
The Davidic Prototype in Deuteronomistic Poetics

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-Five:
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

So begins Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's mythic poem "Paul Revere's Ride."¹ Writing in 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, Longfellow attempts to evoke a shared sense of cultural and moral values among Americans. Longfellow's now famous poem has come to replace the historical account of that important night in the common American memory, demonstrating how the author's ideology and intentions in a literary text can reshape the common conception of history. It also testifies to the blurry line between the genres of literature and historiography.

1. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Paul Revere's Ride," in *Selected Poems*, Penguin Classics (New York: Penguin, 1988), 148–52.

Historians have long criticized Longfellow's loose portrayal of historical detail, which exaggerates Revere's singular role in the event, the length of his ride, and his accomplishments.² Yet, if Paul Revere were not the one to carry the message, "One, if by land, and two, if by sea," why have most Americans heard only of Revere, while others are forgotten? The answer lies in Longfellow's portrayal of the unassisted role of Revere. The well-planned chain of warnings was very much a team effort, yet Longfellow focused solely on the role of his hero, Paul Revere.³ His poem created a national Revolutionary legend of Revere, who previously had been little known.

This poem, which presents an account of the beginning of the Revolutionary War, takes on the role of a historical document even though it was intended as a literary one. It presents events in the past and conveys the intentions and imagination of an author. This demonstrates that the process of historiography is complex, even when the goal of a text is not strictly to report a historical event. Historiography is often ideological. The power of the continued life of a historical document after its composition can be seen in this

2. The historical record is as follows: On April 18, 1775, as the British prepared to march on Boston, Paul Revere and William Dawes rode from Boston (Charlestown) toward Lexington to warn John Hancock and Samuel Adams that the Royal troops were coming, knocking on doors and sending previously planned lines of communication into alert. Longfellow narrates that Revere continued the ride on to Concord, even though the truth is quite the opposite. After fulfilling their initial mission in Lexington, Dawes and Revere set out for Concord, and Samuel Prescott joined them on the way, until all three were stopped by British troops. Prescott and Dawes managed to escape, but the British officers detained, questioned, and escorted Revere at gunpoint back to Lexington. Of the three riders, only Prescott arrived at Concord in time to warn its militia of the British approach. (Paul Revere, "A Letter from Col. Paul Revere to the Corresponding Secretary [Jeremy Belknap]," 1798, Manuscript Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society, <http://www.masshist.org/cabinet/april2002/reveretranscription.htm>). Revere rode a total of thirteen miles that night from Boston to Lexington, and an additional two miles from Lexington before he was stopped by the British patrol. David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 130. Revere's ride pales in comparison to that of the unknown Israel Bissell, who rode from Watertown, MA, to New York City, 225 miles in four days (*ibid.*, 270–71).
3. Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 332.

example of American historical memory. Revere is acclaimed as an American hero.

As consumers of history, we must consider how a poetic hero can replace a historical one in the historical record. How can an event and one of its actors be completely rewritten and be absorbed as history? Until recently, historians of the American Revolution as well as textbook writers relied almost entirely on Longfellow's poem as historical evidence. This is likely a result of the popularity of the poem, as Longfellow was one of the most prominent American poets of the nineteenth century. Despite Longfellow's disregard for historical fact, the poem has become part of the historical record. It is only in recent years that historians (with limited success) have attempted to dissuade Americans from relying on Longfellow's version of the story.

The success of the poem likely lies in both the quality of the poetry and the meaningful connection Longfellow made with his contemporary audience, an engagement that continues throughout American history. Longfellow's Paul Revere (as opposed to the historical Paul Revere) became a national symbol of the fight for freedom. The powerful images of the event and the hero have become our national memory. They have overshadowed and eclipsed the original event and have formed a new collective American memory. According to American historian David Hackett Fischer, Longfellow "appealed to the evidence of history as a source of patriotic inspiration, but was utterly without scruple in his manipulation of historical fact."⁴

"Paul Revere's Ride" offers a powerful example of the process of historiography and its reception history. A beautifully written poem that sets itself up as the transmission of a historical memory creates a character who appeals to the poet/historian's contemporary audience.

4. *Ibid.*, 331.

