

This conference explores the literary dimension of ancient Jewish texts, gathering scholars from different academic fields (rabbinic studies, biblical studies, literary studies, and philosophy) and drawing on different methodologies (literary criticism, rhetorical criticism, cognitive linguistics, historical criticism, and reception history) in order to establish the state of the art in the field of ancient Jewish text studies. This conference is organized in cooperation with Ghent University.

Conference Schedule

Wednesday, March 14 2012

10.00-10.35 *Registration and coffee*

10.35-10.45 Welcome by **Vivian Liska** (Institute of Jewish Studies, University of Antwerp) and **Klaas Smelik** (Ghent University)

10.45-11.00 Introduction by **Karolien Vermeulen** (Ghent University & University of Antwerp)

Session I: What Constitutes the 'Literary'? - Part I

11.00-12.00 **Keynote Lecture 1: Ellen van Wolde** (Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen)
'Bridging the Gap between Linguistics and Literary Studies of Ancient Biblical and Jewish Texts - A Proposal Exemplified by a Study of Genesis 9: 9-17'

12.00-12.30 **Fabien Nobilio** (Université Libre de Bruxelles)
"'Literary" versus "Literal"? Reflections upon an Ambivalent Saying of Isaiah (6:10) and its Translation in the Septuagint'

12.30-14.00 *Lunch*

Session II: Literature as Means or the Implications of the Literary Approach

14.00-14.30 **David Dessin** (Institute of Jewish Studies, University of Antwerp)
'How Job became Kafka. A Literary-Philosophical Reading of the Book of Job and its Modern Variations'

14.30-15.00 **Lennart Lehmhaus** (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg)
'Between Tradition and Innovation - Seder Eliyahu Zuta's Literary Strategies'

15.00-15.45 **Klaas Smelik** (Ghent University)
'Biblical Narrative and the History of Ancient Israel - The Concept of Eye Witness Account in the Books of Samuel'

15.45-16.15 *Coffee break*

Session III: What Constitutes the 'Literary'? - Part II

16.15-16.45 **Tamar Kadari** (Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies & Bar Ilan University)
'Rabbinic Interpretations of Song of Songs'

16.45-17.45 **Keynote Lecture 2: Wilfred Watson** (Newcastle University)
'The Language and Poetry of the Song of Songs: Work in Progress'

19.00 *Conference dinner*

Thursday, March 15 2012

Session IV: What Constitutes the 'Literary'? - Part III

- 9.30-10.00 **Eibert Tigchelaar** (KULeuven)
'Assessing the Poetical Character of the Wile of the Wicked Women'
- 10.00-10.30 **Anne-Laure Zwilling** (University of Lausanne)
'Literary Tricks?'
- 10.30-11.00 **Wout Van Bekkum** (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)
'Early Jewish Hymnography and the Literary - An Investigation'
- 11.00-11.30 *Coffee break*
- 11.30-12.30 **Keynote Lecture 3: Robert Gordon** (Cambridge University)
'A Battle of Wits and Words: The Absalom Rebellion'
- 12.30-14.00 *Lunch*

Session V: Literature: Means or Goal? Challenging the Literary Approach - Part I

- 14.00-14.30 **Dina Stein** (University of Haifa)
'Reading Rabbinic Narrative: Philology, Semiotics and Intertextuality'
- 14.30-15.00 **Rebecca Kneller** (Tel Aviv University)
'Intertextuality and Bible Interpretation according to Samuel Ibn Tibbon'
- 15.00-15.30 **Hanneke Van Loon & Johan de Joode** (KULeuven)
'Cognitive Linguistics, Metaphor and the Literary'
- 15.30-16.00 *Coffee break*

Session VI: Literature: Means or Goal? Challenging the Literary Approach - Part II

- 16.00-16.30 **Karolien Vermeulen** (Ghent University & University of Antwerp)
'The Intentional Use of Polysemy - Literary or Linguistic?'
- 16.30-17.00 **Angela Roskop** (Xavier University & University of Cincinnati)
'Literary Theory and the Composition History of the Torah'
- 20.00-21.00 **Keynote Lecture 4: Scott Noegel** (University of Washington)
'Literary Craft and Performative Power in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament''
- 21.00 *Reception*

