse 4), Daniel (verses 5, 25 and 38), Habakkuk (verse 37) and the king (verse 41). He is also called κύριος in TH (verses 25, 35 and 41), but this occurs far less.

In both accounts, Habakkuk describes the food as "sent by God". He is painted as mindful of those who love him: in TH, this occurs in a speech by Daniel (who is a

reliable voice!), while in OG this is in a speech by Daniel *and* the narrator. Thus, while TH has a little more emphasis on the fact that God is alive, OG focuses on the fact that he is mindful of those who love him.

4.10   Minor Characters

A few minor characters also make their appearance in *Bel and the Dragon*. The first of these, only in TH, is Astyages, whose only purpose is to die. TH also has more appearances of the priests' wives and children (verses 9, 15, 20 and 21, against OG's verses 9 and 20). More emphasis is placed on the complete and utter destruction of the whole household of those who oppose Daniel (and the Lord). (This is in concert with the more explicit reference to Bel's temple being overthrown in TH verse 22). The difference in the king's speech in verse 20 (in both versions) is also noteworthy – instead of using the term τέκνον for the children, as the narrator does, he describes the footsteps as that of παιδία. TH has no reference whatsoever to those "with Daniel" (τοὺς παρ' αὐτοῦ - OG verse 14), while OG has two references to this group of people (verses 9 and 14). TH, thus, has a sharper focus on Daniel himself as the one who outsmarts the priests.

Two more groups of characters should be noted. The first is an *en passant* reference to the bodies being fed to the lions – if this group serves as characters at all. Worthy of note, however, is the difference in designation between the two versions: in OG, theses bodies are described as being "condemned to death" (ἐπιθανατίων – verse 31), while in TH they are merely described as bodies. This heightens the awareness of Daniel's sentence as a *death* sentence in OG.

5   Space

Differences in the use of and reference to space in the two versions are quite evident. Each version has a preference for a specific type of movement in narrative space. TH uses ἔρχομαι ("come"); the word itself occurs six times and four times it is used in cognate forms. OG does not use this word – there are only three instances where cognate forms occur. In contrast, OG uses the word ἄγω ("lead") three times, while this word does not occur in TH at all.

In general, OG is more specific with reference to space. For instance, in verse 18, the table is explicitly called "empty" (τὰς τραπέζας κενάς) in OG, while this is never mentioned in TH. This specificity can also be seen in references to the temple of Bel. In both OG and TH, the temple is described with various terms. In OG, one finds five terms: τοῦ ἱεροῦ (verse 8), τὸ εἰδώλιον (verse 10), τοῦ ναοῦ (verse 14), τὸν τόπον (verse 15), and τοῦ Βηλίου (verse 22). Of these five terms, at least two, ναός and τόπος, clearly refer to the inner sanctuary of the temple. TH describes the temple with only three terms: τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Βηλ (verse 10), τὸν ναὸν (verse 14) and ἱερὸν αὐτοῦ (i.e. of Bel – verse 22). The distinction between the temple as a whole and the inner sanctuary is also clear, as ναός refers to the latter.

Another interesting difference between OG and TH concerns the word ἐμβάλλω. This verb occurs three times in OG, but only twice in TH. In both OG and TH it is used for the action of throwing someone into the pit – with harmful intent, of course. In OG, however, the same word is used when Daniel throws his concoction into the mouth of the Dragon. This reinforces the pattern which is established with regard to the motif of eating in the narrative (cf. Bergmann 2004). This motif is also strengthened in OG by the fact that the Babylonians are eaten "before Daniel" (ἐνώπιον τοῦ Δανιηλ – verse 42) by the lions, while the food and wine prepared for Bel is placed "before Daniel and the king" (ἐνώπιον τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τοῦ Δανιηλ – verse 12). This is not the case in TH, where the only other reference to "before the king" (ἐνώπιον τοῦ βασιλέως) is in verse 14, where the ashes are strewn in the temple sanctuary. The placing of the food is also described more vividly in OG with the use of chiasm (παρετέθη ... ἐνώπιον τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τοῦ Δανιηλ ... παρετέθη τῷ Βηλ – verse 11). This conjures up the idea that the food is placed *between* the king and Daniel on one side and Bel on the other.

In two cases, however, TH has more to say about space than OG. In the latter, there is no direct reference to where the secret entrance is located. In TH, it is very clearly placed *under* the table (ὑπὸ τὴν τράπεζαν – verse 12). Nevertheless, it is implied in the denouement of Episode 1 in OG (verse 21) that the secret entrance led to the house of the priests (the party seemingly moves from the priests' house directly to the temple through the secret entrance), while nothing to this effect is mentioned in TH. In fact, the implied reader of TH might easily surmise that the entrance is pointed out by the priests from the inside of the temple.

The second case where TH is more specific concerning space is in the direct reference to Judah in verse 33. In OG, it is clear that it is *not* Babylonia, but the exact place is not named. That Judah is named in TH is an important aspect of the narrative, since this places emphasis on the fact that it is the Lord who intervenes – taking someone from his "holy land" to feed Daniel in Babylonia.

6   Conclusion

A comparison of the Old Greek version with that of Theodotion using narrative theory clearly shows differences between these two texts. Some of these differences are but minor divergences; others, such as TH's preoccupation with the death of the priests against OG's nearly not mentioning this point, has a big impact on the way the narrative should be read. Although some differences could more easily be uncovered without the help of narratology, others, such as the differences in pace between the two narratives and instances of direct speech versus summary would only be seen and appreciated with difficulty. Differences in character – for instance, Daniel being more rounded in TH, but seemingly more active in OG – would also possibly be overlooked. The same argument pertains to the use of space in both narratives; through the use of narrative theory, one can clearly see that OG has more interest in the space in which the narrative is set. These facts are useful on their own, as they help the exegete to better understand the

narrative of *Bel and the Dragon* in its different versions. However, it is also helpful for other disciplines more focused on diachronic research, such as the translation technique underlying the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. Although narratology might be in some sort of identity crisis, the long road it has traveled until today has not been in vain.

NOTES

1   The versions used are those printed in the edition of Rahlfs (1935).

2   In general, the point of view of biblical narrators can be described as authoritative. For some examples where this is not the case, see Chrisholm (2002), especially page 404.

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