The people hold fast to an inflated minor player because Longfellow's depiction speaks to them. The hero becomes a meaningful symbol, representative of the memory of historical experience, even if he does not necessarily reflect the historical experience itself. This is the process of historiography—the historian interprets the past in a way that is meaningful to him and his audience.

Longfellow's poem and its questionable role in the received tradition of American collective memory pose a worthwhile example for the study of biblical historiography. Longfellow's ideological commitments influence the way his narrative is constructed; he is interested in patriotism and creating a mythic hero. He interprets the historical facts in order to support his ideological goals, depicting a morale-boosting, unifying figure at a moment when the country was about to divide. While he may (or may not) have intended for his poem to be taken as a replacement for a more accurate historical account, it has claimed such a place in American collective memory. This occurrence requires us to consider the modes of historiography. Does a narrative need to be intended as history to be history? Where do we draw the boundaries between fiction and history? How do we deal with the differences between history and collective memory? Can history be presented without an ideological perspective?⁵ The trackable reception history of Longfellow's poem provides a strong example of how collective memories are constructed to re-create a past that is relevant for the present. This is neither strictly historical nor wholly fiction.⁶

5. John Van Seters begins to address these questions in *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997). Also, Johan Huizinga, "A Definition of the Concept of History," in *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*, ed. Raymond Klibansky and Herbert James Paton (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 1–10; Hugo Gressmann, *Die Älteste Geschichtsschreibung Und Prophetie Israels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910). Robert Alter, "Imagining History in the Bible," in *History and—: Histories Within the Human Sciences*, ed. Ralph Cohen and Michael S. Roth (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 53–72.

This book will address the process of historiography in the book of Kings. As Longfellow does in “Paul Revere’s Ride,” the historian of Kings analyzes and interprets historical events and creates a history reflective of his (deuteronomistic) ideology, raising a “historical” figure to heroic status, in line with his ideological purpose. The Deuteronomistic Historian devises a prototype of a covenantally adherent king in the portrait of David, who provides the cultic model for subsequent kings to follow. This historian intends to present a historical past, as he sees it, through the purview of his ideological perspective and with a didactic function, specifically through the model of a hero, as in the case of Longfellow’s Revere.

In this volume, I will adopt a modified version of Frank Moore Cross’s theory of a double redaction of the book of Kings, according to which the Deuteronomistic History is understood as having been compiled, through the redaction of a number of sources, by an author during the reign of Josiah, and updated in a second redaction during the exile. (This theory will be discussed more thoroughly below.) My interest is in examining the creation of the historical past and exploring the historiographical style and method of the preexilic Deuteronomist in Kings.⁷ Throughout, I will use the siglum Dtr for this Deuteronomist, or deuteronomistic redactor, whom Cross identifies as Dtr¹, and like Cross, I will identify the exilic redactor as Dtr². I will use DtrH for the Deuteronomistic History in its received form of the books of Deuteronomy through Kings.

The Deuteronomist (here, Dtr) was a collector, author, and redactor. He inherited several self-contained and comprehensive

6. Ronald S. Hendel, “Culture, Memory, and History: Reflections on Method in Biblical Studies,” in *Historical Biblical Archaeology and the Future: The New Pragmatism*, ed. Thomas E. Levy (London: Equinox, 2010), 255.

7. See Frank Moore Cross, “The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History,” in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274–89.

documents that he adopted and reshaped to suit his purposes. Consideration of the process of historiography is plagued by many problems, including the use of sources—their reliability, objectivity, and provenance. We need to take questions of methodology seriously when examining the “historical” works in the Hebrew Bible like the Deuteronomistic History (or Chronicles, for that matter). These works have either been mined for historical data (the old “Bible as history” approach) or reduced to tendentious constructions of a “usable past,” but rarely studied as the product of an author sifting among sources, deciding what to include in his history and how to structure what is included not only on the basis of the theological or ideological, but also on the basis of literary considerations.

