

TOWARDS AN AESTHETIC READING OF THE BIBLE

Gerrie Snyman
Department of Old Testament
Unisa

Abstract

*This article discusses the problem of texts in a literate culture. Two questions are discussed: what is the text and who is the text. Both questions are formulated within hermeneutical theory. The context of the late twentieth century prefers the latter question. Texts are placed within time and space: not only are texts produced within time and space, but they are read within time and space. The involvement of time and space focuses the attention on the reading process as a performance. To illustrate the value of reading as performance, Heller's book, *God knows*, is discussed with regard to certain aspects of David's behaviour in *Samuel-Kings*. Heller's text is regarded as a response to textual impulses provided by Heller's own social context.*

1. Introduction

Looking at the corpus of literature surrounding the biblical texts, I am confronted by different readers' receptions of these texts. These receptions are the product of readers assembling, demolishing and reassembling aspects of different stories, thereby forming new stories. Using a limited number of images, metaphors, narratives, parables and symbols, readers select, arrange, expose and rearrange the different components in order to construct new stories of the meaning of human life in progress (cf Greeley 1981:11). The story streams found in the pool of biblical stories merge with the readers' own stories in a way that somehow gives direction to the readers' own stories.

The church of the first century, for example, encoded Jesus in terms of the repertoire of story streams available within Judaism at that time: Jesus became the second Moses or Adam, the Messiah and the prophet. The images, stories, parables and metaphors of the Judaistic repertoire of the time shaped the experience of the first century church of Jesus being alive. And not only did the Gospel writers use images and symbols available to them, but their understanding of these very symbols and images was transformed in the process (cf Greeley 1981:10).

A more recent reception of the stories about Jesus, in effect creating a new religious text, is the film *Jesus of Montreal* (cf Wall 1989). The plot of the passion narrative becomes the plot of the characters in the film. The main character, Daniel Coulombe, for example, overturns television cameras in the same way Jesus overturned the tables in the temple in the passion narrative. The film addresses the problem of presenting a reality to a twentieth century audience who were not present at the events narrated in the passion narrative and who do not share the plausibility structures of those who experienced the living Jesus. The film is not a restatement of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus, but a rather different interpretation of this strange event. According to the film, resurrection entails a new life, which is illustrated not by the main character waking up from the dead, but by people receiving his organs and so presenting them with a new lease on life.

What is the status of the biblical text? To Carroll (1993:81) the text remains unreadable unless it is reinterpreted, transformed and made over into a new image in order to become useful to the readers. To those whose main concern is the question what is the text (cf Davies & Wollaston 1993:15), the nature of the text is sacred. The text can only be examined in order to establish the truth about God using an authentic version of the text. In this instance, the transformation of the text is disguised (or even denied) in equating the text with the truth about God. But in effect the truth about God is a rewriting of the biblical text.

If the biblical text is rewritten in any case, it is perhaps more rewarding to look into the production process. Then the question does not focus on what is the text but on who is the text. The emphasis then falls on the social relations behind the production of the text or the social relations that gave rise to the text. In a country where religious tolerance is guaranteed in the constitution, the dominant question no longer concerns whose truth or whose text is the best. What becomes more important is understanding why people believe in the way they do. The subject Biblical Studies can play an important role in nursing this understanding by showing students of the biblical texts how readers rewrite the biblical texts in order to verbalise their own religious experiences.

I will call the act of 'rewriting' the biblical text the result of an aesthetic reading. I will use Joseph Heller's controversial book, *God knows* (1984), to illustrate an aesthetic reading of the David and Bathsheba story in 2 Samuel 11-12:31. The premise of this article is that the biblical text is a performative event in time and space, necessitating a reading which is, equally, a performative event in time and space. Thus, since the thrust of this article itself should be situated, I will start by placing the aesthetic reading in the hermeneutical context of literate culture and the culture's neglect of reading and writing as an event in time and space. This discussion will be followed by a brief reference to an aesthetic approach as a performance in time and space, after which Heller's performance of the David and Bathsheba story will be illustrated.

