



IMAGINING THE OTHER
AND CONSTRUCTING
ISRAELITE IDENTITY
IN THE EARLY SECOND
TEMPLE PERIOD

EDITED BY
EHUD BEN ZVI AND
DIANA V. EDELMAN

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INTRODUCTION

Diana V. Edelman

The present volume grew out of two sessions of papers and an ensuing substantial discussion dedicated to the theme ‘Imagining the Other and Constructing Israelite Identity’ that were organized by the research group, ‘Israel and the Production and Reception of Authoritative Books in the Persian and Hellenistic Period’ (co-chaired by Ehud Ben Zvi and me) that took place at the 2011 meeting of the European Association of Biblical Scholars in Thessaloniki, Greece.

The theme was selected for two reasons. The first was the sense that a conversation involving multiple perspectives, bringing together different types of Othering, and conducted using various methodological approaches, would be particularly helpful within the field. The second was the intrinsic interest of the topic. In the early Second Temple period, imagining the Other was a continual process deeply involved in and crucially facilitating ongoing negotiations and re-negotiations of identity, which, in itself, is a ‘problematic’ concept. At the same time, such imagining involved negotiating and re-negotiating substantial aspects of social constructions concerning the inner organization of ‘normal’, at times shaping forms of its hierarchy and associated conceptualizations. As such, Othering was deeply associated with socio-cognitive processes, with social mindscapes, and, often, with mnemonic narratives that served to explore and communicate the former.

Texts are a main, though problematic, ‘source’ for studying these matters, and we have devoted our sessions and our volume to examples of Othering in texts. As per the mandate of the research group, we have focused on texts that were read and reread as authoritative by the late Persian or early Hellenistic period, but we still have considered it important to include essays that deal with materials from Qumran, *Sira*, *1 Maccabees*, and *Esther*.

Following our initial discussions, the editors contacted additional colleagues with expertise on these matters, and although neither this volume nor any volume can even attempt to be comprehensive, this

collection succeeds in addressing a wide range of Othering processes, including processes involving the social construction of gender and disability. The essays draw on a range of interdisciplinary approaches informed by insights from sociology, anthropology, philosophy, social psychology, social memory, gender studies, post-colonial studies, disability studies, ethnicity studies, and historical and literary studies. Readers will easily notice shared and sometimes unshared threads, dialogues that have opened up between and among the essays, and the multiple ways in which the various contributions inform each other.

One subset of essays within this volume focuses on Otherness within the group, which establishes grades of membership status over against the stranger or foreigner, who is different at a distance (Cataldo, Camp, Stordalen, Brett, Funke, Raphael, and Dorman). A second subset focuses on examples that explore in-group boundary permeability or fuzziness (Ben Zvi, Wetter, Cohn, and Walsh), and a third subset looks at the dynamics of corporate, in-group identity in relation to outside groups (Edelman, Berge, Gillmayr-Bucher, Macchi, and Eskenazi). However, the boundaries between these groups are very permeable, and some essays could be included in more than one subset.

Following traditional genre conventions, this collection opens with the most ‘theoretical’ essay. It is followed by chapters that deal with examples across a wide range of texts. Since disability studies is a relative newcomer to Biblical Studies and since the editors are convinced that it carries a very strong potential, the two chapters addressing this theme were chosen to conclude the volume, to draw particular attention to them.

To whet the appetite of the reader, a brief abstract of each contribution follows. The collection opens with Jeremiah W. Cataldo, ‘The Other: Sociological Perspectives in a Post-Colonial Age’. This essay explores concepts of the Other, human and divine, and Othering among theorists from philosophy, psychology, and sociology, including Slavoj Žižek, Alain Touraine, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Emmanuel Lévinas, and Melanie Klein, in addition to drawing on work done in the fields of post-colonial and feminist studies. He uses Ezra–Nehemiah throughout to illustrate various concepts from a biblical perspective.

This contribution is followed by the essay of the co-editor of the volume, Ehud Ben Zvi (‘Othering, Selfing, “Boundarying” and “Cross-Boundarying” as Interwoven with Socially Shared Memories: Some Observations’). Ben Zvi explores here important sites of memories and mnemonic narratives that were interwoven to create in-between realms

that included both the partial Israelitization of Others and partial Otherization of Israel. Ben Zvi notes that not all biblical systems of categorization are based on a simple, clear-cut Us vs. Them principle and proceeds to examine multiple examples where a generative grammar of reciprocal mirroring that creates discursively contingent rather than categorical Othering has been employed. He notes that Othering can also take place along an axis of gender and of disability in addition to one of a construed ethno-cultural group and provides additional examples. Mirroring strategies cut across boundaries defining insider and outsiders and evoke porousness and ‘fuzziness’ while maintaining a grammar of rejection.

Ben Zvi’s contribution is followed by my own essay (‘YHWH’s Othering of Israel’). I examine threats attributed to YHWH across the corpus of the Hebrew Bible to Other Israel against a wider perspective of collectivist social psychology. I identify four strategies used by the biblical writers to establish in-group identity that includes YHWH as a corporate member and then note how all four are also used to threaten ostracism or termination of the in-group. A fifth Othering category that derives from the universalization of YHWH is also considered, which has no corresponding form of in-group formation.

Then Kåre Berge (‘Categorical Identities: “Ethnified Otherness and Sameness”—A Tool for Understanding Boundary Negotiation in the Pentateuch?’) explores the creation in the Pentateuch of a political category of residual minorities, typified as the Canaanites, in relation to ‘the people’ who constitute the nation of Israel. He notes, like Ben Zvi, the ambivalence toward the Other, especially in Genesis, where such residual minorities can be viewed positively and behave like insiders. In Deuteronomy, the annihilation of the Canaanites is a necessary precursor to a ‘sacred beginning’ as well as a pedagogical example of the fate awaiting those who fail to follow Torah. He emphasizes that in both Genesis and Deuteronomy, the relation between Israel and the nations does not correspond to ‘categorical identity’ proposed by the modern social theorist Eric Hobsbawm, even as modified by sociologists Anthony D. Smith and Thomas Scheff and anthropologist Michael M. J. Fischer but rather, to ‘relational identity’, as described by Craig Calhoun. While modern social theory that tends to emphasize externally oriented ‘powering’ is not fully applicable to many ancient societies, the current emphasis on the role of sentiment in shaping nationality is and should inform future studies in our field.

Mark G. Brett ('Natives and Immigrants in the Social Imagination of the Holiness School') surmises that the policy on 'native' in the Holiness Code, which introduces a new vocabulary, must stem from a need to articulate a new understanding of the relationship between land and identity that had not been present in earlier, Deuteronomistic theology, due to a new set of problems about the legitimacy of land possession. The phrase 'people of the land' must already have taken on negative connotations that prevented it from expressing a sense of equity between native and immigrant. The H editors of the Persian period were imagining new ways to express religious and economic integration via permeable social boundaries that would allow a reconciliation of the peoples of the land who never went into exile with the 'children of the *golah*', while at the same time opening possibilities for including the surrounding *goyim* as both land-owners and participants in the cult.

Claudia Camp ('Gender and Identity in the Book of Numbers') initiates a gender and identity-critical reading of the book of Numbers and argues that such a reading is crucial for understanding the construction/s of identity and authority in the Second Temple period. She systematically critiques the specific ways that subordination is represented in the book and how gender construction intersects with other identity-construction mechanisms, particularly priestly identity, to inform the limits of, and hierarchy within, 'Israelite' identity.

Carey Walsh ('Women on the Edge') explores how Rahab, Jael, Ruth, Jezebel, Esther, and Vashti are used by male scribes in an open system able to incorporate and instruct on difference to explore the laudatory value of circumventing boundaries and listening to marginalized women. She employs both feminist and post-colonial theory in her quest to analyze how these womanly figures exercise power to gain insight into negotiating within hegemonic systems from places of vulnerability and risk.

The next two contributions deal with Ruth, a book and a mnemonic character of widely acknowledged relevance for the theme of this volume. Anne-Mareike Wetter ('Ruth: A Born-Again Israelite? One Woman's Journey') explores the criteria defining Israelite identity in the book of Ruth and if and how, in the story world, it is possible to change ethnic identity. Drawing on ethnicity theory, she identifies the concept of *hesed* and the willingness to leave the safety of one's home in order to build the house of Israel, both of which Ruth enacts with Naomi and Boaz, as specific Israelite markers of solidarity and common culture. This leads the community of Bethlehem to accept her as an insider,

providing her with a common proper name, a myth of common ancestry, and shared historical memories. In theory, such an ethnic cross-over must have been conceivable in the world behind the text.