This inquiry into the process of historiography both integrates the work of biblical scholars who consider issues of style and deals with biblical history in order to discover and prove its historicity or ahistoricity and to designate its sources. This also takes into account the methods developed through the revolution in the literary study of the Bible that began in the 1970s. In this book, I consider the process of historiography and the choices that the Deuteronomist as editor and author had to make in order to craft his history. In a recent essay, Ron Hendel criticizes the trajectory the historical-critical method has taken. It “has too often devolved to tired debates about the dating or historicity of the biblical sources, or has balkanized itself into a variety of methods that take little cognizance of each other, each presuming conceptual autonomy.”⁸ My goal is to take into account both the historical contextualization of redactional layers and the intentional and conscious literary choices made by the author/redactor.

8. Hendel, “Culture, Memory, and History,” 250.

History of Scholarship

Since the work of Martin Noth (1943), the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH)—the books of Deuteronomy through Kings—has largely been considered a unified literary work.⁹ Noth begins by offering the question of consistency and coherence: “Do we in fact have here a comprehensive framework indicating a larger literary unit which has adopted much traditional material?”¹⁰ In response, he sets out to prove that the work is a self-contained whole. He shows that this author uses language and ideology similar to that found in deuteronomic law.¹¹ On a linguistic basis, it is possible to see either the work of a single deuteronomistic editor or different editors with a similar style. It is the linguistic uniformity—the use of a characteristic vocabulary, diction, repetition of phrases and sentence structure—that suggests that the work is self-contained.¹²

Initially, Noth’s theory of unity was widely accepted, yet it generated multiple opinions on the compositional and redactional history of these books. Scholars have further divided the history, which Noth attributed to a single author, into multiple redactors and various historical contexts. More recently, in the past decade, the study of the “Deuteronomistic History” has been focused on questioning whether such a “unified” work exists. If it does, is the

9. Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien. Die Sammelnden Und Bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke Im Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1957); Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981). Noth is preceded by Ewald (1869) in identifying a unity of composition, but with two Deuteronomistic Historians and a preexilic date for the primary history (Heinrich Ewald, *Geschichte Des Volkes Israel*, 6 vols. [Göttingen: Dieterichs Buchhandlung, 1843]; Ewald, *The History of Israel*, trans. R. Martineau [London: Longmans, Green, 1869], 1:156–68). Noth’s work sets a new standard for scholarship. For a survey of the history of the Deuteronomistic History, see Albert de Pury and Thomas Römer, “Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues,” in *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 24–141.

10. Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 15.

11. *Ibid.*, 17.

12. *Ibid.*, 18.

shadowy figure of the Deuteronomist an incompetent scribe, a slavish collector, a royal lackey, an astute literary bard, or a figment of the modern scholar's imagination?¹³ Many scholars have focused on the origins and number of redactors to such an extent that some even deny the existence of DtrH, arguing that the redactional layers get so separated, amplified, and multiplied that it is difficult to maintain that the work of so many hands, at varying times, can possibly be unified. In a volume on *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History*,¹⁴ John Van Seters writes an essay titled "The Deuteronomistic History: Can it Avoid Death by Redaction?". He argues that instead of using redaction criticism to chop up the text into small fragments, it should be used to identify long additions and the core work—and so to restore, rather than destroy, Noth's theory.¹⁵

Heuristic value has also been placed on reading a (semi-)unified narrative by applying literary considerations to the historical narratives. Literary critics have approached these narratives as historical fiction and have challenged the various tactics scholars have used in assessing the historicity of the historical or "history-like" narratives of DtrH.¹⁶ Increasingly, with the discovery of extrabiblical

13. Recent collected works demonstrate the interest in these questions, such as Thomas Römer, ed., *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000); Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical, and Literary Introduction* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007); Linda Schearing and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism*, JSOTSup 268; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville, eds., *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000); Albert de Pury, Jean-Daniel Macchi, and Thomas Römer, eds., *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, JSOT (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000); Lester L. Grabbe, ed., *Good Kings and Bad Kings: The Kingdom of Judah in the Seventh Century BCE* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005); Mark Leuchter and Klaus-Peter Adam, eds., *Soundings in Kings: Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).
14. Thomas Römer, ed., *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History* (Leuven-Louvain: Leuven University Press, 2000).
15. John Van Seters, "The Deuteronomistic History: Can It Avoid Death by Redaction?," in *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. Thomas Römer (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 213–22.

evidence that either undermines or verifies the historicity of the biblical narrative, scholars have taken sides on the veracity and acuity of biblical historiography and the reliability and competency of the biblical redactor as historian.