2. Text in Literature Culture

The Hebrew Bible, as a patched text of a Hebrew no one ever spoke (cf Carroll 1993:80), received its 'textual' status with the Renaissance movement's cry 'back to the ancient texts'. The Reformers used the Hebrew text to subvert the medieval church (cf Carroll 1993:84). The Hebrew text was functional in providing them with an ideological purity against their adversaries. The text itself was not important, but rather the ideas or events that could be extracted or reconstructed from it.

A text has become dispensable (cf Kort 1988:138). The biblical text's liquidation resulted from two approaches within literate culture, namely that of transforming the biblical text into statements of propositional absolutes and that of consigning the biblical text to a mere stage of the development of an entire cultural process.

The first approach relates to a conservative understanding of the Bible (cf Brueggemann 1993:66) and the second approach concerns a liberal understanding of the Bible. From a conservative perspective, the biblical texts display a divine history of divine intentions from creation to the present day (cf Kort 1988:139). The liberal reading of these texts abstracts the meaning and value of the stories from their settings, transforming them into mere tools of the values they make available. In the end, the

biblical story is relegated to another world, ignoring the integrity of the biblical narrative.

According to Kort (1988:142) texts are regarded as prisons where ideas and facts are kept and from which they must be freed. The historical-grammatical method wants to free God's revelations in the text from the text (cf Scheffler 1991:52-65) and the historical-critical method (cf Deist 1991:48-51) delves into the pre-textual stage of the biblical text as well as its subsequent growth and development.

In both cases the text becomes 'superfluous'. In the first instance, the text is not seen in relation to the context of the reader or recipient. Once the text has legitimised a doctrine, the doctrine becomes more important than the biblical text. Secondly, once the production history of the text has been portrayed, the question what do we do with it? still remains, because the text is handled as a matter of pure historical and objective interest.

Why should a text have a bearing on readers? Because we cannot imagine ourselves being in the world without a myriad of texts. It may be worthwhile to spend some energy on researching the sources of a text (this type of research is so blatantly intertextual), but the texts thus uncovered are responses to challenges posed by other texts. To my mind, it is more important to see how texts responded to those challenges. In other words, if texts are responses to impulses within the textual world, who are these texts? These texts consists of an entire discourse, and not only written / printed documents such as books, minutes, reports, legal documents, etc. (cf Kort 1988:110). Texts are more than the written word. Texts include the societies producing those documents.

3. Text in Space and Time

However, the prevailing epistemologies of the Western literate culture (empiricism and idealism) narrowed textuality to written or printed matter, leading us to the belief that writing had introduced a sense of stability and 'closeness' of texts by its transformation of utterances within time and space into utterances devoid of any context (cf Ong 1967; 1987:15). Not only are we led to believe that texts are the consequence of speech and events, but that they, as human products, speak the truth. Only what is written is reliable and therefore, absolute. So we look for the ideal and the absolute truth behind the text (cf Brueggemann 1993:5).

Stephen Toulmin (1990:21) describes the emphasis on that which is stable, reliable, unchanging, timeless and universal, as the consequence of the quest for certainty in reaction to the religious, social and intellectual bewilderment and destruction left by the Thirty Years religious war in the 17th century. Toulmin (1990) gives a comprehensive historical account of the era of modernity. He concludes his account by referring to the ideals of rationality and reason that became rigorous in modernity, so that there supposedly was only one unique procedure for arriving at the correct solution. He says (1990:200) that claims to certainty are at home within abstract theories, but abstraction involves omission, such as those experiences that do not lie within the scope of a given theory.

It is true that this type of modernity is highly attractive because of its neatness and theoretical simplicity. But what about the complexities of concrete human nature which are ignored? The year 1994 has provided this country with an important lesson with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela, a political prisoner for 27 years, as the first so-called

democratically elected president of this country. The last convulsing years of the second millennium and the first years of the third may prove to be a time of increasing interdependence between people of a cultural diversity.

