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THE SCRIBAL APOCALYPSE AND EARLY JEWISH TEXTUAL CULTURE

1.1 Introduction

Textual culture refers to the accepted practices of handling the texts of literary works, including textual production, redaction, reading, oral recitation, exegetical engagement, and transmission, encompassing a network of related sociohistorical features of textual usage in a given period. Situated at the centre of early Jewish textual culture sat the Hebrew Bible (HB), its early versions, and a concerted exegetical engagement with its text, a proclivity shared by the author(s) of the book of Revelation.[1] A controlling and foundational feature of this engagement was the pluriformity of the text of the HB and its versions in the late Second Temple period; pluriformity was both an impetus for and the result of exegetical engagement with scriptural texts.

The book of Revelation, too, was composed within a textual culture in which scriptural texts were pluriform. The procedures by which the Apocalypse was constructed remain elusive, although it is clear that its author[2] constructed it with creative nuance, visionary sensibilities, and great care, a high level of composition masked by its chaos of images and claim to direct visionary revelation. The

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[1] Martin Hengel, *Judaica, Hellenistica et Christiana* (WUNT 109; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 1–71; David Andrew Teeter, *Scribal Laws: Exegetical Variation in the Textual Transmission of Biblical Law in the Late Second Temple Period* (FAT 92; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 199–204, 246–267. Jan Dochhorn, *Schriftgelehrte Prophetie: Der eschatologische Teufelsfall in Apoc Joh 12 und seine Bedeutung für das Verständnis der Johannesoffenbarung* (WUNT 268; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 255 speaks of Revelation as a 'locked text', only accessible through the identification and understanding of its underlying scriptural traditions: 'Der Text ist verschlüsselt, öffnet sich aber demjenigen, der den vom Autor erwünschten Verstehensvorgang nachvollzieht, welcher über Traditionswissen und über die Identifikation der biblischen Bezugtexte möglich wird.'

[2] The author self-identifies as John. This name and other titles ('the author'; 'the author of Revelation') are employed interchangeably in this study to refer to the

manners in which antecedent scriptural traditions were woven into the fabric of the book of Revelation places its author in league with some Jewish scribes of the late Second Temple period, scribes who were responsible for the concurrent transmission of scriptural works and the production of new literary creations that engage incessantly with Jewish scripture.[3] In a recent important study Jan Dochhorn has described Rev 12 as an example of *schriftgelehrte Prophetie* (scribal prophecy) largely because the chapter's meaning is inaccessible without a detailed knowledge of the scriptural source texts that the author reused.[4] To some extent this observation encompasses the entirety of the book of Revelation, since comprehending John's persistent reuse of and dependence upon the HB and its early Greek versions (OG/LXX)[5] is essential to understanding this work and its process of composition. In this way, the book of Revelation is the product of an early Jewish scribal culture – a scribal apocalypse.

notional author. I also retain the masculine pronoun, as John is a masculine name. For further discussion, see David Aune, *Revelation 1–5* (WBC 52a; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), xlvii–lvi; Gerhard Maier, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes: Kapitel 1–11* (HTA; Witten: Brockhaus, 2009), 18–25; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation* (AYB 38A; London: Yale University Press, 2014), 65–69.

[3] I do not primarily use the word 'scribe' – a term that denotes a range of activities and social functions – in this study to refer to professional administrators who produced contracts, etc., although this is certainly an important aspect of the scribal spectrum. While many scribal craftsmen would have created documentary texts and also copied literary works, John is a scribe only insofar as his interpretative engagement with Jewish scriptural texts is similar to the handling and reuse of these texts in other Jewish works of the period. I am *not* arguing in this book that John was a copyist (although he is presented as such in the book), had access to a well-stocked library, or made his living from producing texts. When I describe John as a 'scribe', I refer not to chirographic practices of transcription and the production of copies, but to the broader context of exegetical engagement with Jewish scriptural texts in Early Judaism. See Jonathan D. H. Norton, 'The Question of Scribal Exegesis at Qumran', in *Northern Lights on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 80; ed. A. K. Peterson et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 135–154 for a critical discussion on the relationship between exegetical and scribal activity. Norton wishes to distinguish between exegetical and scribal modes, referring to exegetes as 'scribblers' and those who codify these 'scribbles' as scribes, but the two remain overlapping phenomena. Referring to John's exegetical engagement as 'scribal' is appropriate because it is intimately bound to the processes of *literary composition* that characterize Revelation's substance. For the evidence of the administrative function of scribes, see Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (TSAJ 81; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 110–168.