My inquiry moves beyond the discussion of historicity and of identifying redactors and redactions. I explore how we understand the Deuteronomistic text and the method(s) of the Deuteronomistic historian(s) who created it. Is it possible to explore historical meanings without getting bogged down in historical “fact”? And can we use a more objective record of the past to elucidate the subjective narration of it? I will deal with the intention of the author, the use of sources as can be discerned, the relationship of the historiography to historical events, and the theological and literary shaping of the text. My analysis devises a methodological schema that reflects the historiographical poetics in Kings. My goal is not to demonstrate historicity, “truth,” and date, but rather to consider representation, meaning, and interpretation.¹⁷

The subtitle of this book, *The Davidic Prototype in Deuteronomistic Poetics*, describes the areas this volume will address. In chapter 2, I explore the historiographical process of the Deuteronomist, building on the theories of Martin Noth and others since the middle of the twentieth century; lay out a prescriptive style or poetics of the historian; and derive stylistic criteria for identifying the preexilic Deuteronomist. In chapter 3 and following, I consider the construction of the Davidic prototype as the literary model for the kings of Israel and Judah, a signature framing strategy of the Deuteronomist.

16. Alter, “Imagining History”; Alter, *ABN*, chap. 2; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), chap. 1.

17. Hendel, “Culture, Memory, and History,” 251.

Historiography

Biblical historiography takes quite seriously the task of presenting an understandable past, but until recently, the history of scholarship has not included serious considerations of how the historian works. In the past two decades, three scholars who have dealt with these issues in an attempt to understand the process of biblical historiography are Baruch Halpern, Marc Brettler, and Gary Knoppers.

Halpern, in his book *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History*, bases his arguments on Noth's premise of narrative unity, but does not directly address the question of the unity of the history.¹⁸ Instead, he reacts to the work of scholars who debate the historicity or ahistoricity of the work, the generic identification of literature or historiography, and provenance of composition and redaction. In response, Halpern attempts to qualify and quantify the historiographical process of ancient Israel. He addresses the question of the general nature of biblical history and the role of the historian. He believes that the history writer's intention is to "lead the reader to believe that the work is a valid representation of the past." The narrative does not necessarily have to be historically accurate, but the author must intend to present it as true and the reader believe that it is valid.¹⁹ The author's historical intention is one of the major characteristics of biblical historiography that Halpern highlights; this view comes under attack by other scholars.

Halpern's work responds to an absence of scholarship, following Noth, on the importance of discussing the historical intention of the historian as author and redactor. Many historical-critical scholars, in reconstructing the prehistory of the text as we have it, deal with the identification of multiple sources or editorships, asserting that

18. Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

19. *Ibid.*, xxii.

perhaps the ancient editors were not able to see the contradictions in the text that moderns can see.²⁰ This is a simplistic perspective. Instead, Halpern urges us to understand that the biblical editors were competent and that the biblical historians were aware of the contradictions inherent in the texts.²¹

Halpern also addresses the general question of historiography: the relationship between the writing of history and historical events. He contends that

history is not what happened. . . . History is our way of organizing particle configurations into perceptible fictional blocks, such as individuals, groups, and the environment. . . . Historians deal with people, and with societies, as though these were the atoms of causation. The historian's job is to expound human causes to the reader. . . . [History] is a form of human perception about the subatomic past. It is not accurate; like all memory, it is a useful form of organizing knowledge.²²

Halpern identifies the process of history writing as metaphoric. In this way, historiography inherently lacks scientific objectivity, yet need not be fictional. Halpern's work, especially his conception of Dtr as maintaining "antiquarian" interests (to be discussed below), is important to my arguments here; Dtr inherits a collection of source documents that he faithfully employs in the writing of his history. Halpern's understanding of the selectional work of Dtr contributes greatly to my approach to Dtr's historiographical method.

In contrast, Marc Brettler looks more to the form-critical elements of the biblical historian. In *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, he seeks to highlight the central factors responsible for the production of the biblical texts of ancient Israel.²³ Brettler finds Halpern's approach

20. *Ibid.*, xxv.