To impose rigour, exactitude and system on a time like this, would be, in the words of Toulmin (1990:184), to risk making ideas not only stable, but sclerotic, unable to modify in reasonable ways in order to meet fresh demands of novel situations. In his opinion, the focus should now fall on ensuring that intellectual and social procedures are more adaptive (1990:185).

One aspect that Toulmin (1990:186) highlights is the return to orality in contrast with modernity's celebration of the written word. We should not minimise the influence the written word exerts on our society: illiterate people are regarded as a burden to society, even to the point where they are rejected as barbarics lacking historical consciousness and unable to preserve knowledge (cf Mazamisa 1992:3), whereas writing presents society with a sense of permanence and finality (cf Gunner 1989:52).

The same sense of finality is ascribed to the religious literature of the book religions, Islam, Judaism, and especially Christianity, because central to their faith is a book in which the ancestors' experiences with the numinous are explained. Literate society easily forgot that the Bible as a text has its origins in oral society: the stories, the poems, the wisdom sayings, the letters functioned orally. In other words, the society in which the texts of these stories, poems, wisdom sayings, and letters originated, read them aloud to people or even performed them before an audience.

The consequences of literacy dare not obliterate the value of orality. In the Bible we are confronted with written texts, but from an orality point of view, the biblical texts are a frozen fleeting moment in the fluid oral legacy. The written text enables us to know what was said at a particular moment in history by a specific society. The text is an entextualised performance of a story at a given time in a given society. An oral narrative is only the physical performance of a story, also at a given time in a particular society.

The story narrates to an audience some event in which characters act in terms of a particular plot. But this story must be produced. It is produced by either a physical narrator telling the story or an author composing the story in a text. But both envisage an audience who will receive the story and this implied audience is encoded in the way the story is told or composed. The implied audience embodies those strategies the author or the narrator wants the real readers or spectators to actualise during the production process, be it the reading of the text or the listening to a story, in order to come to an understanding of the story. The production of the story is an event and so is the reception of it. But there is a difference: in an oral performance the production and reception processes occur simultaneously. In the case of written texts, the producer of the text is usually not present during the reception process, that is, when the reader reads the book, unless the author reads the text to an audience in some extraordinary literary event.

The bottom line is that both are events in time. And time is not something abstract and independent of culture. Time is created through social interactions and in coordination with human activities (cf Finnegan 1981:4). For an oral narrative to be performed, it is necessary for the performer and the participants and the audience to be together at a specific time and place. In the case of a narrative text, there must be there is a performer and an audience as well as a publisher who ensures that the text is available. However, the author, as producer of the text, cannot fulfill the role of the

narrator in an oral performance. He needs a narrator encoded in the text. That narrator, also called fictional narrator, is realised by the reading audience in a mental act. The audience imagines a narrator which leads them through the story, helping them to form a picture of the event that the text conveys. In the end, in silent reading, the performer and audience are identical. In a classroom situation, someone becomes the performer and the pupils (and teacher) the audience when someone reads the text aloud.

It is this final performance of the story, be it silent or aloud, that I will describe as an aesthetic approach towards the biblical text. In answer to Toulmin's cry for a more adaptive approach, I would like to propose my understanding of an aesthetic reading of biblical texts, which, I hope, will help students to be more critical of any (ideological) reading of biblical texts (mine included) in order to arrive at a more responsible reading.

4. An Aesthetic Approach

There is a twofold involvement of time and space in reading biblical texts. First of all, there is the time and space in which the text as a performance was constructed by an author, which the readers should bear in mind. Secondly, and equally important, there is the time and space within which readers perform the story by reading it.

To be more specific: biblical texts are performance of particular societies' stories about their gods and their relations with them, enacted in different times at different stages of the history of those societies. The stories found in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible are stories of Yahweh constructed by ancient Israelite communities (cf J A Sanders 1987:15), or as Carroll guesses (1993:81), stories constructed by an imagined elite of priests or sages with relation to their control of the temple community.

