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fortuitous means. Ruth "happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz" (2:3 RSV). Conveniently, Boaz lay down "at the end of the heap of grain" (3:7 RSV). Called to duty by a foreign woman, this Israelite patriarch swore by Yahweh to do right for Ruth (3:13). When the matter finally turned out well (cf. 3:18), Yahweh gave conception to Ruth, and the women of Bethlehem blessed this deity in words appropriately addressed to Naomi (4:13-14). From being the agent of death, God has become the giver of life, although at no place has the divine world intruded upon the narrative by speech or by miracles. Clearly, the human struggle itself is divine activity, redeeming curse through blessing.

In scene one, Naomi and Ruth stand alone. They are women without men. They make their own decision; they work out their own destinies. This posture continues in scene two, though the situation is more complex, since in Boaz a strong male appears. Hence, it is all the more important to discern that the power of the story is not transferred to him. The women continue to shape their tale, as both structure and content confirm. Scene two is their struggle to survive physically even as scene three is their struggle to survive culturally. In both scenes Boaz is reactor to their initiative. Scene four commences with the shock of reminder. After all, it is a man's world, and concerns of women may well be subsumed, perhaps even subverted, by this patriarchal climate. Yet the women of Bethlehem do not permit this transformation to prevail. They reinterpret the language of a man's world to preserve the integrity of a woman's story. Accordingly, scene four concludes with the two themes coming together: a story of women making a new beginning with men. Scene four is, then, the answer to scene one. Having suffered and struggled, the image of God male and female rejoices at last in the goodness of daily life.

As a whole, this human comedy suggests a theological interpretation of feminism: women working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in them. Naomi works as a bridge between tradition and innovation. Ruth and the females of Bethlehem work as paradigms for radicality. All together they are women in culture, women against culture, and women transforming culture. What they reflect, they challenge. And that challenge is a legacy of faith to this day for all who have ears to hear the stories of women in a man's world.

12. I SAMUEL 3: HISTORICAL NARRATIVE
AND NARRATIVE POETICS

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Introduction

As is well known, literary texts accumulate meanings through the intersection of diverse frames of analysis. This accumulation may be the product of repeated readings by one reader, or it may be the collective achievement of many readers who share a common tradition, literary or religious. The capacity of any text to bear an intricate simultaneity of meanings is surely one sign of its complex thematics and rich texture; and surely one mandate of literary criticism is the disclosure of this simultaneity to conscious reflection. Where critics often disagree, however, is with respect to the integration of the planes of signification thus disclosed. For some, the analytical task is restricted to the isolation of micro- or macro-structures; for others, central weight is placed on traditional topics of narrative stylistics, like point of view, representation of character, or analysis of plot. The present essay is an attempt to analyze both the formal structure *and* the narrative stylistics of I Samuel 3, and to disclose its interpenetrating planes of meaning.

At first view, the text presents no complications. It begins when the young Samuel ministered before the Lord and the elderly Eli in Shiloh—a time when divine oracles were relatively uncommon (vv. 1-2). Asleep in the shrine, Samuel is thrice awakened by a direct address and goes each time to Eli for clarification. Twice the

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old priest calms the novitiate and tells him to return to sleep; on the third occasion, however, Eli realizes that the Lord has spoken and advises the youth how to respond should the event recur (vv. 3-10). The subsequent revelation announces divine judgment against the Elide priestly dynasty for the sins of Eli's sons and his own failure to reprove them (vv. 11-14). In the morning, Samuel reluctantly tells Eli the content of the oracle (vv. 15-18). The text concludes with a notice that Samuel grew in stature and that the oracular divine presence returned to Shiloh (vv. 19-21).

