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Amos in Song and Book Culture (review)

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thor includes in a small book not only a lot of information, but very thoughtful discussion about it. There are a few places where the editors didn't proofread carefully, and it is odd that she should not mention some contemporary scholars. Clearly the author's interest was in the warp and woof of the discussion through the ages rather than trying to be encyclopedic in mentioning every contemporary scholar. But her attention to details of the discussion that few of us know about offers a significant contribution to the intriguing questions hovering around Josephus' *testimonium* to Jesus Christ.

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Amos in Song and Book Culture, by Joyce Rilett Wood. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series*, vol. 337. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002. 256 pp. \$80.00.

This monograph, based on the author's 1993 Toronto School of Theology dissertation, presents a new interpretation of the book of Amos. Distinguishing two editions of the book, Wood regards each as "a complete literary composition by a different author" (p. 11). The first is a cycle of seven poems featuring a coherent narrative sequence composed by Amos himself, while the second relates to the first as commentary to a text.

In the Introduction, Wood claims that while the book's literary inconsistencies rule out the notion of single authorship, complex redaction-critical analyses also fail because of the lack of objective criteria for assigning material to different historical strata. Thus rejecting the assumption of multiple editorial levels, Wood maintains that the notion of a single exilic editor "who preserved Amos's prophetic text but thoroughly rewrote it and converted it into a book with ten parts" suffices to resolve the book's literary problems (p. 15).

Chapter 1 investigates Amos's "written prophecy," which is understood as a continuous poetic text of seven poems, in which subsequent poems develop the thoughts of previous ones. Wood's identification of these poems is based largely on the distinction by previous scholarship between the prophet's original words and subsequent redactional additions. Occasionally, however, she departs from the received wisdom, as for instance in the case of 6:1 where Zion is taken to be authentic.

The second chapter on "Writing and Editing in Amos" looks for traces of intrusion, which suggest the presence of a second stage of literary composi-

tion. Wood accepts the common redaction-critical notion according to which redactional additions are an attempt to adapt the old text to changed historical circumstances, arguing that “the reviser is not simply an editor but an author who totally rewrites the original text by integrating it into a new system of interpretation” (p. 47). The editorial version is thus understood not as a separate composition but as “a running commentary on Amos’s [original] poetry” (p. 47), which often “stands in tension with or opposition to the original version” (p. 48). Yet, the end product is “a single homogenized text with a unified argument” (p. 94).

In Chapter 3, Wood develops her view that Amos’s prophecy did not originate in numerous individual speeches or oracles but in a song cycle meant to be performed before a live audience. According to Wood, this song cycle had been composed for performance at the *marzeah* feast, which she regards as a counterpart to the Greek poetic symposia of the 7th and 6th centuries BCE. Rather controversially, Amos’s original text is thus attributed to seventh-century Jerusalem rather than eighth-century Israel. However, with the transition from song to book culture traces of live performance were removed, the song cycle was converted into a piece of history writing, and Amos was turned from a poet into a “larger-than-life” prophet. Yet these were not the only momentous modifications: the book’s exilic editor also turned the original tragic poetry into the U-shaped plot of comedy, a movement Wood believes to be evident not only in the book’s overall structure (which in 9:11–15 ends on a note of salvation) but also in its individual parts.

The fourth chapter examines the cultural background and literary traditions that informed Amos’s poetry. In particular, Wood draws attention to his references to historical events and allusions to antecedent Judean literature. Seeking to reinforce her Greek analogy, she traces Greek counterparts to Amos’s focus on the “Day of YHWH,” concentrating especially on Homeric epic.

Chapter 5 in turn investigates the development of the prophetic tradition, seeking to demonstrate the formative influence of Amos’s song cycle on subsequent prophets. Wood here makes a distinction between early performing prophets and later orators, assigning Hosea, Micah, and Jeremiah to the former and Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, and Obadiah to the latter category. Isaiah, while also being among the performing prophets, preceded Amos and was one of his influences. Wood in this context returns to the revision of the book of Amos, which approximately fifty years after the fall of Jerusalem resulted in a “scholarly edition” (p. 191) that draws heavily on the Deuteronomistic historian, especially 1 Kings 13, 1 Kings 8, and 2 Kings 17, and converts the song cycle into “biography and history” (p. 216). Wood identifies Amos as the anonymous man of God of 1 Kings 13, arguing that the aim of this

"biography of Amos" is to ridicule the prophet by suggesting "that he did not live up to his role" (p. 197). Amos's second biography (the revised book of Amos) later on corrects the Deuteronomist's negative portrait, vindicating Amos and exaggerating his significance by suggesting that he foretold Israel's fall.

Wood's study contains some valuable exegetical insights as well as helpful observations on the linking of individual passages and the development of themes throughout the book. However, her general thesis is not convincing, and scholars may find her lack of engagement with alternative explanations irritating. Having criticized redaction critics for failing to adduce objective criteria for their diachronic proposals, Wood never even attempts to offer any such criteria for her own distinction between Amos's original song cycle and subsequent editorial material. Although she often follows previous scholarship, the current situation in Old Testament studies where the results of twentieth-century form and redaction criticism have come under increased scrutiny calls for significantly more methodological reflection than Wood provides.

Another fundamental weakness of Wood's investigation lies in her focus on Greek poetic traditions to the exclusion of ancient Near Eastern prophetic parallels. To establish that Greek poetic traditions are closer to biblical prophecy than the prophetic texts discovered throughout the ancient Near East would require a sustained historical and cross-cultural study of Mediterranean and ancient Near Eastern poetic/prophetic traditions that goes far beyond the limited focus of Wood's study.

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Playing a Jewish Game: Gentile Christian Judaizing in the First and Second Centuries CE, by Michele Murray. *Studies in Christianity and Judaism/Études sur le christianisme et le judaïsme* 13. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004. 240 pp. \$44.95.

The present study represents a revised version of Michele Murray's doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Toronto. The book is a contribution to the ongoing field of research that no longer treats early Christianity as a movement distinct from Judaism. Rather, as Murray emphasizes, recent scholarship has highlighted the ongoing interaction between Judaism and Christianity in the first two centuries CE (p. 1). Much of the impetus for this rethinking of Jewish-Christian relations in antiquity emerges from contemporary post-Holocaust Jewish-Christian dialogue, both in a scholarly and non-scholarly environment.