21. *Ibid.*, xxv–xxvi.

22. *Ibid.*, xxxiii.

23. Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

to history, relying on the intention of the author to deem it historical, problematic. Brettler counters, “How do we know if an elaboration goes beyond the evidence the author had, especially when that evidence is no longer available to us?” How can we know the intentions of the author? How can we know if the narrator believed what he wrote?²⁴ Brettler contends that “it is difficult, if not impossible, to judge whether a biblical author was working from sources.” It is for this reason that he focuses on the Chronicler’s history as his paradigm because we know that the Chronicler used some version of Kings as his primary source. Also, Brettler argues that “Halpern’s model is especially problematic because it places intentionality in such a central role.” Brettler clearly defines history as “a narrative that presents a past,” and not merely a narrative whose author intends it to be historical.²⁵ These two perspectives are not mutually exclusive. An author who intends to write history would indeed by its nature be creating a “narrative that presents a past.”

Brettler’s arguments against Halpern fly in the face of the history of scholarship on the Deuteronomistic History beginning with Noth. Noth believed strongly in the competence of the Israelite historian, while Brettler questions his motives, first suggesting that historical intention does not make a text historiographical, and second that we cannot know the intentions of the Deuteronomist. More recently, some scholars, especially those deemed literary critics of the Bible, have given up on historical-critical biblical study and only use synchronic approaches, deeming the text unhistorical.²⁶ These approaches were likely influenced by the intellectual development in the world of critical theory of the mid-twentieth century, beginning with the doctrine of intentional fallacy in the 1940s, which denied

24. *Ibid.*, 11.

25. *Ibid.*, 12.

26. *ABN*; Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*; Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: 1 Samuel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

that the interpreter has access to the author's intentions.²⁷ This prohibited scholars from considering the intentions of the biblical authors. Literary criticism is important in the interpretation of the aesthetic quality of the biblical text, but it should not inhibit historical interpretation. It is foolhardy and nihilistic to dismiss reasoned speculation because we can never achieve certainty. This would discredit much important and convincing interpretation of ancient texts. We will always reach a point of indeterminacy, but that should not prevent us from exploration, throwing up our hands that we cannot know anything about the past. Instead, we must make reasoned assessments, methodological speculation, and recognize the differences between the objective and subjective. While Brettler's hesitation about the question of intention, especially of an ancient author, is warranted as it is extremely difficult to qualify and quantify, my schema of historiographical poetics offers observation-based criteria for determining intention. It is by no means definitive, but presents a systematic range of considerations.

While their approaches appear mutually exclusive, Brettler's presentation of ideological construction and Halpern's antiquarian interests must both be considered.²⁸ The work of Halpern and Brettler comes down to the same question: how did the biblical historian see/use his sources?²⁹ They approach this question in two

27. William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, ed. William K. Wimsatt (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 3–18. Reprinted from *Sewanee Review* 54 (1946).

28. H. G. M. Williamson, "Review of The Creation of History in Ancient Israel, by Marc Z. Brettler," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47, no. 2 (1996): 355.

29. Halpern addresses this issue in an analysis of Judges 4 and 5 in Baruch Halpern, "Doctrine by Misadventure: Between the Israelite Source and the Biblical Historian," in *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism*, ed. Richard E. Friedman (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 41–73; Halpern, "'Brisker Pipes Than Poetry': The Development of Israelite Monotheism," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine, and Ernest S. Frerichs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 77–115; Halpern, *The First Historians*, chap. 6.

ways—both of which are necessary to understanding the process of deuteronomistic historiography. Halpern focuses on the work of the Deuteronomist, understanding his process of selection, why he incorporates the sources he does, while Brettler focuses on the Chronicler, primarily because we have access to his sources (DtrH), and the choices of composition that he makes and how he adapts and rewrites his sources. In this book, I consider the approaches of both these scholars, taking into account both the compositional and selectional processes.