Set within the books of Samuel, this text purports to describe a historical event in the life of Samuel and the history of the Elide priesthood. Nothing fully undermines this supposition. But it may be contended that the text is much more than a simple factual report. Two converging factors bring this out, requiring I Samuel 3 to be reread and reinterpreted from an alternate perspective. The first factor is of a comparative nature. The present scenario of a priest who sleeps in a shrine, and to whom the deity "comes and . . . stands" and announces a vision or oracle, is paralleled by a recurrent *topos* known from ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources. There, too, a priest (or cultic designate) sleeps in a shrine in order to receive a dream illumination from a deity who "comes and . . . stands" and announces the future.¹ The suspicion that the factual content of I Samuel 3 is further affected by narrative conventions is reinforced by such internal factors as the highly stereotyped patterning of the divine call to Samuel in verses 4-9 (three times plus a climax). Recurrent biblical instances confirm that such formal patterning was a widespread compositional convention, used in a wide range of genres. Texts like Numbers 22-24, Exodus 7-11, Judges 13-16, I Kings 2, and Amos 1-2 come particularly to mind.² (Note Ira Clark's discussion of this same pattern in chapter 9—ed.)

These comparative observations suggest that whatever the historical kernel underlying I Samuel 3, the report of it has been decisively mediated by a series of narrative conventions. Accordingly, the analytic task is not to distill some historical essence from the received narrative, as if the events of I Samuel 3 were independently accessible or confirmable; it is rather to analyze the particular discourse whereby the events are presented and formulated. Since the historical and the literary intricately

interpenetrate, there is no historical analysis of I Samuel 3 which is not also a literary interpretation—and vice versa.

I

Access to I Samuel 3 is facilitated by its many structural levels, the most comprehensive of which is its ring-composition (or chiasmic arrangement). The initial *mise-en-scène*, describing Samuel's youth, Eli's diminishing powers, and the absence of divine oracles (vv. 1-3; A), is balanced by the dénouement and conclusion, describing Samuel's growing stature as a man of God and the return of divine oracles to Shiloh (vv. 19-21; A'). Within this framework are three divine calls to a bewildered Samuel (vv. 4-9; B), the climactic fourth and subsequent oracle against the Elides (vv. 10-15; C), and Eli's request of Samuel to reiterate the divine revelation (vv. 16-18; B). The result is the structure ABCB'A'. The formal framework of A and A' thus focuses attention on the opening and closing situation, and on the state of the characters (Samuel and Eli). The climax commences with the series of calls to Samuel (B) and peaks with the doom-oracle (C) and its communication to Eli (B'). The concentric structure of this text thus sponsors two complementary fields of force: centrifugal and centripetal. In oscillating degrees the reader's attention is drawn from the peripheries to the center and from the center outward: but all converges at the center-climax, for it is the divine oracle which coordinates and gives referential perspective to the opening and closing situations.

A reading of I Samuel 3 on the basis of this formal design is not exhaustive, however. The alternative is to view the text incrementally so that C is seen as part of the dramatic development from A to A', from a situation characterized by the absence of a divine revelatory presence—"and the oracle of YHWH was infrequent in those days"*—to a remanifestation of that presence—when "YHWH continued to be seen at Shiloh."* (Asterisked biblical quotations are my own translation.) The movement of I Samuel 3 thus traces a trajectory from negativity (the absence of the divine word), through misperceived and so unactualized manifestations of God in the historical moment (B),

to the acknowledged receipt (C) and transmission of the divine word (B'). This sequence climaxes not with the oracle of C but with the transformed situation described in A'.

The preceding two readings are complementary interpretations of the chiasmic structure of the text. The one perceives that center in the renewal of the divine presence (C), the other focuses on its permanence and newly recurrent availability (A'); the one emphasizes the renewal of the divine word to Samuel, an individual (C), whereas the other speaks with reference to the changed situation for all Israel (A'). There is no need to disentangle these latter two loops of significance: individual and national motifs are complexly sustained throughout the text, and particularly in A/A' where a micro-chiasm reinforcing this point may be observed. Verse 1 refers first to *Samuel* who served the Lord (a), then to the *national* situation of divine absence (b); correspondingly, the closing v. 21 refers to the renewal of the divine presence for *all Israel* (b'), "because YHWH was revealed to *Samuel* at Shiloh through the oracle of YHWH" (a'). Just as the macro-chiasm ABCB'A' sponsors alternate climaxes of individual and national import, and hardly separates them, so the micro-chiasm binds the two elements together as well.