[4] Dochhorn, *Prophetie*, 395. I would argue that a detailed knowledge of scriptural intertexts is an important part of reading Jewish prophetic literature generally.

[5] 'OG/LXX' refers to the entirety of the early Greek scriptural tradition including the 'original' Old Greek translations and concurrent Greek revisions of the OG

It is not a simple task to disentangle and isolate antecedent tradi-
tions that John reused; they defy simple categorization or description
as the studies on John's use of the scriptural traditions in past thirty
years have demonstrated. Complex procedures, motivations, rhetorical
designs, and textual issues, upon which our author did not explicitly
comment (and of which he himself may not have been overtly aware),
coalesced to create the Apocalypse. One must reconstruct from the text
itself the principles by which the author engaged Jewish scriptural tradi-
tions. The book of Revelation is a work that constantly forges connec-
tions to antecedent traditions, embedding instances of reuse without
explicit marking.[6] John's engagement with these traditions means that
he placed weighty demands upon those who contend with his work.
In order to understand the Apocalypse, one must struggle with John's
reuse of scripture and construct a model that is situated within the tex-
tual culture of the late Second Temple period,[7] and which addresses
the pluriformity that is constitutive of that culture. What follows in this

towards closer affiliation with a Hebrew *Vorlage*. I adopt OG/LXX as it more accur-
ately represents the chronological features of the OG (the original Old Greek trans-
lation of each Hebrew scriptural work) and the LXX (Greek revisions of the OG
translations). Similarly '*V*OG' denotes the reconstructed Hebrew *Vorlage* of an OG
translation. The abbreviation 'LXX' has, at times, been utilized to refer to the OG
translation of the Pentateuch as narrated in the *Letter of Aristeas*, Flavius Josephus'
Jewish Antiquities (*Ant.* 12.11–118), in Philo (*Mos.* 2.25–44), and in Aristobulus (pre-
served primarily in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.32.14–19, 37; *Praep. Ev,* 8.9.38–10.18a;
9.6.6–8; 13.12.3–8; see C. R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors* [vol.
3; Atlanta: SBL, 1995], 128–197), but here it refers to the later revisions of the OG text
of each work towards the emerging MT.

  [6] Harold Bloom, *The Shadow of a Great Rock: A Literary Appreciation of the King
James Bible* (London: Yale University Press, 2011), 293–294 describes Revelation as
'an anxious network of allusions to the Hebrew Bible'.

  [7] Other influences also played a role in John's construction of this work and its
overtly anti-Roman political ideology, which I do not wish to downplay. Greco-Roman
literature, imperial imagery, and material culture also played a central role but are not
within the purview of this study. See e.g. Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth
in the Book of Revelation* (HDR 9; Missoula: Scholars, 1976); Steven J. Friesen,
Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001);
David Aune, *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity* (WUNT
199; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 99–119. See also Jan Willem van Henten's
recent article for a rehearsal of the methodological issues associated with examin-
ing the relationship between Revelation and Greco-Roman works ('The Intertextual
Nexus of Revelation and Greco-Roman Literature', in *Poetik und Intertextualität
in der Johannesapokalypse* [WUNT 346; ed. S. Alkier, T. Hieke, and T. Nicklas;
Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015], 395–422).

study is an attempt to provide a description of John's engagement with his scriptural texts in conversation with similar examples located in Jewish works composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE.[8] This description hinges on two related questions. First, how did John, as an ancient reader,[9] encounter and process his diverse scriptural traditions? And, second, what were the social forces that influenced and controlled his scriptural engagement?

