

Complexity of Plural Traditions and the Concept of Representation

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1. Introduction

Biblical scholars working with manuscripts and texts have been faced with textual plurality for centuries. This is as true for scholars working on the medieval manuscripts of the Masoretic text as it is for those dealing with the Greek translation (Septuagint) and its daughter versions, or the Dead Sea Scrolls, to name a few.¹ The textual history of some literary works is more complex than others, but for anyone working in the field of biblical studies, there is no escaping textual plurality and its complex practical and theoretical repercussions. This plurality has been tackled by producing various eclectic and diplomatic editions of the Hebrew Bible and its main translations with apparatuses containing a selection of the variants found in available manuscript witnesses.

The Dead Sea Scrolls made this textual puzzle even harder and more intriguing at the same time. After these finds, it has become clear that a plurality of textual traditions was the norm in late Second Temple Period Judaism.² This plurality of traditions cannot be understood and explained simply by direct literary dependencies. This conclusion has led to the ever-growing usage of the term “tradition” in textual studies. Even though tradition is currently an essential part of our scholarly vocabulary and terminology, there are more users of the term than its definers: tradition is commonly used to signify something wider and more complex than what is preserved in individual manuscripts or in particular literary works, but what exactly do scholars mean by tradition, and do they perceive it in the same overall manner? What are we saying when we call something a tradition

¹ Textual plurality is encountered within the textual history of compositions in the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint as well as in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient Jewish literature. It is not possible to offer an extensive list of publications here. On the discussion of the unity and plurality of the Hebrew Scriptures in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls, see for example, Lange, *From Literature*, 51-107; idem, *Textual Plurality*, 43-96. For textual plurality of the book of Joshua, see further De Troyer, *The Textual Plurality*, 330-346. Textual plurality within other ancient Jewish literature is provided in, for example, Lange, *Nobody Dared*, 105-126. For a more recent scholarly discussion on textual plurality beyond biblical texts see, for example, Rey / Dhont / Martone, *Textual Plurality*, 127-130. This is an introduction to a thematic Revue de Qumran issue they edited. This journal issue offers a variety of examples of textual plurality in different sources, see for example, Brooke, *Textual Plurality*, 143-157. For examples of textual plurality in the Qumran rule texts, see further Hempel, *The Qumran*. Cf. Jokiranta / Vanonen, *Multiple*, 11-60.

² See, for instance, Brooke, *Textual Plurality*, 143-157; Lange, *Textual Plurality*, 43-96.

or part of a certain tradition? There is no easy or brief answer to such questions, but we should strive to tackle them in a more profound manner. Terminological clarity is a mutual interest because without defining such a central concept, scholars can easily misunderstand each other.

Defining what is tradition and explaining what is meant by the term in research is a shared interest, challenge, and part of the ongoing terminological and methodological discussion in biblical studies. The term tradition is present in a multitude of scholarly publications and oral presentations in various subfields of biblical studies as well as in the broader humanities. From these representations of the scholarly tradition, it is clear that tradition has been defined and understood in different ways depending on the specific field of study, its conventions, inner academic traditions, used sources or data, etc. To add to this complexity, we may also consider how the word tradition is used in other contexts such as contemporary religious or everyday language.

In this article, I first examine the wide and diverse usage of the loaded term “tradition” and highlight some of the main questions and issues related to it. The term is incremental and suitable for describing the phenomena encountered by scholars in biblical studies, but it is essential to go beyond mere descriptions of its usage and to explore and evaluate its potential definitions. In order to move in this direction, we need to explore the complexity of traditions by asking what constitutes a tradition and where is it contained, what does it do, and how does it function at particular times or in the process of transmission. After exploring what is tradition, I move on to investigate the potential applicability and usefulness of the concept of representation as a possible theoretical way of describing the diverse aspects of tradition. Representation is another loaded term with a long history and a multitude of examples of application in several fields. Even though it appears potentially useful for biblical studies as a way of dealing with the complexity of plural traditions, the term cannot simply be adopted without assessing both its strengths and limitations as well as its field specific dimensions. I argue that, by examining the use of the concept of representation in neighboring fields of study, we may be able to move the discussion about tradition, its definition and theoretical framework in a fresh direction.

