DOUGLAS J. GREEN

"I Undertook Great Works"

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The Ideology of Domestic Achievements
in West Semitic Royal Inscriptions

Mohr Siebeck

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For Rosemarie

"*Love is patient*"

Preface

The book builds on the insights of scholars such as Mario Liverani, Frederick Mario Fales, Carlo Zaccagnini, and Lawson Younger concerning the ideological shaping of ancient Near Eastern historical narratives. It engages in a literary-ideological analysis of the description of royal domestic achievements from a selection of Neo-Assyrian texts before focusing on nine royal inscriptions from Syria-Palestine dating from the ninth to the seventh centuries B.C.E.: *YeHimilk*, *Mesha*, *Kilamuwa*, *Zakkur*, *Hadad*, *Panamuwa*, *Bar-Rakkab*, *Karatepe* (*Azatiwada*) and the *Tell Siran Bottle* inscription. These inscriptions were chosen because each includes an account of the king's domestic accomplishments. While there has been considerable scholarly interest in the way ideology shapes the narration of royal military campaigns, less attention has been paid to the ideological underpinning of the kings' accounts of their domestic activities. This study seeks to rectify that imbalance.

Ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions have been described as "official documents of self-praise." But since honor is always relative and competitive, these inscriptions are also literary exercises in the denigration and humiliation of rival kings. This is most obvious in the narratives of a king's military campaigns against his enemies. Narratives of royal domestic achievements are, however, more positive in their orientation. In this area of activity, the greatness of the West Semitic kings is primarily defined by the way they improve conditions in their countries: in particular through their building programs – the creation of "constructed space" – but also by the creation of agricultural abundance, economic prosperity, national security and social order. In short, through these works, kings mediate utopian life to their lands.

It should recognized, however, that domestic achievements are never purely domestic in nature. The description of these accomplishments is still set in the context of an international competition for honor. In many ways, the inscriptions present the domestic accomplishments as an extension of the king's victory over his enemies. Thus, the king's domestic activities are often represented as the reversal of the destruction and desolation wrought by the enemy. The king not only defeats his enemy in battle but also show his superiority over him by undoing the damage done to his land.

The narration of domestic achievements also provides the king with the opportunity to prove his superiority over those who preceded him on the throne – he creates conditions that surpass everything that existed before him. Moreover, his domestic achievements are also presented in a way that shows his superiority over other kings of similar international standing (e.g., fellow vassals of the Assyrian overlord).

The narration of royal domestic achievements in the West Semitic inscriptional tradition is an exercise in the subtle manipulation of time and space, character and events that creates a delicate balance between reporting "facts" and putting the king is the very best possible light. This study demonstrates that royal ideology controls and shapes the narration of mundane activities like palace building and planting gardens, just as much it does the royal conquest accounts.

This book is a light revision of my 2003 Yale University Ph.D. dissertation. Readers should be aware, however, that I have chosen not to interaction with scholarship published since that a date.

Philadelphia, July 2009   Douglas J. Green

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As a professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary, I have been fortunate to work alongside colleagues who I also counted as close friends. I am especially thankful for the support of Michael Kelly, the late Alan Groves, and my former colleagues, but still close friends, Peter Enns and Stephen Taylor.

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Part One

Introduction

Chapter One

Historical Narratives and Authorial Ideology

Defined simply, historical narratives are "narratives that represent a past."[1] Two dimensions of this definition are worth isolating, at least to help explain the purpose of this study. First, historical narratives represent the *past*, or put another way, they represent events. To the extent that they do inform their readers about the "facts," they give them access to the way things were, to the "real world" or to what can be called the "evenemential[2] world" that stands behind the text. Historical narratives may in fact prove to be untrustworthy witnesses to the "facts," but they can still be interrogated as part of the process of determining "what really happened."[3] This is one way in which historical narratives can be studied: as a means of access to the past they purport to represent.