The results of this discussion are multidimensional. First, this study provides information about John himself and his social setting: the shape of his scriptural traditions, his habits of reading those traditions, his interpretation of scriptural sources, the operations by which he altered his sources, the physical mechanics of text production (the state of John's *Schreibtisch*, if you will), and the various ways in which he presented reused material. I refer to these features collectively as his 'exegetical repertoire', a classification that encompasses unacknowledged or implied features of literary creation, and that provides access to the underlying textual culture to which John belonged. This includes attention to John's own exegetical innovations and his reuse of existing interpretative traditions, particularly as it relates to Jesus tradition. This evidence allows us to begin to paint a portrait of an author of whom we actually know very little. Beyond his self-presentation as Ἰωάννης (Rev 1.1, 4, 9; 22.8), early ecclesiastical traditions and the various apocryphal traditions of his exile to Patmos (which tend to serve particular ideological agendas), John's identity remains mysterious.[10] His movements around the eastern Mediterranean are not as easily traceable as the apostle

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[8] Second Temple Judaism refers to the period from the construction of the second Temple (ca. 520 BCE) to the end of the century in which the Roman army destroyed the temple (ca. 100 CE). While the temple was destroyed in 70 CE, the textual and literary culture that defines the late Second Temple period did not completely disappear in the immediate aftermath of this catastrophe. While early Judaism refers to a period inclusive of the Second Temple period (ca. 435 BCE– ca. 500 CE), I use this classification here to refer to Jewish literature that does not belong to the Second Temple period, primarily the Targumim (at least in its finalized Babylonian redactions). I retain the collocation 'Second Temple Judaism' because the vast majority of material handled here belongs to this period.

[9] John is a 'reader' in the broadest sense. Not only did he read scripture via textual artefacts, but he also 'read' (i.e. experienced) scripture through aural/oral experience and access to memory of preceding scriptural encounters.

[10] For an evaluation of apocryphal John traditions, see Ian Boxall, *Patmos in the Reception History of the Apocalypse* (OTRM; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Issues surrounding the authorship of Revelation in the context of the Johannine

Paul's, for example, a comparison that illustrates how little we know about our author. This study excavates data internal to Revelation that allows us to describe facets of John's literary and textual habits and, ultimately, the social reality in which he produced Revelation.

Second, the study demonstrates that John read, interpreted, and reused scripture in a manner commensurate with the practices of scriptural reuse operative in Second Temple Judaism. The following analyses suggest that John was keenly aware of both the textual details of his scriptural sources *and* already-extant interpretative traditions pertaining to those sources. Comparing the habits of reading and reuses of scripture preserved in the literature of this period with those witnessed in Revelation demonstrates John's tacit participation in a common textual culture with his Jewish contemporaries (or near-contemporaries as the case may be). Running contrary to the trends of recent research on the composition of Revelation and its author's exegetical proclivities, this participation indicates that John was in fact attuned to the fine details and textual interrelationships inherent in Jewish scripture.

Moreover, I argue that the evidence of John's consciousness of Jewish scripture and traditions of its interpretation present in his appropriation of Zechariah are basic to literary production within his textual culture. The form and functions of John's scriptural reuse are parts of the normal manner in which literature was produced. The book of Revelation is often portrayed as an outlier in the New Testament (NT) canon – it is the sole 'apocalypse' and it blends epistolary form with esoteric visionary material. However, in the context of the larger textual culture of which the NT writings are but a part, features of Revelation – particularly its presentation of reused material – cohere more closely with the norms of its textual culture than do other NT works.[11] This study highlights the close relationship between Revelation and the literature of the Second Temple period in terms of their authors' shared exegetical repertoires.

corpus are intelligently examined in Jörg Frey, 'Das Corpus Johanneum und die Apokalypse des Johannes: Die Johanneslegende, die Problem der johanneischen Verfasserschaft und die Frage der Pseudonymität der Apokalypse', in *Poetik und Intertextualität der Johannesapokalypse* (WUNT 346; ed. S. Alkier, T. Hieke, and T. Nicklas; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 71–133.