2. What is tradition?

Before exploring more field specific examples of what tradition is, it is necessary to provide an idea of its broader application by briefly outlining its meaning in different contexts. Definitions of the term vary a great deal. In a classical sense (in theology), tradition is usually seen as something that

is passed down from one generation to the next with little or no change in the object that is understood as tradition or its transmission. Tradition is, thus, a stable and reliable element that has been faithfully transmitted for a long period of time. This is close to what is typically called tradition in, for example, the Roman catholic or Lutheran churches. It is something faithfully passed down through the generations that complements and interprets the scriptures; a doctrine, for instance, that is believed to have divine authority because it reflects the tradition of a church even though it is not part of the actual scriptures. But most biblical scholars today seem to understand tradition to be something much more fluid and “living” both in its content and its transmission processes than such a definition would allow.³ The transmission of tradition may be seen as a web of connectors between previous actualizations of the tradition and new interpretations or performances⁴ that then, in turn, become the past for the subsequent ones.⁵ In this process, each actualization and interpretation is context specific and somehow relevant for the group that produced it, small or large. Furthermore, the process of transmission requires a medium, whether it be something written, spoken, visual or a physical object.

Since the term tradition is used by scholars working in different fields within humanities, it is fruitful to examine how tradition is defined in, for example, folklore studies or cultural studies. Both folklore and cultural studies are wide and multifaceted, and they cover both historical and contemporary phenomena and sources. The use of the term tradition in folklore studies emphasizes the inclusion of oral traditions such as tales and proverbs. Furthermore, in cultural studies, tradition is used to signify, for example, a wide range of customs, practices, and beliefs that are meaningful for the members of a given culture.⁶ This broader view of tradition has been especially advocated by folklorists in the last twenty years. Many of them hold that “tradition entails a complex set of relationships between the past and the present, in which the past sets precedent for the present and the present reflects the past in its adherence to a particular tradition.”⁷

³ For examples of the contrary use of the term tradition in scholarship, see the introduction of Borchardt, *Manufacturing Tradition by Performing the Past*, in this thematic journal issue. Borchardt’s contribution provides helpful discussion and references to further literature. One example of the complexity of plural traditions and their transmission is provided by Orpana, *Reception*, where she examines the creation of humanity traditions, their interpretation and early reception in late Second Temple Jewish literature.

⁴ On traditions as performances and the transmission of traditions, see Borchardt, *Manufacturing*.

⁵ The unbroken chain of custody passing down traditions from one patriarchal figure to the next in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls is discussed in Pajunen, *Transmitting*, 31-51.

⁶ The Cambridge dictionary defines tradition as “a belief, principle, or way of acting that people in a particular society or group have continued to follow for a long time, or all of these beliefs, etc. in a particular society or group.” This definition takes into account the society or group specific factors, but at the same time emphasizes the immutability of traditions.

⁷ Allison, *Tradition*, 800.

A tradition's importance is in the link that it forms from the past to the present as a form of meaning construction and identity building. But in order for this link to be meaningful, the tradition needs to be adjusted to the changing needs of the community transmitting it. Randall Allison acutely remarks that there needs to be an identifiable core within a specific tradition or mode of transmission that is identifiable through time and among various performances. Individual performances of the tradition reflect a continuity and an adherence to the central core of the tradition so that the tradition remains recognizable, but there may nevertheless be certain variations in the core elements. Tradition thus represents both continuity through time and innovation in its particular representations.⁸

A tradition is, therefore, understood to be more than any of its single witnesses, yet at the same time it needs to be recognizable in each of them. In practical terms, this means that a specific written form, artistic, or oral performance does not constitute the entire tradition but rather represents different facets of it. Nevertheless, each representation of a tradition needs to have some parts of the recognizable core of the overall tradition, otherwise the link between the past and the present is lost. This understanding of tradition comes close to how many biblical scholars currently envision tradition: it is fluid, "living," and non-fixed, and therefore cannot be located in a single source or form. There also needs to be continuity between the past and the present in which the tradition is made meaningful in a particular context to a specific group.

Still, the term is used in biblical studies to indicate matters that differ from each other in numerous ways. It is potentially helpful to consider and conceptualize traditions in sets of moving scales between two extremes. Here are some examples to illuminate the complex nature of traditions and what these extremes could be.

Some traditions are compact, others broad. There is a considerable difference, for example, between the tradition of Dodo (Judges 10,1) and the traditions related to central figures such as Abraham, Moses, or David that are used and referred to in a multitude of literary works, later art, and surely in oral performances as well.

Some traditions are detailed, and others operate on a more general level. Furthermore, traditions may be seen to differ from each other in terms of time and place: some traditions span over a long period of time, whereas others have a short lifecycle. Related to the lifecycle of traditions, it is also noteworthy that some traditions may first be active but then seem to disappear or appear to be in a

⁸ Allison, *Tradition*, 800-801. For another example from the field of folklore research, see Noyes, *Tradition*, 233-268, who identifies three main orientations: tradition as a communicative transaction, tradition as a temporal ideology and tradition as communal property.