On the other hand, historical narratives *represent* the past. They do not merely "reproduce the past"[4] or function as mirrors of historical events,[5] even if that were possible. Even historical narratives with a high degree of referentiality to the events they present mediate those events by a process that includes acts

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[1] This is the definition proposed by M. Z. BRETTLER, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995) 12. BRETTLER modifies, and in so doing rejects, the definition advanced by H. C. BRICHTO, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics: Tales of the Prophets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 23: "a narrative about the past." BRETTLER contends that BRICHTO'S definition "might be misconstrued as referring to narratives that tell something about the real past, implying a certain degree of facticity…" (BRETTLER, *Creation*, 153, n. 43). For the purposes of this study it is unnecessary to determine the precise relationship between historical narratives and the events they purport to represent. Therefore BRETTLER'S definition is adequate, at least as a starting point.

[2] This neologism (coined from the French *événement*, "event") is used by C. ZACCAGNINI, "An Urartean Royal Inscription in the Report of Sargon's Eighth Campaign," *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons in Literary, Ideological, and Historical Analysis: Papers of a Symposium Held in Cetona (Siena) June 26–28, 1980* (ed. F. M. FALES; Orientis Antiqui Collectio XVII; Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1981) 250–95, as an adjective referring to the historical referent behind a text. See also M. LIVERANI, "Memorandum on the Approach to Historiographic Texts," *Or* 42 (1973) 183, who uses the expression *histoire événementielle*.

[3] A. L. OPPENHEIM, "Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires," *Propaganda and Communication in World History. Volume I: The Symbolic Instrument in Early Times* (eds. H. D. Lasswell, D. Lerner and H. Speier; Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1979) 117.

[4] V. P. LONG, *The Art of Biblical History* (Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 5; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 68.

[5] M. J. G. STANFORD, *The Nature of Historical Knowledge* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 196) 11.

of selection, ordering, shaping, interpreting and depiction. At the end of this process, readers are not left with the event itself – it has ceased to exist – but an account, a memory, a story of the event. As Hayden White writes:

> Most of us who would defend narrative as a legitimate mode of historical representation and even as a valid mode of explanation (at least for history) stress the communicative function. On this view, history is conceived to be a "message" about a "referent" (the past, historical events, and so on) the content of which is both "information" (the "facts"), on the one side, and an "explanation" (the "narrative" account), on the other.[6]

As I have said, historical narratives can be read for the purpose of determining the "facts." But at the same time, they can be read for access to the "explanation," or to be more precise, the interpretive framework on which the explanation is built.[7] In other words, historical narratives can be used either to reconstruct "facts" or as an entry point to the value system or the "mind" of the author.[8] This

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[6] H. WHITE, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary History Theory," *History and Theory* 23 (1984) 17.

[7] M. STERNBERG, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indiana Literary Biblical Series; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 41, speaking with reference to the (Hebrew) Bible, says that historical narrative is in fact regulated by three cooperating functions: ideological, historiographic, and aesthetic. For the purposes of this study (an analysis of the ideological function of certain ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions), I am not interested in the aesthetic function of historical narrative as an end in itself. I will, however, use the aesthetic dimension of the relevant texts to be studied as a means of gaining access to their ideological underpinnings.

[8] This is admittedly an oversimplification. I speak as if the historical narrative simply stands at an intersection point between the world of historical events and the mind of the author. But just as a text can be analyzed to "re-create" both events and authorial world-views, it also gives insight into the value systems of its readers. Literary communication, as M. H. ABRAMS, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953) 6–7, has observed, involves four constituent elements or coordinates and can be diagrammed as follows:

UNIVERSE
↓
WORK
↙   ↘
ARTIST   AUDIENCE

ABRAMS' model was devised with reference to artistic communication in general. So for the purposes of this study these four coordinates may be renamed to better suit the study of historical narratives: the Text (which corresponds to the "Work" in ABRAMS' model), the Historical Events ("Universe"), the Author(s) ("Artist") and the Reader(s) ("Audience") (J. BARTON, "Classifying Biblical Criticism," *JSOT* 29 [1984] 23; note also LONG, *Art of Biblical History*, 153, who, apart from renaming ABRAMS' "Universe" as "Subject," uses essentially the same terminology as BARTON). This present study focuses on the axis between text and author (or more accurately, the "implied author"). Of course, such a study cannot, and should not be completely isolated from the other two axes in the communicative process. I will occasionally need to discuss the "Text-Event" axis in relation to the "Text-Author" axis. I will, however, have little to say on how the text might be used to reconstruct the value system of the readers. In part, this is a function of the need to give focus to the study. But I also assume that by and

element in the creation of an historical narrative can be variously named. To use narrative-critical terminology, it is the "implied author"[9] (or perhaps the closely related concept of "point of view"[10]). It is the *Weltanschauung*, "the set of world-structuring convictions" held by the author[11] or, to use the term I will most frequently adopt in the course of this study, the "ideology" of the

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large the original readers (or more accurately, the implied readers, that is, the ideal readers inferred from the text) read "naively": that they, for various reasons, did not engage in "ideological dissent" but rather were in "cooperation with the text" and "surrendered to its form." (I derive these concepts from S. SULEIMAN, "Ideological Dissent from Works of Fiction: Toward a Rhetoric of the *Roman à thèse*," *Neophilologus* 60 [1976] 162–77, especially 164.) In other words, I will assume a high degree of convergence between the world-views of both authors and readers, or at least enough of a convergence for the historical narratives (written for the most part on public monuments) to have a power to convince, persuade and coerce the readers to align their world-view to that expressed by the text itself. Thus, I believe that the analysis of the conceptual world of the authors of ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions is a *first* step in entering the conceptual world of the readers. For excellent analyses of the actual (as distinct from implied) audiences of the Assyrian royal inscriptions, see M. LIVERANI, "The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire," *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (ed. M. T. Larsen; Mesopotamia 7; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979) 297–317, and B. N. PORTER, "Language, Audience and Impact in Imperial Assyria," *IOS* 15 (1995) 51–70. See also J. M. RUSSELL, *The Writing on the Wall: Studies in the Architectural Context of Late Assyrian Palace Inscriptions* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 9; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999) and H. TADMOR, "Propaganda, Literature, Historiography: Cracking the Code of the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project Helsinki, September 7–11, 1995* (eds. S. PARPOLA and R. M. WHITING; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Corpus Project, 1997) 325–38.

 [9] The "implied author" of a text, as opposed to the "real author," is that "author" reconstructed from the narrative by the reader. The reader's picture of the author is implied, not from his or her knowledge about the "real author," but from the narrative itself. The "implied author" then is actually a mental construct, an inference or implication about the "author" that emerges from the text itself. The "implied author" is in fact not a person, but a "structural principle" that "establishes the norms of the narrative" (S. CHATMAN, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Story and Film* [Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1978] 149) and "the normative perspective of a narrative which ... controls the evaluative judgements which the narrator makes of characters" (F. W. BURNETT, "Exposing the Anti-Jewish Ideology of Matthew's Implied Author: The Characterization of God as Father," *Semeia* 59 [1992] 159).

 [10] "Point of view," when used with reference to the actual, as opposed to the implied author of a narrative, can be used to describe his or her "world view (ideology, conceptual system, Weltanschauung, etc.)" as well as literal perceptions (CHATMAN, *Story and Discourse*, 151). See also B. USPENSKY, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973) 8, who calls this more specific definition the "ideological" or "evaluative point of view."

 [11] I derive this terminology for speaking about value systems from T. L. DONALDSON, "Thomas Kuhn, Convictional Worlds and Paul," *Origins and Method: Towards a New Understanding of Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Honour of John C. Hurd* (ed. B. H. McLean; JSNTSup 86; Sheffield; Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 197.