[11] This claim is difficult to quantify as other NT works – Hebrews, Matthew, and Luke-Acts to name a few – reuse scripture using similar principles. Nonetheless, my point remains: the practice of scriptural reuse in Revelation is coherent with modes of reuse in Jewish literature.

Third, this study contributes to the discussion surrounding the reception of John's scriptural engagement by his initial audiences. It is often argued that John's exegetical imagination would not have enriched the experience of his 'original audience', since their literary abilities and sensitivities were too deficient to detect his subtle exegetical tendencies. Because these hearers were unable to reconstruct his process of composition and unexpressed interpretation of scriptural locutions, it would have been wasteful or ill-advised for John to interact so carefully with the substance of his scripture traditions. Therefore, he didn't. The following discussion offers the opportunity to interrogate this position and to examine both the sociohistorical make-up of the early hearers of the Apocalypse and the 'ideal' audience to which John's work might speak most fully in its ancient context. What does a reader of the Apocalypse *need* to know in order to properly understand the substance and message of the work?

Finally, in addition to sociohistorical concerns related to the audience of Revelation, John's use of Zechariah provides insight into the question of his points of access to his scriptural interlocutors. Without minimizing the prevalence of memory and orality as the predominant mediums of transmission in this period, I argue that textual artefacts (i.e. manuscripts or inscribed forms of scriptural works) also played a sizeable role in John's scriptural engagement. Memory is an inherent factor in the process of reuse, but textual artefacts help to cultivate memory and control oral expression. Additionally, the visual experience of reading a manuscript provides layers of interpretative possibilities that do not exist in an aural encounter where traditions of reading are explicit and other purely graphic features are not accessible. This aspect of the study highlights the role that textual artefacts played in the composition of Revelation.[12]

Above all, this study interrogates the reuse of scripture in the book of Revelation in the context of its textual culture. In this way, this book is both historical and textual. Placing Revelation within its

[12] More implicitly, this study also offers an approach for utilizing text-critical data from NT allusions as witnesses to the text of the HB and OG/LXX in Christian antiquity. Obviously, the more overt the presentation of a scriptural reference and the more mimetic its representation of a possible source, the more valuable the material is for this process. The following analyses illustrate the possibilities and limitations of such an approach. See also e.g. B. Kowalski, 'Die Ezechielrezeption in der Offenbarung des Johannes und ihre Bedeutung für die Textkritik', *SNTU* 35 (2010): 51–77.

proper textual context provides a base from which to test its reuse of scripture against works that are native to the broader compositional ethos in which it was constructed. No study that has explored the reuse of scripture in Revelation has engaged with textual culture in this manner.

1.2 Some Definitions and Terminology

The technical nature of this discussion requires a precise set of descriptive terms. NT writers did not provide a native vocabulary that describes their modes of reuse and methods of reading. As such, one must be formulated using categories that are not necessarily native to early Christianity or Second Temple Judaism. The cacophony of competing terms and definitions currently in use in biblical studies increases the chances for misunderstanding and imprecision. In order to be clear with my own language and to avoid potential confusion for readers, it is important that I clarify a number of relevant terms that reappear throughout the study. The terminology draws upon language used in text linguistics, combined with terminology that is common in scholarly discourse relating to the literature of Second Temple Judaism.

