How to Write a Literary History of the Hebrew Bible? A Response to David Carr and Konrad Schmid

Thomas Römer

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Malleswaram West P.O.
Bangalore – 560 055 (INDIA)
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HOW TO WRITE A LITERARY HISTORY OF THE HEBREW BIBLE? A RESPONSE TO DAVID CARR AND KONRAD SCHMID.[1]

Since the famous passage from the Babylonian Talmud *baba bathra* 12 the question "who wrote the Bible?" has interested biblical scholarship until today and the books of David Carr[2] and Konrad Schmid[3] are the latest examples of the enquiry about the formation of the Hebrew Bible. They are among the first books after the collapse of the Documentary hypothesis (at least in the German-speaking world) and the critique of the traditional models to explain the formation of the Former and Later Prophets.

Both books are thought-provoking, offering new ideas and new approaches and I strongly recommend them as an appropriate introduction to the question of the formation of the Hebrew Bible. Both authors have offered an impressive *tour de force* by trying to deal with almost all writings of the Hebrew Bible (the title of Konrad Schmid's book speaks about the "Old Testament," whereas David Carr uses the expression "Hebrew Bible," which I will also use, because I think that it is for several reasons the more appropriate term).

Both authors work with a historical-critical approach and organize their books in a diachronic perspective:

[1] This article was presented on 19th of November 2012 in the *SBL Annual Meeting* 2012, Chicago, Illinois, held from 17 to 20 of November 2012 as a reaction to the book of David Carr and Konrad Schmid (see the following footnotes).

[2] David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible, A New Reconstruction*, Oxford: University Press, 2011.

[3] Konrad Schmid, *The Old Testament: A Literary History*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2012 (A translation by Linda M. Maloney from the German version of K. Schmid, *Literaturgeschichte des Alten Testaments: eine Einführung*, Darmstadt: WBG, 2008).

ends in the Hasmonean period, whereas D.C. organizes his work the other way round starting with the finalization of the books of the Hebrew Bible under the Hasmoneans and then goes back, like an archeologist, to the earlier steps until the Neo-Assyrian period and offers at the end several chapters about Literacy and in the Early Monarchic period. Both books contain substantial introductions. Schmid's introduction offers a short review of scholarship and discusses the place of a "Literaturgeschichte" in the field of OT studies, moving then to remarks about literary production in Ancient Israel. David Carr's introduction is double as long as Schmid's and is mainly concerned about methodological questions to which I will return. Schmid's book has a more theological orientation because each chapter, after having addressed the historical background of each period, contains reflections about "theological characterizations" of the period. Both, Carr and Schmid, are not using the German "Literarkritik" in order to dissect the texts into a multitude of layers, although they both acknowledge that we have some tools to retrace the reworking of an older text.

And finally [and this is a less serious remark], both books could be used for practical purposes in order to reconstruct older documents, because they both integrate essays previously published. If one compares the original articles with their reuse in both books one can in fact observe different scribal strategies such as literary copying, shortening and also rewriting. Sometimes the reuse of older pieces leads to some kind of repetition or changes of style, but both books are extremely readable.

Somebody once compared the dating of biblical texts and traditions to the relation between a key and a lock. You can try to insert a key into a lock and when it opens there is some chance that the key was made for that lock. There are however keys that are able to open several locks, so that it is impossible to decide for which specific lock the key was conceived. Therefore all our attempts to correlate texts or traditions to one specific historical context are necessarily speculative. Both authors acknowledge of course this fact. D.C. writes that his book should not be understood more as "a set of guidelines for a modest reconstruction of the literary prehistory of the Hebrew Bible" (p. 9). Similarly, K.S. considers his book "as an intermediate stopping place from which to pose the literary-historical question as such ... Its purpose ... is to reflect the historical-critical reconstruction of the conversation among the most important of its texts and textual corpora as the historical and theological task of scholarly research on the Old Testament" (p. xii).

The following remarks are also meant to be uttered on the same provisional and hypothetical level. I admire my colleagues for having achieved such a synthetic view of the formation of the literature that will have become the Hebrew Bible, and can also offer some questions and modestly some alternative views.

