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ORALITY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES: A REVIEW ESSAY

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William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. Pp. xiv + 306. Paper. \$32.99. ISBN 978-0521448208.

David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. xiv + 330. Hardcover. \$65.00. ISBN 978-0195172973.

Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature*. Library of Ancient Israel. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996. Pp. xi + 170. Paper. \$29.95. ISBN 978-0664227241.

Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Pp. xi + 239. Hardcover. \$65.00. ISBN 978-0195140675.

Erhardt Güttgemanns, *Offene Fragen zur Formgeschichte des Evangeliums: Eine methodologische Skizze der Grundlagenproblematik der Form- und Redaktionsgeschichte*. Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie 54. Munich: Kaiser, 1970. Pp. 280. Translated by William G. Doty as *Candid Questions Concerning Gospel Form Criticism: A Methodological Sketch of the Fundamental Problematics of Form and Redaction Criticism*. Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979. Pp. xix + 418. Pp. 280. \$25.00. ISBN 978-0915138241.

Richard A. Horsley, with Jonathan A. Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999. Pp. x + 326. Paper. \$39.95. ISBN 978-1563382727.

D. C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, by Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Pp. xv + 224. Paper. \$32.99. ISBN 978-0521599511.

The field of oral traditional literature concerns itself with the study of the compositional, performative, and aesthetic aspects of living oral traditions and texts dependent on them. While oral tradition has long been an issue in biblical studies and in the humanities generally, the subject matter achieved a major impetus through the work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, two North American classicists whose comparative work on the oral

epic traditions of the former Yugoslavia and Homer gained wide attention. By now the field has grown into a scholarship that cuts across a broad spectrum of the humanities and social sciences, bridging national and religious boundaries and encompassing the multicultural body of the human race.

The rediscovery of the oral roots of all verbalization and the deeply influential culture of speech in the Western tradition (and in human culture generally) has in turn generated reflection on our scholarly dealing with texts and exposed a dominantly post-Gutenberg mentality within classical, biblical, and medieval studies. To scholars who are proficient in aspects of oral traditional literature, it is increasingly evident that there is something different about many of our classical Western texts than most of our historical, philological, and literary approaches would let us know. Oral and orally dependent texts, as many of our classical texts are, were tradition bound, variously interfacing with orality, continuously reinventing themselves in variant versions, and deriving meaning from extratextual signifieds no less (or even more) than from internal signification.

The study of orality and texts interfacing with oral verbalization is, therefore, not adequately understood if it is viewed as an embellishment of our prevalent historical, philological paradigm, an addition simply to literary criticism, or something of a mere footnote to the existing body of textual scholarship. More seriously, the exploration of the nature, dynamics, and cultural contexts of the verbal arts seeks to sensitize us to ways in which we tend to impose upon ancient texts a set of rules, methods, and assumptions that we have interiorized from daily reading and writing, revising, and interpreting of mostly printed texts. Today the field frequently referred to as orality-scribality studies challenges us to rethink a set of concepts that we thought we had known for certain, or better perhaps, we had assumed to be assured results of the historical, critical, and/or literary paradigms that required no further critical reflection. Text and intertextuality, author and tradition, reading and writing, original text and variants thereof, memory and imagination, copy and manuscript—central metaphors in Western thinking about the verbal arts—are all affected by the study of oral traditions and a chirographic culture interfacing with them.

The seven books that will be discussed in this review essay have all contributed—from different perspectives—to an understanding of the oral dimension in written texts, and all of them challenge us to be alert to sizeable blind spots in our scholarly paradigm whose methods and sensitivities are largely derived from our continuous working with printed texts.

Although published twenty years ago, William Graham's *Beyond the Written Word* has remained a classic whose significance has only grown over the years. The book does not,

strictly speaking, belong to the field of oral traditional literature or orality-scribality studies. But it ranks in its pioneering spirit and intellectual acumen with the pertinent scholarship of Albert Lord, Eric Havelock, and Walter Ong, eminent humanists who have been instrumental in advancing our understanding of the oral component in the verbal arts. Graham is a historian of religion and a specialist in Islamic religious history. But the relevance of his work extends far beyond the history of religion. Biblical scholars, I suspect, have yet to discover the intellectual fecundity of his findings. His prime concern is “scripture,” or sacred texts, perceived as a general phenomenon in the major religious traditions and in the popular and scholarly practices of Western modernity. Meticulously researched, internationally documented, and written with a high degree of nuance, the author examines the overwhelmingly oral verbalization of holy writ in Hinduism, recitation and revelation in Muslim faith, and the audible presence and internalization of the biblical word in Christianity. Additionally, he engages principal aspects of scripture in Judaism, Buddhism, and in numerous other religious traditions. In setting the discussion of scripture in this broad comparative context, he is able to expose concepts of the Bible that typify Western modernity. Scripture, he explains, is not primarily a literary genre, something that it has become in large measure in the West, but a phenomenon in the history of religion. That is to say, whereas in Western modernism the relatively recent paradigm for scripture is the tangible document of the print Bible, in most religious traditions, both ancient and contemporary, piety and practice are characterized by a high degree of *scriptural orality*. The latter is the key concept of Graham’s study that allows for an understanding of scripture both as written and as oral authority.

Scriptural orality, the author explains, is a dimension that has received little attention not merely because of the ephemeral quality of speech but because modernity in the West has made the printed text the yardstick of civilized culture. Prior to the typographic revolution, the aural character of written texts, vocal reading and voiced texts, recitative and memorial powers dominated Western culture to a degree that is barely imaginable, especially for educated, literate people. To be sure, notions of the heavenly book, Buddhist adoration of physical copies of the *sutras*, veneration of the meticulously copied Torah, reverential treatment of texts of the Qur’an, and the deep respect extended toward illuminated medieval Bibles all testify to the antiquity of the notion of the sacred book. But the sacrality of the written or even printed book was, and still is, in many religious traditions of a piece with its oral uses, be they recitation, preaching, singing, or chanting. In the West, Graham explains, the rapidly disseminated print culture did not immediately displace oral practices and sensibilities. Shifts in the human sensorium, the disappearance of rhetoric from the educational curriculum, and the emergence of the authority of the Bible independent from persons and memory were slow in coming. It has to be remembered, Graham reminds us, that education in Western Europe did not accomplish

mass literacy until the nineteenth century. But once the ubiquity of print textuality, combined with general literacy, “became the backbone of modern scholarship” (23), a narrowly culture-bound concept of scripture gained ascendancy that is now shared by many across the spectrum of diverse Jewish and Christian identities: “the literalist’s book religion of the Protestant fundamentalist, the conscious or unconscious image of the biblical text in the mind of the average person of whatever religious persuasion, and the liberal scholar’s historical-critical understanding of the Bible’s genesis are part of the same wider orientation” (48).

Graham exhibits exquisite sensibilities in drawing a vivid picture of the role of the Qur’an in Muslim society. In fact, it was, he writes, his personal experience and study of the oral dimension of the Qur’an that inspired his explorations into the oral aspects of scripture more widely. Such is the intrinsic orality and abiding oral presence of the Qur’an that it can hardly be overstated. From a very early point on, the recitative character of the Qur’an was central to Muslim perception and practice of scripture, and Arabic—rather than vernacular translations—has remained the sacred scriptural language. Perceived as God’s *ipsissima vox*, the vocally transmitted text is memorized, internalized, and repeated as divine speech, and it is expected to live on the lips and in the hearts of the faithful. Qur’anic recitation and cantillation manifests itself in a variety of “authentic” versions and covers a range of recitational styles, widely understood to be blessings rather than impediments. By different degrees and in a variety of modes, the public sphere of Muslim societies is scripturally saturated: the virtual omnipresence of Qur’anic cantillation, educational memorization, Qur’anic enactments at religious events and personal festivities, the use of the Qur’an in worship, and the permeation of religious and traditional scholarly language with the vocabulary and phraseology of the Arabic scripture. It is true, much attention is paid to the material text in the elaborately designed and illuminated copies of holy scripture, but the developed calligraphic art notwithstanding, there always is “functional primacy of the oral text over the written one” (110). The vocal presence of scripture predominates into the present. When in the early twentieth century something of a *textus receptus* was composed, the collaborative work by Muslim scholars was largely based on oral memory traditions—and hailed by Western text-critical scholars as a remarkable feat of a critical edition.