narrative. Admittedly, "ideology" is a difficult term to define.[12] It can be used in a "neutral" sense, to *denote* something approximating to "world-view," "outlook on life,"[13] an "ideas system"[14] or more specifically, "a pattern of beliefs and concepts … which purport to explain complex social phenomena."[15] But it can also carry a more "active" connotation of "ideas oriented toward action, ideas controlling or influencing actions."[16] I also recognize that "ideology" can also carry more pejorative connotations. Both at the level of lay and scholarly usage, it is often viewed as a "distortion" or "false consciousness,"[17] as "something tainted, something shady, something that ought to be overcome and banished from our mind."[18] But for the purposes of this study, I will ignore such negative connotations, and therefore refrain from drawing distinctions between benign and malignant ideologies.[19]

Historical narratives therefore function as the meeting point of two paths. One leads from the world of the events the narrative purports to represent; the other emerges from the value-laden mind of the author. What comes into exis-

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[12] T. EAGLETON, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London; New York: Verso, 1991) 1, contends that, "nobody has yet come up with a single adequate definition of ideology." To illustrate this, D. J. A. CLINES, *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 205; Gender, Culture, Theory 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) 10–11, lists four typical denotations of the word, and no fewer than thirteen different connotations.

[13] CLINES lists this as one of the "denotations" of "ideology" (ibid., 10).

[14] R. P. CARROLL, "Ideology," *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (eds. R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden; London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990) 311.

[15] K. L. YOUNGER, JR, *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing* (JSOTSup 98; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990) 51.

[16] CLINES, *Interested Parties*, 12. R. P. CARROLL, "An Infinity of Traces: On Marking an Inventory of Our Ideological Holdings. An Introduction to *Ideologiekritik* in Biblical Studies," *JNSL* 21 (1995) 27, also adopts a more "active" definition: "the word 'ideology' may be said to refer to a system or network of ideas and to the values in such a system which generate praxis." STERNBERG, *Poetics*, 36, says that the ideological character of the Bible means that "it is anchored in a determinate world picture or value system and concerned to impress it on the audience." With more this more "active" connotation "ideology" begins to overlap with the concept of "propaganda," which is usually taken to refer to communication "connected to the social setting in which there is controversy, embodying a deliberate attempt to influence favorably the outcome of the controversy" (M. CHAVALAS, "Genealogical History as 'Charter:' A Study of Old Babylonian Period Historiography and the Old Testament," *Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context* [eds. A. R. Millard, J. K. Hoffmeier and D. W. Baker; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994] 106).

[17] See, for example, K. MANNHEIM, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968) 84–87.

[18] W. STARK, *The Sociology of Knowledge: An Essay in Aid of a Deeper Understanding of the History of Ideas* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959) 48.

[19] See the discussion below on the distinction between "understanding" and "critique" in ideological criticism. Because I do not intend in this study to evaluate or critique the ideologies of the texts I will discuss, it would be inconsistent and counterproductive to burden the term "ideology" with evaluative connotations.

tence at this meeting point, at this site of the "creative fusion" of "facts" with the mind of the historian,[20] is a new world: a "narrative world." It is a world constrained by and resembling the evenemential world *to some degree*. It is a text that makes an *allusion* to reality.[21] But it is also a world interpreted and shaped by the underlying ideological commitments of the author. Therefore, to some degree, this world is an *illusion* in that it "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence."[22] It is a picture of the evenemential world that exists in the mind, in the *imagination* of the author.

The goal of this study is to map such narrative worlds, with a view to discerning an author's "ideological traces."[23] Specifically, my primary goal will be to chart the contours of the narrative worlds created by nine West Semitic royal inscriptions from the first half of the first millennium B.C.E.: *Yeḥimilk* (*KAI* 4), *Mesha* (*KAI* 181), *Kilamuwa* (*KAI* 24), *Zakkur* (*KAI* 202), *Hadad* (*KAI* 214), *Panamuwa* (*KAI* 215), *Bar-Rakkab* (*KAI* 216) *Karatepe* (*Azatiwada*) (*KAI* 26) and the *Tell Siran Bottle* inscription. My goal in doing this is not to travel back along the path to the evenemential world behind the text, although I will need to make reference to that world at times. Rather, I will seek to outline, describe and understand the ideology, and in particular the royal ideology – the belief systems concerning the role of kings – that gave these inscriptions their literary shape.