A third scholar who begins to bridge the gap between Halpern's work on antiquarian interest and Brettler's focus on theological and literary shaping is Gary Knoppers. In his two-volume work, *Two Nations under God*, Knoppers emphasizes the thematic elements present in DtrH, namely, the role of the unified monarchy in the entirety of the history.³⁰ Highlighting this theme and Jeroboam's literary role in the production of the history, Knoppers combines some of the main issues that Halpern, Brettler, and others have begun to explore, and applies them to the figures of Solomon and Jeroboam. Knoppers explicitly states that Dtr's "*modus operandi* is not so much to invent history as it is to shape history to conform to his own agenda."³¹ In this way, Knoppers is attentive to the historian's use of his sources, as well as his intention to rewrite them for his own ideological purposes. He is among the first to consider the historiographical process for both its historical-critical and literary significance. My work is a direct extension of these three scholars and of work in historiographical theory in general.

30. Gary N. Knoppers, *Two Nations under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies*, vol. 1, *The Reign of Solomon and the Rise of Jeroboam*, Harvard Semitic Monographs (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); Knoppers, *Two Nations under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies*, vol. 2, *The Reign of Jeroboam, the Fall of Israel, and the Reign of Josiah*, Harvard Semitic Monographs (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994).

31. Knoppers, *Reign of Jeroboam*, 182–83.

Poetics

Poetics, as defined by Meir Sternberg in his book *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, is what “the biblical narrator want[s] to accomplish, and under what conditions . . . he operate[s].”³² Sternberg poses the following questions: “What goals does the biblical narrator set himself? What is it that he wants to communicate in this or that story, cycle, book?” Sternberg suggests that the reader approach biblical narrative as “oriented to an addressee and regulated by a purpose or a set of purposes involving the addressee. Hence our primary business as readers is to make purposive sense of it, so as to explain the *what’s* and the *how’s* in terms of the *why’s* of communication.”³³

This is my goal in dealing with the historiographical poetics of the preexilic Deuteronomist in Kings. I explore the ways in which Dtr writes his history, how he selects his sources, how he recrafts and integrates them into a comprehensive story that reflects the general history of the monarchy, and where he makes original compositions. A comprehensive analysis of this process is lacking in the prolific scholarship dealing with Kings specifically and DtrH generally. Greater understanding of the historiographical poetics of Dtr and his purposes in redaction and composition will greatly supplement the bevy of scholarship largely focused on redactional criticism and expand focus into literary composition. This work will advance the field so that once source and redactional lines have been drawn, it will be possible to understand Dtr’s goals, explaining the whats, hows, and whys of his historiography.

The discussion of poetics is primarily a literary one, focused on the ways the author constructs his story, but the text need not be deemed fictional. The generic line between fiction and ancient

32. Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 2.

33. *Ibid.*, 1.

historiography is complicated and blurry. Robert Alter adeptly describes the relationship the historian maintains to the story when he writes: “The biblical historian’s drive to understand the political, moral, and psychological predicaments of the historical personages leads him to shape the events, amplifying what is known through shrewd literary elaboration, [but] there remain bothersome instances of invention plain and simple.”³⁴ He also contends that “the writer could manipulate his inherited materials with sufficient freedom and sufficient firmness of authorial purpose to define motives, relations, and unfolding themes, even in a primeval history, with the kind of subtle cogency we associate with the conscious artistry of the narrative mode designated prose fiction.”³⁵ Need this be categorized as fiction or can it be “interpretation”? Similarly, while the generic distinction between fiction and history can be endlessly debated, Hayden White, who has written influentially about historiography and historiographical theory, posits that generally “what distinguishes ‘historical’ from ‘fictional’ stories is first and foremost their content, rather than their form.”³⁶ As such, historical and fictional narratives will appear similar, only distinguished by their subjects. According to White, the historical method requires the evaluation of documents (the content) in order to determine what is historical, followed by constructing the most plausible story (the form) from the evidence, not so much a product of the historian’s poetic talents.³⁷ In putting together the story, the historian needs to follow the sequence of “facts” and “events,” creating “content [that] may be thought to consist either of the factors linking events in chains of causes and effects or of the ‘reasons’ (or ‘intentions’) motivating the human

34. Alter, “Imagining History,” 67.

35. *ABN* 32.

36. Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 27.