II

The framework of the macro-structure (A and A') can be set against a wider horizon—one which underscores the growth of Samuel's religious stature from verse 1, when "the youth [*na'ar*] Samuel served [*mešārēt 'et*] YHWH,"* to verse 19, when "Samuel grew [*vayigdal*] and YHWH was with him [*'immō*], and let none of his words go unfulfilled."* Close analysis shows that just these phrases are used to develop the character of Samuel in the preceding chapter (I Samuel 2). Thus, following Hannah's prayer upon the birth of Samuel (2:1-10), the text, referring to Samuel, states "and the youth [*na'ar*] served [*mešārēt 'et*] YHWH"* (v. 11). Again, after a description of the sons of Eli and their activities (in 2:12-17) the reader is again informed that "Samuel served [*mešārēt*] the face of YHWH"* (v. 18), and that "the youth [*na'ar*] Samuel grew [*vayigdal*] with [*'im*] YHWH"* (v. 21). Thereupon

follows another depiction of the sins of Eli's sons (2:22-25) and a final notice that "the youth [*na'ar*] Samuel continued to grow [*vegadel*] . . . both with YHWH and mankind"* (v. 25). The entire sequence of episodes concludes with an oracle against the House of Eli (2:27-36).

It is thus apparent that the positive notices about Samuel's priestly novitiate and growth in relationship to YHWH alternate with and dramatically counterpoint the historical notices regarding the Elide priests. The ascendance of the one is deliberately set over against the decline of the other—evaluatively and developmentally. An accumulation of positive attributes thus marks the several descriptions of Samuel in verses 11, 18, 21, and 26, even as an intensification of Elide sins marks the episodes of verses 12-17 and 22-25, which climax in the judgment oracle of verses 27-36. Less noticeable is the fact that this concluding oracle balances the opening prayer of Hannah structurally and thematically: structurally, insofar as the prayer sets the context for Samuel's positive novitiate at Shiloh over against the decadence of the existing priesthood there; and thematically, insofar as both the prayer and the oracle refer to the royal anointed one (*mašīah*) of YHWH (vv. 10, 35). The overall structural form of these several units in I Samuel 2 is chiasmic, and may be graphically recapitulated as follows:

- A. Hannah's prayer and reference to a royal *mašīah* (2:1-10)
- B. Samuel serves YHWH (2:11)
- C. Sins of Elides (2:12-17)
 - D. Samuel serves YHWH and grows with God (2:18, 21)
- C' Sins of Elides (2:22-25)
- B' Samuel serves YHWH and grows with God (2:26)
- A' Divine oracle and reference to a royal *mašīah* (2:27-36)

As remarked, this chiasm is both evaluative and developmental. The sequence of textual units climaxes in terms of the accumulated virtues of Samuel, on the one hand, and the judgment upon the priestly family of Eli, on the other. At the same time, the virtues of Samuel in I Samuel 2:11, 18, 21, 26 achieve a more forceful climax in I Samuel 3—since 3:1 and 19 reiterate these earlier references to Samuel's service and stature before God. The noticeable difference between these testimonies is that in chapter 2 they

interweave the account of Elide decadence, whereas in chapter 3 they *bracket* the narrative of Samuel's call and the oracle against the Elides.

The reader of I Samuel 3:1 thus continues the historical narrative with backward glances at I Samuel 2:11, 18, 21, and 26. The macro-structural element A is thus strikingly bivalent: it concludes the developments of chapter 2 and recharges them. Other verbal elements further accentuate the relationship between I Samuel 2 and 3 and the distance between them. For example, while the oracle against the Elides refers to the fact that YHWH had first "revealed" (*niglōh*) himself to this priestly clan in Egypt (2:27), this divine presence had become increasingly absent until new words were "revealed" [*niglāh*] to Samuel (3:21). Or again, while speaking of the future failure of the Elide line, the oracle in 2:33 states that YHWH "will not cut off everyone of you, to make his eyes fail [*lekhallōt 'et 'ēynāv*]." This phrase assumes ironic punning force in 3:2, where it is said of the declining—but still unreplaced—Eli that "his eyes began to get dim [*'ēynāv hēhēllū khēhōt*]"* and in 3:12, where Samuel is told that YHWH is about to bring about the fulfillment of the oracles "from start to finish [*hāhēl vekallēh*]." And finally, we read that YHWH "will lightly esteem [*yēqāllū*] those who are contemptuous"* of him (2:30), and that the divine judgment later announced to Samuel refers to the fact that Eli's sons "cursed [*meqallelīm*]."