Robert L. Cohn ('Overcoming Otherness in the Book of Ruth') uses literary and anthropological theory to understand how Ruth goes from Moabite Other to an insider Israelite, offering an example of inclusive Israelite identity over against a more exclusive identity in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. He explores the rhetorical strategy within the narrative centering on interrogations concerning identity and then Ruth's intertextual and exegetical role as a commentary on Torah narrative and law, playing off the stories of Lot's daughters (Gen. 19.30-38) and the birth of Perez, Boaz's forebear (Gen. 38.27-29), as a type scene of the tale of a young woman who seduces an older man in order to preserve the man's family line. Finally, he looks at social processes of identity formation in the real world that take place in liminal space, which he thinks best suits the understanding of the book's author, who charts some of the dynamics of this later rite of passage in the likely absence of a formal rite of conversion.

The next contribution is by Terje Stordalen, who uses social memory as a lens to study 'Imagined and Forgotten Communities: Othering in the Story of Josiah's Reform (2 Kings 23)'. He explores how Josiah's remembered reform in 2 Kings 23 would have been understood and used in the early Persian period to model correct behaviour for current and future members of the community. Those who do not conform to the formalities and beliefs of the newly emerging religion, who continue to engage in ancestor worship in the Kidron and Hinnom valleys, will be considered Other and forgotten, like those in the story world who engaged in what was deemed to be 'illicit' religious practices and who were literarily silenced by and forgotten in the wake of the actual or imagined reforms.

From Jerusalem to the Mediterranean Sea and to Nineveh. Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher ('Jonah and the Other: A Discourse on Interpretative Competence') approaches the character of Jonah as an example of a reluctant 'prophet to the nations' and examines the sense of Other that emerges in the book. In contrast to the 'oracles concerning the nations' in other prophetic books, in Jonah the assimilation of Others takes the form of nations finding salvation without being destroyed or included within a Zion-centred worldview. YHWH cares for all creatures and people; Nineveh repents, changes its behaviour, but does not convert to YHWH.

Jean-Daniel Macchi ('Denial, Deception or Force: How to Deal with Powerful Others') focuses on different strategies of resistance that reflect insider Othering of the imperial power explored in various versions of the book of Esther. Three options for resistance are presented: refusal to comply, the use of cunning and courage, and the use of force. Macchi then notes that divergent textual traditions endorse differing strategies; the earliest Greek Alpha text, probably written in the Ptolemaic period among the Judaeon Diaspora in Egypt, omits the massacre of Jewish enemies and the inability to change Persian law. It assumes openness to collaboration with the imperial power. The Hebrew MT text, which includes the final massacre and an inalterable Persian law, would seem to reflect a rewriting in the Hasmonaean period in Jerusalem, where opposition to the foreign imperial power at any cost, including war, was deemed necessary for survival. The LXX presupposes a parent text close to the MT. Thus, the book represents diverse insider responses to dealing with imperial Others within the larger Jewish community in different periods and places.

Tamara Cohn Eskenazi ('Imagining the Other in the Construction of Judahite Identity in Ezra–Nehemiah') explores how the book of Ezra–Nehemiah reconstructs an identity for the community living in the territory of Judah in the Persian period. In a three-part movement from Ezra 1–6 to Ezra 7–10 and then to Nehemiah 1–7, the book 'traces three journeys from exile and Diaspora to Judah'. It begins with an identity for the label יהודים ('Judahites') based on geography, designating anyone associated with the region of the hills of Judah in the present or the past. Then, after an encounter with hostile Others, the further, decisive restriction is added of anyone committed to God and Torah, which requires separation from the people(s) of the land(s). In Nehemiah 1–7 a final necessary marker of the new group identity is asserted: a level of politico-religious self-determination. YHWH's home expands from the temple mount to the entire city, spreading holiness throughout, so that only in completing the building of the temple, the city walls, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem is the new group identity as a holy community committed to YHWH's *torah* and temple finalized.

Tobias Funke ('Phinehas and the Other Priests in Ben Sira and 1 Maccabees') leads us to later communities that considered themselves as standing in continuity with those of the late Persian/early Hellenistic period. He examines strategies used by various priestly lines to legitimate the combination of profane and cultic power in the office of high priest in the Hellenistic period and to vie for internal power against other priestly groups. By comparing the use of Aaron, David, and Phinehas in

the biblical texts with uses in both the Hebrew and Greek versions of Ben Sira and Maccabees, he is able to analyze the differences and identify the shifts in stress by the later writers. The Hebrew book of Ben Sira probably reflects a pro-Oniad stance, which saw them to be of Aaronide lineage and deliberately distanced them from Levitical traditions and rival priestly lines. The deletion of Phinehas in the Greek version of Ben Sira implies that a pro-Maccabean author suppressed the connection between the Oniads and the Maccabees so Phinehas could represent the Maccabees alone, while the composition also could voice a harsher tone toward Samaria, which traced its priestly ancestry to Phinehas.

The first of the two concluding contributions that draw attention to disability studies and its substantial contribution to the matters discussed here is Rebecca Raphael, 'Disability, Identity, and Otherness in Persian Period Israelite Thought'. She uses insights from disability studies to discuss in particular intersections between the ability/disability axis and religio-cultural identity as articulated in biblical texts set or likely composed in the Persian period. She moves from the central category of 'defect' in P texts to an examination of texts dealing with health, illness, physical impairment, and social disability in 1–2 Chronicles, Proverbs, Job, Zechariah 1–8, Ezekiel, and Second Isaiah. As was common in the wider ancient Near East, deficits of the senses and congenital variations of the body's form that had not resulted from warfare or other violence were thought to derive from divine action. Differences in emphasis for the motivation for such divine impairment are apparent in the range of writings examined, with two predominant pathways of embodiment: a Judaism centred on sacrificial cult and another centred on devotion to verbal performance, oral or textual. Both were imaginative and ideal constructions in response to the loss of the monarchic-era temple but continued in use once the temple was reconstructed.

The final essay in this collection continues the focus on Othering and disability and deals also with a community later than those of the late Persian/early Hellenistic period, but one that is very different from those studied by Tobias Funke. Anke Dorman ('The Other Others: A Qumran Perspective on Disability') seeks to understand the membership status of those with disabilities in the Qumran community as reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls. She is able to establish levels of membership that allowed those who exhibited various disabilities, including blindness, deafness, deformity, or visible skin disease, to belong to the community and be considered 'holy' but then also be disqualified from attending the assembly and the annual Feast of Weeks because they were not holy or

qualified *enough* to mix with the holy angels who were present in the congregation. The community's rules and views are built upon the rules that exclude disabled priests from officiating in Lev. 21.16-23. Texts that attribute a profaning quality to disability are the *Rule of the Congregation* (1QSa), the *Damascus Document* (CD) written by a related group, and the rules in the *Temple Scroll* (11QT^a), which likely applied rules against the blind and anyone with ritual impurities to prohibit pilgrims from entering the city of YHWH. The War Scroll excludes the disabled from participation in the final war at the end of time for practical, not ritual reasons, and MMT similarly excludes blind and deaf priests from working due to the limitation in functional capability caused by disability, not because of assumed impurity.

All in all, this is a collection that carries multiple voices and approaches and which addresses a wide variety of texts and contexts, all of which are brought to bear on each other so as to produce a multi-faceted reconstruction of various processes of Othering and their social, ideological, cultural, and mnemonic roles in ancient Israel. No single scholar, no matter how knowledgeable and gifted she or he may be, could have produced this multiplicity and the ensuing conversations, which were the primary goals the editors set out to accomplish in this volume. It is our hope that readers will join the conversation and add to the existing multiple voices, so all of us may increase our understanding of these matters.