37. *Ibid.*

agents of the events in question.”³⁸ The historian’s vocation is “to translate knowing into telling,” by creating a narrative (the form) as a solution “to the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning.”³⁹ White’s definition of history and the use of the historical method require us to consider both the author’s intention and the way he used his sources. It is in this way that I focus on exploring Dtr’s “poetics,” attempting to understand Dtr’s reasons and intentions for linking events, attributing cause, and in particular the development of form and style, how Dtr writes his story.

This endeavor is not only necessitated by the polarizing and divisive developments in biblical scholarship, but also by the development of postmodernist and new historicist theory. Terry Eagleton defines postmodernism as “the contemporary movement of thought which rejects totalities, universal values, grand historical narratives, solid foundations to human existence and the possibility of objective knowledge. Postmodernism is skeptical of truth, unity and progress, opposes what it sees as elitism in culture, tends towards cultural relativism, and celebrates pluralism, discontinuity and heterogeneity.”⁴⁰ While the assumptions of postmodernism—rejection of the objective, erasing any distinction between the objective and the subjective, and maintaining the inexistence of a univocal, unambiguous meaning—are worthwhile guiding questions for the study of the Bible generally and of biblical historiography specifically, in the case of this subset of literature, we cannot and should not disregard the possibility of elucidating textual meanings.⁴¹ It is especially the postmodernist critique of

38. *Ibid.*, 41.

39. *Ibid.*, 1.

40. Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 13n1.

41. John J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 27–28.

metanarratives that should be considered in the study of the Bible. My analysis makes clear that this literature was constructed using grand schemas to organize and interpret history.

While acknowledging the limits of our knowledge (the Halpern/Brettler debate), and putting aside the fears of the doctrine of intentional fallacy, we can still claim some knowledge of the past, the historians' intentions, and the ways in which they used their sources.⁴² This view reflects developments in new historicism, which considers "reality" in literary texts. This approach requires, when thinking about textuality, that one "recover in our literary criticism a confident conviction of reality, without giving up the power of literature to sidestep or evade the quotidian and without giving up a minimally sophisticated understanding that any text depends upon the absence of the bodies and voice that it represents."⁴³ In this way, "the real . . . to which the text implies, lies beyond the written word, outside its textual mode of being."⁴⁴ "The real" needs to be considered. In this way, Stephen Greenblatt states, "New historicist critics have tried to understand the intersecting circumstances not as a stable, prefabricated background against which the literary texts can be placed, but as a dense network of evolving and often contradictory social forces."⁴⁵ This suggests that all texts should be considered within their historical context and in respect to the social, political, and religious factors that contributed to the text's development. Just as the new historicists, focusing on texts themselves, see literature as a product of place and time, with the right tools we can derive some information about the history of ancient Israel from the text. This

42. Halpern, *The First Historians*, xxi.

43. Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 31.

44. *Ibid.*, 23.

45. Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 170.

is not to say that all of the text corresponds to fact or that we must completely deny the veracity of all those texts. We are informed by new historicism in recognizing the problematic boundaries between objective history, the things that happened, and subjective history, the narration of the things that happened.⁴⁶ As such, we must occupy a moderate middle ground between those who say we can never get to the intention of the authors (or that we would even want to) and those who assert that the history is wholly historical or ahistorical. We must identify what intent we can draw out of the text. We must employ the so-called historical-critical method, historical linguistics, redaction criticism, ancient Near Eastern analogies, in conjunction with the newer methods of literary and philosophical approaches, for a more complete interpretation of biblical historiography.⁴⁷ It is with this combination of approaches in mind that I will look seriously at Dtr's method as author and redactor.

The Deuteronomist

Since Spinoza in the late seventeenth century, scholarship of the DtrH has traditionally focused on the unity of the books of Deuteronomy through Kings and the role of the Deuteronomistic Historian. Since Noth, scholars have identified Dtr as an author and redactor. Noth acclaims a historian who “was not merely an editor but the author of a history which brought together material from highly varied traditions and arranged it according to a carefully conceived plan.”⁴⁸ He insists that “Dtr. was the author of a comprehensive historical work, scrupulously taking over and quoting the existing tradition but at the same time arranging and articulating all the material independently, and making it clear and systematic

46. Hendel, “Culture, Memory, and History,” 257.

47. White, *Content of the Form*, 185.

48. Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 26.