Michaela Bauks, Wayne Horowitz, and Armin Lange, eds.

*Between Text and Text: The Hermeneutics of Intertextuality in Ancient Cultures and Their Afterlife in Medieval and Modern Times*

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This collection of essays represents the fruits of a 2009 meeting of the “Hermeneutics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam” group held at the University of Koblenz-Landau. Twenty-one European and Israeli scholars presented papers on the topic of intertextuality, focusing primarily on Jewish, Christian, Hellenistic, and related texts. The essays are classified under three headings: (1) “Methodology,” (2) “The Intertextualities of Written and Visual Texts,” and (3) “Cultural Memory and Canon.”

The essays in part 1 examine methodological issues regarding the study of intertextuality. Michaela Bauks’s “Intertextuality in Ancient Literature in Light of Textlinguistics and Cultural Studies” discusses the many problems with studying intertextuality in ancient texts. “Texts” should be understood very liberally, applying not only to written compositions “but also [to] conventions and discourses of history, culture, art and the dialogical perception of text” (27). Identifying the original author and the historical provenance of an ancient text is extremely difficult, and modern readers must also be wary of other important factors in their study of intertextuality, such as cultural memory, the impact of canonization on intertextuality, and the effects of tradition and transmission of texts over time. In “Texts, Textual Bilingualism, and the Evolution of Mesopotamian Hermeneutics,” Gebhard J. Selz examines the progression of
Mesopotamian hermeneutics from the fourth millennium onward. Selz covers a wide range of topics, including the development from concepts to signs, the bilingual nature of Sumerian-Akkadian signs, and the spatio-temporal aspects of texts. Philip Alexander’s “A Typology of Intertextual Relations Based on the Manchester-Durham Typology of Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Literature of Antiquity” is connected to a larger database project that classifies Jewish texts from 200 BCE to 700 CE by means of a textlinguistic approach. In terms of intertextual relationships, these texts belong to four main groups: metatextuality (implicit and explicit), extensive verbal overlaps (narrative and nonnarrative), borrowings of text-segments and language (quotations, allusions, reuse), and literary models (i.e., genres).

Part 2, on written and visual texts, is subdivided into four sections. The first is “Retelling, Rewriting, and Continuation.” In “Tradition and Transmission of Texts and Intertexts in the Hebrew Bible and in Ancient Jewish Literature (Gen 6:1–4),” Markus Risch looks at the intratextual gaps in the story of Gen 6:1–4 as well as the reception history of this passage in early Jewish literature, specifically 1 En. 6–16, Jub. 5:1–10, and 4Q252. These three epi-texts reinterpret the Genesis story in diverse ways, all of which are made possible by the twofold aim of Gen 6:1–4, namely, an account of the limitation of human life (v. 3) and a genealogy of semi-divine beings (v. 4). Jacques T. A. G. M van Ruiten’s essay, “Abraham’s Death: The Intertextual Relationship between Gen 25:7–10 and Jub. 22:1–23:8,” illustrates how a phenotext (Jubilees) adapts an earlier genotext (Genesis) for a new context, connecting Abraham more closely to Jacob than the biblical story does. Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, in “Gospel of Thomas Logion 7 Unravelled: An Intertextual Approach to a locus vexatus,” resurrects the correct but rejected claim that logion 7 of the Gospel of Thomas draws on Plato’s tripartition of the soul from his Republic. The political and juridical framework of the hypotext (Republic) becomes transformed into an anthropological one for the audience of the hypertext (Thomas). Sydney H. Aufrère’s “An Attempt to Classify Different Stages of Intertextuality in the Myth of Horus at Edfu” studies intertextuality between the hieroglyphic wall inscriptions and the iconographic reliefs in the temple of Horus at Edfu. This interplay creates an intertextual mythological “takeover by force,” which results in a new mythological reading that deviates from the original story of Horus. In “Kabbalistic Elements in Popular Movies,” Klaus Davidowicz traces the trope of the Golem in literature and cinema throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The driving influence behind most of these works has been Yehuda Judel Rosenberg’s 1909 folkbook Miracles of the MaHaRaL of Prague. Manfred Oeming’s “‘In kino veritas’: On the Reception of the Biblical Book of Job in the Context of Recent Cinematography” pursues a similar tack by studying the use of the book of Job in modern film and even YouTube videos. He focuses especially on the reworkings of the story in Adam’s Apples and A Serious Man.
The next section of part 2 considers commentaries and translations. In “Controlling Intertexts and Hierarchies of Echo in Two Thematic Eschatological Commentaries from Qumran,” George J. Brooke looks at multiple aspects of intertextuality in two Qumran commentaries: the Florilegium (4Q174) and Catena A (4Q177). Each text exhibits a hierarchy of allusions where the hypertext makes references to earlier authoritative hypotexts (the highest level of intetextuality) but also contains echoes with other literary traditions that may not have been intended (the lowest level). Gilles Dorival offers “Biblical Intratextuality: MT-Numbers and LXX-Numbers: A Case Study,” which studies not intertextuality but intratextuality, examining how the book of Numbers alludes to other parts of the Pentateuch. These inner-biblical links are more numerous in the LXX than in the MT, showing the importance the Greek translators placed on reading the Pentateuch as a contiguous whole. Margaret Dimitrova’s “New Testament Quotations in a Medieval Slavonic Manuscript with Commentaries on the Song of Songs” studies the use of New Testament verses in Theodoret of Cyrrhus’s Explanatio of the Song of Songs. The translator draws on both the Greek text of these biblical quotations as well as their medieval Slavonic translations, preferring the latter over the former.