1. The Importance of Methodology, Criteria and "Material Culture"

K.S. states rightly: "a literary history cannot be written on the basis of archaeology ... but neither can a literary history be written without taking into account the cultural-historical framework set by archaeology" (p. 25). D.C. shows much concern for questions of methodology, and his prologue, which covers around 130 pages, is in fact more than a prologue. It is a very enlightening and necessary reflection on our methods and criteria we use when elaborating models of formation of the (proto-) Biblical Literature. Carr treats extensively the Gilgamesh epic, which is indeed one of the best examples in our field to get an idea about the formation of ANE epic literature. Interestingly, the evolution of the Gilgamesh epic also reveals the limits of our theory. The prologue of the Old Babylonian version (lines 1-28) was often said to constitute an addition made by Sin-Leqe-Uninnini the redactor of the OB version. The prologue differs in style and content from what follows in the first tablet and appeared to scholars as an attempt of the redactor to emphasize the authenticity of the Gilgamesh tradition. These obvious (stylistic and ideological) criteria to identify the prologue as an addition have recently been challenged by the publication of a

fragment of tablet one from Ugarit which is at least one century earlier than the OB version[4] and which already contains the prologue just mentioned.

Another interesting point is the question of "inner-biblical" reception and rewriting of older tradition. There is some consensus about the idea that the author of the Deuteronomic Code (Deut 12-26) builds upon the Covenant Code (Ex 20:24-23:19), which he wants to "actualize" and the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) is often seen as depending on the Deuteronomic and probably also the Priestly Code (Lev 1-16). D.C. and K.S. tend to follow this idea. In a recent publication John H. Choi,[5] challenged this view on methodological and philological grounds, arguing that the idea of a direct overtaking of supposedly older traditions is not plausible, since the different viewpoints about certain festivals or prescriptions could have arisen without a direct literary dependency. He also points to the case of the so-called "historical summaries" in some Psalms and texts like Ezek 20 and argues that there is no evidence that those "summaries" presuppose a written Pentateuch or Proto-Pentateuch. I am not totally convinced by all the demonstrations of Choi. Nevertheless I think he forces us, to reconsider the question of intertextuality. D.C. rightly speaks of the difficulty to elaborate clear "criteria for determining intertextual relations" (p. 144), and this task still needs further exploration and discussion.

2. From Solomon to the Hasmoneans?

Both Schmid and Carr extent the period of their investigation *grosso modo* from the tenth to the 2nd century BCE, working in opposite directions. The first question that comes to my mind is: why should one stop the investigation with the Hasmonean period? It is quite plausible, as argued by Carr and Schmid, that the youngest books or passages of the HB were written down at

[4] D. Arnaud, *Corpus des textes de bibliothèque des Ras Shamra-Ougarit [1936-2000] en sumérien, babylonien et assyrien,* Aula Orientalis Supplementa 23, Barcelona 2007, text 42.

[5] John H. Choi, *Traditions at Odds. The Reception of the Pentateuch in Biblical and Second Temple Period Literature* (LHB/OTS 518; New York: T & T Clark, 2010).

that period, but this was not yet the birth-date of the Hebrew Bible as a tripartite *Tanak*. David considers the Hasmonean era rightly to be the time of the formation of a "*Torah*-Prophets Corpus" (p. 153), and similarly Schmid states that "the most important literary-historical development in the early Seleucid period" was the formation of the canonical section of the *Nebiim* (p. 218). Why not include the first centuries of the Christian era in which finally the *Ketuvim* were defined and added to the *Torah* and the *Nebiim*? According to Schmid, this question does not really belong to a literary history of the HB (p. 223). I wonder however why. The construction of the *Ketuvim* still implies reworking and stabilization of text and especially a discussion which text should be included into the Hebrew Bible; therefore I would say the "canonical question" is part of a history of the Formation of the Hebrew Bible.

Another question is the silencing of the Hellenistic period in the texts of the Hebrew Bible. Schmid and Carr both emphasize rightly that the prophetic books underwent revision and that new passages or books like Isa 24-27, or the last chapters of Zechariah were composed at that time. However, contrary to foregoing periods, the biblical books as far as I can see do not contain any clear allusion to events or rulers from the Hellenistic period. It is often, and probably rightly argued that Zech 9 presupposes the conquest of Tyre by Alexander; but he is not mentioned. It looks as if the *Nebiim* stop with the Persian period. What are the reasons for this silencing of the Hellenistic period? David speaks of a "general privileging of antiquity in the Hellenistic period" (p. 191), but I wonder whether this dismissal of the Greek era is related to the idea of the end of the prophecy, which occurs according to Carr in the Persian, and according to Schmid in the Hellenistic time.