III

The description of the "negative" religious situation in I Samuel 3:1-3 (A) is richly textured. Semantic and phonemic elements interpenetrate to underscore the situation of lack, passivity, and torpor. The narrative reports that the divine word was rare or "precious at that time,"* and that "there was no frequent vision" (v. 1). This lack of spiritual vision is metonymically captured by the emphasis on Eli's failing sight. Indeed, the phrase "his eyes [*'ēynāv*] began to grow dim"* in verse 2 is linked to the earlier "there was no [*'ēyn*] frequent vision" thematically and alliteratively.

Similarly, a hard truth is expressed through the alliterative puns that unexpectedly link the description of Eli—"his eyes began

[*hēhēllū*] to grow dim; he was unable [*yūkhāl*] to see"*—with the reference to the "temple [*hēykhal*] of YHWH" in which Samuel slept (v. 3). The semantic nexus established by these alliterations juxtaposes Eli's lack of (in)sight to the temple in which Samuel lay with the ark—a simulacrum of ancient divine presence and symbol of potential divine illumination. In his blindness, Eli lay in the spiritual darkness outside the temple; while Samuel, the novitiate, lay within.

The emphasis on spiritual and physical blindness in I Samuel 3:1-2 condenses in verse 3 around the remarkable bivalent image of the "lamp of Elohim before it was extinguished."* This phrase follows the reference to Eli "sleeping [*šōkhēb*] in his place,"* and his blindness, and precedes the references to "Samuel sleeping [*šōkhēb*] in the temple of YHWH,"* and the "ark of Elohim." Linked to these two images of sleep, it is thoroughly ambiguous whether "the lamp of Elohim before it was extinguished"* is a metaphor referring to Eli, and the fact that this religious leader was not yet dead or blind, or whether it is a metaphor for the spiritual illumination dimmed at this time but not entirely extinguished ("there was no frequent vision").

Both levels of meaning are possible; and both highlight features of the social-religious reality that centers on Samuel. If the metaphor refers to Eli, the dominant contrast of verse 3 is between old age and youth, between the senescent priest who "sleeps in his place" and the youthful *mešārēt* who "sleeps in the temple of YHWH." If, on the other hand, the metaphor refers to the state of divine illumination at that time, the contrast is rather between the diminishing spiritual realities, as represented by Eli, and the lingering flicker of divine light that will be reignited through Samuel. On this last possibility, Samuel's sleep in the temple becomes a figurative depiction of his spiritual incumbency. At the same time, the emphasis on sleep (Eli's and Samuel's) reinforces the imagery of passivity that dominates verses 1-3 (A).

IV

The relative lack of action in verses 1-3 (A) shifts abruptly with the call sequence of verses 4-9 (B). The third-person oblique

narrative report is intersected with direct second-person encounters that dramatize the threefold divine address to Samuel. Moreover, with the divine calls beginning in verse 4, there is a reversal of the "infrequent" silence of divinity up to that point (cf. v. 1). But not being used to hearing divine speech, Samuel misinterprets the supernatural address and three times goes to Eli (vv. 5, 6, 7). On the first two occasions Eli, who has also been without the divine oracle, misunderstands the event and sends Samuel back to the shrine to sleep (stem: *šakhab*; vv. 5-6).

Eli's commands to sleep sponsor a variety of ironic meanings when structurally linked to the uses of *šakhab* in verses 2-3 (A). At one level, the repeated emphasis in verses 5-6, where Samuel is directed back to the shrine, call particular attention to the opening spatial polarity, where Eli is described as "sleeping in his place," while Samuel was "sleeping in the temple." To be sure, Samuel's location complements the initial depiction of his status as an acolyte or novitiate, and, as such, occasions no particular attention. But there is already an incipient sense that the spatial polarity of verses 2-3 anticipates the centrality of the young Samuel, in contrast to the increasing marginality of Eli. The situation is thus precisely the reverse from the viewpoint of the protagonists. Samuel, who is in the spiritual-physical center of the shrine, does not know that the Lord has called him and that he has become a spiritually central personality. It is for this reason that he runs out of the sanctuary to Eli, believing the latter to be the voice of his vision and the central spiritual officiant at Shiloh. Consequently, Eli's repeated commands to Samuel to *šakhab* in the shrine have ironic overtones: the old priest sends his novitiate back to the temple, where he will receive an oracle announcing Eli's fall.