hibernation type state. It may, however, popup or “activate” again in a later context. An example to illuminate this aspect of traditions could be the lamentations over Jerusalem. According to available sources, the lamentations for Jerusalem emerged related to the events of 586 BCE.⁹ Then, for several hundred years, we do not have clear evidence that this tradition was actively performed. It could be that lamentations over Jerusalem were merely part of the literary Jeremiah-tradition. It seems the wars between the Ptolemais and Seleucids may have reactivated the performance of this tradition and the need for fresh actualizations of it as is suggested by Apocryphal Lamentations (4Q179; 4Q501) from the third and second centuries BCE.¹⁰ In later sources, in Psalms of Solomon 2, for example, there are lamentations over the Roman conquest of Jerusalem in 63 BCE. The lamentation tradition re-emerges again in the New Testament and in the writings of Josephus in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE. These preserved witnesses show that the tradition of lamentations over Jerusalem was at times activated from a potential hibernation, or at least its use was greatly amplified in several historical settings when the societal situation sparked new relevant interpretations of it.

Some traditions are firmly tied to a specific geographical or cultural context while others span over larger areas of the map or in various cultural milieus. Consider and compare, for example, the specifically Samaritan tradition, like those connected to mount Gerizim, and Greek literature in its many forms.¹¹

In addition, the complexity of traditions is evident in that some traditions are more cohesive and consistent whereas others have more inner variety and strands. A potentially helpful example of this are the various colors and their meanings in various contexts. If we see red, yellow, and green in the context of traffic lights, they mean stop, wait, and go. But what about the meaning of the same colors in different contexts? In the context of Christian liturgical colors, for example, red is the color of martyrs, of Christ’s death, and of fire/the Holy Spirit whereas green indicates life, growth, and renewal, and these colors are associated with specific times of the year.

Furthermore, there can be more than one version of a tradition that occasionally even contradict each other. A good clarifying example of this is the tradition of Manasseh. According to 2 Kings, Manasseh was the worst sinner among the kings of Judah and his acts remained evil until the end of

⁹ There are also lamentations over other cities in Ancient Near Eastern sources; see further, Körting, *Lamentations*, 137-152. For the actualization of lamentations over Jerusalem in the Psalms of Solomon, see Pajunen, *Exodus and Exile*, 252-276.

¹⁰ For the official editions, see Allegro, 179. *Lamentations*, 75-76; Baillet, 501. *Lamentation*, 79-80.

¹¹ For the influence and usage of Greek poetic forms in Jewish poetry, see Dhont, *Jewish Poets, Greek Poetry. Language and Identity in the Hellenistic Jewish Poetic Tradition*, in this thematic journal issue.

his life. In contrast, in 2 Chronicles, he is portrayed as an exemplary repentant sinner that rehabilitated himself after his repentance. What is meaningful here is that both of these versions of the tradition existed at the same time. They both continued to be transmitted, and are even now part of the Hebrew Bible, but because they cannot both be true, later authors and interpreters had to choose which depiction was meaningful to them and their audience, and that was the version that they passed down in their own writings.¹²

Most of the above-mentioned extremes and examples related to traditions examined the question of what constitutes a tradition from various points of view. Is it enough to examine what constitutes a tradition or should we broaden our scope to examine how they function as well as how they are treated and passed down? This is to say that the mere investigation of preserved traditions (descriptive level)¹³ needs to be complimented by the examination of their role in transmission processes (functional level) in order to better understand what they are, what they pass on, and why they are transmitted. Yet traditions are not something stagnant and passive – objects to be passed down – but require agents as their enactors and transmitters and communities that engage with them constantly. Otherwise traditions become irrelevant and lost. It is thus also relevant to ask how traditions themselves operate as active agents. The descriptive level and the functional level are therefore intertwined. The answers to the questions related to both levels may be field specific and attainable only by case-by-case evaluation, but it is important to keep these questions in mind and to be conscious of them since they may have repercussions on the research we conduct.

Our studies might have profound questions and meaningful aims, but in practice, we can confidently proceed only if they are rooted in available sources. Considering traditions in ancient contexts is considerably harder than similar studies on traditions in contemporary societies because the source material is much more limited and partial. In the field of Second Temple Jewish studies, the sources investigated are manuscripts, texts,¹⁴ and multifaceted archeological evidence such as pottery, figurines and statues, remains of habitats, and iconographic images. When working with ancient textual sources and material artefacts, it is important to keep in mind that the preserved

¹² For the early reception of the Manasseh tradition, see, Pajunen, *Saga*, 565-584.

¹³ By descriptive, I do not mean something that is presented objectively. Instead, the process of description also involves interpretation. What is important here is to distinguish between the investigation of the description of traditions, e.g., what are the elements of the traditions, and the examination of how they work in the transmission process by carrying and constructed meanings.