Carroll (1993:81) acknowledges that a historical or literal reading of these narratives is not possible. Because of a different plausibility structure, they are of no use to other, different communities. But they are read! What happens is that they are transformed into the readers' own symbolic worlds which serve their own purposes. In other words, a story is still continuously being constructed by people when they read the verbal structure in the form of a prose narrative discourse that purports to be an account of people's past experiences with a god. The point is that the ultimate dimension is not the verbal structure in the text, but the Gestalt readers form of it in the reading process.

What is Gestalt? It is the world of the text created by the readers in their minds during (and after) the reading process. Because it is created in the mind of the readers, their own context (religious reality, community and culture, education) influences the Gestalt they form of the story. This world they form in their minds on the basis of the biblical text is a performance based on a) the verbal structure in the text, b) their knowledge about the need that gave birth to that text and c) the situation in which they find themselves and to which the text may provide an answer in their eyes. By stirring up resonances of experiences in the readers, the text enables them to interpret their own experience with their god(s) in daily life. By means of their mental faculty readers of the biblical texts form a picture of what God as deity is like. The reading process is an act of imagination, a narrative construed in the mind by which the unspeakable is acted out.

What is so aesthetic about this approach? It definitely does not lie in the soft sensation of observing something beautiful. 'Aesthetic' has to do with the effect the text has on its readers. It is not a question of the pleasure or enjoyment a text may give, but the cognitive and communicative efficacy (cf Jau 1982:71-89). This approach implies

active readers who enjoy generating meaning by playing a role the text invites them to play. In this manner, readers are confronted with an entire new world which enables them to distance themselves from their own daily world in order to see it in a different way. Aesthetics is about the distance and the difference between their world and the world of the text.

One can say that the story is "rewritten" by the reader in such a way that a new story comes into being. Why? Because in the reading process so many gaps are filled, that is, so many things the story is silent about, are imagined by readers in order to understand the story. No story gives a total explanation (Kermode 1990:34) for two reasons: if everything were told, the story would not attract any interest, and secondly, it is simply impossible to tell everything. Even if everything could be told to contemporary readers, later readers would find some "gaps" in the story because they would not share the writer's context.

5. David a Maniac and an American Jew

Frank Kermode (1990:34-35) illustrates some of these gaps in his reading of the story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:1-12:31. Was David a real adulterer? Although it is said he slept with Bathsheba while she was still the wife of Uriah, 'adultery' is never mentioned! When Nathan reproached David, he accused him of killing Uriah and then stealing his wife (2 Sm 12:9):

Nathan said to David: 'You are the man! This is the word of the LORD the God of Israel to you: I anointed you king over Israel, I rescued you from the power of Saul, I gave you your master's daughter and his wives to be your own, I gave you the daughters of Israel and Judah; and, had this not been enough, I would have added other favours as well. Why then have you flouted the Lord's word by doing what is wrong in my eyes? You have struck down. You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword; the man himself you murdered by the sword of the Ammonites, and you have stolen his wife. Now, therefore, since you have despised me and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own wife, your family will never again rest from the sword...'

One is left with several questions after reading the story, resulting from the text's silence on particular issues important to a late twentieth century reader. One could ask whether David did not in any way commit adultery by sleeping with the wives of his 'master' (Saul). Why accuse him of adultery when he took Bathsheba? Can one agree with the construction of some rabbis who suggested that soldiers divorced their wives before war so that the wives could escape the levirate marriage when their husbands were killed in combat (cf Kermode 1990:34)? If Uriah had divorced Bathsheba, David would at least not have committed adultery! But why would he have wanted to kill Uriah? According to the prophet Nathan, the problem was killing Uriah in the process: just as the man in Nathan's parable killed the poor man's only lamb, David killed the sole husband of a woman. Or is the lamb Bathsheba? The rich who has plenty represents David who can pick and choose from Judah and Israel, and the poor man with only one ewe lamb is Uriah with his only wife. Is the emphasis placed explicitly on the murder and implicitly on illegitimate sexual relations? Or does it explicitly fall on the selfish misuse of sexuality? Or could David do as he pleased simply because he was king?