At this point, an explanation of my choice of these nine inscriptions is in order. I have chosen them for two reasons. The first is that each of them conforms to the "memorial inscription" genre, or at least contains elements of that genre. The distinctive feature of texts of this genre is that while most were written in the context of a construction program, their primary purpose was to memorialize a wider range of royal achievements.[24] This means that these texts give the reader an overview of a king's reign, at least to some degree. The authorial decision to memorialize certain activities (to the exclusion of others) from a long period of a king's reign means that these inscriptions can generate a relatively rich characterization of a king and the activities that define his greatness. In short, memorial – and "memorial-like" – inscriptions tend to create relatively complex narrative worlds. It is this complexity that provides an entry point into an undergirding ideology.

For the same reason, I will appeal mostly to annals and annalistic texts when considering the Neo-Assyrian inscriptional tradition as a source for background information on the way royal ideology shapes the narration of history. Strictly

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[20] STANFORD, *Historical Knowledge*, 97.

[21] L. ALTHUSSER, "Ideology and Ideological States (Notes Towards an Investigation)," *Mapping Ideology* (ed. S. Žižek; London; New York: Verso, 1994) 123.

[22] Ibid.

[23] CARROLL, "An Infinity of Traces," 28: texts "have the ideological traces of the writers who live in an ideologically-constructed world."

[24] [J.] M. MILLER, "The Moabite Stone as a Memorial Stela," *PEQ* 106 (1974) 9.

speaking, these texts differ generically from the memorial inscriptions from Syria-Palestine, but both types give overviews, if not of entire reigns, then at least of significant periods of time in which kings were active in their various endeavors.

My second reason for choosing these nine texts is that I wish to set a focus on the narration of royal domestic achievements. As I shall demonstrate below, the ideological dimension of the narration of royal military campaigns has been subjected to fairly close study, especially in the case of Neo-Assyrian texts. Not surprisingly perhaps, much less attention has been paid to the ideological quality of texts that narrate royal domestic achievements, such as palace building. Does royal ideology shape the narration of what appears to be very mundane activities, especially when compared to the dramatic accounts of military campaigns? And if so, how does the narration of royal public works contribute to the overall portrayal of kings?

While I will focus on the domestic achievements described in these nine West Semitic texts, it will be impossible – and actually unhelpful – to ignore passages that have an external orientation (typically those dealing with warfare). So my approach will be to provide an overview of the inscription – often by translating it *in toto* – before locating the narration of domestic accomplishments in its wider narrative context. Finally, I note that the two criteria referred to above also explain the absence from this study of a number of otherwise important West Semitic inscriptions. The focus on memorial inscriptions excludes inscriptions of the purely dedicatory type, such as the *Melqart Stele* (*Barhadad*) (*KAI* 201), *Kilamuwa II* (*KAI* 25), the Byblian inscriptions of *Elibaal* (*KAI* 6) and *Shipiṭbaal* (*KAI* 7), as well as the recently discovered *Ekron Dedicatory Inscription*.[25] Since these texts have the limited function of dedicating some object to a deity[26] and provide no broad overview of the king's achievements they are excluded from this study. The important *Tell Fakhariyah Bilingual* of "king" Hadad-Yithʻi may also be categorized, more or less, within this genre[27] and, apart from the erection of the statue on which the inscription was written, makes no reference to any royal accomplishments. On the other hand, the recently discovered Tell Dan inscription is almost certainly a "memorial inscription,"[28] but

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[25] S. GITIN, T. DOTHAN and J. NAVEH, "A Royal Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron," *IEJ* 47 (1997) 1–16. See also K. LAWSON YOUNGER, JR., "The Ekron Inscription of Akhayus," *COS* 2.164.

[26] J. F. DRINKARD, "The Literary Genre of the Mesha Inscription," *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab* (ed. J. A. Dearman; Archaeology and Biblical Studies 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 132.