There is also ironic truth in Samuel's dependence on the old priest which is called to mind (and so accentuated) by a verbal link between verse 3 and verse 7. The novitiate's confusion during his visions is explained by the narrative comment that "Samuel did not yet [*terem*] know YHWH, and the oracle of YHWH was not yet [*terem*] revealed [*yiggaleh*] to him"* (v. 7). This comment comes between the second and third divine calls, and repeats the adverb *terem* earlier used in verse 3 with respect to Eli, "the lamp of Elohim before [*terem*] it was extinguished."** This verbal

repetition establishes an unexpected structural coordinate between units A and B and effectively juxtaposes Samuel's as yet unilluminated state with Eli's flickering but as yet not totally undiminished spiritual vision. It was Samuel's own consciousness of that fact that directed him to Eli in the first place. He was right in running to this "lamp of Elohim before it was extinguished," but for whom the divine call would have gone unanswered. The "*terem*" of Eli's latent (declining) divine consciousness thus served to help actualize the "*terem*" of Samuel's latent (incubating) knowledge of God.

The final irony attendant upon the verbal stem *šakhab* in A and B comes in verse 9, with the report of Samuel's compliance with Eli's command. Earlier, after Eli told Samuel to *šakhab*, it is reported that he (Samuel) "went and slept"* (v. 5). The reuse of this merism in verse 9 is, by contrast, noticeably prolix—recording that "Samuel went and slept in his place [*bimqômô*]."* In the Hebrew, the semantic disturbance of this merism is all the more obvious: "[and] went Samuel and slept in his place."** Now the repeated accent on Samuel in verse 9 may easily be understood as a reemphasis on the novitiate who comes and goes so obediently. But what of the clause "in his place"? This phrase recurs only in the opening remark (v. 2) that "Eli slept in his place [*bimqômô*]."* Given the transfer of imagery and significance from Eli to Samuel throughout A and B, there is meaningful contrast in this repetition of a phrase used first with respect to Eli and then prior to Samuel's receipt of the revelation-oracle. But the meaningfulness of the repetition is not—it must be stressed—that Samuel literally replaced Eli, for *bimqômô* is a locative clause, and never used in biblical Hebrew to indicate replacement.⁵ All the same, the verbal repetition elicits a structural contrast that complements other thematics of the text. And so one is drawn to the figurative force of the phrase *bimqômô* in this context. Shiloh has begun to become for Samuel "his place," just as it once was the "place" of Eli. That it was Eli who sent Samuel to sleep in "his place" is thus the final irony structurally sponsored by the repetition of the verb *šakhab* in verses 2-9.

All the while he was spiritually unaware of God's call, Samuel awoke to that call with physical unrest and disorientation. He repeatedly ran to Eli and blurted out: "here I am, for you called

me" (vv. 5-6, 8), a response whose self-referential quality is dominant. When, however, Samuel was aroused by the fourth call, having become aware that he was addressed by God, he said: "Speak, for *your servant* is listening" (v. 10). The contrast is marked. The disoriented running is replaced by orientation and focus; and the self-centered "I" of the confused novice has been humbly transformed. Samuel is now "*your servant*."

V

The stereotyped repetition of Samuel's call has functional meaning in I Samuel 3. It controls the reader's perception of time; provides a fixed counterpoint to the developmental nature of the incidents; organizes the tensions of the action; and provides the neutral ground against which stylistic variations can be perceived. The issues connected with the various stylistic uses of *šakhab*, *terem*, and *bimqômô* in A and B all have been discussed; so has the shift within B of pronouns (from first to second person).