¹⁴ Pajunen, *Textual Plurality*, 17, illuminates the relationship between manuscripts, texts, and works when talking about dating: “The date of a manuscript does not give any indication for the date of a literary development. It only shows that the preserved text existed, at least in the attested form, during the time the manuscript was written. It does not tell anything about what other forms of the work might have circulated at the time the manuscript was copied. There might have been many different forms of a work circulating at the same time, all with their own textual history. Supposed absences are not proof for any of these things.”

sources represent only a portion of that which was originally produced. The fragmentary nature of our sources needs to be accepted and taken into account when making conclusions. Another aspect related to what has been preserved to us is that we do not know what has been lost: the destruction and the tests of time might have been kinder or harsher to some sources than to others and did not happen equally and systematically throughout.¹⁵

After considering traditions as such multifaceted, complex constructs, it is fair to ask: are there similarities between various traditions either in themselves, in their structure, or perhaps in the way they function? How do we justify the use of the single term tradition when the overall phenomenon is this complex?

I wish to close this section about what tradition is with remarks from the standpoint of scholars today. The challenge of defining tradition is not the only difficult task when studying traditions. In addition to trying to find proper, thought-out terminology to better share our concepts and research with our colleagues, we need to have a sense of what tradition is and where does it manifest itself. The way we answer these questions has direct consequences on how we justify the meaningful selection of sources for our investigations.

Let us say someone were to take on the scrutinization of the priestly tradition. How will she/he make sure that the whole tradition will be investigated? Which sources should she/he include for the study to be exhaustive? It does not seem sound to start the study before narrowing its scope to a specific context: obvious choices for a more focused study would be to concentrate on, for example, an explicit time period, geographic area, and/or a particular cultural milieu. Each of these options could be well justified. It is, however, necessary to note that the tradition investigated may not fully operate under the same restrictions as we scholars might need or desire them to when keeping up imaginary boundaries.¹⁶ Such boundaries help us maintain a sense of control in terms of manageable amounts of sources, their content, and our scholarly audiences, but they do not necessarily give complete justice to the sources and phenomena under investigation. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, our sources are fragmentary, and portions of what was produced have been lost. Even in rare cases in which almost entire manuscripts and texts have survived, none of them individually or collectively contain the whole tradition but merely snapshots or keyholes into

¹⁵ What has been preserved and what lost and what kind of access to sources we imagine ancient writers had is discussed by Milstein, *Insights from Tradition into the Biblical Law of the Slavewoman (Exodus 21,7-11)*, in this thematic journal issue.

¹⁶ Pajunen / Tervanotko, eds., *Crossing*. This edited volume contains a wide range of essays providing examples of why it is important and beneficial to cross the traditional boundaries of academic disciplines and the anachronistic boundary between canonical and other literary sources.

specific moments in the transmission process of the tradition. Depending on our scope, this might include earlier or later interpretations as part of the reception history of the tradition.¹⁷ Each of these snapshots or keyholes provide us with an interpretation and actualization of a tradition by a group of people that is rooted in a particular context in terms of time, place, and culture. These interpretations have been partially preserved to us in manuscript evidence and textual sources, but the phenomena of transmission processes related to traditions are wider than simply what has been written down. Even though, for obvious reasons, oral transmission has not survived to us fully and unchanged, and its investigation is an even more complex task than investigating textual transmission, the role of orality should not be ignored or dismissed.¹⁸

Considering the complexity of the concept of tradition described in this section and in the referred literature, it is hardly attainable to study traditions directly. Instead, I propose that we concentrate on the various representations of traditions. In the next section, I focus on the concept of representation and on various applications of this concept in cultural studies and in comparative literature.

3. The Concept of Representation

If we accept that traditions, or at least traditions in their entirety, cannot be located anywhere since they are not stable, static or fixed and do not take a single correct and inclusive form in which the tradition can be exhausted, a bold statement could be made: traditions cannot be studied. This does not mean that we cannot operate with traditions in any capacity nor that we should leave them outside of scholarly inquiries all together. Even though traditions in their entirety cannot be exhaustively studied and we only have keyholes through which to look at the whole, we may still investigate the various representations of traditions, how these representations are actualized in complex transmission processes, and what can be deduced about the tradition from its representations.

Earlier, I mentioned that the term “tradition” is used widely across different fields and subfields. This is also the case with the term “representation.” The concept of representation is included in

¹⁷ See, for example, Lied / Lundhaug, eds., *Snapshots*.