The third section of part 2 is concerned with quotations and allusions. In “Quotations in the Writings of Aristotle,” Martin F. Meyer looks at Aristotelian scientific treatises for clues about text production and orality. Aristotle’s references to Plato suggest he was not citing written texts, since he alludes to them paraphrastically, though his reference to his own works show the importance of auxiliary written texts for illustrations and examples. Annette Harder’s “Intertextuality as Discourse: The Discussion of Poetry and Poetics among Hellenistic Greek Poets in the Third Century B.C.E.” compares poetic works on the Argonauts by Callimachus of Cyrene, Apollonius Rhodius, and Theocritus. The intertextual links among these texts elucidates the authors’ understanding of poetics. Lukas Bormann concludes this subsection with “The Colossian Hymn, Wisdom, and Creation,” which uses Hebel’s allusion paradigm to study Col 1:15–20 and its connections to several wisdom texts: Prov 8:22–23, 26; Job 28:23–24; Sir 24:8–9; Wisd 6:17; 7:26–27. These connections create a relationship among the texts centered around three poles (the Creator, a mediator or agent of God, and creation itself) and adapts sapiential theology to Christology.

The fourth section of part 2 contains only the essay by Andreas Wagner: “Typological, Explicit, and Referential Intertextuality in Texts and Images of the Old Testament and Ancient Israel.” Wagner examines prophetic warnings, kô ’āmar formulae, and the motif of the raised arm, arguing that intertextuality is essential for good exegesis, should include images rather than only written texts, and should be studied diachronically but should not be restricted by authorial intent.
Part 3 is devoted to issues of cultural memory and the canon. Wayne Horowitz’s “The Astrolabes: An Exercise in Transmission, Canonicity, and Para-Canonicy” considers the transmission of Mesopotamian astronomical texts (the Astrolabes) over many years. Many variations exist among the versions handed down, yet the basic content remains the same, meaning they do not comfortably fit in categories of “canonical” or “noncanonical” but an intermediate one: “para-canonical.” In “Reading the Canon Intertextually: The Decentralization of Meaning,” Stefan Alkier challenges the common Christian belief that canonicity is the unifying principle of the bible. The canon is not a dogmatic scriptural prison but creates a reading strategy by putting individual texts in relationship with one another, allowing for myriad connections to be drawn among these texts. Felicia Waldman’s “Turning the Interpretation of the Text into Text: Written Torah and Oral Torah in Jewish Mysticism” examines kabbalistic interpretations of the Torah, both written and oral. The kabbalistic approach creates an intertextual relationship between these two Torahs in their mystical reading of rabbinic traditions (oral Torah) about the Sinaitic revelation to Moses (written Torah). In “Intertextuality in the Orthodox Slavic Tradition: The Case of Mixed-Content Miscellanies,” Anisava L. Miltenova studies the works collected in South Slavic anthologies, including apocryphal works such as the Life of Adam and Eve. By grouping various texts together, these miscellanies communicate important messages about eschatology, political ideology, and the connection between the Old and New Testaments. Finally, Armin Lange and Zlatko Pleš’s “Text between Religious Cultures: Intertextuality in Graeco-Roman Judaism” moves beyond the domain of intra-cultural intertextuality and studies the connections between texts from different cultures. They demonstrate how the Letter of Aristeas and Aristobulus of Alexandria employ two different approaches to the relationship of Jewish and Greek cultures.

*Between Text and Text* is a thoroughly eclectic collection that contains something for everyone to enjoy. It includes writings both ancient and medieval, biblical and extrabiblical, Greco-Roman and Mesopotamian. Its diversity, however, has one potential drawback. Scholars looking for a clear explanation of how to identify intertextual relationships will find little guidance here, since the volume does not employ a uniform methodology throughout. Part 1 leans toward a more synchronic, reader-oriented approach espoused by Julia Kristeva, but many of the later essays employ a more diachronic, author-oriented approach, especially as articulated by Gerard Genette.

This hermeneutical ambiguity notwithstanding, *Between Text and Text* beautifully illustrates the manifold connections that exist among texts from the ancient world. Readers will learn much about the study of intertextuality from this volume and how European scholars in particular delineate parallels within the biblical corpus and beyond.