I find myself closer to Schmid than to Carr with regard to the question of early monarchical Literature. Carr argues for instance: "the Davidides temporarily ruled over 'Israel' and never gave up connections to Israelite traditions" (p. 482). This view is mostly based on the Biblical account, and is not shared by archaeological reconstruction, at least not by scholars from

at the end of the tenth century. Regarding Dan a recent article of Eran Arie provides some evidence that Dan only became Israelite during the eighth century.[7] If this would be true, then we could ask whether what is attributed in the HB to Jeroboam I would not fit Jeroboam II better (or even more radically whether Jeroboam I is a "construction" out of Jeroboam II). But this brings us back to the parable of the key and the locks. I personally find it difficult to envisage a date for the Song of Songs at the end of the 10th or the beginning of the 9th century. I am quite convinced by C. Uehlinger (*Cantique des Cantiques*,[8] and others), who argues that the language of the Song of Songs is marked on the one hand by an archaizing Hebrew and on the other by features that point to the Hebrew of the Mishnah. The references to Ein Gedi also make sense in 3rd century BCE context since it was an important source for balsam in the Greco-Roman world [Ein Gedi has an important 7th century BC stratum too]. The case of this book shows again the difficulty to date biblical texts and the risk of circularity, as also acknowledged by D.C. (p. 447-8). To foster a "Solomonic" date of the Song of Songs by comparing it with the story of the Queen of Sheba in 1 Kings 10 is indeed difficult, because such queens are attested in Southern Arabia only from the end of the 8th century and the biblical story looks very much like a tale from the Thousand and One Nights.[9]

[6] See for instance the forthcoming book of Israel Finkelstein, *Le royaume biblique oublié. L'Archéologie et l'Histoire d'Israël, le Royaume du Nord*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 2013.

[7] Eran Arie, "Reconsidering the Iron Age II Strata at Tel Dan: Archaeological and Historical Implications," *Tel Aviv* 35 (2008): 6-64.

[8] Christoph Uehlinger, «Cantique des Cantiques,» in *Introduction à l'Ancien Testament* (ed. Thomas Römer, Jean-Daniel Macchi, Chistophe Nihan, Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2009, 2nd ed), 619-631.

[9] See Albert de Pury, "Salomon et la reine de Saba. L'analyse narrative peut-elle se dispenser de poser la question du contexte historique?" in *La Bible en récits. L'exégèse biblique à l'heure du lecteur* (ed. Daniel Marguerat; MoBi 48; Genève: Labor et Fides, 2003), 213-238.

former and other texts to the latter. Doing this, they follow a long tradition of Biblical scholarship. David rightly emphasizes against some recent statements that the events of 597 and 587 provoked really a major political, economical and "intellectual" crisis. Oded Lipschits' investigations have shown that there were indeed heavy destructions in Judah and also an important decrease of population.[10] The question I would like to address, also to myself, is whether it would be plausible that immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem intellectuals gathered in order to write or to revise an important number of texts. Where should we imagine such writings in the so-called exilic or Babylonian period? Most people would agree today that M. Noth's idea of the Deuteronomist as an independent and "freelance" intellectual who edited around 560 at Mizpah on his own initiative the "Deuteronomistic History" does fit better to Noth's own situation than the context he postulated for the Deuteronomist. To put it differently, is it plausible to imagine that the first concern of the exilic period was to sit down and write texts? To be sure there are many texts in the Hebrew Bible that struggle with the meaning and the explanation of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and the exile. It is also true as Carr and Schmid underline that the concept of "exile" becomes a major identity marker of nascent Judaism. But is it possible or helpful to distinguish clearly between an "exilic" period, which would then have lasted from 597 to 539, and a "postexilic" period? Would it not be better to speak of a Babylonian-early Persian period, because it is quite possible that the so-called "exilic" texts could as well have been written at the beginning of the Persian period? The other question, which is also of interest, is where to locate those scribal activities in the second half of the sixth century: in Jerusalem, in Babylon, or elsewhere (Egypt, Samaria)?