¹⁸ Oral traditions and their role in the transmission processes is discussed at length by Person, *The Deuteronomic History*; idem, *From Conversation*. The role of the oral component in the transmission process is also briefly discussed for example in Brooke, *Scrolls*, 119-128; Pajunen, *Transmitting*, 31-51. In his extensive work, Silverman, *Persepolis*, utilizes media-contextualization, particularly oral theory, and critiques the standard text-centric method of biblical scholarship.

various theories, and it is applied differently and widely in the Humanities, e.g., philosophy, psychology, mathematics, social studies, visual arts, media studies, the study of literature, and communication studies. It should be noted that there is a long and complex history behind the concept, and it holds a wide range of facets that are specific to different fields and approaches, which I will not go through here.¹⁹

The Oxford English Dictionary offers many potential definitions for representation. The ones that come closest to the use in Humanities are:

- A depiction or portrayal of a person or thing, typically one produced in an artistic medium; an image, a model, a picture.
- Something which stands for or denotes another symbolically; an image, a symbol, a sign.
- The presentation of characters and action on the stage; performance; (also) an instance of this.
- The action or process of presenting to the mind or imagination; an instance of this; (also) the result of this process; an image or picture presented to the mind or imagination in this way.
- The fact or process of standing for, or in the place of, a person, group, institution, etc., esp. with the right or authority to speak or act on behalf of these.

The first three descriptions of the meaning of the word underline the nominal meaning with a number of synonyms. Additionally, the two remaining descriptions reflect the verbal use “to represent” or the process of representation. Still, the nominal meanings, such as portrayal, depiction, rendition, illustration in a particular way can be derived from the verbal usage. Hence, there are two levels to the meaning of the word: what representations are and what representations do. Here we may see the intertwined levels of description and functionality that were discussed earlier in relation to traditions. Both the verbal and nominal meanings of representation are part of the processes that involve interpretation and that produce meanings.

Moving on from definition to application, I wish to examine the use of representation in two fields specifically: cultural studies and comparative literature. The applications of the concept in these fields come close to its potential applications in biblical studies in terms of the questions that are

¹⁹ For examples on how representation has been applied to religious studies (including reflections on iconoclasm and contributions on representation in arts) see, for example, Assman / Baumgartner, eds., *Representation*. For critical discussion of the concept of representation see, for example, Goodman, *Languages of Art*; Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*.

posed as well as the sources that are used. The uses of the concept in these fields can thus be fruitful examples.

3.1 Representation in Cultural Studies

It comes as no surprise that representation signifies various things in cultural studies and has evoked a wide range of applications in this field. There is not a single unified theory that is applied consistently, and hence representation is often more of an approach than a ready theory or method to be applied.

Representation is one of the key concepts, for example, for sociologist and cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall. In short, for him, representation is the product of meaning through language.²⁰ He argues that there are two related systems of representation that are both part of the process of constructing meaning. “First, there is the ‘system’ by which all sorts of objects, people and events are correlated with a set of concepts of *mental representations* which we carry around in our heads. Without them, we could not interpret the world meaningfully at all. In the first place, then, meaning depends on the system of concepts and images formed in our thoughts which can stand for or represent the world, enabling us to refer to things both inside and outside our heads.”²¹

Even though we interpret and understand the world in individual ways, we are able to communicate to each other if we share, by and large, the same conceptual schemes and thus interpret the world in roughly the same way. Hall continues this line of thought by stating that, then, “we are able to build up a shared culture of meanings and thus construct a social world which we inhabit together.”²²

A shared conceptual scheme is, however, useless if we cannot represent and exchange meanings and concepts. This is why we also need access to shared language. The second system of representation is then language, understood here in a very broad and inclusive way. “Our shared conceptual map must be translated into a common language, so that we can correlate our concepts and ideas with certain written words, spoken sounds or visual images. The general term used for words, sounds or images which carry meaning are called signs. These signs stand for or represent

²⁰ Hall, *The Work*, 16-24. This chapter is published in a volume Hall, S., ed., *Representation*, which offers a wide range of contributions on applications of representation in cultural studies.

²¹ Hall, *The Work*, 17.

²² Hall, *The Work*, 18. Hall notes that this is why “culture” is sometimes defined in terms of “shared meanings or shared conceptual maps.” See further, du Gay et al., *Doing Cultural Studies*,

the concepts and the conceptual relations between them which are carried around in our heads and together they make up the meaning-systems of our culture.”²³

Hall ties the concept of representation closely with the process of constructing meanings. One of Hall’s examples of how representation works comes from visual arts. He explains that, in a painting, the depicted figures stand at the same time in the place of and for the story of what they represent. Hall notes that meanings are bound to context. In other words, representations take on, symbolize, or come to stand for a wider set of meanings about something that they represent.²⁴ “The relation between ‘things,’ concepts and signs lies in the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call ‘representation.’”²⁵