Graham’s discussion of Christian scripture focuses on Pachomian monasticism and the Protestant Reformation. In Pachomianism, which served as model for later Christian monastic practice and piety, the centrality of scripture was conspicuous and scriptural presence was primarily an oral and aural one. The minds of the desert monks were disciplined by memorization that facilitated a sustained recitation of texts. Meditation did not mean silent contemplation in the reflective, interiorized sense alone, but an exercise that included recitation *viva voce* as well. Monastic life was truly scriptural life in the

sense that it was permeated, paced, and governed by the recited, living words of scripture. Hence, memorization, meditation, and recitation implemented the oral presence of scripture in the Pachomian communities.

The functional orality of Christian scripture, Graham shows, did not end with the waning of the Middle Ages. The Protestant Reformers evidenced profoundly oral sensibilities with respect to scripture. *Sola scriptura* notwithstanding, scripture remained a living presence. Martin Luther, Martin Bucer, John Calvin, and John Bunyan spoke and wrote a scripturally saturated language, not for the most part for prooftexting purposes but because they were at home in scripture, and scripture in them. Luther, although “the first truly prolific and widely read author of the printed word in the West” (147), was still far from viewing the printed page as silent and standing on its own.

“Does it really matter,” Graham asks, “that our modern Western experience of texts may not be normative (and may even be genuinely aberrant) when seen in a larger historical perspective?” Yes, it does, is his emphatic answer, as long as we rely on modern communication standards in dealing with texts that belong to a very different time in history.

The story Graham narrates is both universal and detailed, but never less than absorbing. Scriptural orality expounds a grand vision of the piety and practice of sacred scripture. To the extent that biblical scholars have focused attention on the textual, documentary, and literary history of the Bible, Graham’s work merits their close attention. Of particular interest should be the author’s understanding of the theology of the biblical Word in the Reformation, a period that was instrumental in shaping the historical-critical paradigm. It is at this point that I wish to add what is not necessarily a corrective to Graham’s reading, but a broader hermeneutical, philosophical context in which the Reformers’ undoubtedly oral sense of scripture may be viewed. I would claim that the typographic apotheosis of the Bible deeply affected their theological thinking on matters of scriptural authority and tradition, on memory and interpretation. When we think of Luther’s rejection of the medieval fourfold sense of scripture in the interest of the one sense, his increasingly high regard for the *sensus literalis*, his repudiation of allegory and all nonliteral senses, his unprecedented elevation of *sola scriptura*, his belief in the Bible’s self-interpreting capacity, the steady marginalization of memory, and, perhaps most ominously, his rejection of tradition, this enabling context of biblical learning and interpretation, we observe a reification of the biblical text that was to create a high degree of plausibility for thinking of the Bible as standing on its own.

Carr’s exceedingly ambitious *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart* discusses ways in which people in the ancient Near Eastern world produced, worked, and lived with texts, or,

more specifically, ways in which writing and literature functioned orally, scribally, memorially in ancient educational contexts. His book is erudite at every step and broadly comparative, building on a stream of North American and international scholarship. The first part commences with the Sumero-Akkadian scribal-educational system of Mesopotamia and its modes of textual production, then turns to Mesopotamian influence on Elam (in what is now Iran), ancient Syria, the Hittite culture in Anatolia (modern Turkey), Canaan and the Phoenician city of Ugarit, and Syro-Palestinian culture. This is followed by a study of Egyptian education and textuality, links between Egyptian and Sumero-Akkadian scribal cultures, and Sumero-Akkadian and Egyptian influences on Israel. This part of the book is concluded with a treatment of the educational curriculum and production of cultural texts in ancient Greece and the epigraphic and literary evidence of education in pre-Hellenistic Israel. A second part commences with an examination of education and textuality in the Eastern Hellenistic world, including Egypt and Hellenistic Judaism, giving special consideration to Qumran as a model of a Second Temple Judaism that had structured communal life apart from the temple. Next, Carr takes up forms of early Jewish textuality and education linked with Sabbath observance at synagogues and no longer directly associated with the temple. The author develops a nuanced treatment of the growing consolidation of Jewish texts into the Torah-Prophets corpus, the forerunner of what came to be the Hebrew Bible. He traces this development to the early second century B.C.E., when Hasmonean policy sought to promote a Hebrew focal point for Jewish identity vis-à-vis the dominant Hellenistic educational system. In short, Carr understands the consolidation of Hebrew Scripture as a phenomenon of cultural resistance. Processes of scriptural solidification, he concludes, tend to be associated with centralized institutions of power, ranging from Mesopotamian kingdoms to the Egyptian monarchy, and from the Athenian democracy to Hasmonean Israel, and all the way to Constantinian Christianity—the rabbinic mishnaic and talmudic scriptural consolidations, I would say, being an exception. Three streams of textual-educational cultures persist into late antiquity: Greek and Latin materials, Christian materials (including the Greek Old and New Testaments), and rabbinic materials (including the Hebrew Bible). All three represented transnational entities, transcending traditional geographical and cultural boundaries.

The ancient writing culture, be it in stone, parchment, or papyrus, manifested itself in different alphabetic systems and cultural contexts. The Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform script, incised mostly on tablets, featured elite literacy designed to train (mostly) male scribes for administrative and ritual functions. Initially devoted to the genre of lists, it later expanded toward letters, hymns, treatises, and gnomic materials. In Egypt, hieroglyphic inscriptions and cursive chirography served primarily as a means of induction into the sacral, royal bureaucratic elite. Neither in Mesopotamian nor in the

Egyptian culture do we recognize an identifiable social institution that was responsible for writing, although a long tradition points to temples as locations for text collections. In ancient Greece, the principal purpose of chirographic activities shifted from the training of a scribal elite toward the formation of an aristocratic class of Greek citizens. Homer now took the place of lexical lists in Mesopotamia and of wisdom instruction in Egypt. In ancient Israel, all literate specialists were officials of some kind: scribes, kings, priests, and administrators. We observe the rise of a still-fluid and growing textual curriculum, with Deuteronomy and the Mosaic Torah at the center of a temple-oriented community governed by priests. The Hellenistic period witnessed a formidable expansion of both production and consumption of texts. Gymnasia became focal points of Hellenistic culture, although literary activities at these places appear to have taken second place to athletics. In the Second Temple period, much of the indigenous textuality, including the pseudepigraphic writings, appear to have had links with the temple and priestly authorities, although in Hellenistic Judaism as in Hellenistic culture generally, the use of writing and texts was no longer the privileged medium of scribal elites. Early Judaism increasingly linked scribal and educational practices with synagogal centers and nonpriestly authorities. While early Christianity rapidly turned to the codex form for Scriptures, using it in largely oral contexts, early Judaism continued to sanctify its Scriptures in scrolls, with the “Oral Torah” coming to play a central role in rabbinic culture.