[10] See for instance O. Lipschits, "Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E.," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp; Winona Lak, IN, Eisenbrauns, 2003), 323-376.

to D.C., "a return to the clarity and simplicity of the documentary hypothesis is no longer possible" (p. 124), and K.S. speaks of an "emerging consensus (at least in Europe) about the abandoning of the Wellhausenian model" (p. xi). I am of course very sympathetic to this position, but I also have a problem with it. Statistically the Documentary Hypothesis is far from being given up, in my guess more than 90% of the historical-critical teaching about the Pentateuch in the world still is done on the base of the Documentary Hypothesis. Statistics are no truth, for sure. But I wonder if both authors should not have tried to engage somewhat more with the traditional model in order to facilitate the dialogue between different currents of Pentateuchal scholarship.

Another point on which Carr and Schmid agree is in a way a return to Wellhausen: they both advocate at some stage of the formation of the Torah the existence of an early Hexateuch, because of the idea that there cannot be a story of an *exodus* without the account of an *eisodos* (returning in a way to G. von Rad and his "short historical credo"). I was not really convinced by their reconstructions of this kind of a Hexateuch, and K.S. acknowledges: "There have not yet been any methodologically persuasive attempts to reconstruct the precise literary history of the Moses narrative as a whole" (p. 83). The return of the Hexateuch is probably prompted by the rejection of the DtrH-hypothesis on which I will comment briefly later. What is unclear for me is the reason of the promulgation of the *Pentateuch* in both models. If I understand Schmid rightly the Pentateuch is the result of an amputation from an Enneateuch, and for Carr it was the book of Joshua that had been truncated. But for what reasons?

Both authors agree on the existence of an independent P-document, and both reject the view that the P-texts could also be understood as a redaction, which is an alternative that should be taken seriously. Schmid discusses the recent debate on the conclusion of the original P-document and, together with several European scholars, locates this end either at the end of Exodus or somewhere in the book of Leviticus, whereas Carr postulates very close to that developed by Erhard Blum.[11] He distinguishes between P and non-P texts and is very reluctant towards the idea of post-P texts (p. 137). Here I find myself in agreement with K.S. who admits a broad spectrum of post-P texts. I wonder whether Carr's emphasis on the idea that there are very few post-P additions to the Pentateuch is the heritage of Wellhausen or the influence of E. Blum. But is the Pentateuch only the conflation of a non-P Hexateuch and a P-composition (so Carr, p. 220)? Should one not admit the idea that there were post-Priestly redactional interventions in order to create a Pentateuch (or eventually a Hexateuch) as argued by Otto, Achenbach and others?[12]

Carr is trying hard to show that Josh 24 is a pre-P conclusion to the non-P Hexateuch from the late exilic (?) time (p. 273-9). Of course, one can always discuss if the chapter contains or not allusion to priestly texts. What is more interesting is the question of the position of Josh 24 at the end of a book. There is quite good evidence in the HB and the NT of new book-endings that were added very late in order to redefine the foregoing content: this is the case of Mark 16:9-20, which is not attested in the oldest manuscripts of the Gospel, and also in Lev 27, which perhaps was added in order to integrate the HC in the book of Lev and Mal 3:22-24, a passage added in order to correlate the *Nebiim* to the *Torah*. In my view the same holds true for Josh 24, a chapter that was added in order to break the Dtr transition from Josh 23 to Judg 2:6ff and to create an ephemeral Hexateuch.

Finally, I found little attention paid to the different scrolls of the Pentateuch. Only Schmid mentions briefly the book of Numbers as a late post-priestly development of the Pentateuch and

[11] Erhard Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (BZAW 189; Berlin - New York: de Gruyter, 1990).