The structural deployment and effect of one final term, *vayyôsef*, "and He [God] continued," may be noted at this point. It is of special interest both because it is related to the temporal relation of the calls, and because it is linked to the opening and final scenarios (A and A'). The term is used initially with respect to the divine calls to Samuel. It is naturally missing from the first occasion, but does precede the second and third calls, emphasizes the successive nature of the divine presence, and counterpoints the opening absence of that presence (v. 1) and Samuel's inability to perceive it (v. 7).⁶ There is, thus, through the repetition of *vayyôsef*, a dramatic emphasis on the recurrent—even insistent—divine attempt to return to the shrine and religious consciousness. The hesitant and initially inconclusive occasion of God's calls, which leads up to the conclusive divine breakthrough in C, contrasts with the concluding verse of I Samuel 3 that announces that "YHWH continued [*vayyôsef*] to be seen at Shiloh"* (v. 21). There is final irony in the fact that when Eli admonishes Samuel to repeat the oracle to him, he adds the adjuration: "May Elohim do thus to you and all the more so [*yôsf*]"* if the content of the oracle is withheld in any way (v. 17; B').

Through verbal repetitions, B' thus sponsors ironic contrasts with earlier phases in the narrative and provides a transition to the new reality of divine revelations in A'. B' also provides a dramatic reversal of the initial trope of darkness and dim (in)sight. When Samuel awakes after receiving the anti-Elide oracle, the first thing he does is "open the doors of the temple of YHWH"* (v. 15). The situation of darkness is thereby transformed into one of light—a light both physical (the light of day) and spiritual (divine illumination). The nighttime scenario of the incubation and revelation in B-C is thus an extension of the larger trope of darkness illumined by a flickering "lamp of Elohim" (A). And finally, this mixture of physical and spiritual illumination is structurally underscored by means of another remarkable verbal allusion and contrast. When Samuel reported the oracle to Eli in B', Eli recognized it as a divine communication, saying "it is from YHWH, let Him do as is fitting in *his eyes* [*ēynâv*]."* This response strikingly recalls the earlier reference to Eli's increasing blindness, when "his eyes [*ēynâv*] began to grow dim." Verbally textured in this way, this response formally draws attention to the thematic shift from human blindness and divine absence to human insight and divine presence.

VI

One final level of textual meaning in I Samuel 3 remains to be explored. This is the phonemic level of musicality, whereby meaning is *presented* simply and directly by repeated relations of sound clusters. No nontextual reality is represented or implied.⁷ The musicality exists and functions on its own terms. Nevertheless, the phonemic clusters *may* reinforce or highlight other semantic levels in the text. This possibility is, in fact, the case in Jeremiah 20:1-9,⁸ and may be observed in I Samuel 3 as well.

On a purely phonemic-allophonic level, the reader is struck by the repetition of the related sounds *k/kh/h/g/q/* with *l*, as in *hēHēLLâ . . . Lō'yûKHaL* (v. 2); *hēyKHaL* (v. 3); *hāKHēL veKaLLēh* (v. 12); *meQaLLeLîm Lâhem . . . veLō' Khihâh . . . veLâKhên* (vv. 13-14); or as in *YiGGâLeh* (v. 7); *yiGdaL* (v. 19); *niGlâh* (v. 21). But these similarities of sound also highlight other

patterns and coordinates of meaning in the text. Thus, to simply follow the preceding Hebrew transcription: the description of Eli's eyes, which "began" (*hehellû*) to grow dim so that he "could not" (*lo' yukhal*) see (v. 2) occurs in syntactic and semantic juxtaposition to Samuel's residence in the "temple" (*hëyKhal*, v. 3)—a contrast remarked on above. Similarly, the description of the onset of Eli's blindness is musically—and semantically—aligned with the curse against the Elides which was to be effected from "beginning to end" (*hāKhël veKallēh*, v. 22). Eli's physical condition thus anticipates, and is punningly resumed by, the reference to the divine oracle. Moreover the foregoing sounds are also linked to the sin of Eli's sons who "cursed" (*meqallelm*) but were "not reproved" (*lo' Khihāh*, v. 13). Altogether these several sounds associated with the blindness of Eli, and the imminent destruction of the lineage for its curses and forbearance, accumulate a negative cohesion that contrasts with—while simultaneously echoing—the repeated verbs *LēKH* or *vayyē-LēKH*, which describe Eli's command to Samuel to "go" back to the temple. The phonemic reversal of the dominant *KH-L* sequence/pattern in *LēKH* formally highlights the thematic/religious reversal underway in the contrasted personalities of Eli and Samuel. Such phonemic reversals with semantic meaning occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.⁹