To begin, I deploy the term *reference* to generically denote the direct dependence of material from one work upon material from another.[13] A *scriptural reference* refers to an author's reuse of material (locution, wording, theme, syntactic structure, etc.) from a scriptural source. In the case of the reuse of scripture in Revelation, this includes material preserved in influential Jewish works of the period. *References* have three related but independent variables that, together, determine whether a *reference* is a quotation, allusion, or another type of textual relationship: introductory formula, discreetness, and mimesis. First, a reference may or may not have an *introductory formula*. Various formulae, both explicit and implicit, are

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[13] The term 'reference' is used in a similar way in socio-rhetorical analysis, as a way to denote intertextual dialogue. I use the term only in instances where one work (e.g. Revelation) borrows material from another work (e.g. Zechariah). See Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 40–68 and L. Gregory Bloomquist, 'Methodological Criteria for Apocalyptic Rhetoric: A Suggestion for Expanded Use of Sociorhetorical Analysis', in *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse* (ed. G. Carey and L. G. Bloomquist; St. Louis: Chalice, 1999), 181–203 (esp. 185–187).

employed in the NT to demarcate or introduce quotations.[14] For the most part, John does not employ explicit introductory formulae (e.g. καθὼς γέγραπται), but he does use *implicit* markers that signal the presence of antecedent material (anaphoric articles, deictic markers, etc.). Second, references have varying levels of discreetness from their surrounding co-texts. The use of an implicit or explicit introductory formula already creates a level of syntactic discreetness between reference and co-text at the front end of the reference. However, if the end of the reference can be delineated from the following co-texts, a higher level of discreetness is present; if the frame of the reference can be clearly distinguished, then it has a high level of discreetness. Third, a reference mimics the wording of (or part of) its source tradition, at least to a degree. The closer the text of a reference follows the wording of its putative source, the higher its mimetic value. These three variables (introductory formula, discreetness [frame], and mimesis) together determine whether a reference is a quotation or an allusion.

A *quotation* refers to the explicit reuse of identifiable antecedent discourse events. For this discussion, these discourse events equate to the formal surface features of the literature of Jewish scripture and Second Temple Judaism. For a locution embedded within Revelation to be considered a quotation of antecedent material, two requirements must be satisfied. First, the locution in question must illustrate a significant level of literal correlation to the wording of a specific source tradition. Literalness is measured by a number of factors including serial fidelity, quantitative representation, lexical consistency, semantic consistency, and morpho-syntactic form.[15] Ancient quotations usually retain both free and literal characteristics. It is important not only to assert that a given reference is literal but also to describe in what sense and by which measurements it is so. Quotation need not consist of an absolute reproduction of source material, although some level of reproduction remains a distinctive feature of quotation.[16] Second, quotations require a high level of discreetness

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[14] See Darius Müller, 'Zitatmarkierungen und die Gegenwart der Schrift im Neuen Testament', in *Textual History and the Reception of Scripture in Early Christianity* (SCS 60; ed. J. de Vries and M. Karrer; Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 189–199.

[15] James Barr, *The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations* (MSU 15; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 294.

[16] Meir Sternberg, 'Proteus in Quotation-Land: Mimesis and Forms of Reported Discourse', *PT* 3 no 2 (1982): 148 states in terms of quotation generally that 'absolute reproductiveness . . . is precluded, or at least actively militated against, by an

from their co-textual environment in the target text. A quotation requires formal autonomy.[17] Meir Sternberg notes that 'representational bond, structural framing, communicative subordination, and perspectival montage or ambiguity' are the four dimensions by which discreetness is measured.[18] In terms of the formal surface features of a text (arrangement of graphic signs on a delivery surface), structural framing is the essential feature that determines the discreetness of a reference. Paratactic and deictic linguistic markers, in contrast to the hypotactic markers of more indirect forms of reference that conflate the reference with other narrative material in the target text, serve as the primary measurements in determining a locution's level of discreetness.[19] The locution need not be introduced by explicit citation markers to be considered discreet from its co-textual environment.