OTHERING, SELFING, 'BOUNDARYING'
AND 'CROSS-BOUNDARYING' AS INTERWOVEN
WITH SOCIALLY SHARED MEMORIES:
SOME OBSERVATIONS

Ehud Ben Zvi

There is a vast corpus of literature on matters of Othering as a discursive strategy of exclusion, as one of dialectical selfing, on whether Othering necessarily involves exaggerations of differences, essentialization of differences and of self, on Othering as a manifestation and/or sharp instrument in power (hierarchical) relations, on Othering as a delegitimizing tool, on the contingent character of Othering, on Othering as a common or even 'natural' cognitive tool, and on various social grammars of Othering. Discussions about self, constructions of sameness, 'strong' or 'weak' concepts of identity, and about processes of social identity formation or categorization and identification are often deeply intertwined with those about Othering.¹

Being a historian of ancient Israel, my intention is not to contribute to the discussion of disciplinary or cross/inter-disciplinary, explicit or implicit theoretical understandings of Othering evidenced in today's critical literature. Nor is it to discuss the use of constructions of, and social memories about, biblical Israel that served to frame, conceptualize,

1. The literature on these issues, whether discussed directly or indirectly, whether theoretical or based on case-studies, is beyond massive. Moreover, it cuts across multiple disciplines and areas. It plays important roles, for instance, in anthropology, a field that began as an exercise in Othering, social-anthropology, sociology, cognitive studies, history, political science, cultural and postcolonial studies, gender studies, disability studies, contemporary European (and EU) studies, and genocide studies. Against common perception, it should be stressed that, although 'processes of negative "othering" clearly are common aspects of many societies and social groups... they are by no means universal and are not built into all theoretical understandings of identity processes' (Hector Grad and Luisa Martín Rojo, 'Identities in Discourse: An Integrative View', in *Analysing Identities in Discourse* [ed. Rosana Dolón and Júlia Todolí; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 2008], pp. 3-28 [13]).

and justify the Othering of various groups by a wide range of communities, across time and space to the present, that each were strongly influenced by their own Bible and, as they saw it, by 'The Bible'. There can be no doubt that a wide variety of historical instances of oppression, domination, persecution, marginalization, and the like were justified and partially conceptualized in these ways. Such studies, as important as they are, are unlikely to contribute to our knowledge of the discourse of ancient Israel in the early Second Temple period, which is my own area of research.

Instead, I will focus on an array of important sites of memories and mnemonic narratives that were shared at least among the community's literati within early Second Temple Israel and which were interwoven in one way or another in processes involving the (partial) Israelitization of Others and (partial) Otherization of Israel. As a whole, these sites and narratives shaped a discursively significant series of 'in-between' realms that communicated and socialized the community in terms of ternary systems rather than simple, clear-cut Us vs. Them systems of categorization.²

One may claim that ternary categorizations are ubiquitous in human societies,³ but the particular features and contours of the 'in-between' realms and the underlying discursive grammar generating them provide significant information about the ideological discourse of the community in question, about what it considered and remembered as being 'Israelite', its rules of classification, and indirectly, its take on matters of 'sameness' and 'identity'.⁴ Moreover, since the array of cases discussed

2. For additional examples of ternary systems reflected in texts in the Hebrew Bible, see the contribution in this volume by Kåre Berge, 'Categorical Identities: "Ethnified Otherness and Sameness"—A Tool for Understanding Boundary Negotiation in the Pentateuch?', pp. 70-88.

3. See Gerd Baumann, 'Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach', in *Grammars of Identity/Alterity: A Structural Approach* (ed. Gerd Baumann and André Gingrich; EASA Series, 3; New York: Berghahn, 2006), pp. 18-50.

4. The texts to be discussed below do not really construct a 'thirdspace' as the latter is usually understood, because they did not construct a contact zone characterized by concrete intercultural or transcultural encounters involving more than one partner. These texts were written in Hebrew, by and for a very narrow group. They were not primarily aimed at facilitating negotiations with contemporary Others, even if they may have reflected such negotiations in some way. These texts were aimed above all at constructing a sense of self-understanding within the inner group through the partial development of a shared social memory. As was usual in these cases, the endeavour required a discursive, imaginative act of creation of Others. Whether the in-between categories discussed here eventually facilitated the creation

here involved cutting across diverse Othering boundaries and binaries like ‘ethnic’ origin, gender, and ‘normal’ bodiedness, it seems that the construction of significant ‘in-between’ areas and the concomitant construction of boundaries as porous, flexible, and even contingent and contextual were not minor ‘accidents’ but a reflection of some substantial aspect of the social mindscape of the community, or at least its literati. This shared aspect, in turn, came to be reflected in a tendency to shape and prefer certain types of memories.

The memories discussed here suggest quite complex grammars of constructing ‘others’ that were far more advanced than a simplistic, binary of Us = good, male, able-bodied, righteous, and pure that included a Them = bad, female, not fully able-bodied, unrighteous, and impure. They suggest multiple grammars were involved in appropriations of the Other; *inter alia*, reciprocal mirroring and discursively contingent rather than categorical Othering. To be sure, the cases discussed here are selective. Certainly, there were other memories that reflected and emerged out of other discursive and ideological needs of the community,⁵ which seem to be in clear tension with the patterns observed in and underlying those selected for discussion here. Moreover, the community was well aware that mnemonic narratives were not the only way to explore matters of Otherness. Various ‘legal’ texts concerning multiple Others and the divine Other existed in the community as well.⁶ None of this, however,

of historical thirdspaces or failed to do so in the late Hellenistic or Roman periods is a completely different matter. Had this essay been focused on northern Israel/Samaria, the main historical counterpart and inner-group Other of Yehud, a discussion using ‘thirdspace’ approaches might have been in order. But all the cases discussed here involve Others who were not categorized as ‘Samaritans’. On ‘thirdspace’ in general, see, *inter alia*, Karin Ikaš and Gerhard Wagner (eds.), *Communicating in the Third Space* (Routledge Research in Cultural and Media Studies, 18; New York: Routledge, 2009) and the now ‘classical’ work, Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

5. See, for instance, Num. 31; Ezra 10; Neh. 13. Interestingly, most of these memories were balanced by other memories that also existed in the community. The case of the Midianites was offset by the memory of Jethro, the priest of Midian. In the case of the foreign wives, remembering that a significant number of central characters in Israel’s formative past wedded ‘foreign’ wives (e.g. Moses, Joseph, Judah, Boaz, David, Solomon) and remembering that those ‘who separated themselves from the pollutions of the nations of the land to worship YHWH, the God of Israel’ were fully accepted in the midst of the (early) Second Temple community as encoded and communicated by Ezra 6.21 provide balance to claims about a ‘holy seed’ and its purity implications advanced in other sections of Ezra–Nehemiah.

6. See, for instance, the recent collection of essays in Reinhard Achenbach, Rainer Albertz, and Jacob Wöhrle (eds.), *The Foreigner and the Law: Perspectives*

takes away from the importance of the set of memories discussed and its implications for the study of Othering, Selfing, 'boundarying', and 'cross-boundarying' within the general social mindscape of the remembering community/ies. To the contrary, the explorations advanced provide an important stepping stone for a more integrated approach to the study of the Otherness embodied in the Others who were imagined, remembered, and above all, vicariously encountered by the literati of the early Second Temple period when they read all the texts that served to construe their own past.

Shifting our attention to the cases to be discussed here, one of the most memorable narratives about David that serves as a turning point in the narrative about him involved a central character, Uriah the Hittite. His very name, Uriah, 'YHWH is my light/fire',⁷ asked the community to remember him as an embodiment of a worshiper of YHWH. What they remembered about him only supported this portrayal. He was remembered as a righteous foil against which an unrighteous David was found extremely lacking. He represents what an Israelite male, never mind an Israelite king, was supposed to be and how he was supposed to behave. Even as he carries his deadly letter,⁸ likely aware or at least suspicious of

from the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East (BZAR, 16; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011). See also Mark A. Christian, 'Openness to the Other Inside and Outside of Numbers', in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers* (ed. Thomas Römer; BETL, 215; Leuven: Peeters, 2008), pp. 579-608; Christiana van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law* (JSOTSup, 107; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); Jacob Milgrom, 'Religions Conversion and the Revolt Model for the Formation of Israel', *JBL* 101 (1982), pp. 169-76; and Rainer Albertz and Jakob Wöhrle (eds.), *Between Cooperation and Hostility: Multiple Identities in Ancient Judaism and the Interaction with Foreign Powers* (Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

7. It has been proposed that the name Uriah was originally derived from Hurrian. Whether this is the case or not is clearly irrelevant to the matters discussed here, because the mnemonic community in the early Second Temple period would not have recognized it as a Hurrian name, even if those advancing such a position in contemporary scholarship were right. The remembering community would have understood Uriah as carrying the meaning, 'YHWH is my light/fire'.