Very little is said about Uriah. The narrative is silent on Uriah's thoughts when David recalled him. One does not know whether he suspected that his wife had been unfaithful. What is the role of the bathing episode? If it was a post-menstrual purification, the child could not have been Uriah's unless he slept with Bathsheba on his return. But why would Bathsheba bathe on the roof? If she knew she was pretty, she would have anticipated that her exposure on the roof would not pass unnoticed. Is she as guilty as David is? Does the bathing episode simply function to arouse David's desire? Moreover, what is David doing at the palace when his troops are in battle? Only after the battle had been won did David go to occupy the city formally, thereby taking the spoils for himself.

Some of these gaps are filled out by a twentieth century author in the USA, namely Joseph Heller and the book is the controversial book, *God knows*, which presents us with a fictionalised tale of the events surrounding David, Bathsheba and Uriah (1984:261-290).

Heller, not part of any powerful elite, resists the interpretation of David as a hero, a man of God one can associate with. The book, described by some as junk or a cartoon, by others as entertaining, is a first person narrative of the well known plot of the life and times of David, based on 1 and 2 Samuel. The story is told from the point of view of an aging David, and covers his lust for Bathsheba to his impotence with Abishag, his defeat of Goliath to Solomon's succession of the throne.

What kind of gaps does Heller fill out? Let us take the question of what David was doing on the roof when he saw Bathsheba. The narrative in the Old Testament leaves us with no clue, but, according to Heller, David had just quarreled with Michal.

In fact, it was during a meditative and solitary stroll on the roof of my palace, taken to insulate myself against another querulous diatribe from Michal, that my eye first lit upon the exquisite spectacle of Bathsheba taking her bath on the roof of her house. I stopped in my tracks. Up spoke the Devil. I lusted, sent for her, and had her the same day. And the next morning, and the evening following, and the next, and the next, and the next. I could not stop touching her once I began. I could not stop staring at her. I could not end wanting her. (Heller 1984:27).

Heller provides the readers of his presentation with more than one reason why David was on the roof. David was also bored with life as a rich man having practically everything:

The next thing I knew I was madly in love. It hit like a thunderbolt. I was gaping at this naked woman as though transfixed and communing with voices on my roof like a frenzied and licentious maniac, for I tarried still in Jerusalem after I sent Joab and my servants off on this campaign against Rabbah, and I had nothing much to do for excitement as I waited for the new summer wardrobe for which I had already been measured. So I went for a walk on my roof each evening and let my mind go wandering where it would. I was bored. A time before when I was bored in Jerusalem, I brought the ark of the covenant into the city (Heller 1984:261).

And what about Uriah's knowledge of David and Bathsheba's affair? The biblical account is silent about Uriah's knowledge. But Heller wants to fill out the gap, in order to provide a reason for Uriah's refusal to sleep with Bathsheba.

Nathan, that hypocrite, that prophet, must have known from the outset that I was after Bathsheba's ass and getting it every morning, noon, and night, but never said a word to dissuade me until after her husband was killed and he found something real

on me. Jerusalem is a very small town. And Bathsheba was a very loud woman. Maybe even Uriah knew (Heller 1984:46).

Heller's book presents us with a creative narrative on the story of David, especially David and Bathsheba. But it is not a story of what happened in the past. It is a story of the past moulded in the idiom of the late twentieth century. The gap between the historical event and a twentieth century reader is overcome by interpreting David's actions in terms of what is known to a particular audience of the twentieth century. What do I mean? First of all, the plot of the story is known: everybody knows who David was and what he did as described in 1 and 2 Samuel. However, because the biblical text is so strange to our thinking and way of life, the actions of the characters are interpreted in terms of what readers know today. In other words, the actions of the characters are interpreted in terms of present-day behavioural patterns.

For this reason one can situate Heller's David in Brooklyn within American Jewry. Bathsheba becomes a "WASP" (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), and Michal the first American Jewish princess (cf Alvarez 1985:17 and Wieseltier 1984:32). Heller conceived of the biblical narrative in terms of his own social context and in terms of the social context his implied readers presumably are: American Jewry hence the incidence of Jewish humour.