A signal achievement of Carr’s study is the deliberate move away from a paradigm about the ancient verbal arts that is entrenched in typographic and purely textual modes of thinking, and the construction of a model of textual production and appropriation that is firmly situated in historically suitable media contexts. Writing, texts, and literacy, he suggests, have to be understood as core constituents of educational processes. From Mesopotamia to Egypt, and from Israel to Greece and into the Hellenistic period, literacy and education were closely interconnected phenomena. Indeed, literacy and education were virtually synonymous as long as it is understood that neither concept imports what it has come to mean in European and North American cultural history. Concepts derived from the contemporary experience of literacy in the West are too narrowly focused on the rudimentary ability of reading and writing. What mattered most in ancient cultures was a “broader” literacy that went beyond alphabetic competence to include training in and mastery of the tradition. A literate person was not necessarily an alphabetically skilled individual but one knowledgeable in the tradition. Education likewise entailed far more than training in the technology of writing and reading skills. The principal aim of education was the enforcement of a standardized moral, ethnic, and social consciousness, something we might call today the cultural identity of a people. In different words, the central idea of education was socialization into the elite class and increasingly, in the

Hellenistic age, into a general citizenship via the (re)inforcement of a core of cultural knowledge. For this process Carr has coined the term *education-enculturation*. Most writing and texts in the ancient world served this educational function of enculturation with the aim of inscribing on people's minds a distinct sense of social, ethical consciousness that would mark them off from others.

Given the fact that much of ancient writing was part of this educational-enculturational project, what was primary was the internalization of texts on people's minds and hearts. This had implications for the social role of scribes. The training of scribes predominantly occurred in family apprenticeship settings or in homes and workshops of master scribes, far less frequently than often assumed in schools run by professional teachers. Ideally, scribal training entailed both alphabetic skills for the purpose of (re)writing the cultural texts and the mental ingestion of these scripted materials. That is to say, scribes were expected to possess or acquire mastery of their core writings by way of memorization and recitation. Our scholarly designation of scribes, connoting strictly writing activities, is thus too limited a term to characterize the professional role and identity of ancient scribes. Memorization, scribality, and recitation were intertwined aspects of the enculturation processes, and scribes were the principal custodians of the authoritative curriculum.

The enculturation model also had implications for the composition and transmission of texts. The notion of scribes copying an extant text or juggling multiple texts that were physically present to them is, for the most part, not a fitting model for the communication dynamics in the ancient world. Undoubtedly, texts were written down, stored, consulted, and also copied. But the core tradition was not primarily carried forward by copying of texts. Rather, scribes who were literate in the core curriculum carried texts as mental templates, using them, recasting them, and/or repeating them. They had ingested the tradition consisting of one or more than one text so as to be able to rewrite the tradition without any need for physical texts. Rewriting texts was a hallmark of enculturation processes. Biblical texts in particular bear clear marks of "recensional" activities that have provided the basis for source and documentary theories. Carr's enculturation model suggests that "editing," "copying" and "revising," "recension," "original version," and "variants," the nomenclature of historical, critical scholarship, seems for the most part ill-suited to come to terms with the transaction of most ancient manuscripts. Biblical texts, along with many other ancient texts that were orally, memorially, and scribally transmitted from generation to generation Carr aptly describes as *long-duration texts*. These were texts in process, representing a fluid, mental, scribal, memorial model of transmission that challenges modern scholarly efforts at retrieving the single, authoritative, or original text.

Carr has given us a strong thesis, a conceptual model that is both comprehensive and thematically focused. Strong theses tend to be risk-taking ventures because they are intrinsically vulnerable to queries from many different angles. Should more allowance be made for processes of faithful copying of texts after all? To balance the picture, should more be said about texts such as economic, agricultural, and military records that were preserved for pragmatic purposes as materials designed for consultation more than enculturation? How can tendencies toward standardization of texts be weighted against tradition in the process of the long-duration texts? The thesis of an early dating of the consolidation of a recognizable body of Jewish texts into the Torah-Prophets corpus in the early second century B.C.E. needs to be balanced with the phenomenon of scriptural multiformity that is manifest in the Dead Sea documents. But then again, biblical studies needs strong theses. In the words of Eldon Epp, "What is needed is a microscope with less power of magnification so that our field of vision is broader." Carr has given us this kind of vision that challenges biblical scholarship to reflect on the phenomenology, use, and formation of biblical texts in broader cultural settings.

Niditch's *Oral World and Written Word in Israelite Literature* is strictly focused on the Hebrew Bible but broadly developed against the background of ancient Near Eastern cultures. While Carr operated with the educational-enculturational model, Niditch uses the notion of an *oral-literate continuum* as explanatory paradigm. Based on this model, she locates the Bible's literature either toward the literate end of the continuum, as in the frequent references to the written Torah, or toward the oral end, as epitomized by Ezekiel's swallowing of the scroll (2:9–3:11), or at oral-literate interfaces, as in frequent examples to write down in order to recite (Exod 17:14–16). Niditch's major objective, therefore, is to illuminate biblical texts according to their location on the sliding scale of oral-scribal communications. It is not that writing played no role in ancient Israel, she explains, but rather that the function of writing and texts was unlike that of modern literacy. The oral-literate continuum model postulates that literacy in ancient Israel and in traditional societies in general ought to be understood in continuity with an oral world. In that sense her model negates the *Great Divide theory* that views oral and scribal dynamics in oppositional terms. In Niditch's understanding, the texts of the Hebrew Bible are variously informed by the aesthetics of orality because the "Israelites lived in an essentially oral world" (44). Written word and oral world, therefore, interact complexly, and the Bible derives much of its force and effect from the dynamics of this oral-literate interplay.

While Niditch takes a cautionary approach with regard to oral compositional processes of Hebrew texts as developed by Parry/Lord, she explores, in chapters 1 and 2, what she calls "traditional Israelite aesthetics" (38). Linguistically, they manifest themselves in stylistic, phraseological, and thematic features such as repetition, recurring formulae, epithets,

topoi, conventional scenes, and many more. These features, she explains, are not to be understood merely as rhetorical devices to accommodate audiences, to create strong impressions, or to profile key messages but rather as signifying elements of considerable import in creating meaning. Relying on the work of John M. Foley, she interprets the conventional and stylized patterns as metonymic signifiers that tap into the larger tradition so as to bring it to the hearing of the text. In Foley's words, traditional and conventional language invokes "the ever-impinging presence of the extra-textual, summoned into the process of interpretation" (*Immanent Art*, 45). Obviously, this understanding of the Bible's traditional language is contrary to the work of those modern literary critics who derive meaning strictly from the internal configuration in texts. Traditional Israelite aesthetics as perceived by Niditch (and Foley) evoke a reservoir that is deeper and larger than the particularity of any single text.

In chapters 3 and 4 Niditch examines a wide spectrum of oral-literary relations in a variety of cultural contexts ranging from the Near East and ancient Greece to medieval Europe and early twentieth-century Yugoslavia. These ethnographic parallels serve to place Israel's practice and self-understanding of writing and literacy in historical perspectives. Special attention is given to epigraphic materials, archives, and the material media of communication. Inscriptions on monuments, she states, often fulfill symbolic, religious functions more than providing service to a public readership. For example, the late eighth-century B.C.E. inscription on the wall of the water tunnel connecting old Jerusalem with a spring to the east of the city was intended to commemorate—in the literate mode—the feat of engineering by preserving information that, however, remained inaccessible to the populace. But the inscription also belongs to the genre of graffiti that is "the poor man's monument" (55), and hence closer to the oral mode. Archives and libraries (Ugarit, Ebla, Mari, Aššur, Nineveh, Alexandria, Pergamon) appear to be designed for systematic, long-term record keeping in the modern sense. Indeed, in some instances the archival materials give the impression of being marked for identification, consultation, and retrieval, suggesting the beginnings of our cataloguing system. Some archival deposits, however, are more on the order of temporary storage places. Others lack any recognizable systematic ordering or seem to limit access to the elite. Even where archives or libraries are used for purposes of consultation, one must not immediately assume that the archived texts functioned as norms for memory and oral tradition. By no means implausible is the reverse procedure: oral tradition was perceived to be the standard on the basis of which archival texts were subject to rewriting. The writing materials (stone, ostraca [broken sherds], wooden tablets, wax-coated boards, papyrus, parchment, metal, ivory) give evidence of different social circumstances and purposes for writing. Techniques of inscribing on these materials required special scribal training and

skills, turning the ancient scribe into “a sort of performer” (75), once again suggesting an intriguing blending of the literary with the oral, performative mode.