Moreover, Sternberg is concerned to discuss the dialogical relationship between these formal features (the relationship between the quotation and its co-texts) and the representational features (relationship between quoting and quotee text) of a quotation.[20] While these overlapping features are inextricably linked, where the author of Revelation *quotes* Zechariah, the focus of this discussion will primarily address the formal text-linguistic features of a quotation. Occasionally, representational features will figure into the discussion but they are not the primary concern of this study. It is often assumed that, because the author of Revelation did not utilize explicit citation

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array of communicative factors. Such reproductiveness, therefore, is neither a constitutive feature of direct discourse, that is, one whose absence would entail a shift to another reporting form; nor an obligatory function, whose absence would perforce count as an infringement of a social artistic norm; nor even a primary function, whose absence would launch an interpretive quest for some rhetorical substitute.' Sternberg terms this the 'Proteus Principle'. Moreover, John Whittaker, 'The Value of Indirect Tradition in the Establishment of Greek Philosophical Texts or the Art of Misquotation', in *Editing Greek and Latin Texts: Papers given at the Twenty-Third Annual Conference on Editorial Problems University of Toronto 6–7 November 1987* (ed. J. N. Grant; New York: AMS, 1987), 64 notes that there was a 'persistent inclination of the scholars and writers of the ancient world to introduce into their quotations deliberate alteration'.

[17] Sternberg, 'Proteus', 109.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 111.
[20] Sternberg, 'Proteus', 112. Expanding upon this dialectic, Sternberg goes on to suggest, 'each act of quotation serves two masters. One is the original speech or thought that it represents, pulling in the direction of maximal accuracy. The other is the frame that encloses and regulates it, pulling in the direction of maximal efficacy. Reported discourse thus presents a classic case of divided allegiance' (152).

formulae, he does not quote. This assumption is faulty, and others have noted 'implicit' or 'unmarked' quotations in Revelation.[21]

Explicit Allusion is a form of reported discourse that is less direct than quotation. Like quotation, explicit allusions need not reproduce linguistic material from its source verbatim. However, it must retain a high level of linguistic correspondence to an identifiable source. An explicit allusion must also demonstrate *some* but not necessarily complete discreetness from its surrounding co-texts in the target composition. This discreetness can be a subtle linguistic feature such as a particle (e.g. γάρ), deictic marker (anaphoric article, demonstrative pronoun, etc.), or an indication of direct speech (e.g. λέγων).

Implicit Allusion refers to a scriptural reference that has been represented in the target composition with a minimal level of linguistic correspondence to its source. Some concrete linguistic link must exist, preferably a unique phrase or 'allusive keyword',[22] but an implicit allusion may be embedded into the target composition in a manner where no discreetness exists between locution and co-texts.

It is often assumed that implicit allusions reflect the unconscious action of an author drenched in the language of scripture.[23] While this is a possible explanation, it is by no means definitive. Literary tradents of the Second Temple period fashioned connections between works based on numerous graphic, phonological, literary, textual, ideological, and narrative features implanted in their scriptural works and presented these connections with varying levels of explicitness.[24] The fact that a reference may be more implicit than it needs to have been does not mean that it was created as the result of a sub-cognitive process. The level of explicitness with which antecedent material appears in a target composition only provides information as to how the author wished to present the material. The vast majority of instances of scriptural reuse and interpretation in the

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[21] See, for example, S. Moyise, 'The Psalms in the Book of Revelation', in *The Psalms in the New Testament* (ed. S. Moyise and M. J. J. Menken; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 231–246.

[22] This latter phrase is borrowed from Aaron Koller, *Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 139, who uses the repetition of unique phrases as a license to forge intertextual connections.

[23] See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985), 17–18; G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (JSNTsup 166; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1998), 74.

[24] See W. A. Tooman, 'Between Imitation and Interpretation: Reuse of Scripture and Composition in *Hodayot* (1QHᵃ) 11:6–19', *DSD* 18 (2011): 58–59 who puts forth