Keynote speakers



Prof. dr. Scott B. Noegel University of Washington, Seattle (United States)

Literary Craft and Performative Power in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Biblical scholars have done a great deal to advance our appreciation of the literary sophistication of biblical texts. Biblical commentaries and a host of other publications now regularly draw our attention to a multitude of textual devices that operate on micro and macro-levels such as punning, allusion, inclusion, chiasm, repetition, and ring structure, to name just a few. The influence of a number of theoretical approaches to biblical texts, chief among them, the so-called Literary Critical School, greatly contributed to this interest. Scholars working within such theoretical frameworks have shown that the ancients were far more skillful and calculated than previous generations had perceived. Another contributing factor has been the continued comparative study of texts from elsewhere in the ancient Near East, such as Ugarit, Egypt, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia. While such research has at times emphasized literary similarities

at the expense of cultural differences, it nonetheless has removed the study of the Hebrew Bible from its relative literary isolation. The combined influence of these factors has allowed scholars to speak about biblical texts on par with Homer, Beowulf, Shakespeare, and other great works of literature. In this presentation I shall argue that while such literary and comparative approaches have helped us to appreciate more fully the repertoire of technical devices employed by the Israelite writers, in the main, they have not helped us to understand their functions. In particular, I shall argue that a comparative examination of the social context for textual production in the ancient Near East suggests that we think of biblical literary devices not as stylistic embellishments, but as performative devices of perceived power.

Scott B. Noegel is Professor of Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies and Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization at the University of Washington in Seattle. He received his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1995. Prof. Noegel's publications include eight books and more than sixty articles on a variety of ancient Near Eastern topics. His two most recent books are *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (American Oriental Society, 2007) and *Solomon's Vineyard: Literary and Linguistic Studies in the Song of Songs* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), co-authored with Gary Rendsburg. He currently is completing a monograph entitled "Word Play" in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. This book surveys the phenomenon as found in Akkadian, Egyptian, Ugaritic, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts, and provides a comprehensive taxonomy for devices often labeled as "word play." In addition, the monograph explores definitions of "word play" by exploring ancient conceptions of words, the various functions that such devices serve, and the generative role of scripts (consonantal, syllabic, and pictographic). Also discussed in the book are issues of terminology, genre, audience, grammaticality, interpretation, and methodology.

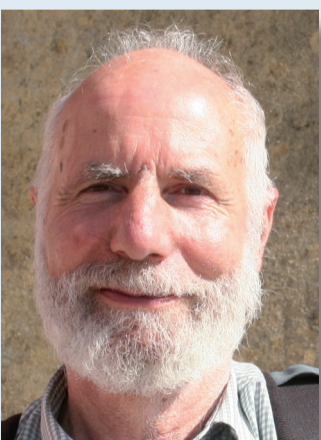


Prof. dr. Robert Gordon
University of Cambridge (United Kingdom)

A Battle of Wits and Words: The Absalom Rebellion

The books of Samuel contain some of the most striking prose in the Old Testament-Hebrew Bible, and some of this in what was once with greater confidence called 'The Succession Narrative'. This paper will focus on the contest between Ahithophel and Hushai in 2 Samuel 16-17 as the centrepiece in this literary masterpiece, in which are deployed narrative skills worthy of the story of the resolution, of the field of battle, of the issue between King David and his renegade son.

Robert Gordon began his university teaching career in Glasgow in 1969, subsequently moving to Cambridge in 1979. His earliest publications were on the ancient versions, including *Targum Prophets* (PhD 1974). His student guide to the books of Samuel appeared in 1984 and his commentary on Samuel in 1986. More recent research and writing have tended to focus on Genesis and on the OT/HB in its near eastern context, especially in relation to prophecy. His main retirement project will be the writing of a commentary on Amos for the ICC series. His Antwerp paper represents a return to former, and favoured, pastures.



Dr. Wilfred G. E. Watson
University of Newcastle (United Kingdom)

The Language and Poetry of the Song of Songs: Work in Progress.