[27] According to E. LIPIŃSKI, *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics-II* (OLA 57; Leuven: Peeters, 1994) 33, this text combines two distinct dedication inscriptions. It also adds other elements not usually associated with such inscriptions; see W. R. GARR, "'Image' and 'Likeness' in the Inscription from Tell Fakhariyeh," *IEJ* 50 (2000) 229.

[28] See A. L. MILLARD, "The Tell Dan Stele," *COS* 2.161.

the fragments discovered thus far unfortunately do not contain any references to royal public works.

Although the *Siloam Tunnel Inscription* (*KAI* 189) describes a work undoubtedly authorized by the king, it is cannot be classified as a royal inscription,[29] and therefore does not offer an entry point into a distinctly *royal* ideology.

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[29] See K. L. YOUNGER, JR., "The Siloam Inscription," *UF* 26 (1994) 551 ("this is a commemorial inscription, and not a royal inscription connected somehow to the Judahite annals") and idem, "The Siloam Tunnel Inscription" *COS* 2.145 ("This commemorative inscription is not an 'official'/'royal' inscription, but an 'unofficial'/'common person' type text.").

Chapter Two

From Text to Ideology:
Studies in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions
(Methodological Considerations)

1. History of Research[1]

With the previous brief and introductory reflections on the nature of historical narrative serving as background, we may now consider how these insights have been taken up in the study of a specific subset of historical narrative, namely, the royal inscriptions of the ancient Near East.[2]

Ancient Near Eastern historiographic texts have long been studied with a view to reconstructing the events referred to in these documents. While it is true that this classic approach has its own set of methodological problems,[3] the

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[1] For a much briefer and more general survey of recent research see M. W. HAMILTON, "The Past As Destiny: Historical Visions in Samʾal and Judah Under Assyrian Hegemony," *HTR* 91 (1998) 217–21.

[2] Accordingly, the focus of this study will fall on prose narration rather than poetic narration of historical events. For a discussion of the differences between these two types of narration, at least in the context of ancient Near Eastern historical texts, see K. L. YOUNGER, JR., "Heads! Tails! Or the Whole Coin?! Contextual Method & Intertextual Analysis: Judges 4 and 5," *The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective* (eds. K. L. Younger, JR., W. W. Hallo and B. F. Batto; Scripture in Context 4; Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 11; Lewiston; Queenston; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1991) 113.

[3] LIVERANI, "Memorandum," 179, draws attention to two such problems: (1) in the situation where the textual information is wrong, "the error passes inevitably into the historical reconstruction," and (2) the problem of the difference in "scopes and interests" between the modern scholar interested in historical reconstruction and the authors of ancient documents. For the modern scholar, this means that the texts are too often "uncommunicative or altogether silent." The current debate between traditionalists and the so-called minimalist school over the nature of biblical historiography bears witness to at least the first of these problems. This debate is at an impasse precisely because there is no agreement on the degree to which the ideological dimension of the biblical histories renders them historically inaccurate. In other words, when the goal is historical reconstruction, the ideology of a text is a problem to be solved rather than an object of study in its own right. Unless there is agreement on the extent to which ideology intrudes on the veracity or reliability of historical texts, there can be no agreement on any reconstructions based on them. For recent evidence of the sharpness of the disagreement see I. PROVAN, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel," *JBL* 114 (1995) 585–606, with rejoinders by T. L. THOMPSON, "A

task of historical reconstruction remains a valid endeavor.[4] However, since the 1970's greater attention has been given to the world of the text, rather than the world behind the text.[5] Leading the way in developing this line of inquiry has been the Italian scholar Mario Liverani. In 1973, he called for a shift in focus from the study of historiographic texts as a "source of information" for "the reality laying [*sic*] beyond" the texts, that is, as "*a source of knowledge of what*

Neo-Albrightean School in History and Biblical Scholarship?" *JBL* 114 (1995) 683–98 and P. R. DAVIES, "Method and Madness: Some Remarks on Doing History with the Bible," *JBL* 114 (1995) 699–705.