In chapter 4 Niditch directs attention to the phenomenon of textual pluriformity as evidenced by the Dead Sea Scrolls and evaluated by Julio Trebolle Barrera, Emanuel Tov, and above all Eugene Ulrich. Quite possibly as late as 135 C.E. scriptures that were eventually going to emanate into the Hebrew Bible manifested hitherto unexpected pluriformity, raising deep questions about the dating of the Masoretic *textus receptus* and the concept both of the “correct,” authorized text and “variants.” Moving beyond Niditch, I would venture to say that scriptural pluriformity we witness in the Dead Sea Scrolls is a way, perhaps the way, of textual life in the Second Temple period and into the second century C.E. While we have scarcely begun to assimilate the textual evidence that has been generated by the Dead Sea Scrolls, Niditch is surely right in stating that the textual multiformity exhibits “qualities of an oral register” (75).

Attitudes toward writing that are assumed by the Hebrew Bible itself are the main topic of chapters 5–7. On the one hand, writing is infused with numinous and magical qualities: the tablets of stone are written with the finger of God (Exod 31:18), investing them with special powers; the writing of names on sticks (Num 17:2–5; Ezek 37:16–17) serves to symbolize and to effect certain actions; written curses are ritualized and understood to take effect (Num 5:11–31). These and numerous other examples point to the well-known phenomenon of the oral efficaciousness of words. On the other hand, the writing of lists and genealogies, royal annals and letters, certificates and deeds approach the literary function of record keeping, although even these documents have often retained nuances of oral dynamics. Finally, writing self-consciously operates in a dual scribal-oral role, such as the Shema (Deut 6:4–9), which is to be written on doorposts and gates, yet kept in the hearts and recited. No matter at what place of the oral-literate continuum biblical texts come to stand, they are almost always framed or colored by oral dynamics.

In conclusion, Niditch reflects on the implications and applications of her studies. She advocates a reconsideration of major theories about the composition of the Hebrew Bible, foremost among them the documentary hypothesis regarding the pentateuchal sources. That hypothesis, she suggests, “comes from our world and not from that of ancient Israel” (112). At the heart of it is an image like that of “Emperor Claudius of the PBS series, having his various written sources laid out before him as he chooses this verse or that, includes this tale not that, edits, elaborates, all in a library setting” (113). As regards application, Niditch hypothesizes four possible models for the genesis of the Hebrew Bible: texts originated in live performances and were written down via dictation, or orally composed but chirographically “fixed” in the interest of a pan-Israelite identity, or written in oral-traditional style, or written on the basis of an antecedent manuscript

tradition. There is no single or simple trajectory that can account for the composition history of the Bible as a whole.

The author is quite right in arguing that all too often we assume that written manuscripts in antiquity operated like our print books. It does make a difference whether we view biblical texts from the vantage point of print-conditioned notions of textuality or in oral-traditional contexts. But my sense is that in her work the line that distinguishes scripturality from orality is anything but clear and often a bit blurred. It may well be appropriate to denounce the Great Divide and opt for oral-scribal interfaces, as most of the seven authors reviewed here are doing. But we will not get around articulating with a degree of precision what meets the definition of orality and of scribality. Still, Niditch has made a bold and admirable effort at stemming the tide of a positively overpowering textual scholarship. Something is announced here and a challenge has been posed that, if pursued further, has a potential for revising substantial aspects of biblical scholarship.

The line of thought inaugurated by Graham and pursued by Carr and Niditch is further extended in Jaffee's work on the *Torah in the Mouth* in rabbinic Judaism. Certainly, oral tradition and Oral Torah have long been an issue in the scholarly discussion of Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism. The Oral Torah has specifically been linked with Pharisaism, while recitation and repetition of tradition are well-established features of rabbinism. Ranging widely from the last centuries of the Second Temple period to the compilation of the Talmud, benefiting from recent orality-scribality studies, and building on a close reading of texts he has developed a coherent and comprehensive view of the oral-literate rabbinic tradition and its perceived relation to the Mosaic Torah.

In the first part Jaffee sketches a broad scenario of the logistics of Second Temple scribalism. Palestinian scribes in that period, he writes, worked and lived with scrolls that functioned less as reference systems for information and more as memory devices for texts often already memorized. As long as the temple existed, most scribes were of priestly descent and closely associated with the central administrative system. No widespread activity of lay scribes is demonstrable. As far as scribal production of scrolls was concerned, Jaffee places heavy emphasis on dictation. Scribal dictation was "a fact of life" so much so that it was fictionalized into a "rhetoric of literary authenticity" (25) that sought to validate texts by reference to the archetypal writing or dictation by revered figures such as Moses, Enoch, and others. Hence, scrolls originated in a human voice and in turn found authentication as aural phenomena in the performative events of recitation. In this culture where scribal products were embedded in orality, scribes enjoyed ample room for creative intervention; textual closure was all but nonexistent. "Scribal orality" (16) is the designation Jaffee uses to capture this Second Temple scribalism in which "the

characteristic organ of the literary life was the mouth and the ear, and its main textual reservoir was the memory” (18).

At Qumran Jaffee observes the kind of “orally mediated interpretive tradition” (29) that is generally continuous with the oral-scribal dynamics encountered in Second Temple Judaism elsewhere. Study of the Torah, the central ritual of the community, was practiced as a collective act that required the engagement of the entire assembly. The communally centered textual appropriation proceeded in two stages. In the first stage the sacred text was read or recited aloud, and in a second stage it, or rather its recitation, became a source for explanatory discourse. Both recitation and explication, the central acts of Torah study, were thus delivered orally and apperceived aurally in communal sessions. It was, therefore, not as fixed texts per se that sacred scripture exhibited authority but rather as an “ongoing revelation” (37) that was extended into the present. Texts in this oral-scribal media culture were perceived as both numinous and potential entities. They provided the locus of extraordinary powers, but these were powers that achieved validation in what Jaffee in a particularly felicitous phrase calls “the authoritative oral moment of textual tradition” (38). Put differently, the recitation reinstated the original moment of oral dictation, and the explication activated the texts’ full(er) implications. Oral explication and aural appropriation were the norm, while at the same time oral activation remained firmly linked to and grounded in the sacred writings. Importantly, however, there was as yet no attempt in Second Temple communities to reflect on scribal versus oral hermeneutical procedures, let alone to differentiate the written Torah from what would be termed the Oral Torah.