When one understands present-day Jewish humour, much of the initial repulsion one experiences when reading the book is invalidated. Although the Bible is generally not regarded as a funny book, some people (Jews) perceive the Jews as funny people, in the sense that their history has left them with a sense of humour. Their "closeness" cost them dearly in the past, especially in the Second World War. In a certain way, Jewish humour is regarded as a way in which Jews vent their anger (cf Wieseltier 1984:31):

The primary purpose of a great deal of contemporary American Jewish humor is rather to lessen the tradition's threat, to diminish the stature of spiritual standards to which it has fallen heir but which it cannot be bothered to honor, to embarrass the past by which it is embarrassed. Such absolution may be accomplished, for example, by making the strange into the familiar, the great into the plain.

The strangeness of a tenth century BCE king is overcome by interpreting his antics in terms known to the author/implied readers. Several of Heller's critics attempted to depict the David in God knows. Alvarez (1985:17), for example, depicts him as a biblical king talking like a disreputable Uncle Max from Brooklyn. In typical American style, there are the famous one-liners and comic tirades. The dislike with which some people regard the book can be ascribed to its functional affect, namely a humour that cannot always and everywhere be appreciated because of another strangeness between the American culture and other cultures of the reading public.

This strangeness starkly confronts the readers when Heller compares Palestine with the USA.

Some Promised Land. The honey was there, but the milk we brought in with our goats. To people in California, God gives a magnificent coastline, a movie industry, and Beverly Hills. To us He gives sand. To Cannes he gives a plush film festival. We get the PLO. Our winters are rainy, our summers hot. To people who didn't know how to wind a wristwatch He gives underground oceans of oil. To us He gives hernia, piles, and anti-Semitism. Those leery spies returning from Canaan after their first look described the place as a place that eats up its people, a land inhabited wholly by giants. The reports were false but not

altogether off the mark. True, there were figs, pomegranates, and clusters of grapes so heavy they could be borne back only on a thick staff shouldered between two men. But the land does tend to eat up its people. Still, it's the best that's been offered us, and we want to hold on to it.

The land of milk and honey is interpreted in terms of what people know today and the way they regard the metaphor "milk and honey". To Americans living in California, the metaphor means a coastline and movies. Compared to this somewhat hedonistic outlook on life, Israel or Palestine does not seem a very agreeable place to live in: there is only sand and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation that did not recognise Israel's status as a state at the time Heller was writing. David feels that everyone else got a better deal from God than the Israelites. They did not even get the oil like their Arab neighbours whom he accuses of being culturally inferior. Living in America is much nicer than living in the so-called promised land which consists only of sand and trouble.

And lastly, perhaps most importantly, the measure in which Heller was able to transform David's story into a story of the lives of contemporary Jewry constitutes a religious experience which implies a confrontation with the numinous. Through David, the readers of Heller's book sense some dissatisfaction with the role God gave the Jews and the idea of a promised land (Heller 1984:40).

Heller's David accuses God of withholding the promises associated with the promised land. This David is not a man to God's heart, but a man experiencing problems with God who does not make things easy for him. He symbolises cynical humankind of the secularised or desecralised society of the twentieth century. The result is an entirely anachronistic narrative in which the royal king of Jerusalem refers to oil as we do today and recalls that the music he played for Saul as a young man, was not Beethoven's 'Ode to joy' or some Mozart sonata. But Heller's book also tells us what David could have been, had he lived today. In depicting David as a twentieth century man, Heller tries to explain the meaning the story of David generates within a twentieth century reader.

6. Conclusion

Whatever one may think at the end of Heller's story of David, Heller's reading of the David narrative is creative and imaginative. He did what everyone does subconsciously when reading biblical narratives so strange to our own life-world: he transformed the characters to make them act within the limits of the customary knowledge dictated by his context.