The production of meaning in language and representation with signs relates to biblical studies and particularly to the representations of traditions and their transmission processes. But how may the two related systems of representation operate in biblical studies? To answer this question, we need to consider how we imagine the shared conceptual maps to look like in the historical context of our sources. Related to this, we must examine what sort of language is used to represent and exchange meanings and concepts. To give but a few examples from the field of biblical studies, let us first consider the concept of an eagle. Eagles (in singular or in plural) are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible several times (e.g., Ex 19,4; Isa 40,31; Jer 49,16.22; Prov 23,5; 2 Sam 1,23) as well as in the New Testament (e.g., Rev 8,13; 12,14). These passages are representations of the tradition of eagles. These representations and the meaning they produce is accessible to those who share the conceptual map of eagles, and this map is utilized when representing eagles in the above-mentioned passages to activate the audiences’ knowledge structures related to what eagles look like and how they act. Another example would be the traditions of lions that are represented in literary sources (in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., Num 23,24; Deut 33,20; Judg 15,5.8.18; 1 Sam 17,34.37; 1 Kgs 13,24.26; Job 4,10-11; Ps 7,2; 91,13; Prov 28,15; Isa 11,6-7 and in the New Testament, e.g., 1 Pet 5,8; Rev 4,7), figurines and iconography.²⁶ Here, as in the case of eagles, each representation operates with the two related systems of representation that are both part of the process of constructing meaning: first is the mental representation carried inside one’s head, and second is the access to shared language so that mental representations may be translated into a common language, which is essential for sharing concepts. The process works in two directions: mental representations are present when

²³ Hall, *The Work*, 18.

²⁴ Hall, *The Work*, 16.

²⁵ Hall, *The Work*, 19.

²⁶ Strawn, *What Is Stronger. On the method of iconographic exegesis and its applications*, see de Hulster / LeMon, eds., *Image*; de Hulster / Strawn / Bonfiglio, *Iconographic Exegesis*.

producing and interpreting representations outside our heads, but these representations also actively build mental representations. Both directions of this process have a role in the transmission processes of traditions. The representations may be concrete or metaphoric, but in both cases the shared, culture specific, mental representations provide the ground for meaning construction.

Before moving on to discuss representations in the study of literature, I wish to remark that representations and the process of representing also ties into power and may thus have political dimensions. To represent may also mean that a person or organization speaks, acts, or is present officially for someone else, and therefore the scope of representation covers the phenomena of the action of presenting: speaking or acting on behalf of someone or the state of being represented. This aspect of representation has sparked a multitude of studies in contemporary and historical contexts related to, for example, political representations and representations of gender. Central questions here are, on the one hand, who represents, what is represented, and how, and on the other hand, who or what is not represented. Connecting the study of power and power relations to biblical studies is certainly not unheard of. When analyzing our sources, it is vital to consider not only what is represented but also who is representing, from what perspective, and with what motivation. Sources themselves do not have power, but power dynamics are in play when they are used and interpreted.

3.2 Representation in Literature

To clarify the application of representation in literature, it has been argued that representation operates in four ways: literature as self-representation, the representation of literature in literature, the representation of language, and literature as representation of the world.²⁷ In what follows, these aspects are introduced moving from the simplest to the more complex and accompanied by some examples from the field of biblical studies. First, literature may be seen as self-representation. This means, for example, that literature may mimic itself by the repetition of its material features such as metric structure or rhymes. Scholars working on the concept of representation in literature have rightly noted that to mimic or duplicate does not automatically mean to represent. These techniques are linked to self-replication if the structure is intentional, forming a unity in which all parts have meaningful relations to each other.²⁸ In addition, for a text to represent, the audience is invited to

²⁷ These four ways representations can be applied to literature are translated and adapted from Veivo, *Representaation*, 145-156.

²⁸ de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 25.

compare these relations to each other in order to form a way of reading that notes the inner references and takes them as the basis for interpretation.²⁹

In practice, self-representation may occur in poetry that utilizes the phonetic aspects and semantic dimensions of language. A good example from the Second Temple Period is Second Isaiah, which utilizes semantic dimensions of the Hebrew language and contains poetic passages that additionally play with phonetic aspects. For anyone who has tried to translate poetry into another language, it is abundantly clear that the phonetic and semantic features may be lost in translation. Self-representation is, however, a wider phenomenon, and it occurs also outside poetry. For instance, the myth cycles in antiquity may be seen as repetitions of family relations and particularly as the repeated neglect of rules and regulations associated with them.³⁰

The second way a representational approach has been used in comparative literature is to consider the representation of literature in literature. One application of this is intertextuality, which was first put forward by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s. She understands citations as repetition, but “absorption” is always involved within intertextuality. Therefore, the meaning of the cited content within the new context attains new aspects and is never the same as in the context from which it was taken.³¹ Intertextuality, however, is not the only way literature can represent literature. Cases in which a text does not represent any one text or a group of texts but rather the conventions of literature may also be categorized under this second manner in which representation operates.³²

The third aspect is the representation of language in literature. What is important here is that literature can be an imitation or a simulation of a section of meaningful reality. According to Jean Bessière, literature is metarepresentation, and it utilizes representations produced in culture. He argues that this does not mean that literature is secondary to other representations but that the value of literature is specifically in its nature as metarepresentation because this means that literature can observe, analyze, and question the material it uses without having to be tied down to “scientific” demands. This means that the truth value between the world and what is represented in literature is

²⁹ Veivo, *Representaation*, 145.