8. The literary/folkloristic topos of the person carrying the 'deadly letter' to his putative executioner is well known. In this case, the bearer dies, unlike the case in the Sargon story. On this motif, see Bendt Alster, 'A Note on the Uriah Letter in the Sumerian Sargon Legend', *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 77 (1987), pp. 169-73; idem, 'Lugalbanda and the Early Epic Tradition in Mesopotamia', in *Lingering Over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (ed. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard, and Piotr Steinkeller; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), pp. 59-72 (70-71); and William W. Hallo, 'Introduction: Ancient Near Eastern

its significance, he faithfully carries out his duty to the king, who fails to carry his own. By doing so, he not only highlights the fault of David but also the illegitimacy of human rebellion against a Davidic king and, by extension, the Davidic dynasty, even when their rulers grievously sin. In addition, he is remembered as faithful to YHWH, not only by being faithful to the unfaithful David but also by following YHWH's laws of purity (cf. 1 Sam. 21.5-6; see also Exod. 19.15; Deut. 23.11). His fate, like Bathsheba's, was sealed by a proper observance of purity laws (see 2 Sam. 11.4).⁹ In all this, Uriah is remembered as an exemplary Israelite man, wrongfully oppressed and persecuted, and yet, or perhaps because of that, one with whom the male remembering community was supposed to identify and aspire to imitate. In fact, in the parable of Nathan, Uriah stands for any proper male in Israel who is good.¹⁰ Thus, within this episode, Uriah stands for male Israel and David for the male Other;¹¹ Uriah stands for the pious and dispossessed and David for the powerful oppressor and dispossessor, a type of Oriental despot. David/Israel may remain alive only because he undergoes a retributive and punitive process that turns him into a quasi-Uriah (2 Sam. 11.12-13).¹²

Given that Uriah stands for any proper male in Israel, and thus, for Israel itself, the existence of a very strong preference to remember him

Texts and Their Relevance for Biblical Exegesis', in *The Context of Scripture* (ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger; Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. xxvii and bibliography cited there.

9. This is another site of memory communicating to the remembering community that at times proper behaviour, piety, and faithfulness led to premature death/execution. The individuals were remembered despite or perhaps because their fates were considered positive examples for behaviour. For other examples, see 2 Chron. 24.19-22; cf. 2 Chron. 16.10. For the general lack of anticipated coherence between behaviour and fate, see Qohelet, passim, but also Psalms, passim. In both cases, the conclusion is similar to that expressed in Qoh. 12.13.

10. The characterization of Uriah as both a military hero and the 'owner' of the ewe-lamb is clearly gendered.

11. Who is significantly, within the gendered discourse of the period, feminized when he prefers to remain in his city and 'house' instead of joining his warriors in battle. On shared concepts of masculinity in the ancient Near East, see Timothy M. Lemos, "'They Have Become Women": Judean Diaspora and Postcolonial Theories of Gender and Migration', in *Social Theory and the Study of Israelite Religion: Essays in Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. Saul M. Olyan; Resources for Biblical Study, 71; Atlanta: SBL, 2012), pp. 81-109 (99-101).

12. Cf. from a different perspective, Regina M. Schwartz, 'Adultery in the House of David: "Nation" in the Bible and Biblical Scholarship', in *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion* (ed. Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick; New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 181-97.

in terms of Uriah the Hittite is particularly noteworthy (2 Sam. 11.3, 6, 17, 21, 24; 12.9, 10; 23.29; 1 Kgs 15.5; 1 Chron. 11.41). It repeatedly evokes a memory of a notable character who was Us and, at the same time, explicitly and saliently, a Hittite Other.¹³

Uriah is not a unique case. One may note the explicit salience of constructions of Otherness in characters like Doeg the Edomite (1 Sam. 21.8; 22.9, 18; Ps. 52.2). Doeg was remembered as the head of Saul's entire administration, a loyal servant of the king, and a much stronger defender of his master and his household than Abner. Significantly, Saul, who is chastised elsewhere for not following YHWH, is never censured for having given Doeg such an influential position of leadership over Israel. He was both a faithful and zealous (perhaps overzealous) Saulide Israelite, a zealous (perhaps overzealous) worshiper of Israel's deity, and saliently, an Edomite as well.¹⁴

Beyond the memories explicitly evoked by book of Samuel, Ruth is the most obvious figure of the past that is similarly imagined. She is both integral to Israel (see Ruth 1.16b) and serves as a 'mother' for David, for the Davidic, royal/messianic line, and even for Israel itself, because David was identified by the remembering community with Israel and vice versa.¹⁵ At the same time, Ruth is saliently and repeatedly Othered

13. I am not interested here in the question of the 'historical' Uriah. The point is that he is a site of memory that embodies both Israel and the Other. A comparable salient association of ethnic Otherness is present in the case of Ruth, the Moabite, who is constantly remembered as a Moabite and as a mother in Israel, who became one of Us (see Ruth).

14. As an aside, one may mention that, among the constructions of Doeg that were reflected and shaped in rabbinic literature, one finds Doeg, the 'ethnic boundary maker', who claims that David was unworthy of even entering the community of Israel, never mind being king over it, because he comes from a Moabite woman. The partners in that imagined 'halachic' discussion were Abner and Saul. On Doeg, Uriah, and a few other cases of zealous worshipers of YHWH, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22* (AB, 3A; Garden City: Doubleday, 2000), p. 1417. Milgrom considers them all *gērim*, because he reads the stories about them in a way informed by (his reading) of Leviticus and related texts and in light of his claim that 'religious conversion' was not an option in 'biblical times' (p. 1417). But significantly, none of these characters is ever called a *gēr* in the narratives themselves or in references to them elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. It is likely that they were not imagined as *gērim* by the readers.

15. See, for instance, Isa. 55.3 and the increased identification of Israel (the communal I) with David (and vice versa) in the Psalms (e.g. Ps. 89.50–51). Note the common exchange between David's house/kingdom and YHWH's house/kingdom in Chronicles (e.g. 1 Chron. 17.14; 28.5; 29.23; 2 Chron. 13.5, 8).

by the repeated attachment of the Othering gentile, the Moabite (Ruth 1.22; 2.2, 21; 4.5; cf. 1.4).¹⁶

Significantly, one may note that whereas the Othered is remembered as an Israelite and even a mother in and of David/Israel, within the world evoked by readings of the Ruth's narrative, Elimelech's sons were remembered as Israelites Othering themselves when they married Moabite women, in Moab, which was not part of Israel at that time nor worshiped its deity. So, too, was their father Elimelech, indirectly, due to his role as the head of his household.

'Foreignness' could be evoked by explicit 'foreign' gentiles, as in the case of Ruth, or by the identification of 'foreign' places.¹⁷ But ethno-cultural Otherness could be evoked in other ways as well. For instance, a personal name could fulfill that role and, at times, might even add to the texture of the memory/narrative and facilitate its role in communal memorability and socialization. A good example is the story involving Obed-Edom and Amaziah, king of Judah, in 2 Chronicles 25. This text raises multiple images and a plethora of issues,¹⁸ but for present purposes it suffices to highlight two points. According to 2 Chron. 25.24: (a) the treasures of (the house of) YHWH were under the care of an officer bearing the name Obed-Edom, meaning 'servant of Edom', and (b) Amaziah, whose name evokes the sense, 'YHWH is strong', a Davidic king of Judah, worshiped *Edomite* gods and thus caused YHWH's treasures, those kept by Obed-Edom, to be lost. Who is theologically characterized here as 'servant of Edom', but Amaziah? Who is characterized as YHWH's servant, but Obed-Edom?

Moreover, this positive image of YHWH's servant associated with Obed-Edom is reinforced among the readership of the book by the fact that the readers approach the text in a way informed by their image of a second Obed-Edom present in Chronicles. This second Obed-Edom is imagined and remembered by these readers as not only a person whose name communicates the meaning, 'servant of Edom', but also as both a

16. For an analysis of Ruth using feminist and postcolonial theories in this volume, see Carey Walsh, 'Women on the Edge', pp. 122-43; for one using ethnic theory, see Anne-Mareike Wetter, 'Ruth: A Born-Again Israelite? One Woman's Journey Through Space and Time', pp. 144-62; and for a literary and anthropological analysis, see Robert L. Cohn, 'Overcoming Otherness in the Book of Ruth', pp. 163-81.

17. See the case of the widow of Zarephath in Sidon. On this example, see below.

18. I have expanded on the matter elsewhere; see Ehud Ben Zvi, 'A House of Treasures: The Account of Amaziah in 2 Chronicles 25—Observations and Implications', *SJOT* 22 (2008), pp. 63-85.