[4] W. W. HALLO, "New Directions in Historiography," *Dubsar anta-men: Studien zur Altorientalistik: Festschrift für Willem H. Ph. Römer zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres mit Beiträgen von Freunden, Schülern und Kollegen* (eds. M. Dietrich and O. Loretz; AOAT 253; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998) 122, contends that "Methodologically, it makes sense to treat Mesopotamian history and Israelite history alike – to exempt neither from criticism, to expose neither to unreasonable tests of authenticity … [T]he historian of history has no alternative but to use every scrap of evidence available – making allowances for its biases, for the intentions of its presumed authors and the expectations of its presumed audiences in order to reconstrcut [*sic*] the remote past." Even MARIO LIVERANI, who is highly sensitive to the ideological components of ancient historiographic texts, evidently agrees with this conclusion. While LIVERANI has subjected the Annals of Ashurnasirpal II to the kind of ideological-literary analysis that will be employed in this study (see E. BADALÌ, M. G. BIGA, O. CARENA, G. DI BERNARDO, S. DI RIENZO, M. LIVERANI and P. VITALI, "Studies on the Annals of Aššurnasirpal II. 1: Morphological Analysis," *VO* 5 [1982] 13–73), he recognizes that the same texts can be studied – with appropriate sensitivity to their ideological dimension – with the goal of reconstructing the actual campaigns described therein and locating them in "the political and economic reality" of Ashurnasirpal's reign (M. LIVERANI, *Studies on the Annals of Ashurnasirpal II. 2: Topographical Analysis* [Quaderni di Geografica Storica, 4; Rome: Università di Rome "La Sapienza", 1992] 1). See also A. F. CONRADIE, "A Methodological Approach to Assyrian Historiography as History in Inscription and in Sculpture," *Papers Read at the 24th Meeting of 'Die Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suider-Afrika'* (eds. F. E. Deist and J. A. Loader; Stellenbosch: Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suider-Afrika, 1982) 11–22.

[5] A similar shift in focus can be seen in the emergence during the late 1960's and early 1970's of "literary approaches" in the study of the Bible. In the case of ancient Near Eastern texts, M. LIVERANI, "2084: Ancient Propaganda and Historical Criticism," *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century: The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference* (eds. J. S. Cooper and G. M. Schwartz; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996) 285–86, contends that this new approach to the reading of ancient historiographic texts was a by-product of theoretical developments during the 1960's and 1970's in "counterinformation studies." Nonetheless, the fundamentally "literary" character of this area of study is seen in his description of this method: "Against the danger of being completely submerged by the official interpretation [contained in contemporary 'totalitarian' political propaganda], new semiological and literary techniques were conceived, with the result that the [contemporary] political message was dismantled, its purposes were clarified, and the hidden facts were extracted from the biased interpretation" (ibid., 285). See also idem, "Model and Actualization. The Kings of Akkad in the Historical Tradition," *Akkad: The First World Empire: Structure, Ideology, Traditions* (ed. M. Liverani; History of the Ancient Near East/Studies Vol. V; Padova: Sargon, 1993) 46–48.

the document says" to a study of the texts as "information in itself," that is, "*a source of knowledge of itself*."[6] In fact, Liverani was not *ultimately* interested in the text itself, but in the text as a point of access to the mind of the author, or more impersonally, the ideology that gave the text its shape and structure.[7] While he defines his method as the "analysis of the literary and thought patterns according to which the events are presented,"[8] in reality literary analysis logically precedes and leads to the knowledge of "thought patterns" (that is, ideology).[9] Therefore, this method studies the "surface" of the text (literary analysis) but does so with a view to going below its surface to recreate (as far as is possible) the authorial thought world (ideological analysis). To put it another way, Liverani's approach travels along the axis between the text and the author rather than between the text and the events it purports to represent.