Other phonemic patterns exist in I Samuel 3. For example, it is reported in verse 2 that Eli's "eyes began to dim" (*Kēhôt*), and in verse 13 that when his sons cursed Eli did not "reprove [*Kihāh*] them." Like the foregoing examples, this phonemic assonance has semantic meaning as well. It juxtaposes Eli's physical blindness to his spiritual unattentiveness, and retrospectively reinforces the presentiment that Eli's lack of vision was spiritual as well as physical.

The consonantal sequence *ry* may serve as a final instance of the interpenetration of phonemic and semantic levels of meaning. The first occurrence of this pattern is at the very outset of I Samuel 3, where it is reported that there were infrequent (*nifRās*) visions (v. 1); the last occurrence comes in the concluding report that YHWH was "with" Samuel's oracles so that "none of his pronouncements fell unfulfilled to the ground" (*'aRSāh*, v. 19). Compactly, this phonemic repetition highlights the thematic development of the

entire chapter, which moves between the poles of a relative absence of revelations and their renewal. This thematic movement is mediated and coordinated, as it were, by another recurrence of the *ry* phonemic pattern in the verb *vayāRās*—which refers to Samuel's alacrity when "he ran" to Eli upon first being awakened by an unperceived divine call (v. 5). Samuel's activity thus provides the transition between the absence of oracles and their renewal.

What is particularly striking in the above is the way purely formal phonemic repetitions complement levels of meaning achieved by other means. Surely these phonemic/semantic meanings add to the historical "fact" of the composition and bring out more forcefully that in the Hebrew Bible historical narrative is always narrative history, and so is necessarily mediated by language and its effects. It is thus language in its artistic deployment that produces the received biblical history—a point that must serve to deflect all historicistic reductions of these texts to "pure" facts. And if all this requires a reconception of the truth-claims of the biblical historical narrative, then it is to this point that reflection has long been due.

- Campbell, *Ruth*, pp. 88-90, 132-37. For the term *myd'*, I follow the traditional translation *kinsman* rather than *covenant-brother* as proposed by Campbell.
23. The noun *margin'lotaw* in 3:4, 7, 8, 14, which is usually translated "feet," probably functions as a euphemism for the genitals; cf. Campbell, *Ruth*, pp. 121, 131-32. I should prefer that Campbell had left intact the ambiguity of this episode in the dark of night rather than conclude "that there was no sexual intercourse at the threshing floor" (p. 134). For the opposite conclusion, see D. R. G. Beattie, "Kethibh and Qere in Ruth IV 5," *Vetus Testamentum* 21 (1971): 493.
 24. Cf. the woman in the Song of Songs who goes out into the streets at night to find her mate and then brings him home for lovemaking (SS 3:2-4).
 25. Discussions about the meaning of *redeemer* in relation to levirate marriage are legion; see, e.g., H. H. Rowley, "The Marriage of Ruth," in *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), pp. 161-86; Thomas and Dorothy Thompson, "Some Legal Problems in the Book of Ruth," *Vetus Testamentum* 18 (1968): 79-99 and the bibliography cited there; also Campbell, *Ruth*, pp. 132-37.
 26. For a perceptive interpretation of this occasion, see Leszek Kolakowski, "Ruth, or the Dialogue Between Love and Bread," in *The Key to Heaven and Conversations with the Devil* (New York: Grove Press, 1972), pp. 53-56.
 27. Cf. in 3:8 the narrator's use of the words "the man" and "a woman" rather than the names Boaz and Ruth. Darkness hides identity. Moreover, after 3:9, this screening of personal identity is maintained throughout the rest of scene three. But, although darkness, privacy, and secrecy hide the names of Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi, these phenomena do not conceal the divine name; see below on 3:10, 13.
 28. See Hals, *The Theology of the Book of Ruth*, pp. 13ff.
 29. For the translation "so-and-so," see Campbell, *Ruth*, pp. 141-43.
 30. On the topic of land and related issues in Ruth 4, see Robert Gordis, "Love, Marriage, and Business in the Book of Ruth: A Chapter in Hebrew Customary Law," in *A Light Unto My Path*, pp. 146-64.
 31. I follow the *qere* here rather than the *kethib*; for the opposite reading, see Beattie, "Kethibh and Qere," pp. 490-94; also "The Book of Ruth as Evidence for Israelite Legal Practice," *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974): 251-67.
 32. Note that this interruption is set apart by an inclusion: "this was the [custom] formerly in Israel . . . this was the manner of attesting in Israel" (4:7 RSV*). On the symbolism of the sandal, see Calum M. Carmichael, "A Ceremonial Crux: Removing a Man's Sandal as a Female Gesture of Contempt," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977): 321-36, esp. 332-36.
 33. Note the symmetrical arrangement of the proper names in this statement: two women and one man at the beginning; two men and one woman at the end. Cf. "house of Israel" and "house of Perez" with "mother's house" in 1:8; the last occurs in an episode void of males; the other two in an episode void of females.
 34. An alternative interpretation suggests that Boaz is protecting Ruth in public.
 35. Cf. the reversal on the theme of exogamy in 1:4: marriage in Moab vs. marriage in Bethlehem.
 36. Cf. Gen. 2:24, where third-person narration also distanced the privacy of intercourse.
 37. This statement, "Yahweh gave [ntn] her conception" (RSV*), corresponds in structure and function to 1:6: "Yahweh had visited his people and given [ntm] them food" (RSV*). As the first and last narrative references to the deity, these statements accent two blessings of life: food and posterity.