Finally, Jaffee addresses the often stated thesis of a specifically Pharisaic claim on the Oral Torah. His examination of the principal sources—Qumran, early Christian texts, Josephus, rabbinic literature—adduces no evidence that the idea and practice of the Oral Torah originated in pre-70 Pharisaic circles. While the Qumran residents may have entertained tense relations with the “Expounders of Smooth Things”—a possible reference to Pharisees—the Dead Sea scrolls indicate nothing about a Pharisaic concept of tradition/revelation. The ancient sayings Gospel Q and the canonical Gospels have collectively developed a fairly distinct picture of the Pharisees. But apart from the fact that it is a picture drawn up in light of conflictual relations between the Jesus people and the Pharisees, these sources convey little information about the content of the Pharisaic tradition and say nothing about the significance of medium: oral or written. Josephus portrays the Pharisees as a religio-political movement that practiced scrupulous adherence to traditions anchored in the Torah, but he, too, remains silent on the matter of oral versus written transmission. As far as rabbinic literature is concerned, Jaffee expresses a strong caveat against assuming direct social and transmissional continuities between Pharisaism and rabbinism. The most one can say, therefore, is that the Pharisees,

like most other scribal communities in the Second Temple period, participated in the prevalent oral-performative activation of texts.

In the second part Jaffee illuminates a rabbinic trajectory toward a gradual coordination of the (mostly) post-70 rabbinic traditions with the Mosaic Torah. It was a move that would culminate in the rise of the Oral Torah, an entity that eventually came to share co-equality with the Written Torah. Following the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, Judaism found itself in a period of reconstruction seeking to consolidate its identity in the absence of central place. The instructional material that emerged from the early centuries of the Common Era was by and large oral-performative instruction that, transcribed into written form, was finally compiled in the Mishnah and Tosefta. The emergent perception was that the memorially manageable material was transmitted by word of mouth from teacher to disciple and grounded in the personal authority of Hillel and Shammai and their circle of disciples. These two preeminent sages and their disciples were regarded as the authoritative guarantors of the rabbinic tradition. There was no indication in the earlier segments of rabbinic literature that it stemmed from ancient Mosaic origins.

The later rabbinic tradition and especially the more expansive Tosefta, the author explains, exhibit a growing discussion about the relationship between the Mosaic Torah and the rabbinic tradition associated with individual sages. How was the authority of Moses to be understood in relation to the rabbinic teachers, and what was the role of the halakic norms in relation to that of the Mosaic commandments? The underlying issue appears to have been internal rabbinic needs to obtain clarity on the origins, nature, and authority of the halakic tradition. Are rabbinic traditions already anticipated, included even, in the Mosaic revelation? How can the autonomy of the halakic tradition be preserved without undermining scriptural foundations? Several sets of correspondences between the two traditions were suggested, but no unanimity is observable. From the middle of the third century onward, tannaitic exegesis evidences statements to the effect that the rabbinic oral-performative tradition was the work of the same processes that generated Scripture or that in fact the halakic norms issued forth from the mouth of God. The purpose was to bring rabbinic tradition into closer relationship with the Sinaitic revelation. It is a tendency that culminates in the conviction that “two Torahs were given to Israel, one by mouth and one in script” (90).

The tannaitic tendencies to link rabbinic tradition with Mosaic Scripture were further strengthened by the amoraic sages of the third and fourth centuries. Their theories entailed the conviction that the rabbinic oral-performative tradition was by definition torah, that it was exclusively oral in nature, that it constituted an unbroken chain of transmission from Sinai to the present, and that its covenantal efficaciousness hinged on

its oral preservation and performance. The “fictionalization of rabbinic oral tradition as Torah in the Mouth” (7) had been accomplished.

Jaffee is at his most astute when he develops a model of *interpenetration or interdependence* of the rabbinic tradition. Irrespective of rabbinic self-definition, his analysis of texts suggests that rabbinic teachers drew on the oral-performative tradition for textual compositions that in turn were subject to reoralization. There was, in short, “a continuous loop of manuscript and performance” (124) that never yields a ground zero on the basis of which “original” instructions or texts are recoverable. Pure oral tradition, uncontaminated by scribality, is as much in doubt as direct intertextuality devoid of oral-performative mediation. For example, the compositional history of the Mishnah cannot be understood as a linearly progressing oral tradition that accomplished its textual breakthrough on the level of mishnaic redaction, but rather as a complex interaction of oral and scribal forces. I suggest that scholars of the Gospels pay particular attention to Jaffee’s explanation of the relationship between Mishnah and Tosefta. While the author does not question the toseftan literary closure after the Mishnah, he casts doubt on the compositional explanation of the Tosefta as a literary expansion and interpretation of mishnaic materials. Instead of the widely assumed direct literary relationship, he argues, on the basis of close textual readings, that both Mishnah and Tosefta independently drew on anterior oral-performative traditions. The two literary bodies are thus to be understood as separate “variant formulations” (116) rather than as literary revision of one by the other.

Finally, Jaffee explores possible rationales both for the oral-scribal media interdependency and for the apotheosis of the Oral Torah. As for the former, he points to Greco-Roman rhetorical practice that was devoted to the recycling or transformation of written texts into orally manageable speeches. As far as the elevation of the Oral Torah and the implied suppression of writing was concerned, the author points to the master-disciple relationship and the life-transforming experience of orally performed tradition. The concept arose from the needs of discipleship to legitimate the authority of the sages and to preserve their living instructions.

It is the very substantial achievement of Jaffee to have transposed the often intricate deliberations concerning the nature, function, and media identity of the rabbinic tradition into a new conceptual frame. My questions arise from the second part of the book, which I find not fully coordinated with the first part. Do we really need the model of the Greco-Roman rhetorical education to account for the interdependence of oral and written texts in rabbinic education? Remarkably, many of the features Jaffee has described were likewise observed by Carr and Niditch within the much larger compass of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean verbal arts: oral-scribal interpenetration, scribal

orality, the educational locus, the absence of the “original” text, oral implementation of texts, textual variants related to recurring performances, the eminent role of memory, repetition of various kinds—although “repetition” may well be a misnomer in the oral arts. My second question concerns what Jaffee calls the “Ideology of Orality,” as in the apotheosis of the Oral Torah. This is an extraordinary feature, unparalleled, as far as I know, in the textual traditions covered by Graham, Carr, and Niditch. Jaffee is surely right in explaining it as a method of rabbinic legitimation that at a later point proved useful as a polemical tool in the amoraic disputes with Christianity. But could we perhaps explore the Oral Torah more deeply from media perspectives, a feature so well developed in the first part of the book? What is happening in a tradition that has become so consciously self-referential that it isolates, identifies, and idealizes one of its media as an entity in its own right?

In turning to the New Testament, and specifically Gospel, scholarship, one remembers that the issue of oral tradition has historically been the pursuit of form criticism. Designed to attend to the orally perceived Synoptic tradition and to oral aspects of New Testament texts in general, the discipline has presided over much, although by no means all, of twentieth-century Gospel studies. Today form criticism is besieged by substantial challenges to its basic premises. The scholar who took the lead in developing a systematically grounded critique of form criticism was Erhardt Güttgemanns. His *Offene Fragen zur Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (1970) ranks, in my view, among the seminal New Testament works of the twentieth century—not necessarily because of his constructive theses, some of which are questionable or unsustainable, but because of the powerfully analytical force of his criticism. Although translated in an extraordinary labor of professional dedication by William G. Doty under the title *Candid Questions Concerning Gospel Form Criticism* (1979), the work has by and large not been absorbed into the Anglo-American discussion of form criticism, redaction criticism, literary criticism, and orality-literacy studies of the Bible. James Robinson and Helmut Koester, for example, who in the United States were instrumental in espousing the Bultmannian model of form criticism as a methodological basis for Gospel studies and the history of the tradition, have not engaged Güttgemanns’s critical objections to the discipline.

