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The volume grew out of an international conference held at the prestigious *Institut für Judaistik* of the University of Vienna in October 2011 entitled *Narratology, Hermeneutics, and Midrash*. It consists of an Index of contents (pp. 5-6); an Introduction (pp. 7-13); fourteen studies of unequal length, two of which in German language (pp. 15-323); and a cumulative bibliography (pp. 325-349). It further entails a black-and-white reproduction of the first illumination in Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber Scivias*, as preserved in the Rupertsberg Codex (p. 285).

The studies presented in the volume are in-depth, innovative and illuminating inquiries into a remarkably wide scope of textual sources in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Arabic, Yiddish and German (the study of one text being complemented by the analysis of its pictorial transposition). Whereas most of the textual sources entail to differing degrees narrative elements, the literary forms and genres in which they are composed are variegated, starting from biblical narrative and legal texts, concluding with XXth century philosophical writing, and passing through rabbinic texts of various nature, such as *midrashim* and talmudic *sugyot*, among others. In this regard the term Midrash, employed in the volume's title as an encompassing definition, takes on very distinct meanings in the individual studies, being in some cases applied *strictu sensu* to the rabbinic compositions usually defined as Midrashim; in other cases in a broader sense, either as "commentary-like" or as a heuristic means for the analysis of the literary or hermeneutical features of the texts. The textual sources are examined through the lenses of heterogeneous, even if contiguous, scholarly fields of study (biblical studies, rabbinics, patristics, Arabic and Islamic studies, German studies, and Yiddish studies), whose hermeneutical premises and epistemic interests are to be found mainly within the realms of philology, theology, history, literary theory and philosophy. As described by the editors in the Introduction, the *trait d'union* unfolding through the

1. Thanks are due to Pete Walton for the proofreading of this review.

studies is their task of examining the respective textual sources “in interpretations that are context-sensitive and take into account the link connecting midrash, hermeneutics, and narrative”, with the result of combining the description of textual phenomena and exploration of the cultural and historical circumstances in which the texts were composed (Introduction, p. 8). In this regard, the editors point to the enterprise seminally advocated by Bo Pettersson (*sic*), a scholar versed not in Jewish studies, but rather in several branches of literary studies, among which narrative theory, as being kindred in nature and results to the studies collected in the volume (cf. Bo Pettersson, “Narratology and Hermeneutics: Forging the Missing Link”, in Sandra Heinen / Roy Sommer (eds.) 2009, *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research* (Narratologia, 20) Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 11-34, referred to in the Introduction at pp. 7-8). If Pettersson’s study is programmatically committed to a rapprochement of “the study of narrative and the study of interpretation” (Pettersson 2009, p. 11), throughout the volume edited by Constanza Cordoní and Gerhard Langer the emphasis shifts onto the one or the other component of the narratology-hermeneutics-Midrash triad. Thus, some studies explicitly resort to classical or post-classical narratological categories, whereas others address the narrative aspects of their sources without positioning their analysis within an explicit narrative-theoretical framework. Some devote ample room to the clarification of their own hermeneutics for the sake of self-positioning and interdisciplinarity; all are concerned with the hermeneutics underlying or informing their textual sources. Some studies explain and articulate better than others the ways in which they forged the link, in Pettersson’s words, between “the formalist *how*” and “the interpretive *why*” (Pettersson 2009, p. 15, italics in the text). All strive to broaden the interpretive angle by means of literary analysis and demonstrate the validity of the convergence of literary and interpretative concerns in textual analysis, advocated by the enterprise pursued in the conference and the volume.

The first two contributions are devoted to passages in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, namely Irmtraud Fischer’s “Reception of Biblical Texts in the Bible: A Starting Point of Midrash?” (pp. 15-24), and Ilse Muellner’s “Celebration and Narration. Metaleptic Features in Ex 12:1 – 13:16” (pp. 25-37). The next eight contributions deal predominantly with rabbinic literature, with comparative looks taken at other Jewish or non-Jewish writings: Agnethe Siquans’s “Midrasch und Kirchenväter: Parallelen und Differenzen in Hermeneutik und Methodologie” (pp. 39-70. The study takes a comparative look at Origen’s *Homilia II in Exodum*); Carol Bakhos’s “Reading Against the Grain: Humor and Subversion in Midrashic Literature” (pp. 71-79); Joshua Levinson’s “Post-Classical Narratology and the Rabbinic Subject” (pp. 81-106. The study originated as the key-note lecture in the conference); Paul Mandel’s “Kidor’s Revenge: Murder, Texts and Rabbis – An Analysis of a Rabbinic Tale and its Transmission (BT *Yoma* 83b)” (pp. 107-144. The study also touches upon the early Ashkenazic Talmud commentaries by Rashi and Rabbenu Gershom of Mainz or his students); Lorena Miralles Maciá’s “Judaizing a Gentile Biblical Character through Fictive Biographical