Gittite and a pious Levite (see esp. 1 Chron. 13.13-14; 16.5; 26.4-8).¹⁹ Both characters converge and shape together a site of memory, 'Obed-Edom', within readers of Chronicles. This site of memory, or cipher, if one prefers, embodied and communicated a sense of fuzziness, of images and memories of apparent Others who were part of Israel even though they bore and communicated explicit Otherness and, conversely, memories of central Israelites who Otherized themselves.²⁰ Once again, Otherization has been used here to explore what being Israel and thus a faithful servant of YHWH might entail, but, significantly, through the construction of 'in-between' areas and of Others who are or become Us and of Us who become Others.

It is worth stressing that the Other did not have to be imagined within the remembering community as one of Us to be construed and remembered as a substantially 'Israelitized' individual and thus able to facilitate the kind of 'mirroring' that generates the 'in-between' realms that serve as grounds for exploring, negotiating and constantly reformulating and undermining boundaries. For instance, the gap between 'proper' Israel and Otherized Israel construed by the story of Elijah carried an interesting mirror gap within the Other. Whereas Jezebel, the Sidonian woman (see 1 Kgs 17.31) who was queen over the Northern Kingdom, persecutes YHWH's prophets, another Sidonian woman, the widow of Zarephath, supports the prophet. Jezebel and the elite of the kingdom of Israel follow Sidonian gods, the widow acknowledges YHWH and YHWH's true prophet. The Israelite elite is Otherized and a non-elite Other woman is 'Israelitized'. Moreover, given that the prophet stands

19. Cf. 2 Sam. 6.10-12. He is associated here with Edom and with Gath, but, in addition, the readers are asked to imagine him as a proper Israelite. Moreover, readers who would approach 2 Sam. 6.10-12 in light of their readings of Chronicles would imagine their Obed-Edom as a Levite. It is possible (and even likely) that the association of Obed-Edom with the Levites in Chronicles does not represent an 'innovation', but rather, was a common reading of the story in Samuel that existed among the literati of the late Persian or early Hellenistic period. On readings of Samuel and memories evoked by reading Samuel that were influenced by readings of and memories evoked by reading Chronicles in the late Persian or early Hellenistic period, see my 'Chronicles and Samuel-Kings: Two Interacting Aspects of One Memory System in the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Period', in *Rereading the Relecture? The Question of (Post)chronistic Influence in the Latest Redactions of the Books of Samuel* (ed. Uwe Becker and Hannes Bezzel; FAT II, 66; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), pp. 41-56.

On Obed-Edom in Chronicles see also Nancy Tan, 'The Chronicler's "Obed-edom": A Foreigner and/or a Levite?', *JSOT* 32 (2007), pp. 217-30.

20. See also 2 Sam. 6.2-12.

in this story for, and as a representative of, YHWH, the proper relation between YHWH and Israel is partially explored through an Israelite prophet and a Sidonian woman who, like Jezebel, is twice Othered as a foreigner and a woman.²¹ A system of double mirroring is clearly at work here.

Nebuzaradan, the person who burned the temple and Jerusalem and deported Israel and the temple vessels (2 Kgs 25.8-11; Jer. 39.9; 52.12-27), was also remembered as someone who thought and talked like a godly disciple of the prophet Jeremiah,²² unlike most of Israel at the time. Significantly, Nebuzaradan is not the only case of an enemy military leader who is partially 'Israelitized'. Naaman was remembered as the head of the army of Aram and as a military leader who defeated Israel and took captives from it but also as one who came to acknowledge YHWH and wished to worship YHWH alone (2 Kgs 5.17).

21. The preference for a story in ancient Israel's social memory in which Jezebel is imagined as the daughter of a Sidonian rather than a Tyrian king, as one might have expected historically, is consistent with, and reinforces the construed anti-pair, Other 'Israelitized' Jezebel and still Other Israel, which, by implication, also deals with proper yet Otherized Israel. This preference is at work even in Josephus. He harmonizes his understanding of the biblical story with his reliance on Menander when he refers to Jezebel as the daughter of the king of Tyre and Sidon (see *Ant.* 8.371; for Ethbaal as king of Tyre, see *Ant.* 8.324 and cf. 8.318). Most significantly for our purposes here, he shifts the description of Zarephath from 'belonging to Sidon' (1 Kgs 17.9) to 'a city not far from Sidon and Tyre, for it lay between them' (*Ant.* 8.320), closing the circle again.

The tendency to conceptualize one's group optimally by constructing and embodying oneself in the remembered figure of someone who is also the Other, along with all the mirroring and crossing of boundaries in multiple directions that is involved, is more common in societies with a low sense of existential anxiety (see below). It is not by chance that in later tradition, the widow of Zarephath becomes a full Israelite and the mother of Jonah (e.g. *y. Sukk.* 5.1; 22b; *Gen. Rab.* 98.11) or even of the Messiah-son-of-Joseph (e.g. *Seder Eliahu Rabba*, ch. 18, *siman* 19); she is eventually included among the twenty-two 'women of valour'.

On Jezebel and the widow as 'analogous' characters see Dagmar Pruin, 'What Is in a Text?—Searching for Jezebel', in *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe; LHBOTS, 421/ESHM, 6; New York: T&T Clark International, 2007), pp. 208-35 (213-14).

22. 'The author wants to persuade us that Nebuzaradan was a pupil of Jeremiah (40:2-3)', Klaus A. D. Smelik, 'The Function of Jeremiah 50 and 51 in the Book of Jeremiah', in *Reading the Book of Jeremiah: A Search for Coherence* (ed. Martin Kessler; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), pp. 87-98 (97). Compare also Jer. 40.2 with Jer. 32.23.

Naaman was doubly Othered by being made an Aramean and a 'leper'. Particularly relevant to the argument here, whereas Naaman's Otherness is largely overcome in the narrative because he becomes partially 'Israelitized' and also is cured of his leprosy, the latter disease becomes associated subsequently with Gehazi (2 Kgs 5.27), the most central 'insider' aside from the prophet. The community imagined Gehazi as the servant of the servant of YHWH. Otherness was shifted, as it were, from Naaman to Gehazi. The outsider became an insider, even if a crypto-insider in some ways (2 Kgs 5.18), whereas the insider became the certainly non-cryptic outsider, now and for generations (2 Kgs 5.27).

Moreover, whereas Naaman was remembered as partially 'Israelitized' after he inflicted blows on Israel, Pharaoh Necho was remembered as partially 'Israelitized', fulfilling the role of an Israelite prophet (2 Chron. 35.22), *before* he inflicted a severe blow on Israel. He killed Josiah, a pious Israelite who, however, rejected YHWH's word and thus was construed as a kind of Other. It is not by chance that the memories Chronicles evoked about Josiah's death were partially evocative of those the community had about Ahab's death.²³ To remember Necho as partially 'Israelitized' and as a temporary prophet went hand in hand with remembering Josiah as partially 'Ahabized' and partially Otherized.²⁴

Foreign rulers like Hiram of Tyre, the Queen of Sheba, and Cyrus of Persia are all remembered as non-Israelite but also as individuals who, to a substantial extent, understood and were able to participate in the discourse of well-educated Israelites, even able to talk like one of them.²⁵ Whereas the Queen of Sheba was remembered as going to Jerusalem to hear and learn from Solomon's wisdom, Jethro, the priest of Midian, was remembered as going to Moses to provide him with necessary practical wisdom (Exod. 18). In addition, Jethro the Midianite evoked the image

23. See, among others, Christine Mitchell, 'The Ironic Death of Josiah in 2 Chronicles', *CBQ* 68 (2006), pp. 421-35; Ralph W. Klein, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), pp. 526-27; Paul K. Hooker, *First and Second Chronicles* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), p. 285.

24. It is worth noting that, just as in the case of the widow mentioned above, there was an attempt to remove the 'foreign prophet' from the mnemonic narrative and replace him with Jeremiah in the story remembered by the community (compare 2 Chron. 35.22 with 1 Esd. 1.26).

25. I discussed some of these cases elsewhere; see 'When a Foreign Monarch Speaks', in *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture* (ed. M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie; JSOTSup, 263, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 209-28.

of a father figure to Moses, while Cyrus was remembered as YHWH's anointed king, Hiram as Solomon's brother, and the Queen of Sheba as a female quasi-counterpart to the wise Israelite king.