Güttgemanns’s work must be understood by its location in the history of scholarship of the 1960s and 1970s, when redaction criticism was sharpening interest in the Gospel’s relation to tradition and in the internal literary unity of Gospel narrativity. Increasing awareness of the integral narrative form of the Gospel and an understanding of oral dynamics quite different from form-critical assumptions prompted Güttgemanns to raise fundamental questions about the Bultmannian model of an unproblematic and smoothly continuous relationship between oral tradition and Gospel, a model that entailed a trivialization of the difference between oral versus scribal processes. Rigorously

systematic and deeply provocative, Güttgemanns challenged the form-critical model of pre-Gospel tradition and the genesis of the Gospel.

What distinguishes *Candid Questions* from a majority of biblical studies is its intense application of linguistic theory and the subjection of the historical-critical model to linguistic scrutiny. “The ‘purely historical’ is always transmitted by language, and it is only understandable by means of linguistic processes” (3). The motto of the book could well be: we cannot get around the facts of language, because this is all we have. Güttgemanns confronts the reader with the kind of deep linguistic reflection on form-critical premises that one wishes had been undertaken by the founding fathers of the discipline. Uniquely conversant (for a New Testament scholar) in linguistic theory and ranging widely among the works of J. G. Herder, W. von Humboldt, P. Bogatyrev, R. Jakobson, H. Bausinger, L. Lavelle, H. E. Gleason, F. de Saussure, R. H. Robins, A. Martinet, K. Bühler, K. Ammer, and numerous others, the author postulates the essential and functional difference between oral and written language. “Contemporary linguistics considers that between the oral and the written there are *differences on all structural levels*” (197). The thesis of the “structural-functional dissimilarity of ‘oral’ and ... ‘literary’ technology” (211) suggested to him that the relation between Gospel and tradition had to be more complex than the form critics had assumed and that the form of Gospel could not be derived genetically from the dynamics and processes inherent in antecedent oral tradition.

Güttgemanns’s thesis had profound implications for an understanding of both Gospel and tradition. As for the Gospel, he suggested that we view it as “*an autosemantic language form*, i.e., a language form which in its ‘sense’ can only be explained through and by means of itself” (307). As for pre-Gospel tradition, it occupies a territory that for the most part escapes our linguistic grasp, “since the evolutionary implications of the [form-critical] method produce only false hopes and scientific phantoms” (311). If oral and written functions of language are different from scribal ones, if the evolutionary model of oral traditions was unprovable, and if the Gospel narrative constituted an integral linguistic, narrative entity, then the form-critical habit of deriving oral units from the written Gospel was problematic in the extreme.

How far Güttgemanns was willing to challenge the form-critical practice of extrapolating assumed oral units from the Gospel narrative can be demonstrated in his handling of Mark’s passion-resurrection predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). Discussing form-critical theories regarding the pre-Markan status of these formula-like summaries and efforts to arrive at their original form, he concluded that their perfect narrative fit inclines the argument in favor of at least Markan redaction, if not composition. Recognition of the “autosemantic” integrity of the Gospel narrative undercut the form-critical method of

identifying detachable Gospel units and using them as building blocks in the reconstruction of the so-called Synoptic tradition.

Still more radically, Güttgemanns struck at the heart of one of form criticism's basic assumptions about the recovery of "the original form"—a thesis programmatically articulated by Bultmann. In this regard, Güttgemanns (204–11) was the first New Testament scholar to appropriate Albert Lord's empirical findings concerning oral performance and written transcription. Based on his fieldwork on the Serbo-Croatian epic tradition, undertaken to illuminate the oral-scribal processes in the Homeric epics, Lord demonstrated that there was no such thing as "the original saying" or "the original form" of a saying. "In a sense each performance is 'an' original, if not 'the' original" (*The Singer of Tales*, 101). Moreover, if there was no such thing as an original form, or, we should say, original performance, then there could not be variants of the assumed original form either. No matter how many, and how many different, oral performances were delivered, each oral rendition was a freshly composed speech act. Güttgemanns concluded that, unless we learn to understand oral speech, tradition, and genres "exclusively in terms of the creative processes of continually new performances," we have not understood the oral legacy of the Gospels (206). An orator in the oral performance medium was not a spokesperson of original forms but a speaker of multiple, authentic performances.

The thesis of the fundamental linguistic differentiation between oral and written communication has played a role in the current Great Divide discussion, but without reflection on Güttgemanns's work. As I pointed out in the part on Niditch's work, we need to come to terms with what constitute oral versus scribal characteristics, even if, and especially if, we increasingly (and rightly) argue in favor of oral-scribal interfaces. Moreover, to the extent that recent performative, receptionist aesthetics perceive the Gospel as oral both in its pretextual tradition and in its scribal manifestation, they appear to view the Gospel simply as an oral variant, as Lord had suggested, or as the culmination of oral drives, as Bultmann had assumed. But that the Gospel was entirely unaffected by the chirographic medium is hardly a plausible proposition. Clearly, the demonstration of oral-scribal interfaces is one thing, but to refrain from drawing precise theoretical distinctions between oral and scribal verbalization is quite another. Regardless of the outcome of that debate, three of Güttgemanns's theses were undoubtedly to the point: the problematic procedure of detaching oral traditions from literary contexts; the inadmissibility of the notion of the single, original rendition; and, consequently, the concept of multiple authentic performances and versions. In retrospect, one wonders whether twentieth-century scholarship on Gospels and tradition would not have developed differently if prior consideration had been given to the Gospels' interior narrative constellation before far-reaching assumptions were made about the history of

pre-Gospel traditions. Or, to put the matter differently, would not twentieth-century scholarship on Gospels and tradition have yielded more satisfactory results if early and simultaneous attention had been accorded to oral hermeneutics *and* to Gospel narrativity? Instead, we now look back upon a disquieting history of form criticism's scholarship that focused on oral tradition without an adequate understanding of speech and oral performance, and derived forms of assumed oral speech from Gospel texts without an adequate grasp of Gospel narrativity.

Today, matters of orality and scribality present themselves in a somewhat different light than Gütgemanns had imagined. As most of the authors reviewed in this essay suggest, pure oral tradition, uninfluenced by scribality, is for most an unlikely proposition. Equally important yet not widely recognized, however, is that pure textuality, uninfluenced by oral dynamics and solely relying in rectilinear fashion on another text, is not a widely practiced proposition either. Manifold different oral-scribal interfaces are the rule in the ancient world of manuscript culture. In *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*, Horsley and Draper have provided a challenging test case of the application of an oral lens to the hypothetical text Q. Treating Q (as well as Mark) as an *oral-derived text*, a definition derived from Foley and covering "works that reveal oral traditional features but have reached us only in written form" (*Immanent Art*, 15), the authors institute a major shift in our understanding of the ancient collection of Jesus materials.

The book is motivated as much by recent developments in orality-scribality studies as it is by discomfort with mainstream Q scholarship. In the first five chapters, the authors critically review previous scholarship on Q and lay out the historical, social context of the old Jesus tradition. Both theologically and methodologically, they claim, much of Q scholarship has operated on the basis of an inadequate conceptual apparatus. A certain line of Q studies tended to reach out for universalist categories and/or to opt for an individualist concept of the kingdom, showing scholarly affinities with liberal nineteenth-century theology and its needs to free Jesus from perceived Jewish particularism and to downplay social dynamics altogether. More recent Q studies, committed to a composition and source-critical paradigm, adopted stratigraphic readings of Q that sought to demonstrate a compositional division into an older sapiential and a secondary apocalyptic stage. However, Horsley argues, "[i]f Wisdom appears in 'apocalyptic' or 'prophetic' sayings and 'sapiential' sayings use apocalyptic language against the sages, then the criteria of categorization require critical attention" (74). Instead, Horsley (with Draper) judge Q to be "prophetic throughout" (81). The widely used generic designation of Q as *logoi sophon* is likewise deemed unacceptable because the many and heterogeneous materials referred to as *logoi* in Jewish, Hellenistic-Jewish, and early Christian texts cannot be forced into a single generic category.