Reports: The Case of Bityah, Pharaoh's Daughter, Moses' Mother, according to Rabbinic Interpretations" (pp. 145-175. The study also deals with the Masoretic Bible and the Septuagint, as well as with works of Judeo-Hellenistic authors, such as Ezekiel the Tragedian, Artapanus, Philo, and Josephus); Susanne Plietzsch's "'That is What is Written'" – Retrospective Revelation of the Meaning of a Verse in Aggadic Midrash" (pp. 177-186); Gerhard Langer's "*Lekh Lekha*: Midrash Bereshit Rabbah and Tanhuma to Gen 12:1" (pp. 187-224); Constanza Cordoni's "The Emergence of the Individual Author(-Image) in Late Rabbinic Literature" (pp. 225-250). The ensuing contribution, Angelika Neuwirth's "The Challenge of Biblical Passion Narratives: Negotiating, Moderating, and Reconstructing Abraham's Sacrifice in the Qur'an" (pp. 251-263), broadens the spectrum of textual sources examined in the volume to the Qur'an, seen here against the backdrop of biblical, Christian, and rabbinic narratives and interpreted as a late-ancient and not-yet-Islamic text, in accordance with the author's ground-breaking thesis. The next contribution has a mediaeval Christian source as its object of study, namely Andreas Mauz's "Write What You See and Hear". Methodological Problems of the Poetics of 'Sacred Text': Hildegard's *Protestificatio* as Revelation Narrative" (pp. 265-288. The study also examines the non-textual medium constituted by the first of the illuminations which integrate Hildegard's work). The last two contributions in the volume reach into the Modern Era, by focusing on writings which renew or transmute the elements of earlier Jewish tradition by which they are informed: namely, Armin Eidherr's "Forms and Functions of Midrashic Narrative in Modern Yiddish Literature in the Light of Itzik Manger and Hirsh Osherowitsh" (pp. 289-299), and Dorothee Gelhard's "*Maqom* als Figur der Profanierung bei Walter Benjamin" (pp. 301-323).

The main thread unfolding throughout such a great variety of texts and contexts is the diachronic and contextualising focus on Jewish literature, which situates the volume in the series in which it has appeared (*Poetics, Exegesis and Narrative: Studies in Jewish Literature and Art*). After the initial section on the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, the examination of classical Rabbinic literature has the lion's share, and is well complemented by the investigation of other textual sources – Origen's Bible exegesis, Judeo-Hellenistic authors, and Qur'anic excerpts – which are indispensable objects of study when it comes to the contextualisation of Rabbinic literature against the ancient and late-ancient cultural and historical backgrounds. Thus, the volume is exemplary and coherent in its broadening the perspective on Jewish literature by presenting textual sources from the other two Abrahamic traditions. Less coherent, although fascinating and enriching, is the *coda* comprising the study on a mediaeval Christian work and the two on modern Jewish writings, whose exiguous number results in a sense of disproportion. On account of this, the Introduction to the volume engenders dissatisfaction as far as the rationale for the terminology employed in the volume's title is concerned, especially when it comes to the definition of Midrash, whose applicability to the sources presented by the studies is not self-evident in all instances (for example, the excerpts from the Qur'anic Surah 37 and Hildegard's *Protestificatio*). Thus, not only the deploy-

ment of the categories of narrative, narratology, hermeneutics, and Midrash, but also the inclusion of some sources in the volume would have required greater explanation and contextualisation. Otherwise, the Introduction is accurate and insightful in its presentation of the individual studies.

As far as the novelty of the intellectual enterprise underlying the volume is concerned, it might come to mind that a convergence of philological and literary interests, on the one hand, and historical and sociological ones, on the other, is not new to Jewish literature research. However, the novelty of Constanza Cordoni's and Gerhard Langer's *Narratology, Hermeneutics, and Midrash* lies in the aim to integrate specifically narratology and hermeneutics for the sake of textual analysis (and, no less importantly, to adopt this approach also for the study of non-Jewish or non-rabbinic textual evidence). Illuminating in this regard is the observation by Joshua Levinson, whose study was originally presented as the key-note lecture of the conference from which the volume originated. Levinson stresses that the literary school within rabbinics has seldom applied classical or post-classical narratological tools and faces the challenge of utilising "the powerful discourses of narratology to forge a renewed and more sophisticated dialogue between text and context, creating a cultural poetics that views literature neither as a separate and separable aesthetic realm nor as a mere product of culture, but as one realm among many for the negotiation and production of social meaning, of historical subjects, and of the systems of power that at once enable and constrain those subjects" (Levinson, "Post-Classical Narratology and the Rabbinic Subject", p. 82). By means of its specific ways of articulating and applying a blend of narratological and interpretive perspectives, the reading of *Narratology, Hermeneutics, and Midrash* has to offer precious substance both to those interested in the concrete texts analysed and contextualised by its constituent studies, and to those engaged in (Jewish) textual studies in general. This holds true also when it comes to the contributions, which have not resorted to an explicitly narratological tool kit.

A final note of praise goes to the passionate effort of many authors to address not only peer specialists in the respective disciplines, but also a larger audience, in the interest of interdisciplinary dialogue. Such a virtuous intention becomes evident, in some instances, in the framing words of the introduction which precedes the textual analysis and, in others, in the commentaries, footnotes and "aid" distributed throughout the essays themselves.

The volume is on the whole carefully edited and presents with few *errata* (the most notable being an incorrect arrangement of the original texts in Hebrew and Aramaic at pp. 112; 126-7).