Most significantly, it was not necessary for the Other to be in direct contact with Israelite territory, its main sites, or even its main heroes to be construed in such a manner, as the case of Job demonstrates. Job was remembered as a man from the land of Uz, a non-Israelite who engaged in direct dialogue with YHWH and whose discourse and the discourse of all his friends were part and parcel of Israelite discourse.

Of course, there were some limits to these processes of 'Israelitization' of the Other; Cyrus does not know YHWH (Isa. 45.5), and Jethro is not present at the revelation at Sinai. Even so, it is obvious that it is not by chance that all these characters are construed and remembered the way they are. Moreover, memories of this type are encoded in works belonging to multiple literary corpora, across genre and collection. In addition, these memories are not associated with any particular remembered/construed period but cut across temporal lines. They are part and parcel of the entire mnemonic landscape of the community and reflect systemic preferences in terms of both mnemonic narratives and ways of Othering and cross-Othering, which existed in the early Second Temple period.

The above examples demonstrate that, at times, remembering the Other as partially Us was associated with partial Othering of some of Us or even Us.²⁶ But memories of Israelites who remain Israel but who are partially Othered were certainly not limited to these types of cases. They include the obvious case of Zimri (Num. 25), the motif of Israel asking for a king 'like all the other nations' (1 Sam. 8; significantly, a request that was remembered as tantamount to rejecting YHWH and YHWH's kingship), ubiquitous deuteronomistic memories about Israel following the ways of the other nations and about repeated warnings not to do so, memories of Israel's kings worshiping other gods or their symbols and the like, or even attaching some Othering attributes to some of the more central and pious figures of Israel's constructed past (e.g. Moses, Joseph, David, Solomon). At times, however, the process is far subtler, as when 'Qohelet's king (mnemonically, Solomon) is rendered as one of the Eastern monsters [i.e., monster monarchs] of popular history'.²⁷ At times,

26. E.g. Solomon is both implicitly and explicitly compared and contrasted to either the kings or wise people of the other nations (cf. 1 Kgs 5.1-8, 9-14; 10.23; 11.1-3).

27. See Jennifer Barbour, *The Story of Israel in the Book of Qohelet: Ecclesiastes as Cultural Memory* (OTM; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), citation from p. 34.

the process involves mirroring characters and groups in substantially different temporal circumstances, evoking long-term narratives in which mirroring serves as a main tool to remember and 'experience' manifestations of Us vicariously.²⁸

Perhaps one of the most interesting and sophisticated cases of mirror Othering is present in the book of Esther.²⁹ There are numerous kinds of Othering in the book,³⁰ but a particularly salient case of Otherness that demands attention involves Israel/Esther/Mordecai vs. Haman/Amalek. As is well known, the memory of this conflict encoded in the book/s of Esther reflected and evoked an ideological discourse in which Israel and Amalek were construed as mutually genocidal (cf. Exod. 17.14-16; Deut. 25.17-19; 1 Sam. 15; 28.18). Each of the two was remembered as trying to exterminate the other. Thus, when readers were asked to remember that Haman wanted to destroy all the Jews/Judahites,³¹ this would have

28. E.g. Deborah sitting under the tree; Siserah's mother inside a palace; or victorious 'judges' as Us and defeated royal courts as They. But as the remembering community knows all too well, 'royal courts' became We and We were defeated. Compare Judg. 5.28 and 2 Kgs 9.30 and notice the similar language. Multiple forms of mirroring were reflected in and evoked by the memory of the mother of Sisera. A serious examination of them and the ways they complement each other requires a separate discussion that cannot be undertaken here. Beth Hayes is currently working on this and related matters. For another case of mirroring across time, see the Deuteronomistic comparison between social memories about the 'nations that YHWH disinherited' and memories of late monarchic Israel.

29. This chapter is not the proper place to address the various proposals for dating of the books of Esther (e.g. MT Esther, proto-AT Esther, LXX Esther and their forerunners or textual successors) critically and their underlying mnemonic stories. The favoured date between 400 and 300 BCE may be in range, but even a date of several decades after 300 BCE will have no substantial bearing on the arguments advanced here. For the 400–300 BCE range, see, among others, Adele Berlin, *Esther* (JPS Bible Commentary; Philadelphia: JPS, 2001), pp. xli-xliii, and Jon Levenson, *Esther: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), pp. 26-27.

30. For an analysis in this volume of Othering due to power dynamics deriving from minority status in an imperial system, see Jean-Daniel Macchi, 'Denial, Deception or Force: How to Deal with Powerful Others', pp. 219-29.

31. I prefer the term 'Judahites' over 'Judaean', because it reflects the self-understanding of the readers better and the role of their ideological identification with the kingdom of Judah and its traditions, as they understood them to be, in their inner discourse. Within that discourse there was a substantial level of overlap between 'Judahite' and 'Israelite' that involved and effected the appropriation and encompassing of 'Israel' under and for Judah/Yehud/the reading community. This process is at work in the case discussed here as well; notice how mnemonic Amalek (i.e. Amalek as a site of memory) was construed around its desire/attempt to exterminate Israel/(all of the) Judahites/Jews.

been a familiar narrative/mnemonic motif. This realization explains the seeming enigma presented by the conceptual rarity in Esther of a political plan to exterminate an entire *ethnie* from the face of the earth in the ancient Near East.³² What is more telling, however, is the way in which Haman is portrayed as constructing his Other (i.e. Israel) as ‘a certain people scattered and separated among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king's laws’ (Est. 3.8, NRSV). For present purposes, the issue is not that the book, written within the inner group for the use of the inner group, characterized Israel as keeping the king’s laws and bringing benefit to him and the like—which it does—but that Haman was remembered as construing his Other, Israel, in terms of its own laws. Moreover, the issue is not that their laws are characterized as different *per se*; every group had somewhat different laws. What stand out is that the Otherness of the laws of the Jews/Judahites was presented as essentially different from that of all Others. Amalek/Haman construed his Other according to Israel’s social norms, thus reflecting/refracting self-identities among Yehudites/Judahites/Israel in the Persian and Hellenistic period as a *torah*-centred group. Even more importantly, Mordecai/Israel construed those doomed to destruction in an analogous way. His/Their Other was not necessarily constructed in terms restricted to lineage, even if it included an element of that, because his/their Other consisted of those who wished calamity on Israel, that is, the enemies of the Jews or Judahites, whatever their (original) lineage might be. In other words, Haman’s people (the counterpart of Mordecai’s people) also were construed as a norm-centered group.³³ Those imagining and remembering this world were involved in mirror Othering at multiple and connected levels.³⁴

All the previous sets of examples have dealt primarily and often exclusively with one common axis of Othering: a construed ethnocultural group with which the in-group identifies itself and then distinguishes

32. This is not to deny that there were some negative constructions of Jews/Judahites in the early Hellenistic period. See Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes Toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

33. For a different perspective on Israel vs. Amalek in Esther, see André LaCocque, *Esther Regina: A Bakhtinian Reading* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008), pp. 65-80.

34. The potential mnemonic significance of the ‘Jewishization’/‘Judahitization’ of many Others is likely related to these issues (see Est. 8.17 and note its possible narrative continuation in 9.1). But an analysis of this verse demands a substantial, separate study that cannot be carried out within the scope of this essay. The variegated set of examples brought to bear in this discussion suffices for present purposes.

outside groups by shaping them as Other in its conceptual world. But this is not the only possible axis for Othering. A very common, transcultural axis is based on gender constructions. In patriarchal societies, it is the inner group that would tend to identify with the hierarchically superior pole, masculinity, and would relegate Others to the socially construed pole of 'femininity'.³⁵ There are memories of future and past events that clearly reflect this common type of Othering (e.g. 1 Sam. 4.9; 8.7; 2 Sam. 13.28; Isa. 19.16).³⁶ It also is easy to comprehend why constructions of 'exilic'/defeated Israel would at times feminize Israel.³⁷

Nor is it difficult to understand that Israel could identify with both female Esther and male Mordecai in a 'diasporic tale' such as Esther. A fundamental assumption on the narrational level is that the welfare and life of the Israelite/Israel depends, at least on the surface, on the protection and support of a powerful non-Israelite male, the foreign king. Thus, in the narrative world, just as the fate of female Esther is in the hands of her husband, so, too, Israel's future is in the hands of the king of Persia. Both are interwoven; Esther is Israel.