³⁰ Johansen, *Literary Discourse*, 211-221. On literary semiotics, see Veivo / Ljungberg / Johanson, eds., *Redefining*.

³¹ Kristeva, *Word*, 37, “Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.” See also Kristeva, *Desire*. Since Kristeva’s initial work, intertextuality has been heavily developed in linguistic studies and applied widely in biblical studies. For the general study of intertextuality, see, for example, Still / Worton, *Introduction*; Allen, *Intertextuality*; Orr, *Intertextuality*. For applications of intertextuality in ancient cultures and their afterlife, see, for example, Bauks / Horowitz / Lange, eds., *Between Text and Text*.

³² Veivo, *Representaation*, 151, introduces an example from a poem that follows the conventions of poetry, such as metrics and rhyme, but that is not written in any natural existing language. It cannot thus carry semantic meaning. For the use of literary conventions in Second Temple Literature, see Dhont, *Jewish Poets*, and Livneh, *Between Scholarly and Ancient Rhetorical Tradition*. A New Look at LAB 39,10-40,9, in this thematic journal issue.

not central.³³ What sets Bassière apart from Jørgen Dines Johansen is that Johansen's understanding is based on the idea that literature mimics contemporary societal discourses such as various religious, philosophical, or scientific discourses. What combines these discourses, according to him, is that they have important purposes and that, within them, there are strict ways to use language. Therefore, these societal discourses strongly regulate both the use and production of language. Literary discourse, in contrast, mimics all societal discourses without having to obey their typical rules and obligations. This means that literature may also produce representations of the world that fall between the societal discourses and that are, for that reason, existentially relevant and meaningful.³⁴

Fourth, and finally, literature may operate as a representation of the world. The principle is that representation needs to be distinguished from what it represents, otherwise the whole concept of representation becomes impossible. This means that the world that is represented is not the same as the world that it represents. Representation is an interpretative view of the world that it represents, but it is not the world itself. Otherwise, it would not be a representation but the world. This notion can be adapted to the study of traditions by stating that representation is not the same as the tradition it represents. A representation is just a representation, which interpretively represents the tradition.

In this view, what makes the process of representing more complex is that sometimes what is represented in the text (e.g., described places or activities) only exists in what is represented by the text and not in the world outside the text. Such places and activities can still be understood and be meaningful for a reader or listener with the help of mental schemas, scripts and images, which are familiar from cognitive studies.³⁵ With the knowledge structures of the city gates and of walking, a literate passage representing a figure walking through city gates becomes accessible to the audience. Another example would be praying in a synagogue or sacrificing at an altar. There are plenty of similarly structured examples in which a familiar schema, script, and mental image of the audience is activated by what is represented in the sources of biblical studies, in literature, visual art, and

³³ See further, Bessière, *La littérature*, on how something that is considered banal is no longer considered to be so when it is treated in literature. Instead, it becomes an attempt to ponder and investigate societal norms and structures that determine significance and insignificance with the help of the representation of banality.

³⁴ Johansen, *Literary Discourse*, 74-109.

³⁵ On the theory of natural narratology, see, Fludernik, *Towards*, who builds upon the assumption that narratives utilize a reader's own experiences by activating mental elements such as schemas, scripts, and mental images. This same process may be in operation when narratives or other literary genres are read out loud and received in audio instead of them been read as a text. This would make the theory more applicable to the use of biblical studies working in ancient context where literacy was low and oral performances provided access to content.

archeological evidence. In this way, various representations may represent not just the world but also the fictional worlds accessible by their audiences.

Following this line of thought, let us examine a visionary work labeled New Jerusalem that is extant in seven fragmentary Qumran manuscripts (1Q32, 2Q24, 4Q554, 4Q554a, 4Q555, 5Q15, and 11Q18).³⁶ New Jerusalem describes in detail a heavenly/future Jerusalem where the temple at the very center of the city stands as the culmination of the vision. This work utilizes the layout and structure of a typical large city. The depiction starts from the walls and gates and continues inward. The work is made up of long lists containing detailed measurements of the city and its different parts as well as descriptions of the used materials.³⁷ Even though this is a vision of the future/heavenly Jerusalem and not of a place that physically exists in the world, the content may have meaning to audiences if it activates certain schemas and scripts. If we assume that the ancient audience had a mental representation of a typical large city structure in their heads, the representation of New Jerusalem with all its details is accessible to them. This is likewise true in the case of the measurements and used materials – they are meaningless if a person does not have a mental representation to match it. The representation of New Jerusalem with the holiest, the temple, in the middle reflects a city that exists only in the literary work, that is in the representation itself.