This means, of course, that the very shape and structure of the text now becomes the object of study, or as Liverani put it:

> This type of approach requires, so to speak, an increased delicacy as regards the document, which must no more be forced, dissected, plagiarized for our aims. Rather, its literary structure, terminology, and implications must be tactfully analyzed toward an understanding as complete and conscious as possible. To speak in the linguist's terms, we need to take a higher interest in the connotational level than in the denotational.[10]

Liverani described the kind of approach he had in mind as "total or comprehensive reading," which he defined as reading a text *in its entirety* and *from all possible points of view*.[11] Unfortunately, his explanation of what this means is not particularly helpful, although it appears that the kind of analysis he had in mind can be placed under the broad heading of what would today be called "a literary approach" or "narratological analysis."[12]

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[6] LIVERANI, "Memorandum," 179.

[7] While LIVERANI shifts the focus from the events to "how they are narrated," the real goal is "characterizing" and trying "to gain some enlightenment on the historical environment of the author, and possibly even on the single author in the context of his environment" (ibid.). More specifically, LIVERANI also speaks of the "political aims of the author" as the "gravitational centre" of the text ("Model and Actualization," 47).

[8] LIVERANI, "Memorandum," 181.

[9] This can be seen, for example, in LIVERANI's view that "every irregular, irrational, inconsistent and even reticent element in the document" (what he calls "distortions" in the text) is a vehicle for "typical political (or generally ideological) propaganda" (ibid., 180).

[10] Ibid., 179.

[11] Ibid., 182–83.

[12] It may, of course, be more precisely defined than this. The influence of structuralist theory – a literary approach that "looks beneath … the texts for the underlying patterns of thought that come to expression in them" (D. J. A. CLINES and J. C. EXUM, "The New Literary Criticism," *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* [eds. D. J. A. Clines and J. C. Exum; JSOTSup 143; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press] 16) – will become obvious, especially when the thought patterns underlying the ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions

Having set an agenda for a new approach to the study of ancient historical narratives, Liverani and his colleagues then focused their energies on the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions. They chose these texts primarily because "they constitute the widest and most chronologically compact corpus of texts that can be qualified as 'political discourse.'"[13] I suggest, however, that the decision to concentrate on the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions had a significant impact on the implementation of their methodology, as I shall seek to demonstrate below.

Liverani had recognized that before one can speak of the ideology of a corpus of texts, one must first analyze *individual* texts and describe their ideological component: "we are forced to admit … that our final aim has to be the understanding of the single document."[14] But, in reality, Liverani's orientation is rarely towards the single document *per se*. His focus is much more towards understanding any single document in connection to other similar single documents:

The most productive type of study of the single document towards its total comprehension derives from the setting of the text in a homologous series, chosen so as to enlighten the particular structure under study, and to set apart the paradigmatic variants and the syntagmatic successions.[15]

F. M. Fales has made the same point even more strongly:

The multiform nature of Assyrian royal inscriptions can probably be better approached through a study of variants and variation in general than by any, however deep, regard to single texts within this class of written materials.[16]

This method of analysis is appropriate. Texts are always better understood when set in the context of similar texts. And the corpus of Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, by virtue of its repetitive character and size, invites such a comparative analysis. The recurrence of syntagms – "precise and easily recognized structural elements"[17] – both within individual texts of a single king or across the texts of successive kings, encouraged careful attention to the patterns of repetition and

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are analyzed in terms of binary oppositions (see also LIVERANI, "Model and Actualization," 47, n. 18). But at the level of the text itself, the methodology can be defined simply as a form of rhetorical criticism, which is concerned with "the way the language of texts is deployed to convey meaning" (CLINES and EXUM, "New Literary Criticism," 16).

[13] BADALÌ *et al*, "Studies," 14.

[14] LIVERANI, "Memorandum," 181.

[15] Ibid.

[16] F. M. FALES, "A Literary Code in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: The Case of Ashurbanipal's Egyptian Campaign," *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons in Literary, Ideological, and Historical Analysis: Papers of a Symposium Held in Cetona (Siena) June 26–26, 1980* (ed. F. M. Fales; Orientis Antiqui Collection XVII; Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1981) 169.

[17] YOUNGER, *Ancient Conquest Accounts*, 70. More precisely, YOUNGER defines syntagms as "individual functions or syntactic entities" of prose narrative (ibid.).