But matters are not so simple. For one, within the ideological discourse of the time, it is not only Israel who is imagined as dependent on the heroic male king for protection, but everyone in the empire. Only the presence of the genocidal Other Amalek makes Israel's dependence more vivid and unique.³⁸ Particularly interesting for the present discussion of Othering within the axis of gender is the fact that the Persian king is not portrayed heroically at all in Esther. While he is de-masculinized in the story, Mordecai becomes more and more masculine as the story progresses, culminating in Est. 10.2-3, and more kingly, even he cannot become the king without breaching the world of the story. Since both Mordecai and Esther stand for Israel, toward the end of the story Esther also begins to be portrayed as fulfilling roles commonly associated with male leaders (Est. 9.29-32).³⁹ Othering through gendered categories proves

35. E.g. Cynthia R. Chapman, *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter* (HSM, 62; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004). Cf. 'They Have Become Women'.

36. The motif of the woman in birth can be used in more than one way, though. See Isa. 13.8; Jer. 30.5-6; Mic. 4.9-10; but also and significantly, Isa. 42.13-15.

37. See, for instance, Lemos, 'They Have Become Women'.

38. Thus, in that sense, Israel has a 'unique' existence because of Amalek's Othering of Israel, and vice versa (see above).

39. See the shift from an Esther who achieves influence through 'feminine wiles' and female beauty to that of a leader who sets up ordinances (Est. 9.32; cf. 9.29 and notice the order of the names).

in this case to be a relatively fluid business; Israel is both Mordecai and Esther, both at the beginning of the narrative and at its conclusion.

Other cases of Othering seem to be even more remarkable. Two come to mind. The first involves discursive negotiations of Otherization by males who construct themselves using obvious female characteristics, thereby shaping their identity and Israel's identity through a construction of qualified, seeming alterity. The second includes cases in which masculinity itself has to be and actually is reshaped to include a realm that allows the Israelite literati to construct themselves as males who are hierarchically superior to Others.

Turning to the first category, Israel was imagined as YHWH's bride/wife (Jer. 2.2; 31.32; Hos. 2.16-25; Isa. 54.5-8; 62.3-5). There is nothing strange in the conceptualization of a hierarchical relationship in gendered terms; moreover, the marital imagery is helpful and preferred discursively and mnemonically because it is an easy and fruitful means to characterize Israel negatively. Less obvious features of this metaphorical realm are, however, equally important. For instance, in ancient Israel there was an 'assumption that a virgin woman can be altered like clothing. Once she has sex, however, she becomes unalterable, marked or branded by her husband's "personness"... His [the husband's] person and hers become interwoven through sexual contact.'⁴⁰ Israel was certainly imagined as unalterably 'branded' by her husband YHWH, and to some extent their 'personhood' becomes intertwined. The noted assumption raises at least two important issues.

First, Israel could not be remembered as branded by anyone before YHWH. She had to be a virgin when meeting YHWH (cf. Jer. 2.2; Hos. 2.16). The male literati, then, had to imagine their ancestors in the distant past in terms equivalent not only to women but virgin women, and unborn generations in the distant future as 're-virginized' Israel for whom the ba'als will be erased (Hos. 2.19), who will return to the wilderness to be allured by YHWH once again (cf. Hos. 2.16). They also know that bride Israel concerns only a transformative but still fleeting moment in their narrative about their future. The final and permanent state will be Israel as the eternally good wife of YHWH. Other 'female' characters, each with her own husband, lover/s, or their dead counterparts, are necessary within this discourse to make full sense of the marriage between YHWH and Israel.⁴¹ Thus, the Othering and hierarchies

40. Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 85.

41. Even 'I love you' is meaningless if the 'unloved' are not excluded as correctly stressed in Baumann, 'Grammars of Identity/Alterity', p. 36.

involved in this process of shaping a sense of self-understanding and boundaries move away from differences shaped around dichotomies of male/female toward a binary consisting of virgin bride/non-virgin bride. The latter then contrasts a wife with the most masculine, powerful husband with wives/lovers or widows of less masculine husbands, which is how nations other than Israel are conceptualized. Within this patriarchal system of hierarchical classification and Othering, the lowest rung is occupied by the whore and cheating wife. Significantly, this was exactly how Israel also remembered itself. Boundaries are not only porous but can be crossed by all at more than one point.

YHWH was the husband of Israel but also 'the king' among all the gods. The self-understanding of Israel construed and remembered YHWH as a male who took no wives in addition to Israel,⁴² and yet, since kings were among the relatively few males in society who took multiple wives as a way to broadcast, as it were, their great masculine power, a contradiction arose requiring resolution. To maintain YHWH's conceptualization as the top, most masculine king required the renegotiation of socially constructed norms of masculinity. A conceptual realm was required in which YHWH remained the hierarchically top man who, at the same time, was completely monogynistic.⁴³

Re-negotiations of masculinity involved not only YHWH but a self-understanding of Israel and its literati as the top 'man' in the world in the late Persian and early Hellenistic period. Because YHWH was the top 'man', faithfully serving him made the literati and their Israel, who were powerless in worldly terms, the top 'men' of the world and hierarchically superior to the seemingly masculinized, mighty warriors of the other nations, whose fate was and would be eventual defeat. Israel was masculinized and the Other feminized, but mirroring and the reconceptualization of categories had to take place. As a result, the 'great warrior' aspect of main biblical military heroes like David and Joshua has been strongly tempered by remembering them as learners and conveyors of divine knowledge and de-emphasizing their warrior-like personal achievements. A similar tendency shapes the way in which founding

42. See Ehud Ben Zvi, 'Monogynistic and Monogamous Tendencies, Memories and Imagination in Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud', *ZAW* 125.2 (2013), pp. 263-77.

43. Perhaps some play among various manifestations of transtemporal/ideological 'Israel', i.e., as northern and southern, as Jerusalem and the like, may have provided room for a safe acceptance of the monogynistic character of YHWH, but the room for play was minor and ultimately irrelevant. YHWH could never marry Edom, Assyria, Egypt, or the like; none of the 'women' of the world except transtemporal/ideological Israel.

figures like Moses and Abraham tended to be remembered in the community. Even a future ideal king was imagined in one case as riding on a donkey rather than in a war chariot or on a horse (Zech. 9.9).

This being said, blurring, in-between, overlapping realms were still necessary for the process to work. YHWH still remained a top warrior, not only a teacher; and wisdom, although belonging to YHWH and partially to Israel's literati, was also female. As much as Israel identified with the wife/wives of YHWH in Hosea, it still identified itself with husband YHWH/Hosea; as much as it identified with Jerusalem as YHWH's wife, it also identified itself as the male children of that union (e.g. Isa. 62.4-5).⁴⁴

I will round off this exploration with a brief discussion of another axis that was employed to Other in the biblical texts and continues in use today: bodily ableness and the lack thereof (e.g. Lev. 21.22; Deut. 15.21 or 17.1). One would assume Israel was supposed to construct itself as bodily able/whole/גָּמַל, since this is the normally preferred status, and even more so, given the tendency toward viewing Israel as a nation of priests (e.g. Exod. 19.6).⁴⁵ Yet, the community remembered Isaac as blind, Moses having a speech impediment, and Jeremiah's rescue by a double Othered individual, Ebed-Melech, a Cushite and a eunuch (Jer. 38.7-13). Moreover, it remembered Israel as embodied in a (future) servant of YHWH who was emphatically imagined as far from possessing 'body normalness'.

Although one may claim that, at times, the construction of exilic (though not necessarily exiled) Israel took the form of the Other whose body was not 'normal', even so, YHWH's servant and, indirectly, the Others, point at a *positive Israel in the future* that was characterized at least temporarily as not being whole or able-bodied. Here again is a case of mirrored construction of otherness in which positive images of Israel are associated with the lack of physical wholeness.

These images are also informed and balanced by more usual images. Non-Israelites can be described as not having a complete body (e.g. for the Philistines see Judg. 14.3; 1 Sam. 14.6, *passim*), enemy bodies can be maimed (e.g. Judg. 1.6 and see also v. 7), and good Israelites who sin

44. Cf. Ehud Ben Zvi, 'Exploring Jerusalem as a Site of Memory in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Period', in *Memory and the City in Ancient Israel* (ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming).