Almost every year, it seems, at least one commentary or monograph on the Song of Songs is published. Some of these works focus exclusively on language, for example, the philological analysis by P. van Stoop-Paridon (2005). Others are more concerned with literary aspects, such as Patrick Hunt's *Poetry in the Song of Songs. A Literary Analysis* (2008) and Stefan Fischer's *Das Hohelied Salomos zwischen Poesie und Erzählung* (2010). Here, both aspects will be discussed: language and poetry. With its rare and difficult vocabulary, the Song of Songs presents philological problems, many of which can be resolved in the light of comparative Semitics or can be identified as loanwords. These will be considered in some detail. The book also uses a series of poetic devices and techniques, some of which will be described here, including parallelism of various kinds, word-pairs, wordplay, ellipsis and enjambment. Some attention will also be given to verse patterns. In addition, the *Song of Songs* did not emerge in isolation and to some extent its ancient Near Eastern background will be explored here.

After publishing *Classical Hebrew Poetry* (1984), based on his doctoral thesis in Aberdeen, Scotland (1973), Dr. Watson continued writing on ancient Semitic poetry. These papers were collected in *Traditional Techniques* (1994). In 1993, he was asked to contribute a commentary on the Song of Songs for the series *Historical Commentaries on the Old Testament*. This led to series of publications on literary aspects of that book. With Johannes de Moor he edited *Verse in Ancient Near Eastern Prose* (1993) which tackled the problem of differentiating prose from poetry. He has also contributed entries on poetry to the *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, edited by Geoffrey Khan.

His other main interest is comparative Semitics, with a focus on Ugaritic, and he is a member of the International Association for Comparative Semitics. In 2007, his *Lexical Studies in Ugaritic* (Barcelona) was published. With Nicolas Wyatt he edited the *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies* (1999).

He has lectured in Trinity College, Dublin and in the University of Newcastle. In 1989 he was appointed Visiting Professor in the University of Barcelona to work on a dictionary of Ugaritic and again in 1999 to edit and translate the *Diccionario de la lengua ugarítica* (by G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín), published as *Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* in 2003.



Prof. dr. Ellen van Wolde Radboud University of Nijmegen (The Netherlands)

*Bridging the Gap between Linguistics and Literary Studies of Ancient Biblical and Jewish texts.
A proposal exemplified by a study of Genesis 9: 9-17*

Literary studies of ancient Biblical and Jewish texts mainly concentrate on stylistic and poetic features or on textual and narratological structures. Conversely, linguistics focuses mainly on words and grammar, hardly ever crossing the border of the sentence. The proposal presented in this paper is to use the cognitive linguistic concept of *valence structure* to explain the contextualization of word meaning in literary texts in more detail. According to this view the internal structure of a word is made up of various components which determine the vast range of potential combinations with other words. Each word has a *valence* or a disposition to combine with other words in that they can share meaning components. It is only by virtue of having certain substructures in common that two component expressions can be integrated to form a coherent literary expression. A study of the composite meaning structure of Gen. 9:12-17 with a central position for the word *qēšēt* commonly understood as 'rainbow' will illustrate this proposal.

Ellen J. van Wolde (PhD 1989, Nijmegen) was appointed Full Professor Exegesis Old Testament in 1992 at the University of Tilburg. Since 2009 she has been Full Professor at the Radboud University Nijmegen. She was elected Member of the Netherlands Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2005 and Member of the Holland Royal Society of Sciences and Humanities in 2006. Since 2010 she has been a Member of the Board of the Netherlands Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences. Recent publications include 'Semantics and the Semantics of בָּרָא: a Rejoinder to the Arguments Advanced by B. Becking and M. Korpel' (together with R. Rezetko), *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* (2011, vol. 11); *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context* (Eisenbrauns, 2009); and 'Why the Verb 'bara' Does Not Mean 'To Create' in Genesis 1-2.4a. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 34.1 (2009), 1-21.

International Conference Ancient Jewish Texts and the 'Literary'

Organization

Institute of Jewish Studies (University of Antwerp)
in cooperation with Ghent University



Registration & contact

Jan Morrens
Institute of Jewish Studies - University of Antwerp
Prinsstraat 13, L.400 | BE-2000 Antwerpen
T +32 (0)3 265 52 43 | F +32 (0)3 265 52 41
ijs@ua.ac.be/ijs

Venue

University of Antwerp
Hof van Liere
Prinsstraat 13
2000 Antwerpen