But what did he do with the biblical text? He used the story elements found in the biblical narrative of the royal history of David, and fused them with the socio-political story streams of modern Judaism and late twentieth century values in the USA. The result is an entirely new text without any pretense of posing as an authoritative interpretation of the David story.

Heller's text is a response to all the impulses of the texts provided by his textual world. What he did, first and foremost constitutes an aesthetic experience. An aesthetic experience occurs as soon as readers are confronted by the strangeness of a text caused by a difference in cultural, social, historical or religious context. In my mind, Heller succeeded in respecting the integrity of the biblical text of the royal history of David by refusing to situate his story in the life-world of the historical David. Instead, he situated the story in his own time and he responded to the problems of Judaism within his social context. The original story provided him with a setting to develop his own story.

And its value for Biblical Studies? Instead of teaching students to use the Bible as a 'proof-text' for their own hidden agendas, the biblical texts can show them the way to think creatively about their religious reality. When an ancient Israelite community thought about Yahweh in particular terms, the resulting text constituted a performance of a story about that god. Biblical Studies as a subject at school or university can introduce students to the production factors related to that text, in order to stimulate within them a creative impulse to 'perform' their own religious texts. Not only would the students learn something about these ancient biblical texts, but the factors behind the production process might reveal to them the human side of these texts. And, being human, they would be invited to participate in similar processes of 'performing' religious texts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alvarez, A 1985. Working in the dark. In *The New York Review* April, 11 1985:15-17.
- Barber, K & Moraes Farias, P F de (eds), *Discourse and its disguises. The interpretation of African oral texts*. Centre of West African Studies: University of Birmingham. (Birmingham University African Studies Series no 1.)
- Brueggemann, W 1993. *Texts under negotiation. The Bible and Postmodern Imagination*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis.
- Carroll, R P 1993. *The Hebrew Bible as literature a misprision?* *Studia Theologica* 47:77-90.
- Davies, J & Wollaston, I (eds) 1993. *The sociology of sacred texts*. Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield.
- Deist, F E 1991. Where do the biblical texts come from? Historical-critical exegesis. In Bosman, L et al. *Plutocrats and paupers. Wealth and poverty in the Old Testament*. Van Schaik: Pretoria: 42-51.
- Finnegan R H 1981. 'Short time to stay'. Comments on time, literature and oral performance. Indiana University: Bloomington.
- Greeley, AM 1981. *The religious imagination*. Sadlier: Los Angeles.
- Gunner, E. 1989. *Orality and literacy*. Dialogue and silence. In Barber & Moraes Farias 1989:49-56.
- Heller, J 1984. *God knows*. Knopf: New York.
- Jau, H-R 1982. *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main.
- Kermode, F 1990. *Poetry, narrative, history*. Blackwell: London.
- Kort, W A 1988. *Story, text, and scripture*. Literary interests in Biblical narrative. Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park.
- Mazamisa, W 1992. *Re-reading the Bible in the Black Church: towards a hermeneutic of orality and literacy*. Lecture presented at Unisa, 13 November 1992.
- Ong, WJ 1967. *The presence of the Word*. Some prolegomena for cultural and religious history. Simon and Schuster: New York.
- Ong, WJ 1987. *Text as interpretation. Mark and after*. In Silberman 1987:7-26.
- Sanders, J A 1987. *From sacred story to sacred text*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia.
- Scheffler, E 1991. What does God's word refer to? Historical-grammatical exegesis. In Bosman, L et al. *Plutocrats and paupers. Wealth and poverty in the Old Testament*. Van Schaik: Pretoria: 52-65.
- Silberman, LH (ed) 1987. *Orality, auralty and biblical literature*. (Semeia 39. An experimental journal for biblical criticism). Scholars Press: Decatur.
- Toulmin, S 1990. *Cosmopolis: the hidden agenda of modernity*. The Free Press: New York.
- Wall, JM 1989. *Jesus and others at Montreal festival*. *The Christian Century* 106(7):835-836.
- Wieseltier, L 1984. *Shlock of recognition*. *The New Republic* October 29, 1984:31-33.