A significant feature of the book is its rigorous focus on the social matrix of Q. Firmly locating the ancient hypothetical text in Israel's historical matrix, the authors challenge recent interpretations that postulate Q's rejection of Israel, a thesis that failed to acknowledge the deep roots of the Q sayings and speeches in the Israelite tradition. Among the numerous Israelite references and ideas Horsley identifies in Q are the restoration of the twelve tribes, exposure of the killing of prophets, Jonah's preaching, prophetic laments, Wisdom as sender of prophets, offspring of Abraham, bearing good fruit, the fire of judgment, forty days in the wilderness, indictment of Jerusalem, blessings and woes, and many more. Rather than being in conflict with Israel, Q is positioned at the point of an intra-Jewish crisis between the rulers and the ruled. Growing out of Galilean village communities, the Jesus traditions of Q are said to have taken a stance within Israel's history speaking on behalf of the Galilean and Judean peasantry against Jerusalem governed by Roman power, scribal-Pharisaic representatives, and Galilean rulers. What we find in Q, the authors suggest, adopting the nomenclature of the political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott, is a classic case of the little or popular tradition pitted against the great or official, Jerusalem-based tradition. In mobilizing both prophetic, revolutionary traditions long operative in Galilee and the overarching themes of the Mosaic covenant and the kingdom of God (not of King David!), Q stands in continuity with and reenacts fundamental values of Israel. In sum, the old Jesus traditions speak for a movement that aspired the renewal (not rejection!) of Israel.

In chapters 6–8 the authors develop a theory of the oral art of verbalization or, one could say, a hermeneutic of oral-derived texts. In broad agreement with a number of recent historical studies, they describe the general lack of literacy, the largely ancillary function of writing and texts in ancient Mediterranean antiquity, and the oral cultivation of ancient Israelite traditions. Writing functioned primarily as an aid to memory and in the service of oral communication. Whether a text existed or not, and whether the genre was poetry, drama, history, or even philosophy, oral transmission and performance were predominant. In ancient Israel, scribal activity worked hand in glove with an intense oral, communal life. By and large, knowledge of scripture was not obtained by reading sacred texts and not necessarily even by listening to them as they were being read aloud. For the most part, scriptural knowledge was acquired by listening to oral recitations in the absence of textual aids because scriptural traditions were an essential part of the oral, communal repertoire. It is in this communications milieu, the authors suggest, that we must imagine the functioning of Q. As oral-derived text, Q originated in oral performance to be sustained in repeated oral recitations. In different words, Q was “a libretto that was regularly performed in the early Jesus movement” (174). By contrast, the authors point out, the International Q Project aimed at controlling and stabilizing the transmission of Jesus materials by securing a, or rather *the* “Q archetype” (J. Robinson).

One of the characteristics of an oral-derived text such as Q (or Mark) is that words relate not intratextually as much as they do in reference to a wider or deeper tradition. Importantly, tradition is perceived here not in terms of transmissional processes but rather as a body of experiences, an orally recited and internalized scriptural heritage, memories, values, symbols, cultural and national identity, and so forth shared by the community. A crucial feature of tradition, perceived thus as a collectively internalized cultural legacy, is *register*, that is, idiomatic modes of verbalization and signification in which different activities, memories, experiences, ideas, and the like take on life. In each instance the register consists not merely of a word or phrase, an idea or concept, but of a wide range of associations that have multiple links with and often deep roots in tradition. To be effective, an oral-derived text uses terms and images that metonymically key into the hearers' register by resonating extratextually with values and experiences that are immanent in tradition. An interpretation of Q will therefore seek to recover the tradition in the context of which Q was heard by summoning the register appropriate to such items as prophetic proclamation of new deliverance, Mosaic covenant renewal, mission and the sending of envoys, arrest of members and trial before authorities, sanctions on discipline and solidarity, consolation in situations of poverty, and so forth. Tradition, this extratextual reservoir of a shared culture, thereby operates as the "enabling referent" (Foley) in the production of meaning.

Following the theoretical part, the authors demonstrate in the remaining chapters (9–14) the oral functioning of key passages in Q. Instead of transmission of isolated sayings addressed to individuals, Q, they argue, functioned as a performance of discourses on issues of communal concern. As far as the actual Q text is concerned, they present the transliterated Greek version accompanied by a translation. Both versions are divided into what are assumed to be speech units that are marked by features characteristic of an oral-derived text: parallel lines; repetition of words, ideas, phrases, and syntactic units; stock images; mnemonic patternings; sound rhythms; paratactic constructions; and many more. Additionally, they divide Q into stanzas, verses, and lines whereby priority is given to stanzas of which verses and lines are component parts. A crucial aspect of the interpretation depends on recovery of the oral register in order to determine meanings in the performance context. For example, covenantal forms and language, prophetic woes, images and terms such as wilderness, harvest, or sheep among wolves, judgment, and Pharisees summon a larger world of meanings immanent in the tradition. On the whole, the Q discourses are defined as prophetic speech perceived to be spoken through Jesus in the present: "Whoever hears you hears me" (Q 10:16). Through the performance of Q the earthly Jesus (not the exalted Lord!) continues as proclaimer of the kingdom and the renewal of Israel.

The great significance of this study is that it offers its readers a genuinely oral interpretation of a (hypothetical) text based on current theories of orality. Issues of theory and application, performance and format, history and language, social setting and oral aesthetics, register and tradition (perceived as the enabling referent) are unified in a grand theory. I am sure the authors are aware of the irony that their Q text is largely based on the archetype constructed by the International Q project, while all along the premise is that Q as a single text with a single meaning is no longer tenable. I raise a question, moreover, as to the authors' understanding of an oral-derived text. Q, Horsley suggests, is oral in the sense that "scribes are not required for the composition of Q" (294). Foley, however, distinguishes unambiguously oral from oral-derived texts. The latter reveal oral traditional features but are the likely products of literate authorship. I reiterate the question I raised with regard to the composition of the Gospels: Is it plausible to think of the Q composition as having been entirely unaffected by the technology of chirography? Horsley and Draper have pushed our understanding of Q far beyond the limits of the established practices of Q research. In terms of oral aesthetics and hermeneutics, this study is unique in New Testament scholarship. Q in oral performance is not the objectified linguistic artifact of print culture. It is safe to say that biblical scholarship trained in the assumed certainties of strictly textual hermeneutics will find it difficult to acclimatize itself to the open-endedness and polyvalency of an oral hermeneutics.

I have reserved David Parker's *The Living Text of the Gospels* for last because it articulates matters of ancient scribal life in the intellectually most challenging fashion. Lurking beneath the positively conventional title are theses that, if pondered thoughtfully, confront the historical, critical paradigm of Gospel scholarship with formidable questions.

The genre of Parker's book is an intriguing one. It presents itself as an introduction to text criticism, but chapter 1 already sets a tone that lets the reader suspect a deviation from the genre of traditional text-critical handbook. The author introduces the subject of text criticism by citing the examples of Shakespeare's plays and Mozart's libretto of *Figaro*, this cornerstone of the operatic repertoire. In Shakespeare's case, many of his early plays exist in a number of different print versions, while the scripts of Mozart's *Figaro* consist of the autograph and additional performance copies, including the official copy of the court theater in Vienna. Both the dramatist and the composer instituted changes in rehearsals, producing differing scripts that later appeared in print format. Which version, we tend to ask, is the original one? The answer, of course, has to be that there is no single original script. For Parker, these examples are paradigmatic for the discipline of text criticism, or rather for the way in which it ought to be reconceptualized. As long as "it is assumed that there *is* an original text, the textual critic's task is very

simple: to recover the original text” (6). This, of course, has by and large been the basic fascination of the discipline: to sift through multiple textual versions in order to recover or, as the case may be, reconstruct, the one fixed point in the tradition, namely the so-called original text. But the quest for the so-called original text need not be the only objective of text criticism. A different and perhaps more legitimate option, Parker suggests, is to study every scrap of textual evidence *in its own right and on its own terms* and to evaluate the sum total of collected texts for the story they tell us about the early scribal tradition. Once we begin to get a sense of the startling variety of early Jesus traditions and Gospel variants, the question forces itself upon us: “are the Gospels the kinds of texts that have originals?” (7). It is a key question Parker’s book is wrestling with. Quite clearly, his book, while principally dealing with text criticism, offers more and something other than an updated summary of the current state of that discipline.