45. Cf. Isa. 61.6 and notice the presence of a generative grammar in which 'Israelitization' is associated with 'priestization'. The entire issue of the partial 'priestization' and partial 'kingization' of the ideological concept of 'Israel' in the late Persian/early Hellenistic period (and later) demands a separate discussion.

may be remembered as symbolically and physically 'othered' (e.g. Uzziah in Chronicles or Miriam).⁴⁶ The lack of a complete body is associated with impurity and with social marginalization. These two seemingly contradictory ways of Othering along the body-wholeness axis actually complement one other and together create additional realms of blurring, of in-between and double-edgeness in which the direction of the Othering is basically contextual and contingent rather than categorical.

Examples can be multiplied, additional axes for Othering may be explored (see, for instance, Isa. 2.3-4), and each example already given could be analysed further. Nevertheless, the cumulative weight of the evidence from these three different axes of Othering indicates that, while Othering was a main tool for shaping constructions of self and corresponding memories of Israel, those Othered or the Othering features used point at the inner group and vice-versa. Boundaries not only were porous but also could be crossed in multiple directions. In-between realms could be expanded and crucial attributes were shifting, contingent, and constantly balanced in terms of the ways in which they served to construct Otherness. Deliberate fuzziness also was a key strategy.

Even when it takes place primarily as internal discourse without involving direct engagement with living 'ethnic' Others,⁴⁷ socially shared Othering is enmeshed in processes of identity formation and socialization. Significantly, the literati of the period discussed here were involved, *inter alia*, in imagining and developing memories of a future world empire of YHWH experienced only through acts of shared readings and imagination.⁴⁸ Thus, it is not surprising that a relatively common, cross-cultural, imperial attitude was also at work in their Otherizing. After all, good Israelites or a good 'Israelitized' non-Israelite, like Jethro, Hiram, or the Queen of Sheba, all had to be imagined as complying with what the literati considered to be in line with YHWH's teachings. In other words, these texts and memories reflect and socialize the Othering community into a variant of a cross-cultural, relatively imperial attitude, where foreigners can be like Us or even Us, provided they think or

46. On Gehazi, see p. 29 above. Gehazi is not construed as a 'good Israelite' who sinned.

47. The texts were written in Hebrew and accessible only to a few literati who knew Hebrew.

48. I expand on this topic in 'The Yehudite Collection of Prophetic Books and Imperial Contexts: Some Observations', in *Divination, Politics and Ancient Near Eastern Empires* (ed. Jonathan Stökl and Alan Lenzi; ANEM/MACO; Atlanta: SBL, 2014), pp. 145-69.

behave like Us. Yet, this is also a reminder that Us and the Other can and do share an in-between area; the kind of area evoked by memories like those of Moses and Jethro, of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, or of Solomon and Hiram, of Elijah and the widow, of a Job with whom Israelites can easily identify, of foreigners and eunuchs who are not separate from YHWH's people (Isa. 56.3), and of imagining a glorious future Israel embodied in an impaired body or as both male and female.

The other side of an encompassing grammar of Otherness,⁴⁹ where some of Us may (temporarily?) become some of Them if they fail to behave and think like Us, is also a common, cross-cultural topos of Otherization that serves obvious roles in socialization processes. Yet, it also shapes and evokes memories of in-between areas, mirroring, and even double mirroring, which, by necessity, imply a reconceptualization of boundaries as very porous. The Other is often potentially Us and We are often potentially the Other in this type of grammar of Otherization.

The imperial, encompassing grammar of Othering mentioned above cuts across seemingly important boundaries and evokes fuzziness and porous boundaries; at the same time, however, it could not but involve a grammar of rejection. Boundaries still remain and exclude others, like the sinful Israelite and the nations that do not acknowledge or even scorn YHWH. Such preferences in the boundaries used in 'othering' have prioritized following YHWH and YHWH's ways as understood by the community, which one would expect among literati whose Israel was *torah*- (and text-) centred and who explained calamities of the past in terms of forsaking YHWH and YHWH's *torah*. Othering, memories, and systemic mnemonic preferences are all contingent and are an integral component of a larger discourse.

The paragraphs above have stressed encompassing grammars of Othering. But, as is often the case, they were complemented by other grammars at work simultaneously. Segmentation grammars of Othering were clearly at work among the literati who shaped their memories by reading the literature that eventually became the Hebrew Bible. From their perspective, various groups were Us and not Us or Us or not Us, depending on the context in which the We talked about, imagined and construed the Us. Among the most obvious examples of this grammar of Othering are the Northern tribes, Samaria, the generation of the 'wanderings', and even the far more tricky case of Benjamin, which was part not only of Israel but also of a Judah that stood in direct mnemonic continuity with Yehud and yet was, at same time and in the same general

49. On generative grammars of alterity, see in particular Baumann, 'Grammars of Identity/Alterity'.

discourse, clearly non-Judah, depending on the context.⁵⁰ Segmentation grammars, like the others already explored, could not but evoke in-between areas and fuzziness, since the very same sites of memory embodied both Us and the Other at the same time within the general memory-scape of the community.

As shown above, there was much use of reverse mirror Othering, which is another generative grammar for Otherness and for memories that construe and evoke Otherness. Mirroring involves, by its very nature, constructions of Others who were both rejected and emulated. They were rejected when they embodied and helped Us to formulate in our own discourse what was wrong with Us now, in the past, or in the future, and emulated when they embodied and helped Us to formulate in our own discourse what was or could be right with Us, like the sailors and the repentant Ninevites.⁵¹ Mirror grammars of Othering were ubiquitous in the period. Significantly, the extended use of mirrors and mirrors of mirrors as a means to explore and formulate ways of thinking about Us reflects a sense of comfort with fuzziness. Social preferences for fuzziness and openness, even within limits, are historical, contingent features. They are far more likely to be present in groups that do not face perceived existential threats to their existence and which are relatively secure and 'at ease' in their circumstances.⁵² This observation suggests

50. See my 'Total Exile, Empty Land and the General Intellectual Discourse in Yehud', in *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and its Historical Contexts* (ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin; BZAW, 404; New York: de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 155-68, and 'The Concept of Prophetic Books and Its Historical Setting', in *The Production of Prophecy: Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud* (ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi; BibleWorld; London: Equinox, 2009), pp. 73-95 (83-85).

51. For a discussion of the Ninevites 'Israelitizing' their behaviour in response to Jonah's delivery of YHWH's word yet remaining fully Other rather than readjusting or undermining the boundaries of Israel, see the essay in this volume by Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher, 'Jonah and the Other: A Discourse on Interpretative Competence', pp. 201-18.

52. I have discussed these matters elsewhere; see Ehud Ben Zvi, 'On Social Memory and Identity Formation in Late Persian Yehud: A Historian's Viewpoint with a Focus on Prophetic Literature, Chronicles and the Dtr. Historical Collection', in *Texts, Contexts and Readings in Postexilic Literature: Explorations into Historiography and Identity Negotiation in Hebrew Bible and Related Texts* (ed. Louis Jonker; FAT, II/53; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2011), pp. 95-148, esp. 141-43; 'Exploring the Memory of Moses "The Prophet" in Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud/Judah', in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination* (ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 335-64, esp. 362-64.

that in later periods, groups in Israel who were not as 'at ease' may have had different Othering tendencies, but a discussion of these matters is beyond the scope of this essay.⁵³

53. The same holds true for the issue of YHWH as the Other, which requires an entire monograph. Here, it suffices to note the strong presence in the world of ideas and the imagination of the community of a binary. On the one hand is the principle of *imitatio Dei* (e.g. Lev. 19.2), of *imago Dei* and the fact that the ideal/future Israel/Jerusalem is often imagined with godly attributes (e.g. Hos. 2.21; Isa. 60.3) and, on the other hand, multiple sites of memory that time and again assign human attributes to YHWH, anthropomorphizing the divine. Multiple levels of negotiating, partially bridging, and leaving open the gap between human and divine or some humans and the divine through explorations of potential 'in-between' areas of attributes shared by both are all at work as well. The considerations advanced above all seem, at the very least, heuristically relevant to the study of the divine as the Other within the imagination and historical discourse of the literati of the early Second Temple period, and probably not to them only. This said, a significant difference between this case of Othering and the other cases discussed above should be noted: trends that enhance a measure of 'fuzziness' in this case are less common in societies that are 'at ease' and more common in those that are not, but his matter demands a separate study. For some strategies used to make the divine one of Us and also for the Divine to assert its Otherness, see the Diana Edelman's contribution to the present volume, 'YHWH's Othering of Israel', pp. 41-69.