These four aspects of representation presented above all emphasize the participatory role of an audience in the construction of the meaning of representations. It should be noted that, even though audiences are composed of individuals, the way representations and their meanings are produced is not completely subjective because interpretations are rooted in cultural contexts. Members of the same culture broadly share the same conceptual schemes and thus interpret the world in roughly the same way, and they have access to shared language (words, signs, images, etc.), which enables the exchange of meanings.³⁸ Without the active role of audiences in the production of meanings, representations would only be non-actualized potentials.

4. Conclusions

³⁶ For the manuscripts and text, see DiTommaso, *The Dead Sea*.

³⁷ The closest parallel to the New Jerusalem would be the temple vision in the Book of Ezekiel (Ezek 40-48). For contrasts and consistencies between New Jerusalem and Ezekiel 40-48, see García Martínez, *The Temple*, 431-460; Lange, *Between*, 397-412. Cf. Perrin, *The Dynamics*, 171-177.

³⁸ Hall, *The Work*.

The current scholarly consensus is that textual plurality was the norm in late Second Temple Judaism. It is clear that the plurality of traditions cannot be understood and explained simply by direct literary dependencies. This conclusion has led to the ever-growing use of the term “tradition” in textual studies and in biblical studies more broadly, but there is considerable variation in the way tradition is understood and used. A tradition should be understood to be more than any of its single witnesses. Still, for the link between the past and the present to remain recognizable, some key elements of the tradition need to be included in each witness. Tradition thus represents both continuity through time and innovation in its particular group specific representations, but the essence of a tradition needs to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

In this article, I conceptualized the complexity of tradition by offering examples of what constitutes a tradition with remarks on its function in the transmission process. It is essential to keep in mind that, when working with ancient textual sources and material artefacts, the preserved sources represent only a portion of that which was originally produced. The fragmentary nature of our sources needs to be accepted and taken into account when analyzing these sources, when making conclusions about the transmission processes of traditions, and when building perceptions of traditions.

I argue that, since traditions or entire traditions cannot be located and contained anywhere because they are not stable, static, or fixed, they cannot be studied. Instead, I suggest that we turn the focus of investigation towards the various representations of traditions. I propose that the applications of representation in the wider Humanities, particularly in cultural studies and comparative literature, may provide fruitful parallels for biblical studies. All sources may not be studied with the same set of questions, concepts or approaches, but this article provides some thoughts on how to proceed with the study of traditions.

There are a few broad questions related to traditions that I could not scrutinize here, but which I wish to continue discussing within biblical studies. For instance, what is the essence of different traditions that needs to be transmitted in each of its representations for the link between the past and the present to be maintained? This ties in with the need to perceive what is actually transmitted when it is claimed that a tradition is transmitted, and how would it be possible to determine whether various representations are representations of a single tradition or of several traditions.

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Abstract

Biblical scholars working with textual sources have, especially after the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, been challenged by the complexity of plural traditions. This plurality of traditions cannot be understood and explained simply by direct literary dependencies. This has led to the ever-growing usage of the term “tradition” in textual studies, but it is not clear what exactly is meant by this term. The complexity and fluidity of non-fixed traditions which are not exhaustively presented in any of their representatives, makes it impossible to capture and study entire traditions. Therefore, I suggest that by examining the use of the concept of representation in neighboring fields of research we may be able to move the discussion about tradition, its definition and theoretical framework to a fresh direction.

Zusammenfassung

Bibelwissenschaftler, die mit Textquellen arbeiten, stehen insbesondere mit der Veröffentlichung der Schriftrollen vom Toten Meer vor der Herausforderung, eine Erklärung für die Pluralität der

Textbezeugung zu finden. Die komplexe Überlieferungssituation kann nicht einfach durch direkte literarische Abhängigkeiten verstanden und erklärt werden. Stattdessen wird immer häufiger der Begriff der „Tradition“ in Textstudien verwendet, wobei aber unklar bleibt, was genau mit diesem Begriff gemeint ist. Die Komplexität und Fluidität nicht festgelegter Traditionen, die in keinem der Textzeugen (z.B.) vollständig dargestellt sind, macht es unmöglich, Traditionen in ihrer Gesamtheit zu erfassen und zu studieren. Daher schlägt der vorliegende Beitrag vor, die Diskussion über den Begriff der Tradition und ihren theoretischen Rahmen durch eine vergleichende Untersuchung des Representationskonzeptes in benachbarten Forschungsgebieten auf eine neue Basis zu stellen.