[12] Eckart Otto, *Das Deuteronomium im Pentateuch und Hexateuch. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte von Pentateuch und Hexateuch im Lichte des Deuteronomiumsrahmen* (FAT 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); Reinhard Achenbach, *Die Vollendung der Tora: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Numeribuches im Kontext von Hexateuch und Pentateuch* (BZAR 3; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003).

a forerunner of midrashic literature (177-8), an opinion I share.[13] The question however I wanted to raise is whether we should pay more attention of the different books that constitute the Torah and not consider them as having been invented at the latest stage of the formation of the Pentateuch. The length of the five books of the Torah also speaks against the idea of a quite mechanical division for strictly practical reasons. It is immediately clear that each book of the Torah has its own profile. This is especially the case for Genesis and Deuteronomy, whereas Exodus and Leviticus are bound together more closely. If one thinks more of scrolls kept together in vessels made of clay, the question of the larger literary units becomes a bit less exclusive. If there were a "priestly" and a "Deuteronomistic" library in which different scrolls were kept, it would have been easy to transfer for instance Deuteronomy (and Joshua) into another vessel in which priests and others collected and edited the scrolls of the future Torah.

5. A Farewell to the Deuteronomistic History?

Schmid and Carr both follow a trend of recent European scholarship, which is to consider the theory of a "Deuteronomistic History" as a further "Irrweg der Forschung." Carr notes: "the evidence for an overall exilic Deuteronomistic history composition is scant" (p. 245). Schmid admits Dtr editing of Deut., Josh-Kings, but thinks that "Deuteronomism" is a much broader phenomenon (p. 73-4). On this point he is correct. I wonder however what kind of progress biblical scholarship is making by giving up Noth's idea. For sure, there was not one Deuteronomist who is responsible for all Dtr texts in Deut-Kings; the DtrH is multilayered as is P. One must however explain that the book of Deuteronomy is so strongly related to the books of Joshua-Kings and that there is a theological refrain covering this corpus: the explanation of the loss of the land and the exile. There is so much literary and theological coherence in the Dtr passages running from Deut to Kings that the theory of a DtrH should not be given up so quickly. Deut is not only related to the book

[13] Thomas Römer, "Israel's Sojourn in the Wilderness and the Construction of the Book of Numbers", in *Reflection and Refraction. Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (ed. in R. Rezetko, T. H. Lim et W. B. Aucker ; VT.S 113, Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2007) 419-445.

of Joshua. D.C. considers the book of Judges as a "late" bridge between Joshua and Samuel-Kings (p. 284). But this bridge is at least presupposed in Deut 6.12-15: "watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery... 14 You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, ...otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will burn against you..." a passage that prepares literarily Judg 2:12-14: "and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who surrounded them, and bowed themselves down to them ... The anger of the LORD burned against Israel...," as I have already pointed out in my dissertation.[14] This passage was clearly conceived in Deut in order to prepare for the time of the Judges. Also Noth's observation about the summarizing speeches which structure the whole History is better understood in the context of a comprehensive redaction than as of accumulation of unrelated Dtr revisions.

6. Conclusion: How to Reconstruct the Literary History of the Hebrew Bible?

The foregoing remarks have already shown my agreements and my question with regard to the way in which Carr and Schmid reconstruct the Literary History of the Hebrew Bible. I think the diachronic perspective that both adopt [either from the beginning to the end or from the end back to the beginnings] is a fitting one. An alternative solution would be to take the three parts of the *Tanak*: *Torah*, *Nebiim* and *Ketubim*, and to investigate around these three "circles." One could start with the discussion of the rise of the Torah in the second half of the Persian period and then investigate about the materials, which were integrated, paying also attention to the question of the "role" of the North and the Samaritans in this process. Then one could highlight the

[14] Thomas Römer, *Israels Väter: Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990. See now Walter Groß, "Das Richterbuch zwischen deuteronomistischem Geschichtswerk und Enneateuch" in *Das deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk* (ed. Hermann-Josef Stipp; ÖBS 39; Frankfurt a.M. et al.: Peter Lang, 2011), 177-205, p. 186-7.

of the *Ketuvim*, always [illegible]
traditions and texts that were used, revised and integrated. Is this a better way to write a Literary History of the HB? I am not sure, but it is at least an alternative.

Thomas Römer[15]
Professor of the Hebrew Bible
Chair of "The Bible and Its World" - Collège de France
75005 Paris

[15] Thomas Römer is also Professor of the Hebrew Bible in the *Faculty of Theology at Lausanne* (Switzerland).