Chapter 2, still on fairly conventional grounds, discusses the classification of manuscripts according to materials, script, and contents, as well as translational versions and patristic citations, and surveys Gospel texts through the centuries from the earliest scraps of papyrus all the way to the electronic versions in CD-ROM and diskette format. In chapter 3 Parker sets alongside each other the three manuscript versions of Luke 6:1–10 as they exist in Codex Vaticanus (B), Codex Bezae ((D), and Codex Dionysiou 10 (Ω). A thoughtful examination introduces the readers into the intricacies of manuscript variation. Many of the variants are small, minuscule even, yet cumulatively tiny changes can be more significant than one or two large ones. Can one, should one, favor a particular reading in view of the variations? The case is dramatized by the fact that “there are as many differences between D and B in Luke 6.1ff as there are between the two texts in D of Mark 2.23ff. and Luke 6.1ff” (46).

Chapters 4 and 5, a centerpiece of the book, examines the manuscript evidence of the Lord’s Prayer and Jesus’ sayings on marriage and divorce, respectively. I limit the review to chapter 5. Sifting through the early manuscript evidence of Jesus’ sayings on marriage and divorce, Parker recognizes that the problem is not simply one of explaining the (often redactional) differences between Mark 10, Matt 5 and 19, and Luke 16. There are differences not only between these Gospel versions, as is well known, but within the manuscript tradition of each Gospel. Sometimes the differences among the manuscripts of a single Gospel are greater than those between our printed Gospel texts. Assessment of the full scribal evidence, therefore, confronts us with a quantity and quality of different renditions that go far beyond Markan, Matthean, and Lukan adaptations and are not readily explicable by a single genealogical tree that would take us back to the one root saying: “a single authoritative pronouncement,” Parker writes, “is irrecoverable” (183). Perhaps one may add that the project of retrieving the single authoritative saying is not

merely fraught with inextricable technical difficulties but, more importantly, incompatible with what appears to be the prevailing spirit of the early scribal tradition.

In chapters 6–10 Parker approaches a series of well-known problems in Gospel studies from the angle of the available scribal evidence. The textually ambiguous story of the woman taken in adultery—sometimes following John 7:52, 7:36, or 21:25, sometimes following Luke 21:38 or 24:53—is judged not to have been part of the oldest textual traditions. However, Parker’s point is that its textually inferior status notwithstanding, its existence in the lectionaries of most denominations and in Christian consciousness generally attests to its continuous appeal. The author concludes: “passages do not lose their influence once they have been declared and acknowledged to be spurious” (95). So-called minor agreements between Matthew and Luke versus Mark, always a challenge to the Two-Source Hypothesis, lead Parker to reflect on the quest for a strictly documentary solution to the Synoptic Problem. Advocates of the Two-Source Hypothesis, he observes, tend to envision the compositional history of the Synoptic Gospels “as though it were identical with the publishing of a printed book today” (117). Instead of assuming single-point contacts between two texts (Matthew using Mark and using Q), Parker explores the possibility of “a series of contacts between texts each of which may have changed since the previous contact” (121). The underlying conviction is that the Gospels “were not archives of traditions but living texts” (119). With regard to the issue posed by the ending of Mark, the available evidence suggests that the short ending is “the oldest form of the Gospel” (143). However, its textually superior status has (until recently) not been implemented in our readings of Mark. The fact is that the long ending “has been dominant for the reading of Mark for most of the text’s history” (147). Another example Parker examines is Luke 22–24, the concluding chapters of the Gospel that present a known textual conundrum for critics and interpreters alike. Examining the multiple textual versions of these chapters, Parker detects a tendency toward textual growth, frequently marked by harmonization and leading to the gradual loss of distinctly Lukan features. “The Gospel story continues to grow within as well as beyond the canonical pages” (174). In reviewing, finally, the textual history of the Fourth Gospel, Parker finds that there “is no manuscript evidence for either the omission of Chapter 21 or the reversal in order of Chapters 5 and 6” (177), virtual standard assumptions in the commentary literature since Bultmann. Hence to suggest the secondary status of chapter 21 and a reversal in the order of chapters 5 and 6 is to postulate a text for which we lack evidence.

In chapters 11 and 12 Parker expands his focus on successive scribal versions toward the materiality in which they are transmitted, thereby mutating text criticism into media criticism. The early papyrological Jesus traditions were at their most fluid in the first century of their existence: “The further back we go, the greater seems to be the degree of variation” (188). Parker places a high premium on the introduction of the codex because

it facilitated *inter alia* comparative Gospel readings that affected textual developments, above all harmonizations. In this sense the materiality of the codex contributed to the character of Gospel versions. What was of the essence of the fifteen hundred years of manuscript tradition was that “every copy is different, both unique and imperfect” (188). It was print culture that conferred an unprecedented authority upon the Bible. However, Parker is quick to remind us that in the desire to print the perfect, the original text, the editors constructed what must be called eclectic text versions, theoretical more than real entities. The author finds it difficult to arrive at a suitable terminology to describe the new vision of the tradition. He opts for a definition of the Gospels as “as a free, or perhaps as a living, text” (200).

It is easy to dismiss Parker for having drawn deeply consequential conclusions on a rather slim evidential basis. But as if to anticipate the charge, he has articulated his defense: “If the degree of variation which we have found were to exist in only one of the passages we have studied, the matter would require a serious evaluation of the nature of the tradition” (198). It is the abiding value of the book that it has contributed to a reevaluation of the discipline of text criticism and to a new view of and, I dare say, attitude toward the (early) Christian tradition. I hope that Parker’s studies of the early scribal life of the Jesus tradition can be brought into a fruitful collaboration with orality studies. In view of the theories proposed and evidence produced by Graham, Carr, Niditch, Jaffee, Güttgemanns, and Horsley and Draper, we should not be surprised about variability, multiple originality, and recurring performance in the Jesus tradition as it endeavored to flow with the flux of temporality. These phenomena, while possibly particularly pronounced in the early Jesus tradition, are well-established features of the ancient communications history.

The paradigm of historical, critical scholarship has served as intellectual matrix for biblical scholarship from premodern times throughout the modern period into the present. Our assumptions about the verbal arts are for the most part indebted to and entrenched in his paradigm. It needs to be stated emphatically: the intellectual accomplishments of this paradigm have been incontestably huge, even monumental. More than that: Western modernity is unthinkable without the historical, critical examination of the Bible. But, as I stated at the outset of this review, the discovery of the oral dimension of ancient texts addresses conceptual flaws that, far from being superficial, go to the core of this paradigm. There is a palpable discrepancy between the dominantly print medium of modern scholarship and the oral-scribal communications world of its subject matter, with the former encroaching upon the latter. The seven books under review challenge us to (re)consider the Bible in its Jewish and Christian provenance, the biblical and the rabbinic tradition in the media context of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean communications history.