38. *Contra Oswald Loretz*, "The Theme of the Ruth Story," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 22 (1960): 391-99.
39. On comedy, cf. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 163-86.

12. I Samuel 3: Historical and Narrative Poetics

1. See A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 46.3 (1956): 188-90, 199-201.
2. Cf. Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978), chap. 3.
3. The Massoretic text reads *meqallelim lahem*, "cursed them," but this is clearly a pious scribal correction of the original *'elohim* ("cursed God"), preserved in the Septuagint.
4. Cf. the two possible references of the expression noted earlier.
5. The word *tahat* ("instead of"; "in place of"; "after") is regularly used.
6. The fourth call uses a different, "intensifying form": YHWH came . . . and called *kefa'am befa'am*, "as aforesaid"; it also repeats the name of Samuel twice, not once as earlier.
7. See, e.g., I. Burke, "On Musicality in Verse," *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1941), pp. 369-78; and M. Bloomfield, "The Syncategorematic in Poetry: From Semantics to Syntactics," *To Honor Roman Jakobson* (Paris: Moulon, 1967), pp. 309-17.
8. See my *Text and Texture; Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), chap. 7, esp. pp. 99-101.
9. E.g., Genesis 11:9 (*lebēnāh/nābelāh*), and my discussion in *Text and Texture*, p. 38.

14. I Samuel 25 as Literature and History

1. An earlier and somewhat different version of this essay was published under the title "I Samuel 25 as Literature and as History" in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 40 (1978): 11-28. I thank the publishers of that journal for permission to reproduce parts of that article herein and Prof. James S. Ackerman for his very constructive suggestions for revising it.
I Samuel 25:1-42 is one unit of literature. In v. 1, read *Mā 'ôn* with LXX Instead of Paran. If David ever fled to Paran, we have no other reference to it. The notice about David's wives at the very end of the chapter (vv. 43-44) does not belong to the action of the narrative, but seems to have been attracted quite naturally by the reference in the conclusion of the narrative to his marriage with Abigail, to which the notice alludes (v. 43). There is no reason to assume that the last two verses were ever separate from the rest of the chapter.
2. Prov. 17:21; 30:22; Jer. 17:11; Ps. 14:1; 53:1.
3. The wording is significant for the theme of heartlessness: *welēb Nābāl tōb 'alāyw*, literally, "Nabal's heart was good on him," v. 36.
4. II Sam. 13:23-28; perhaps Gen. 38:12.
5. I Sam. 16:2; see also 18:1, 16, 20.
6. But compare the opinion of P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. (*I Samuel*, Anchor Bible 8